**LINK’s Social Media Guidelines  
2020**

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# Purpose of Document

This document serves as a working set of LINK guidelines for use of social media by staff, volunteers (and member organisations where relevant). LINK encourages all those who work for LINK and use social media on its behalf to understand and follow these guidelines. These guidelines will continually evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge or as and when the needs of LINK’s members develop. Social media guidelines, which apply to all forms of social media channels including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other online communities. These guidelines are to assist you in making responsible decisions when posting to social media.

* Using social media can be a very effective tool for achieving shared LINK member advocacy and engagement objectives.
* Picking the right social media platform for your communication need can be quite tricky; this document will help you distinguish where is best for your message.
* Use of the LINK network’s name or logo on a social media profile implies collective agreement across the membership for any initiative or position that is being communicated by that profile.

As well as demonstrating broad support, the use of a shared profile can help to harness and channel the collective efforts of members to co-promote a particular message or initiative. Conversely, if a shared social media profile is not appropriately managed (e.g. if it does not follow agreed Style Guidelines or falls into abeyance due to a decline in capacity), then this can weaken joint advocacy. The growth in number of shared profiles can also complicate an external audience’s understanding of Scottish Environment LINK as a network organisation. For some audiences, connection via a particular shared LINK social media profile may be the first time that audience has engaged with the network. The use of any such shared profile therefore has implications for the policy and reputation of all members.

# Contacts

The LINK Advocacy Officer and Advocacy Office Administrator are the lead contacts for all general enquiries about use of LINK’s social media. If you have specific questions about particular LINK social media profiles, please refer to the listed ‘Lead contacts’ in Table 1 below.

# LINK’s social media profiles

## When is a profile a shared LINK profile?

A shared LINK social media profile is any social media profile which deploys the LINK name or logo to promote/communicate:

* a network-wide LINK initiative
* Group-led LINK initiative
* an initiative which involves LINK as a partner organisation

## What are they?

Separate to members’ own many organisational social media profiles, there are now 10 social media profiles which fall into the above definition:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Social media platform** | **Profile name** | **Purpose** | **Lead contact** |
| Facebook | ScotLINK |  | Advocacy Manager/Perth Office Manager |
|  | SaveScottishSeas | A Group-led campaign profile to engage the general public, marine conservation community and policy- and decision-makers with SEL Marine Group campaign work | Marine Policy Officer |
| Twitter | @ScotLINK |  | Advocacy Manager |
|  | @SaveScotsSeas | A Group-led campaign profile to engage the general public, marine conservation community and policy- and decision-makers with SEL Marine Group campaign work | Marine Policy Officer |
|  | @SpeciesChampion |  | Species Champion Coordinator |
|  | @SeaScotland | A partnership-based social media feed to encourage engagement with the Sea Scotland conference | Sea Scotland Steering Group |
| Youtube | [Youtube.com/ScotLINK](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5voB0KjcByC6xznO2pJVkQ) |  | Perth |
|  | [Youtube.com/SaveScottishSeas](https://www.youtube.com/user/SaveScottishSeas) | A Group-led campaign profile to engage the general public, marine conservation community and policy- and decision-makers with SEL Marine Group campaign work | Marine Policy Officer |
| LinkedIn | Scottish Environment LINK |  | Office and Finance Manager |
| Instagram | @scottishenvironmentlink | A Group-led campaign profile to engage the general public, marine conservation community and policy- and decision-makers with SEL Marine Group campaign work | Species Champion Coordinator |

Table 1: An overview of LINK shared social media profiles

## Accessing accounts and data protection

To access or gain permissions for management of a shared LINK social media profile, please contact the leads identified in Table 1 above. Passwords for any profiles should be kept safe and in line with [LINK’s Data Protection policy](https://www.scotlink.org/publication/link-data-protection-privacy-statement-for-link-members-supporters-and-others/).

## How to set up a shared social media profile

There is a general presumption against creating new profiles, where adopting hashtags within current profiles can be used to build profile on a given topic or project. In most cases and wherever possible, a hashtag should be used rather than a new social media account.

