

Social Media Policy



A group of four independent statutory Land Drainage, water levels and Flood Risk Management Authorities working collectively under a partnership agreement in accordance with section 11(5) of the Land Drainage Act (1991).

Four Independent Boards:

- *Witham First District Internal Drainage Boards*
- *Witham Third District Internal Drainage Boards*
- *Upper Witham Internal Drainage Boards*
- *North East Lindsey Internal Drainage Boards*

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1.0 - Introduction

The Boards recognise that social media is a large part of the online presence of many individuals, and a 'normal part' of modern life.

The Boards operate this Social Media is govern the use of social media within the Boards, either on Board platforms, or whereby individuals refer to Board activities, share photos of Board activities, colleagues, property belonging to others or anything which may bring any of the Boards, their employees, members or members of the public in to disrepute.

This policy sets out behaviours and expectations when using the Board and personal social media platforms if referring to the Board either for promotion of activities or whereby disgruntled employees have in organisation used social media for negative comments.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Employee Code of Conduct and the Access and Security Policy.

1.1 – What is social media:

For the purposes of this policy, social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. Social media platforms include all of those which share text, opinions, pictures of self, property and or colleagues, as well as video media.

Social media moves rapidly, but examples of social media are X, Facebook, Instagram, snapchat, LinkedIn as well as blogs, forums, message boards, polls, YouTube, Flickr etc.

Social media can be a distracting technology which causes a negative effect on the productivity of employees working for the Boards', however, it can also be an engaging platform that enables the Boards' to build new relationships with new and existing customers.

1.2 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

This Policy does not discriminate against persons based on age, disability, family status, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, as defined as protected characteristics within the Equalities Act 2010.

This policy is an extension of the standards and behaviours of the employees (as per Employee Code of Conduct) and does not directly or indirectly misrepresent any individual.

There are now however, Case Law within the UK whereby employees have brought their employer in to disrepute and Social Media posts have been used as part of disciplinary cases. [Link to Fitzgeraldhr.co.uk with examples of such case law.](https://www.fitzgeraldhr.co.uk)

2.0 – Social Media Policy

The following is the policy of the Boards in relation to the use of social media.

2.1 – Use of Social Media at Work

Personal use of social media is permitted provided that the Security Policy is adhered to and it does not impact on an employee's job or interfere with the performance of other work colleagues doing their job.

The use of personal social media must be during employees own time, for example, before starting work, during breaks or after work. Any exceptions to this must be by exception and agreed in advance by the employee's line manager.

Employees may be permitted to use Board approved social media websites and feeds as part of their normal work duties and if agreed in advance with the employee's line manager.

In some circumstances, personal social media channels may be used for professional purposes while at work. The conditions for this must be agreed in advance with the employee's line manager.

Employees are permitted to use the Board's computers or devices and/or their own computers or devices in the workplace to access personal social media provided that this is during their own time, for example, before starting work, during breaks or after work. Any exceptions to this must be agreed in advance by the employee's line manager.

The use of Board computers or devices for personal use outside of normal working hours must comply with the Boards Security Policy and only take place with prior manager approval.

Under normal circumstances, the use of Board computers or devices for personal use outside of normal working hours is not permitted.

2.2 – Monitoring use of Social Media during work time

The Board reserve the right to monitor employees' internet/social media usage whilst using Board devices.

If the Board considers there are valid reasons for checking an employee's internet/social media usage include suspicions that the employee has:

- Been spending an excessive amount of time using social media sites for non- work-related activities
- Acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy
- Breached the Employee Code of Conduct

Access to particular social media site(s) is likely to be withdrawn in any such cases of misuse.

2.3 – Personal mobile devices

Personal mobile devices and phones should not be used excessively during work hours.

Reasonable use of a personal mobile device is permitted for making or receiving calls in the event of an emergency or for exceptional personal reasons.

Employees should also recognise that ringtones can be disruptive to other work colleagues and accordingly, the manager may request that personal mobile devices be set to 'silent mode' during working hours.

In cases where a manager considers that an employee is making or receiving an unreasonable amount of personal calls or text messages during working hours, they are permitted to reasonably request that the employee turns off their mobile device during working hours.

2.4 – Social medial and Person Devices Misuse

Breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action.

Serious breaches of this policy, for example bullying, use of inappropriate language, accessing inappropriate and/or offensive channels or social media activity causing serious damage to the Board, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.

Disciplinary action may be considered where employees continue to use personal devices after such requests and/or fail to comply with the original request to turn off their device.

2.5 – Personal use of Social Media

While accounts of Board employees are their own business, it is still possible for the content posted on them to affect their professional standing and/or that of their employer.

To mitigate this risk, employees may not wish to include any reference to, or post comments about, the Board, their job role, colleagues, or partner organisations.

If, however, they do wish to refer to their employment with the Board on a personal social media profile, they must ensure the following actions:

- Declare somewhere on their page or biography that the views expressed are theirs alone and do not reflect the views of Witham and Humber Drainage Boards'
- Must not damage the Boards reputation or brand and/or bring the 4 Board into disrepute
- Must not compromise or reveal any potentially confidential or sensitive information about the Board that they may have come across in their work duties
- Do not use any Board-owned images or logos
- Must not breach copyright or data protection
- Must not contain libel or defamatory content
- Must not engage in bullying or harassment
- Be of illegal, sexual or offensive content

- Use the name of the 4 Boards' to promote products or political opinions
- Do not include contact details or photographs of work colleagues, visitors or public
- Do not make offensive comments about the Board, members, colleagues or members of the public - this is a disciplinary offence and may lead to disciplinary action
- In some circumstances, personal social media channels may be used for professional purposes while at work. The conditions for this must be agreed in advance with the employee's line manager.

