Social Media Policy

A comprehensive guide for social media use for Friends of the Elm Tree Inn's channels and for individuals using social media in a personal capacity as a representative of FOTETI.

This policy will be reviewed every three years. FOTETI will amend this policy, following consultations with shareholder members and volunteers as appropriate.

This policy is intended for all staff/volunteers of the organisation; this includes any employees, consultants, committee members and volunteers. Before engaging in social media activity, you must read this policy, which contains guidance that will help you adhere to our standards.

As a community benefit society (CBS) FOTETI is a not-for-profit organisation that operates for the benefit of the community. It is also legally registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and is owned by its members. Therefore, all social media usage needs to ensure that it is compliant with the aims and objectives of FOTETI.

Contents

Introduction **2**
What is social media? 2
Why do we use social media and what can we use it for? 2
Social media helps us to: 2
Why do we need a social media policy? 2
Responsibilities and breach of policy 2
Setting out the social media policy **3**
Application 3
Point of contact for social media and authority to post on FOTETI's social media accounts 3
Policy ownership 3
Code of conduct headlines 3
Confidentiality 3
Discrimination and harassment 3
Accessibility 3
Use of social media in the recruitment process 4
Use of social media to support fundraising activities 4
Public Interest Disclosure 4
Related policies, laws and guidance that may be relevant 4
Further external guidance 5
Social Media Procedures - see separate document

Introduction

What is social media?

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

Why do we use social media and what can we use it for?

Social media is an essential part of communicating FOTETI's work. It is important for designated staff/volunteers to participate in social media to engage with our audiences and stakeholders, contribute to relevant conversations, and raise the profile of FOTETI's work, using the organisation's corporate accounts. Some staff and volunteers may also support the organisation's work using their personal accounts, and many will have social media accounts for personal use.

Building an engaged online community can lead to more significant long-term support and involvement from supporters. Social media can be a highly effective way for a organisation to engage its audiences and communicate about its work.

Social media helps us to:

☐ Promote our campaigns
☐ Share our news and updates with our audiences
☐ Engage in important conversations with stakeholders
☐ Celebrate our successes
☐ Raise awareness of important issues and challenges
☐ Advertise any job and volunteering opportunities
☐ Support our fundraising activities
☐ Increase our membership
☐ Build an online supportive community
☐ Raise our public profile and strengthen our reputation
☐ React to quickly changing situations and topics

Why do we need a social media policy?

Social media is a fast-moving online world, where nuance and context can be easily lost. While social media brings the organisation to a wide audience, it can also present risks. We want to ensure that all staff and volunteers using social media represent and reflect FOTETI in the best way possible. It is also important to mitigate risks (such as reputational or legal issues) associated with the use of social media to protect our supporters, tenants, staff & volunteers, work and reputation.

While we encourage the use of social media to support our communications strategy or plans, we have important standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe and adhere to. The difference between a personal and professional opinion can also be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to FOTETI's work. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations and is subject to the same laws as other kinds of publication or commentary in the public domain.

Failure to comply with this policy could expose FOTETI *to* reputational damage as well as putting staff, volunteers, tenants, services users and members at risk.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their compliance with this policy. (See Appendix A)

Setting out the social media policy

Application

This policy applies to all social media platforms used by staff (including consultants, and freelancers) and volunteers (including Officers / trustees) in a professional and personal capacity.

This policy also applies to online blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, and messaging based apps, such as WhatsApp. Social media can be accessed in various ways, including from a desktop or laptop computer, tablet or smartphone. This policy applies to the use of all such devices.

Point of contact for social media and authority to post on FOTETI's social media accounts

Our Management Committee is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have questions about any aspect of these channels, please speak to the designated member of the Management Committee. No other staff member or volunteer is permitted to post content on FOTETI's official channels without the permission of a Management Committee member.

Policy ownership

The Management Committee is responsible for authoring and updating this document. The policy must be approved by the Management Committee and reviewed every 3 years, unless a significant change requires the organisation to check the policy before the next review date. All staff /volunteers will be notified of updates.

Rules for use of social media

Code of conduct

FOTETI have a Code of conduct for use of Social Media, whether on our official channels or on personal accounts. FOTETI staff/volunteers are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are considerate of FOTETI's values and policies, both online and in real life. (see Appendix A for full guidelines)

Confidentiality

Any communications that staff and volunteers make must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that FOTETI is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date, or information from people who the organisation has worked with, which is private.

Discrimination and harassment

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

Accessibility

In line with FOTETI's equity, diversity and inclusion policy, we endeavour to ensure our social media is as accessible as possible. This includes:

- Using plain English, accessible fonts and avoiding small text sizes
- Using contrasting colours
- Using subtitles where appropriate
- Using alt text for videos and images
- Explaining text contained in an image in the copy that accompanies it
- Following our brand guidelines which have been designed to be accessible.

You can view more guidance on the government website:
https://www.communications.gov.uk/guidance/digital-communication/planning-creating-and-publishing-accessible-social-media-campaigns/

For accessibility best practices, visit the OrganisationComms resource:
https://www.charitycomms.org.uk/accessible-communications-a-starting-point-for-fostering-more-inclusive-comms

Use of social media in the recruitment process

Any form of recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the *recruitment policy*, and associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through the designated Management Committee member, with HR support as needed, and promoted through approved channels.

There should be no systematic or routine checking of candidates' 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 FOTETI's equal opportunities *policy*.

Use of social media to support fundraising activities

Our social media platforms play a key role in our fundraising efforts and engaging with our shareholders and donors. Before using our social media channels for fundraising purposes, staff and volunteers should read our fundraising policy and adhere to The Code of Fundraising Practices.

Public Interest Disclosure

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, if a staff member releases information through FOTETI's social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public, FOTETI's [*whistleblowing policy*] must be initiated before any further action is taken.

Guidance on use of images

The core policy for using pictures of people on social media in the UK is that you must obtain their informed consent, particularly if they are identifiable.(see Social Media Procedures)

Please note: While all attempts have been made to cover an extensive range of situations, it is possible that this policy may not cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the standards outlined in this document.

It is expected that in these circumstances staff and volunteers will always consult with the designated Management Committee member where possible or advise the Committee Chair of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed.

Related policies, laws and guidance that may be relevant

- Data Management & Protection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy
- Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy
- Reporting serious incidents to the police or other regulators
- Disciplinary Policy
- Fundraising Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Employment Law

Further external guidance

National Cyber Security Centre's guidance

https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/social-media-how-to-use-it-safely

https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/social-media-protect-what-you-publish

Government guidance on the Online Safety Bill

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-safety-act-explainer/online-safety-act-explainer