If, however, you think there is a need for a new profile, it is essential that you first:

1. **Inform LINK:** It is helpful for LINK staff to be made aware of this at an early stage to plan out capacity. The first step would be to contact LINK’s Advocacy Officer to discuss.
2. **Create an outline plan:** provide a short rationale and summary of the proposed profile, including:
   1. Profile name
   2. Platform (e.g. Twitter)
   3. Purpose
   4. Projected calendar of use
   5. Management/maintenance arrangements (See section 5)
   6. Proposed lead contact

Once the proposed profile has been agreed by the LINK Advocacy Officer and Advocacy Office Administrator you can begin to develop the profile:

1. **Refer to** **anchor profile**:any new **shared LINK profile** in support of a campaign, Group or network-wide initiative must explicitly refer to the main **anchor Scottish Environment LINK profile on the relevant platform**, i.e. a Twitter-based @LINKSaveScotBees profile for a campaign on conservation of bees, must refer to @ScotLINK in its profile description, e.g. “*A @ScotLINK Land Group campaign to protect Scotland’s bee populations*”
2. **Style**: Work with LINK’s Advocacy Officer to ensure that the styling of the profile is consistent with the LINK Style Guide. Ensure logos are up to date.

# General Guidelines

Below is a list of general guidelines to consider when using LINK share social media profiles:

## The Green and Golden Rule

**As the voice for Scotland’s environment, LINK amplifies member messages and agreed LINK positions though LINK’s social media profiles.**

## LINK and its Members

Because LINK is a network of many different member organisation it makes the use of social media more sensitive as occassionally LINK members might not agree on a particular topic or subject. Therefore as a general rule, LINK will not promote member materials on LINK’s social media feeds unless they are specifically linked to a Group campaign or have received explicit approval and encouragement to do so from the LINK membership. If in doubt always check with the relevant LINK Group Convenor and Vice-Convenor, LINK Advocacy Officer, or Group policy officer (if relevant) before posting.

## Rules of Engagement

* **LINK amplifies agreed network messages** - in order to maintain our credibility it is imperative to follow this rule. All statements must be clear and not misleading.
* Opinions, such as news articles, editorials or third-party comments from outside the network can be posted or re-posted. For example, articles can be shared which don’t directly mention the FFSN campaign but still hold relevance to the campaign. However, **we should only repost where items come from reputable non-political sources**. As LINK moves gently towards the way FFSN campaign works, we must remember to be careful.
* LINK will post whatever appears on the public pages of its website onto its social media in order to make it accessible to more people.
* LINK will not respond to comments made on LINK’s social media profiles
* **It is important to remain consistent** with the quality and credibility or our posts.
* **Ensure that you're not duplicating effort** and check with colleagues if in doubt.
* LINK will not allow spam or remarks that are off-topic or offensive from either employees or general public. These should be removed and if applicable apology posted as soon as possible.
* Respect proprietary information and content, and confidentiality.
* **If you make a mistake**, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction.
* **If it gives you pause, pause**. If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't shrug it off, take a minute to review these guidelines and try to figure out what's bothering you and then fix it. If you're still unsure, you might want to discuss it with the  
  Chief Officer or Advocacy Officer.
* As a charity, we have to remain **politically neutral**. This means that LINK cannot endorse or promote any political party, or a campaign closely associated with a political party.

1. **PR Disaster Strategies**

The general rule of dealing with ‘trolls’ (people who leave negative comments on tweets, Facebook posts, and Instagram images) is to not respond. Responding to negative comments can put the organisation at reputational risk or show LINK in a negative light.

Therefore, no responses to comments should be made, unless you feel it is absolutely necessary to prevent reputation damage. If a user has responded in a negative manner but has asked a question you feel could be beneficial to the individual if answered, you should follow the simple dos and don’ts.

**Do’s**

* Check with Chief Officer or Advocacy Officer if you should respond.
* Twitter, Facebook and Instagram all give the option to private message. Use this setting to encourage the user to transition the conversation to a more private place, such as your LINK email address.
* Some people who write negative comments are looking for attention but moving the conversation to a private setting will keep them from drawing more negative attention to the site.
* Respond in a timely manner. They posted something because they want to be heard and want a reaction.

