A bird flying in the air

Description automatically generated**MAPLE LODGE CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

[**www.maplelodgenaturereserve.org**](http://www.maplelodgenaturereserve.org)

**Registered Charity No. 1153157**

**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

A guide for Members on using social media to promote the work of Maple Lodge Conservation Society and in a personal capacity.

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. Maple Lodge Conservation Society will amend this policy, following consultation, where appropriate.

Date of last review: 21st January 2024

Next review date: January 2025

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Introduction

What is social media?

Social media is the term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create and share content (words, images, and video content), and network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge, and common interests. Examples of social media include Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), LinkedIn and Instagram.

Why do we use social media?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating Maple Lodge Conservation Society's work. It is important for some members to participate in social media to engage with our audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of Maple Lodge Conservation Society’s work.

Why do we need a social media policy?

The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you are discussing issues relating to Maple Lodge Conservation Society's work. While we encourage the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

This policy is intended for all *members and* applies to content posted on a personal device*.* Before engaging in charity work-related social media activity, members must read this policy.

Setting out the social media policy

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of Maple Lodge Conservation Society, and the use of social media by members in both a professional and personal capacity. It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help members support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the society and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

Point of contact for social media

Our Social Media team consists of The Chairman, The Conservation Officer, and The Health & Safety Officer, they are responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring, and management of our social media channels.

Which social media channels do we use?

*Maple Lodge Conservation Society has a Facebook page, Facebook group, Flickr group and X account (formerly Twitter) which it uses to share news with members, supporters and to encourage people to become involved in our work*.

***Facebook, Flickr, and X Links below:***

Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/maplelodgeconservationsociety>

Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1376832645919171/>

Flickr group:

<https://www.flickr.com/groups/maplelodge/>

X (formerly Twitter):

<https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=991f05ea74e23591JmltdHM9MTcwMDg3MDQwMCZpZ3VpZD0wZGQ2Mzc0Ny1mODEyLTZlYWMtM2Q2My0yNDc3ZjlmMjZmMjMmaW5zaWQ9NTIyNQ&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=0dd63747-f812-6eac-3d63-2477f9f26f23&psq=%40mapleLodgeRsrve&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly90d2l0dGVyLmNvbS9NYXBsZUxvZGdlUnNydmU&ntb=1>

Guidelines

Using Maple Lodge Conservation Society's social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. The Social Media team are responsible for setting up and managing Maple Lodge Conservation Society's social media channels. They are responsible for reviewing, moderating, and deleting content to ensure the content is appropriate, not harmful to an individual or the audience and/or is relevant to the work of the society. Official announcements will be posted by the Social Media team once authorised by the Chairman. Access to these accounts is authorised by the Chairman.

2. *Our Social Media team will respond to comments when able.*

3. Bring value to our audience. Answer their questions, help, and engage with them.

4. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings, or grammatical errors. Also check the quality of images.

5. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.

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

7. Members should refrain from offering personal opinions via Maple Lodge Conservation Society 's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. If you are in doubt about Maple Lodge Conservation Society 's position on a particular issue, please speak to the Chairman.

8. All relevant rights for usage must be obtained before publishing material.

9. Maple Lodge Conservation Society is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We have every right to express views on policy, including the policies of parties, but we cannot tell people how to vote.

10. If a complaint is made on Maple Lodge Conservation Society 's social media channels, Members should seek advice from the Social Media team before responding. Similarly, if a member receives abusive messages through the society’s social media platforms, this should be brought to the attention of the Committee and where necessary the relevant law enforcement agencies; so that appropriate action can be taken and to ensure that the individual is supported.

11. Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the society's reputation. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the society.

12. The Social Media team regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of Maple Lodge Conservation Society so we can catch any issues or problems early. If there is an issue that could develop or has already developed into a crisis, the Social Media team will bring this to the attention of the Committee, for discussion.

13. If any members outside of the Social Media team become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on the Maple Lodge Conservation Society 's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the Chairman immediately.

Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct

This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which conflicts might arise. Maple Lodge Conservation Society Members are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with Maple Lodge Conservation Society’s values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive Maple Lodge Conservation Society. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Maple Lodge Conservation Society. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about Maple Lodge Conservation Society 's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent Maple Lodge Conservation Society 's positions, policies or opinions."

2. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with Maple Lodge Conservation Society and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the generalpublic*,* colleagues*,* and friends.

3. If a member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to Maple Lodge Conservation Society, they should talk to the Chairman immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.

4. Maple Lodge Conservation Society is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. When representing Maple Lodge Conservation Society, members are expected to hold Maple Lodge Conservation Society 's position of neutrality. Members who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from Maple Lodge Conservation Society and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.

5. Always protect yourself and the society. Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so do consider the content carefully.

6. Think about your reputation as well as the society’s. Express your opinions and deal with differences of opinion respectfully. Do not 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.

Further guidelines

Libel

Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. Whether Members are posting content on social media as part of the society’s work or in a personal capacity, they should not bring Maple Lodge Conservation Society into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

Copyright law

It is critical that all Members abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Never use or adapt someone else's images or written content without permission. Failing to acknowledge the source/author/resource citation, where permission has been given to reproduce content, is also considered a breach of copyright.

Confidentiality

Any communications that Members make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that Maple Lodge Conservation Society is not ready to disclose yet.

Discrimination and harassment

Members should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official Maple Lodge Conservation Society social media channel or a personal account. For example:

* making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion, or belief.
* using social media to bully another individual.
* posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.

Lobbying Act

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law. However, the Lobbying Act, which was passed in January 2014, states that during national elections (known as regulated periods) spending on campaigning activities may be regulated.

Charities which spend more than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland, during the regulated period, need to register with the Electoral Commission. To abide by the Lobbying Act, campaigning activities on social media must not be seen as intending to influence people's voting choice. During these periods, all campaigning activity will be reviewed by the Chairman and the Treasurer.

Protection and intervention

The responsibility for measures of protection and intervention lies first with the social networking site itself. Different social networking sites offer different models of interventions in different areas. For more information, refer to the guidance available on the social networking site itself. For example, Facebook. However, if a member considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the Social Media team immediately.

Under 18s and vulnerable people

Young and vulnerable people face risks when using social networking sites. They may be at risk of being bullied, publishing sensitive and personal information on their profiles, or from becoming targets for online grooming.

Where known, when communicating with young people under 18-years-old via social media, the Social Media team should ensure the online relationship with Maple Lodge Conservation Society follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. The Social Media team should ensure that young people have been made aware of the risks of communicating and sharing information online and given guidance on security/privacy settings, as necessary. The Social Media team should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and Maple Lodge Conservation Society content and other content is appropriate for them.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of Maple Lodge Conservation Society is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. Members who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the Chairman.

Signed electronically by:

The Maple Lodge Committee