2.6 – Social Media and Recruitment

Recruitment processes are increasingly utilising social media as a method of engaging job-seekers. Due to the increasing amount of content posted online, viewing candidate's social media profiles is a quick and effective way of checking details contained in a CV or getting an idea of the personality of the candidate.

Witham and Humber Drainage Boards' permit authorised staff who are involved in the recruitment processes to review or access candidate's social media profiles.

Any persons 'public facing' pages, comments, photographs etc are public information if they can be readily and easily obtained directly and without additional permissions being provided by the individual. Therefore, any information within those platforms, are public information and publicly available.

Before accessing a candidate's social media profile, permission must be sought from the Associate Director for HR. Permissions will only be given once assessment of the reasons, purpose and benefits it will bring to the process, which cannot be found elsewhere, have been established. Once permission is given, evidence of the rationale will be kept by the Associate Director for HR.

Accessing of the candidate's profile page may be disclosed to the candidate during the recruitment process. Where information is discovered that makes the candidate unsuitable for the position, the candidate will be notified, and they will be entitled to make representations about the information and their unsuitability.

2.7 – Legal information

Employers can be held legally responsible for online content published by their employees. Employees should take the following into consideration when using social media:

Be aware of the overall Board policy and guidelines for using social media, whether this is for personal use or as a part of their working role.

Be familiar with the legal issues and risks before posting about colleagues or sharing information about the Board.

Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations forbids creating fake blogs, falsely representing oneself as a customer and falsely advertising on social media sites.

Examples of social media activities outlawed under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations are:

- Creating fake blogs ('ghosting')
- Falsely representing oneself as a customer /someone you are not
- Falsely advertising on social media sites

2.8 – Defamation

Defamation is the act of making a statement about a person or company that is considered to harm reputation, for example, by lowering others' estimation of the person or company, or by causing them to lose their rank or professional standing.

If the defamatory statement is written down (in print or online) it is known as libel. If it is spoken, it is known as slander.

Posting a defamatory statement online or recording it on a podcast would both be examples of libel and may result in disciplinary action or action by the individual against whom it was aimed.

2.9 – Images

It is illegal to use graphics or photographs from the internet without permission. Ensure that anyone giving permission to use an image is the original copyright owner.

Check the licensing agreement of photographs in any existing archives before use.

If using or requesting to use photographs of work activities to promote the works being completed by the Boards, only photos which show all appropriate PPE, and safe working practises may be used e.g. if PPE has been taken off due to activity being finished this does not provide an accurate reflection of safety. Check with line manager/ SMT prior to uploading photos such as this.

Do not take/use any photographs of children who appear to be under the age of 18 without permission from a parent or guardian. Permission is non-transferable from a third party.

3.0 – Social Media - Statement

The 4 Boards (Boards) recognise that social media has positive use and is a good way to share messaging with many people.

However, it is vital that only appropriate content should be shared. This is because once uploaded in the public domain, it is never truly removed/deleted or un-posted. Opinions, situations or comments, even years down the line can be found, and raised as a complaint about an organisation and or an individual.

The Boards will comply with the policy by:

- Making this policy easily accessible
- Support any individual to review photos or content if requested.

- Ensure any Board social media channels, the content editors are adequately trained in standards of what could and should be posted.

4.0 - Glossary / Definitions

Word/ term	Definition

5.0 – Legislation

No specific Law in the UK which refers to social media alone, however, social media is protected by a number of laws such as below.

- Online Safety Act 2023
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Communications Act 2003 (Section 127)
- Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 (Section 43)

These laws all cover social media and other forms of electrical methods of communication including email.

6.0 - Main policy Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Arrangements for roles and reporting lines

The arrangements and organisational responsibilities for implementing the policy are detailed in this section.

6.1.1 – Board Members

- Approve and support the Senior management Team with this policy.
- Ensure any social media usage follows the good practice within legislation.
- Ensure that any social media posts do not bring the Board(s) in to disrepute.

6.1.2 – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Senior Management Team (SMT)

- Lead by example with regards to social media and electronic platforms.
- Offer guidance and support to any team members who may require it.
- Provide a suitable ICT professional where advice or guidance is required.
- Use competent organisations for electronic media to get best guidance e.g. website.

6.1.3 – Risk Manager

- Support SMT with the review and update of this policy.

6.1.4 – Line Managers / Supervisors / Foremen

- Support the CEO & SMT to cascade the policy.
- Lead by example.
- Support team members with queries pertaining to the policy.
- Seek guidance from SMT if required.

6.1.5 – All Staff members

- Follow the Policy with work and personal online platforms.
- Ask if you are unsure about any aspect of the policy.

7.0 - Document review:

Version	Date	Reviewed by	Changes	Approved by/ date
2.00	2020	Ass Director for HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board approved Smoke-free policy	JSC July 2020
3.00	2024	Risk Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated lay out, general review	JSC December 2024

This policy is due for review at 5 yearly intervals, unless a review is required before e.g. change to management, process or anything which may affect the contents of this policy.

8.0 - Supporting documents

No additional supporting documents are included within this policy.