**Don’ts**

* Do not delete negative comments. They may decide to repost it and call you out for deleting it, or then post something in another location where you are unable to delete.

## Group Campaigns

Occasionally a LINK Group or the wider network will run a campaign and use social media as part of campaign strategy. This might incorporate trying to create a vibrant online community or more proactive engagement from the general public. Therefore, in addition to the rules of engagement above, please also consider these:

* Please never comment on anything related to **legal matters**, or any parties we are in dispute with without the appropriate approval.
* Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
* When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite.
* **Be careful what you say**. Some topics, like politics or religion, slide more easily into sensitive territory. So be careful and considerate. Once the words are out there, you cannot get them back. And once an inflammatory discussion gets going, it is hard to stop.
* Weigh up the risk of reputational damage to LINK if you respond.

If your Group or organisation is keen to use an existing profile or set up a new shared LINK profile, please contact the lead and/or refer to the “[How to set up a new LINK social media profile](#_How_to_set)”

## Personal vs. Professional Identity

In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred, therefore when doing anything online, it's vital that you are upfront about your identity.

The LINK Facebook and Twitter accounts are currently set as an organisation with no set personal name attached to it, but many employees have personal social media account.

* We ask that if you reference @ScotLINK in your personal profile, that you clarify that you are posting as yourself and not on behalf of LINK and make it clear that your opinions do not reflect those of LINK.
* It's better to be upfront about who you are, and in the conversation, rather than hidden away, and out of the conversation.
* Think about how to present yourself. Lines between the personal and professional are blurred in online social networks. By identifying yourself as a LINK employee through the content you share; you are searchable to colleagues, third-party partners and those who may hold an opposing view to you. What you publish and how you react, reflects on LINK.
* If there arises a situation that you are posting on behalf of LINK and using your own name be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with LINK's professional standards.
* Use your real name, identify that you work for LINK, and be clear about your role. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out.
* Also be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy, and LINK confidential information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully.

## Moderation Guidelines

Currently LINK allows public comments on the LINK facebook profile: this is a beneficial setting to have in place and can help our audience and supporters feel more engaged and part of our work. If questions are asked, only respond to positive questions and completely ignore any negative questions.

LINK does not endorse or take responsibility for content posted by third parties. It is preferred that all content be posted by registered users of a site in accordance with accepted terms and conditions and a code of conduct.

**LINK Content**: This is content which is already publicly available on our LINK website and which has also been shared on our Twitter and Facebook sites. It is also any content that has approval from the membership or board to be shared on social media sites.

**Anonymous Content**: Anonymous content is defined as content submitted as a comment, reply, or post to a LINK site where the user has not registered and is not logged in to the site. For anonymous content, we require moderation on all submissions. Moderators are required to review the content for approval or deletion.

**Registered Content**: Registered content is content submitted as a comment, reply, or post to a LINK site where the user has registered and is logged in to the site. We do not require moderation of registered content before the content is published to the site. Registered content is directly published, and content is moderated post-publishing.

If the content is relevant, appropriate and in context to the conversation, then we approve the content, regardless of whether it's favourable or unfavourable to LINK. However if the content is illegal, ugly, offensive, denigrating and completely out of context, then we reject the content.

## Managing Permissions/Privacy

LINK’s current privacy settings on the ScotLINK Facebook profile is:

* The public cannot post on the LINK timeline
* Visibility of ‘Recent Post by Others’ on the LINK timeline is disabled
* The public cannot tag photos posted by LINK
* Our profanity block list is set to ‘Strong’

These settings should be replicated for all shared Facebook profiles.

If posting images or videos of LINK member employees and/or third parties on LINK’s social media channels, such usage needs to be authorised by the individuals concerned prior to release in accordance with the [Data Protection Act 1998](https://www.gov.uk/data-protection))

Respect copyright laws. If you didn’t write the material or take the picture, be careful of how you use it. For writing, quote and link to the original source. For pictures, only use images you have permission to use (through fair use, creative commons licensing, or explicit permission from the owner).

Remember to link to citations of others’ work and never quote more than small excerpts from another’s publication or blog.

