



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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A guide for staff on using social media to promote the work of Rural Media (including Rural Media Charity and Rural Studios and all its projects) and in a personal capacity.

Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| What is social media? | 2 |
| Why do we use social media? | 2 |
| Why do we need a social media policy? | 2 |
| Setting out the social media policy | 2 |
| Internet access and monitoring usage | 2 |
| Point of contact for social media | 2 |
| Which social media channels do we use? | 2 |
| Guidelines | 3 |
| Using Rural Media's social media channels — appropriate conduct | 3 |
| Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct | 5 |
| Further guidelines | 6 |
| Libel | 6 |
| Copyright law | 6 |
| Confidentiality | 6 |
| Discrimination and harassment | 6 |
| Lobbying Act | 6 |
| Use of social media in the recruitment process | 7 |
| Protection and intervention | 7 |
| Under 18s and vulnerable people | 7 |
| Responsibilities and beach of policy | 7 |
| Public Interest Disclosure | 7 |

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, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube and Instagram.

Why do we use social media?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating Rural Media's work. It is important for some staff to participate in social media to engage with our audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of Rural Media'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 Rural Media'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 carry similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

This policy is intended for all staff members of all levels, volunteers, and trustees and applies to content posted on both a Rural Media device and a personal device. Before engaging in work-related social media activity, staff 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 Rural Media, and the use of social media by staff 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 staff support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the charity and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

Internet access and monitoring usage

There are currently no access restrictions to any of our social media sites in the Rural Media office. However, when using the internet at work, it is important that staff refer to our IT policy appendix in the Staff Handbook. You are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media activity during your lunch breaks, but usage should not be excessive and interfere with your duties.

Point of contact for social media

Our Social Media Producer is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to Elle Adams ellea@ruralmedia.co.uk. No other staff member can post content on Rural Media's official channels without the permission of the social media and Content Producer.

Which social media channels do we use?

Rural Media uses the following social media channels:

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/RuralMediaCharity>

Twitter @RuralMedia

Instagram @Rural_Media

Which we use to share news *with supporters and to encourage people to become involved in our work.*

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/@ruralmediacharity7219>

Which we use to host themed playlists to showcase our non-broadcast films

TikTok

Which we use to share social impact films with specific audiences nationally.

From time to time, we may set up specific channels on a project-by-project basis (e.g.; Bookflicks, Travellers Times, POV) however the same policy and guidelines apply.

Guidelines

Using Rural Media's social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. Elle Adams is responsible for setting up and managing Rural Media's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the Social Media producer will have access to these accounts.
2. Our Social Media Produces checks social media channels and responds to comments or DMs (Direct Message) on Tuesdays and Thursday 9.00am-5.30pm. Outside these hours for busy channels with potentially sensitive content such as Travellers Times we have rota system between the team who deal with offensive, derogatory or inflammatory comments by deleting and banning the commenter. Do not engage or respond without prior consultation with the editorial team.
3. Be an ambassador for our brand. Staff should ensure they reflect Rural Media values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Our brand guidelines set out our tone of voice that all staff should refer to when posting content on Rural Media's social media channels.
4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for Rural Media, and accurately reflects Rural Media's agreed position.
5. Bring value to our audience(s). Answer reasonable questions, help, and engage with them
6. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings, or grammatical errors. Also check the quality of images and ensure posts are created within brand guidelines.
7. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.

8. If staff outside of Rural Media wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should speak to the Social Media Producer about this.

9. Staff should not post content about supporters or service users without their express permission. If staff are sharing information about supporters, service users or third-party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from Rural Media. If using interviews, 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.

10. Always check facts. Staff should not automatically assume that material is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation.

11. Be honest. Say what you know to be true or have a reliable source for. If you have made a mistake, do not be afraid to admit it.

12. Staff should refrain from offering private opinions via Rural Media's social media accounts directly by commenting. By 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting' you are indirectly offering an opinion, so it is important to fully read the full content of external posts to ensure it fits within Rural Media's editorial policy before doing so. If you are in doubt about Rural Media's position on a particular issue, please speak to the Head of Production. In instances of sharing or retweeting external content, it is vital to

13. It is vital that Rural Media does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials. For example, a video of a stunt.

14. Staff should not encourage people to break the law to supply material for social media, such as using unauthorised video footage. All relevant rights for usage must be obtained before publishing material.

15. Staff should not set up other Facebook groups or pages, Twitter accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of Rural Media. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the Social Media Producer can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.

16. Rural Media 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.

17. If a complaint is made on Rural Media's social media channels, staff should seek advice from the Head of Production before responding. If they are not available, then staff should speak to the Creative Director or Travellers Times editor.

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

The Social Media Producer regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of Rural Media so we can catch any issues or problems early.

If any staff outside of the communications team become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on Rural Media's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the Head of Production 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. Rural Media staff are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with Rural Media's values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive Rural Media. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Rural Media. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about Rural Media's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent Rural Media's positions, policies or opinions."
2. Staff who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they work at Rural Media should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the [team name]. Similarly, staff who want to start blogging and wish to say that they work for Rural Media should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager and the [team name].
3. Those in senior management, and specialist roles where they are well known in their field of expertise, must take particular care as personal views published may be misunderstood as expressing Rural Media's view.
4. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with Rural Media and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the public, colleagues, partners, readers, audiences, stakeholders, and funders
5. If a staff member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to Rural Media, they should talk to the Head of Production immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.
6. Rural Media 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 Rural Media, staff are expected to hold Rural Media's position of neutrality. Staff who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from Rural Media and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
7. Never use Rural Media's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from Elle Adams.
8. Always protect yourself and the charity. 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. When you are using social media sites at work, it is important that you do so safely. You can find more information on your responsibilities when using our computer systems in our IT Policy found in the Staff Handbook.

9. Think about your reputation as well as the charity'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.

10. We encourage staff to share tweets and posts that we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support Rural Media and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy, we encourage staff to do this as it provides a human voice and raises our profile. However, if the content is controversial or misrepresented, please highlight this to the Head of Production who will respond as appropriate.

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 staff are posting content on social media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring Rural Media into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

Copyright law

It is critical that all staff 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 staff make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that Rural Media is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date. Please refer to our Data Protection Policy for further information.

Discrimination and harassment

Staff should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official Rural Media 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.

Use of social media in the recruitment process

Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the Inclusive Recruitment section of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through HR and the Senior Management Team. Vacancies are shared routinely on LinkedIn and Talent Manager once approved.

There should be no systematic or routine checking of candidate's online social media activities during the recruitment process, as conducting these searches might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics, such as religious beliefs or sexual orientation, played a part in a recruitment decision. This is in line with Rural Media's the Equal Opportunities Section of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy.

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 staff member considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the Safeguarding Officer 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, staff should ensure the online relationship with Rural Media follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. Staff 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. Staff should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and Rural Media content and other content is appropriate for them. Please refer to our Safeguarding Policy.

Responsibilities and beach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of Rural Media is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect. For staff, breaches of policy may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Please refer to our Staff Handbook for further information on disciplinary procedures. Staff who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the Finance and Operations Director.

Public Interest Disclosure

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, if a staff member releases information through Rural Media's social media channels that is in the interest of the public, Rural Media's Whistleblowing Policy must be initiated before any further action is taken.