

**NORTH WALES SHEEP DOG SOCIETY**

**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS**

**(September 2023)**

**Introduction**

North Wales Sheep Dog Society (‘The Society’) uses social media in its work and recognises that those who are involved in its work may also use social media either as part of their role or in their private lives including business purposes.

Social media use is governed by a number of laws and the Society has a very positive reputation and this is extremely important in delivering our charitable work.

The policy will help members understand how to use social media effectively and well and help avoid problems.

As a very simple guide, you may be breaking the law, if you post (or potentially repost) anything that may fall into any of the following categories:

* harassment - not leaving someone alone.
* menacing behaviour – writing something that may scare someone.
* threatening behaviour – making someone believe that you were going to hurt them.
* grossly offensive behaviour – making deeply unpleasant comments about a sensitive issue.
* libel - a post is potentially libellous, if it is a false statement and may damage someone's reputation.
* defamation - users may be sued for defamation, if they post an unsubstantiated rumour about someone.
* data protection – breaching an individual’s right to privacy.
* copyright – posting material without permission that is owned by another person or organisation.

A written policy is therefore required for members (incl. trustees) on the acceptable use of social networking.

The Societyencourages the responsible use of social media. The purpose of this policy is to set out what the Society expects from its members when using social media. It aims to:

* give clear guidelines on what members can say about the organisation;
* comply with relevant legislation and protect members;
* help members draw a line between their private lives and their membership of the Society;
* protect the Society against possible liability for the actions of its members;
* be clear about sensitive issues and explain how problems with inappropriate use will be addressed.

It is important to remember that all members are ambassadors for the charity and that social media is never private.

**1.** **Policy statement**

1.1 North Wales Sheep Dog Society recognises that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics relevant to the charity’s work using a wide variety of social media, such as Facebook, X, Instagram, blogs etc. This policy aims to protect members networking on the Society’s media by encouraging you to take responsibility for what you write, exercise good judgment and common sense.

1.2 Inappropriate use of social media can pose risks to our confidential and proprietary information and reputation and can jeopardise the Society’s compliance with its legal obligations.

1.3 To minimise these risks and to ensure that our resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate business purposes, the Society therefore expects all members to adhere to this policy.

1.4 Failure to adhere to this policy may result in the Society being discredited and leave any associated member the subject of possible disciplinary sanctions. The Society’ trustees are responsible for addressing any issues raised.

**2.** **Scope and purpose of the policy**

2.1 Social media is the term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create and share content (words, blogs, images and video content), and network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests.

2.2 The Society uses Facebook as its social media channel. The Secretary and Treasurer is responsible for setting up and managing the Charity’s account.

2.3 This policy is not intended to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which conflicts might arise. Members are expected to behave appropriately and in ways that are consistent with the Society’s values and policies, both online and in real life. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive the Society. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the Society. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about the Society’s work you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed are my own and don't necessarily represent North Wales Sheep Dog Society's positions, policies or opinions."

2.4 Members may be required to remove social media postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy.

2.5 This policy links to all other policies therefore social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the Society’s other policies such as equal opportunities, data protection etc.

2.6 Any content which raises a safeguarding concern must be reported to the Secretary and Treasurer in line with the reporting procedures outlined in the Society’s safeguarding policy.

**3.** **Guidelines for the responsible use of social media**

The following sections of the policy provide members with common sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

3.1 The Society expects members you to help protect the Charity’s reputation. Members must therefore not post disparaging or defamatory statements about:

* North Wales Sheep Dog Society;
* the Society’s office holders or other members past or present;
* other affiliates and stakeholders.

3.2 Members should also avoid social communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the Society’s (Charity’s) reputation, even indirectly.

3.3 Members are personally responsible for what they communicate on social media. Remember that what you publish might be available to be read by many people including other members, future employers and social acquaintances for years to come. Always keep this in mind before you post content.

3.4 Members should be honest and say what you know to be true or have a good source for the information. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it.

3.5 Members must not post content about other members or supporters without their express permission. If members are sharing information about other members, supporters or third party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from the Society. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, members must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.

3.6 The Society does not permit tagging of vulnerable adults or anyone under the age of 18.

3.7 Members are responsible for the security settings of any social media sites they use and should ensure they are set to the appropriate level if they wish to limit who can see their information.

3.8 Members must remember to respect confidentiality at all times and protect confidential information. You should be mindful of data protection issues, if in doubt speak to the Secretary and Treasurer. Confidential information includes things such as unpublished details about the Society’s work, details of current projects, future projects, financial information, or information held on members or supporters.

3.9 Contact details of members are subject to data protection. Members are not permitted to access or store information on any other members that would breach data protection.

3.10 Avoid posting comments about sensitive Society related topics, such as our performance. Even if you make it clear that your views do not represent those of our Charity, your comments could still damage the Society’s reputation. If in any doubt about responding to issues that may be sensitive, pause and reflect before replying.

3.11 If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from making the communication until you have discussed it with the Secretary and Treasurer.

3.12 If any member sees content on social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the Society they should report it to the Secretary and Treasurer. All members are responsible for protecting the Society’s reputation.

3.13 Members must not use the Society’s social media to circulate or share chain letters or other spam. Circulating, posting or sharing commercial, personal, religious or political solicitations, or promotion of outside organisations unrelated to the Society’s work is also prohibited.

3.14 It is vital that the Society is not seen or perceived to encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather material. For example, a video of a stunt.

3.15 Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis situation because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the charity's reputation. Examples might include: posting videos which purport to demonstrate a dog’s power but in fact demonstrate unacceptable stockmanship. The nature of social media also means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly.

3.16 Not acting on bad practice and complaints can be detrimental to the charity. The Secretary and Treasurer monitors social media so that any issues or problems can be caught early. If any member becomes aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on the Society’s social media or elsewhere, they should speak to the Secretary and Treasurer.

3.17 Members must never use the Society’s logos unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the Secretary and Treasurer.

 3.18 Members should think about their reputation as well as the charity's. Express opinions and deal with differences of opinion respectfully. Don't insult people or treat them badly. Passionate discussions and debates are fine but you should always be respectful of others and their opinions. Be polite and the first to correct your own mistakes.

 3.19 Abusive posts: A troll is someone who intentionally causes upset, harm, or offence by provoking people online.  Be careful not to confuse a troll with someone who is critical and/or upset. There will be people who have valid concerns or have a genuine complaint that may come across as angry and irate.  Look at their social media to see what they post and how they reply. Trolls often have a profile picture that is an object, rather than a person, or no profile image at all. People who are abusive are usually trying to provoke a reaction from you, so don’t give them what they want. Besides, you are unlikely to convince them they are wrong. Tweet or post separately to address the issue. You can also adjust your settings to not allow replies, use the relevant abuse reporting system, block them and, if you think they are committing a crime, report them to the police.

3.20 Meaning: Remember that the majority of our communication is through body language and voice tone/loudness etc. and the amount of written text in social media can be limited, so meaning can easily be lost.  What may appear light hearted and funny to you, may potentially come across very differently on social media. Also, consider potential social and/or cultural differences in your audience who may be more sensitive to particular issues or subjects than the wider population.

**Change record**

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| **Date of change / Trustees approval** | **Changes / Comments** |
|  | To be reviewed September 2026 |
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