# Social Media Platforms

# Twitter

## Overview

Twitter is a ‘micro-blogging’ service which allows people and business to quickly communicate via short, sharp text-based updates which are 280 characters or less. You can ‘add a tweet’ to build a conversation if needed but this is not recommended. For LINK, it enables us to share information with a wide audience and use it to share our good and bad news.

Twitter is hugely effective as a news source; with many news outlets using it as a broadcast medium.

Users are required to adhere to the [Terms and Conditions](https://twitter.com/en/tos) of Twitter.

## Practical tips

1. Twitter has a ‘[Using Twitter](https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter)’ section which outlines FAQ on how to use the platform.
2. Use tweet bank wisely. Don’t repeat the same tweets too close to one another. This is why it is important to have a range of pre-prepared tweets so there is some variety. After a while you may wish to refresh the tweet bank.
3. Use tools like Hootsuite to prepare tweets in advance and schedule when they will appear. This way you don’t have to think daily of tweets.
4. Use visuals and pictures in your tweets whenever possible.  There is a range of websites offering royalty free pics, e.g. <https://pixabay.com/> .
5. If a specific tweets merits more attention, pin it on your profile. See Manifesto Example.
6. See **‘4. (viii) Managing Permissions/Privacy’**
7. A conversational, enthusiastic tone of voice is essential for social media and reinforces our standing as an approachable, friendly and inclusive organisation.
8. Being concise is what makes Twitter work and being snappy is what engaged audiences.
9. By linking through to more information (blog posts from the website etc.), you can keep followers up-to-date with real-time news but keep posts brief – leaving for them to read on if they want to know more.
10. Unlike Facebook, Twitter does not penalise for lots of posts – but a tweet is only visible for an average of 12 minutes, so being repetitive is no bad thing but must be done carefully.

**Retweeting or quote retweeting**

In practice, retweeting is simply resending existing message to your supporters. Most often it suggests you’ve found something interesting that you might also be of interest to your followers. We would advise that were possible, always add value by ‘quote retweeting’ – it’s more impactful and supports your engagement rates.

**Hashtags**

Hashtags assign a topic to a tweet. You can click on or search for a specific hashtag to see Top, Latest, People or Photos that include that tag. Check trending # and see whether a relevant and sensible tweet can be issued on the same topic. See Burns Night tweet example. If you are contributing to an ongoing debate check if there is already a # being used. For example, the # for the May 2016 elections is #Holyrood2016. Follow people, create lists and use hashtags that are relevant to the account. By engaging with the audience, there is an opportunity to build a group of people with a common interest.

**Links and Tagging**

Tweets are limited to 280 characters, so using a web link to more information can help to increase the message visibility.

As each character in a link counts towards the total character count of a tweet, using shortened URLs are a useful tool Via Hootsuite (Ow.ly) Bitly (Bit.ly) or TinyURL it is possible to set up a free account that is linked to the twitter account. Then simply type in the full web address and the site will shrink it for you, providing a much shorter link to use in your tweet. Twitter will also automatically shorten your URL to 23 characters, see https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/how-to-tweet-a-link.

Tagging in other accounts no longer adds characters to your tweet, so it's easier to add in followers or partners to a tweet and start a wider conversation. However, a downside to using Hootsuite is not having the option to tag other accounts. This can only be done when tweeting on the Twitter website.

**Threads**

Twitter has a ‘thread’ button. This removes the obstacle of not having quite enough characters for a single response. This button allows for you to continue the story or statement whilst keeping it all connected as one thread. This is a plus (“+”) button in the composer screen of tweets. Each "plus tweet" represents one tweet, with a character limit of 280. The same amount of media — GIFs, images, videos, etc - can be included in any individual tweet in the thread. When finished editing first tweet, just tap in the space below or the plus button to continue your thread.

While drafting a thread (up to 25 entries), it is possible to edit the tweets at any time as they're still in draft format. When ready to post, tap the "Tweet all" button at the top to send the stream to Twitter. Twitter will automatically pace the tweets posting so they don't all hit at once.

