



WSRA POLICY No P4: Social Media Policy

Introduction

It goes without saying that social media plays a big role in our personal lives. Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and other platforms are influential at the workplace too. Using social media effectively can lead to better information sharing, increased participation, and more outreach for the charity.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to the use of social media platforms where you are responding to or creating posts or threads that could reasonably be considered to be the view of the WSRA or if you are creating posts or threads on the platforms of related organisations on the West Somerset Railway. Examples include WSR plc posts, posts by other charities connected to the West Somerset Railway and other groups, formal and informal, that are connected to the West Somerset Railway. This would include organisations of which the WSRA is a member such as the HRA.

The policy applies to Trustees, Staff and Volunteers working directly for the WSRA or its trading subsidiaries. It does not apply to WSRA members who do not take an active role in helping to run the charity unless they claim to speak for the WSRA in an official capacity. The policy applies whether you are posting from a personal social media account or a WSRA social media account.

Policy Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to avoid embroiling the WSRA in arguments with other organisations on the West Somerset Railway and as noted in the Policy Scope. It is too easy to become involved in arguments on social media that you did not intend to become involved in. There is a huge amount of deliberate trolling on social media and this policy aims to provide guidance that avoids you becoming caught up in trolling which may have adverse consequences for you or for the WSRA.

If you are a Trustee, staff member or actively volunteer with the running of the WSRA then you should stop and think and if you are unsure then you may be better served by bringing a post to the attention of the Chairman and seeking guidance rather than responding to the post.

Policy Elements

Using Personal Social Media at Work

It is a fact of life that this will happen and Staff may have legitimate reasons for doing so.

If Staff are using a personal social media account to browse content that relates, in any way, to the West Somerset Railway then this is acceptable if it is limited and does not impact on their paid work for the WSRA. Else they may browse social media using personal accounts in their free time only. This free time includes any official breaks that they take from their work (e.g lunch break).

Trustee and Volunteers are not paid and are therefore free to browse social media at any time provided that such browsing does not, in any way, hamper the work of paid staff.

Using WSRA Controlled Social Media

Some Staff and Trustees may have access to official WSRA web sites and social media in an administrative capacity. Generally the only content that should be published on such platforms is official information including news items that relate directly to the work of the charity or work taking place on the West Somerset Railway. This can include material that explains how the WSRA is cooperating with other West Somerset Railway organisations but consideration should be given to any joint statements to ensure that any agreed embargo deadline is not breached.

The posting of Items relating to agreed appeals for funding or updates connected with such appeals is permitted.

Posting or re-posting agreed information relating to capital projects on the West Somerset Railway is permitted.

Posting or re-posting information regarding the work of official volunteer teams on the West Somerset Railway is permitted.

Posting to encourage new membership of the WSRA is permitted.

Posting to encourage volunteering for the WSRA or the WSR plc or any connected organisation is permitted.

Information posted or reposted by the WSRA must always be factual and be verified. Never post any piece of information if it is not verified.

Making Comments on Social Media

If you are commenting on any social media platform in response to a question or statement that is perhaps misleading about the WSRA you must only quote the official agreed position of the WSRA. If you are unsure then you are better off not commenting.

If you are commenting on a post by or about any other organisation connected with the West Somerset Railway then positive comments which support the West Somerset Railway are welcome.

If you are adding a comment to a post that amplifies or clarifies something positive that WSRA have contributed then this is also welcome.

If you are correcting something you know to be a factual inaccuracy about WSRA or the railway then limit yourself to that correction and do not get drawn into a protracted discussion.

If you find you are trolled for a comment about WSRA or the railway then stop commenting. Do not seek to justify the comment with further posts.

At all times your posts must be factually accurate and must not give offence. Do not be tempted to “fight fire with fire” as this is inappropriate.

Bear in mind that sometimes you may have access to proprietary or sensitive information or information which could be commercially sensitive. You should never disclose this information on social media.

You will sometimes encounter very negative posts about the WSRA and the West Somerset Railway. Do not give those who make such posts the oxygen of a reply.

Remember, members of the WSRA are free to contact the WSRA at any time if they have a concern via legitimate channels including telephone, letter and e-mail and the WSRA will respond appropriately to those members. Of course non-members are similarly free to contact the WSRA if they have a legitimate concern.

You do not owe anybody on social media a reply.

Many social media platforms have a direct messaging facility (DM). Think carefully before using this and do not assume the other person will keep something you say in DM confidential. Generally the guidance above applies to DM's

Disciplinary Actions

If it comes to the attention of the WSRA trustees that the guidance in this policy has been breached then it may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

The disciplinary process is laid out in the WSRA disciplinary policy. Generally in the first instance it will be assumed that a genuine mistake has been made and a verbal reminder to consider this policy will be given. A second breach will lead to a written reminder of this policy. These reminders may be issued by the General Manager or the Chair of Trustees as appropriate.

Further breaches of this policy will invoke the full disciplinary process.

For members who claim to speak in an official capacity for the WSRA when they do not they may have their membership revoked.

Reminder

You may also work or volunteer for the WSR plc or other connected organisations. As such you must also obey their social media policies.

Definitions

Staff – this includes all paid staff whether full time or part time or any person while they are employed on a contract by WSRA.

Trustee – a person duly elected or co-opted to serve on the trustee board of the WSRA.

Volunteer – any person who acts in any official unpaid capacity to support the work of the WSRA.

Member – any person who pays a membership fee, makes occasional donations, has the right to attend and vote at the AGM but takes no active part in helping to run the WSRA on a day to day basis.

Social Media – any online platform or forum where the West Somerset railway or the WSRA might be discussed in the virtual online world. This list is not exhaustive but for guidance:

- Facebook, including those pages which are moderated and semi- private.
- X (Twitter) all feeds private, semi - private or public.
- YouTube and all similar platforms, both videos and comments.
- Discussions forums that are part of Web sites.
- Instagram or similar apps.

Posts – sometimes called threads or comments or replies. Generally posts in this policy are your writings on social media insofar as they relate to the WSRA or the West Somerset Railway or connected organisations.

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