



# Alnwick Civic Society

## Social Media Policy

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### Purpose

Alnwick Civic Society has a very positive reputation and this is extremely important in delivering our charitable work. Social media plays a large role in helping us foster this reputation, communicate with all our stakeholders and advance our charitable and community aims. This policy is intended to set out how we can use social media effectively and ethically, how to avoid problems and how to respond when issues do arise.

### The Law

Use of social media is covered by a number of UK laws and social media has no national boundaries, so posts may well be read across a number of jurisdictions. As a very simple guide, all posts and publications should seek to avoid falling 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 comments](#) – 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 - posters may be sued for defamation if they post an unsubstantiated rumour about someone.
- Data protection breach – breaching an individual's right to privacy.
- Copyright breach – posting material without permission that is owned by another person or organisation.

### Our Spokespeople

The majority of our social media posts and publications will be made by the Chair. When the Chair posts in the name of Alnwick Civic Society he/she will always be considered as the spokesperson for the society.



Where posts and publications are jointly authored (eg, the newsletter) these will always be reviewed prior to publication by the Chair and/or Committee. In these cases the lead reviewer (usually the Chair) will have final responsibility for the content posted.

The Chair is the primary spokesperson for the society. However, we sometimes ask members of the committee or ordinary members to be our spokespeople on specific issues. If you are appointed spokesperson for a particular subject then all of your posts on that topic will be considered as representing the society. Always check (with the Chair) if you are unsure whether you are the appointed spokesperson for a specific topic.

Please remember, even if you do not speak on behalf of Alnwick Civic Society you are personally responsible for all online content you publish. If you were to post on an issue related to our work, people who know you may think you were speaking on our behalf and those that don't may think so too, particularly if you were to use our logo or refer to us by name in your posts.

## **Guidelines**

**Do not breach privacy or security.** Do not post personal information, such as someone's home address, and never post about individuals without their consent, unless there is little if any doubt it would be given. Remember that individuals who may not be fully competent, perhaps due to a disability or illness, such as dementia, may not be able to give consent.

**Write using our 'tone of voice'.** Where possible, when communicating with the public, media or branches of government, use our 'tone of voice'.

Eg. We are passionate in pursuing both our charitable aims and supporting our community. We enjoy humour as much as anyone else, but we're professional, courteous, positive and respect the right of others to hold opinions that are different to ours.

**Text and Symbols.** The majority of our publications are on serious issues which are best communicated using standard English and proper punctuation. However, use of emojis or social media shorthand (eg 'lol') etc can help add humour to a light hearted post but shouldn't be used if an important point is being made as this might give the impression of trivialising the issue.

**Be politically neutral.** It is essential that we are not only politically neutral but are also seen to be so. From time to time we may aim to positively influence local agencies and government in support of our charitable and community aims but direct criticism should



always be avoided. Equally, we treat all recognised political parties with respect and may support any of their initiatives that support our own aims, but we do not actively support or promote any individual party.

**Ethics.** Posts should always be respectful of any named organisations, agencies, individuals and beneficiaries and aim to portray them in good faith in a way they would wish to be seen. Posts should never set out to cause embarrassment, offence or alarm. Extremist views, sexism, pornography/distressing or otherwise offensive imagery, racial/ethnic or religious discrimination, homophobia or disparaging comments against any minority group, such as the disabled or mentally ill would not be acceptable, under any circumstances, ever.

**Respect copyright, fair use and other laws.** If you are using imagery or text extracts make sure you acknowledge the source and observe copyright laws. Members regularly producing more extensive publications for the society should ensure they have a basic understanding of copyright and fair use law. When using pictures of people be aware that images of crowds at events, etc don't require the approval of each individual, but an image where a limited number of individuals are the subject matter of the image do. It is particularly important that you obtain permission, if you wish to use images of children or vulnerable adults.

**Think first, upload/post after.** If something gets online, it stays there for a long time. Posts on **X**, for example, now appear in Google search results. Please remember that almost anything online can always be traced back to the original poster.

**Ask for a second opinion.** If you are not sure if and how you should post or comment on something then please seek a second opinion? Contact the Chair for advice.

**Disagreeing.** From time to time it may be necessary for the society to rebut or refute something that appears online about our work or about our people. Any rebuttal should always be published by or in direct association with the Chair. It should always be factual and focus on the issue, not the person who wrote the original post. A solution should be offered whenever possible.

**Clearly state your opinions are your own.** If you are not a spokesperson for the society on a particular issue make clear that your comments, opinions or posts are your own, so these won't be interpreted as our position.

## **Moderation of Posts on Social Media**

We act as a platform, both online and off, for our community to debate issues that matter to them and we actively encourage diversity of opinion. We believe that open, honest debate



can help to address divisions and just because we don't agree with something, doesn't necessarily mean that we would remove it. For example, critical comments about our work are rare but, whilst we always respond in a balanced and measured way, we do not remove these, even when we do not necessarily agree with these, subject to the guidelines below.

The community has a diversity of views, some strongly held. There is nothing wrong in holding strong views, but that does not automatically make alternative views offensive. In general, as long as a post does not break the law, is a genuine contribution to a debate and is not offensive, we would not usually remove it. Specifically, we will take down any post that falls into the categories below:

- Anything we believe may fall into one or more of the categories set out in the section above, titled 'The Law'.
- We would also remove any post that contained views that we feel the majority of reasonable people would consider to be offensive.
  - Derogatory comments about an individual or organisation would always be considered offensive.
  - The use of 'swear words' would also normally be considered offensive.
- Any post that is irrelevant to our work and the online conversations being held.

We may also block those posting such material and/or report the issue to the relevant authorities including the police if we think a crime has been committed.

## **Take Down Process**

- Authority to remove posts/publications has been delegated, as follows:
  - Immediate take-down of posts that are obviously unacceptable - Chair
  - Take down of posts that may be unacceptable – Chair in consultation with Committee members, if possible
- Any request to take down a post is to be managed using our complaints (or other) policy.
- Before a post is taken down, screenshot or otherwise record the post.

## **Distribution**

This policy is to be brought to the attention of committee members on appointment, members appointed spokespeople and be available in our members resource section.



## Version Control - Approval and Review

Version No	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Changes	Review Period
1.0	Board	04/09/2024		Annually