This option can be very helpful if live tweeting a parliamentary debate or event.

**Twitter cards**

If you want to drive traffic to a specific webpage, Twitter cards can be an effective way to do so. They allow you to tweet an image or video that functions as a hyperlink, and are likely to give you more click-throughs than if you simply tweet an image and include a link in the text of your tweet. Go to <https://ads.twitter.com/> and select ‘Creatives’ then ‘Cards’ to create cards. Always untick ‘promoted only’ when tweeting cards.

**Video on Twitter**

Videos uploaded to Twitter will play automatically, without the viewer having to click on a link. These can be maximum 2 minutes and 20 seconds.

## Access to LINK’s Twitter account

All staff members can access LINK’s social medias. If you wish to post, all staff members should run draft posts past their line manager. It is always helpful to have a second pair of eyes on public posts. This does not apply to the Chief Officer, Advocacy Manager, Finance Manager or Advocacy Officer Manager.

## Management/Measurement

1. Each business account has Analytics - a measurement tool for administrators and digital advertisers to use, which analyses the published content performance through a number of defined formulas. This insight helps to define the content: it enables the admins to understand the visits, views and interactivity of supporters with the page, what the account should publish more or less of.
2. The insights should be checked regularly after posting to draw out the markers of success for future use. This will be completed monthly when the social media analysis are checked and logged by the allocated staff member, currently the Species Champion Coordinator.

# Facebook

## Overview

Facebook is a social networking community that offers free personal/accounts that connect the user to friends, common interest groups and business pages. The purpose of LINK’s Facebook page is to allow the public and member organisations to ‘Like’ our page, share posts, and keep up to date with what is going on across the website and the wider LINK network. Facebook has multiple features that allow us to build a community and share photos, videos and links to webpages. Facebook is a great channel for encouraging conversations, engaging our audiences, building support and love of our brand.

## Practical tips

1. See **“4. (viii) Managing Permissions/Privacy”**
2. Facebook has a ‘[Questions you may have](https://www.facebook.com/help/)’ section which outlines FAQ on how to use the platform.
3. A conversational, enthusiastic tone of voice is essential for social media and reinforces our standing as an approachable, friendly and inclusive organisation.
4. Facebook is not a good platform for traditional method of simply broadcasting news. If you don’t engage your audience, the most you’ll get are a few non-committal “likes” as opposed to a real sense of community or an audience that will support campaigns.
5. In January 2018, Facebook changed its algorithm so that organic content from a business (and personal account) will only be delivered to followers’ timelines if the story is proving to create meaningful interactions. The better engagement (emojis, shares, comments), the higher the delivery and reach.
6. Quizzes, polls and “just for fun” competitions are immensely successful on Facebook.

**Boosting Posts**

Boost a post with the click of the button in the lower right-hand corner or schedule the boosted post as it's created. When you click "Boost Post", you have the option to choose either pushing the post to "People who like your page and their friends" or "People you choose through targeting" (the latter is likely to be the best option is most circumstances). You'll also be able to set your budget, pause and/or add money and include a "Call To Action Button". Boosting is a cheapest form of advertising that targets a warm pool of followers.

If you want to boost a post that Facebook deems as ‘political’ – which is likely given LINK’s remit (something like ‘Tell the Scottish Government we need an Environment Act’ falls within the ‘political’ category, for example) – you will first, as an individual, need to go through an authorisation process, which involves providing Facebook with personal details. This takes 1-2 weeks, so make sure you do it in advance. (At present, the campaign coordinator is authorised.)

Boosting posts can be a very effective, and cost-effective, way of putting LINK content in front of people who would not otherwise see it. Pushing the post to ‘people you choose through targeting’ puts the post on the Facebook feeds of people who don’t already ‘like’ or ‘follow’ LINK. You can choose whether you want people to click on your link (for example, in the case of a petition you want them to sign), or like and share your post.

It can be very useful to useful to boost a variety of different styles of post, putting small amounts of money (a few pounds, for example) behind each for a limited number of days, and then adding more budget to those that are performing best (for example, add more budget to one where you’re spending 8p per click-though, rather than one where you’re spending £1 per click-through).

Specify Scotland as the target nation to ensure that your post is targeted at people living here.

Experiment with a variety of demographics and interests, as some will work much better than others for your post. Depending on the categories available, you could choose, for example, people aged 18 to 30, who are interested in politics, environment and wildlife. Or women aged 18 to 70 who are interested in outdoors, nature and Greenpeace. Or many other variations.

You can also exclude certain interest groups whom you think might not be interested in your post, which can increase its effectiveness by making it more likely to be put in front of the right people (i.e. those who will do what you want them to do with it, e.g. click the link or share the post). Nobody but you can see who you’ve excluded.

Note that Facebook does not like images with a large proportion of text, and will not run boosts with such content. You can check the image you want to use at <https://www.facebook.com/ads/tools/text_overlay>.

**Video on Facebook**

Facebook is competing seriously with Youtube as a video player, and so uploading your video directly to Facebook will get it seen by more people on Facebook than just creating a Facebook post that links to your video on Youtube. (Post your video on Youtube too, as this puts it in front of a different audience.)

## Access to LINK’s Facebook account

1. The admins’ add their personal profile pages to the business page so that they can post content, add third-party scheduling and management tools (Hootsuite etc.) and manage the general enquiries.

## Management/Measurement

1. Each business page insights – a measurement tool for administrators and digital advertisers to use which analyses the published content performance through a number of defined formulas.
2. This insight helps to define the content: it enables the admins to understand the visits, views and interactivity of supporters with the page, what the page should publish more or less of.
3. The insights should be checked regularly after posting.

# Instagram

## Overview

Instagram is an online photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking service that allows users to take pictures, apply digital filters, and share them on a variety of social networking services. We will show a selection of moderated images on Scotland’s environment website and may encourage interested users to take images of certain environmental topics.

## Practical tips

1. Instagram has a ‘[Getting started on Instagram](https://help.instagram.com/454502981253053/)’ section which outlines FAQ on how to use the platform.
2. Instagram is all about the visuals, therefore keeping consistent colours and filters and overall aesthetic that is easy to spot as followed scroll through the Instagram feed.
3. Good quality visuals are essential to Instagram; however, captions should be compelling. Use of emojis and signposting to the LINK website (blogs, publications, campaign pages etc.) should be used.
4. **Instagram Stories** is a brilliant feature which allows you to post videos and photos which last for 24 hours, along with live broadcasting.
5. Do some research of how other charities communicate via Instagram. (e.g. MCS & RSPB) and which posts are more successful than others.
6. See **“4. (viii) Managing Permissions/Privacy”**
7. A conversational, enthusiastic tone of voice is essential for social media and reinforces our standing as an approachable, friendly and inclusive organisation.
8. LINK will use an Instagram ‘business’ account.
9. Take advantage of Instagram business-only options. Including LINK’s contact information (email address etc.). Using the “**Category**” option to show people at a glance what LINK does.
10. You can share Instagram content to Facebook and Twitter accounts. This is a good way of sharing and promoting the account on accounts which already have a solid follower base.

**Hashtags**

You can search for hashtags on Instagram. LINK should consistently use appropriate hashtags (E.g. #LINKThinks) in order to encourage community amongst followers. There should be a bank of hashtags created which can then be posted accordingly to each post – most effectively as a separate comment from the post’s caption.

## Access to LINK’s Instagram account

All staff members can access LINK’s social medias. If you wish to post, all staff members should run draft posts past their line manager. It is always helpful to have a second pair of eyes on public posts. This does not apply to the Chief Officer, Advocacy Manager, Finance Manager or Advocacy Officer Manager.

## Management/Measurement

1. Commit to a regular posting schedule – You want your followers to be engaged and aware of LINK without your content overwhelming them to the point that they clock out (or worse, unfollow!).
2. Instagram Insights shows you exactly when your followers are online, broken down by day.
3. To access this information, go to your Instagram business profile, click the **three bars icon** in the top right, then click **Insights**. Click on the **Audience** tab and scroll down to see active times.
4. Monitor hashtags that are circulated by member organisations.

**Last update:**

Juliet Caldwell

24 April 2020