



Bethnal Green Nature Reserve Trust

Social Media Policy

Last Updated: 1st April 2026

About this Policy

The Bethnal Green Nature Reserve Trust (the **Trust**) recognises that the internet provides opportunities for individuals to participate in interactive discussions and share information on topics using a wide variety of social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, website posts and online blogs.

Social media is also important for communicating and publicising the work that the Trust carries out at the Bethnal Green Nature Reserve (the **Reserve**), and we will sometimes ask staff, trustees, volunteers, and guests to participate in developing or co-creating social media to help us engage with our audience and raise the profile of the Trust's work.

However, the difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly when discussing issues related to the Trust on personal accounts. While we encourage the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe.

1. Scope and Purpose

This policy is intended for all staff, volunteers, and trustees and sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of the Trust. It also applies to any guests or third parties that are authorised to post on the Trust's social media channels.

It applies to the use of social media in both a professional and personal capacity and applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using our IT equipment or equipment belonging to the staff member, volunteer, or trustee.

It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting on social media and is designed to help support and expand our social media channels, while protecting the individuals using social media, the Trust and its reputation and limiting any legal issues.

2. How the Trust uses social media

The Trust uses the following social media channels:

a. **Instagram:** (<https://www.instagram.com/phytologyuk/>):

This is our main, public-facing, social media channel.

The purpose of our Instagram account is to promote the work of the Trust, engage the wider public with our work, advertise events, encourage new volunteers to join and to communicate any research outputs. Guests or third parties may also post on the Trust Instagram account (where authorised), to publicise their own research outputs or workshops, or for the purpose of sharing updates about projects that take place at the Reserve (e.g. Forest School or Mobile Apothecary).

b. **WhatsApp:**

We use WhatsApp for internal, Trust related communications between staff, trustees and regular volunteer groups.

WhatsApp allows us to keep our volunteers and stakeholders engaged and up to date with what is happening within and around the Reserve, and is also used to share work that needs to be done on a weekly basis, as well as relevant safety information e.g., strong winds, falling branches etc. The community can also share knowledge and ask questions via WhatsApp.

To facilitate this, we have set up several official Trust private WhatsApp group chats, accessible by invite only. The official Trust private groups currently active are: (i) Site Caretakers, (ii) the Medicine Garden team, (iii) the Ecology survey team, (iv) the Caretakers team and (v) the Mobile Apothecary team.

These groups may change, and others will come and go as necessary for the organisation of certain activities and events at the Reserve. This policy also applies to these other private WhatsApp groups associated with the Trust.

c. **Website(s):**

The Trust also manages certain websites as follows: (i) <https://bethnalgreennaturereserve.org/>, (ii) <https://mobileapothecary.org.uk/>.

These websites are used for similar purposes to the Trust Instagram account, i.e. to promote the work of the Trust and activities taking place at the Reserve, engage the wider public, advertise events, encourage new volunteers to join and to communicate research outputs. The Trust also sends out regular emails / newsletters to interested parties through these websites. Posting on the website and sending out emails is also subject to this policy.

3. Account administrators and access

All social media channels will have two members of staff as administrators and moderators.

Unless notified otherwise, the Senior Site Manager will be the account administrator and lead moderator of the Instagram account and each of the official private WhatsApp groups run by the Trust. Another member of staff (Site Manager) will act as co-moderator.

If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, please speak to Senior Site Manager or Site Manager.

Additional details for Instagram and WhatsApp are as follows:

a. Instagram

Login details to the Trust Instagram account will be given to individuals where deemed appropriate. The account administrators will have ultimate discretion to decide who is granted access to the Trust Instagram account.

Passwords for the Instagram account will be reset every year by the Senior Site Manager in order to manage and reset who has access. If the password is changed (or attempted to be changed) by anyone other than the Senior Site Manager, they will be notified and will be able to regain control of the account as the owner of the email address linked to the account.

When we have a guest or third party posting on the Trust Instagram account, Senior Site Manager will authorise and grant access to that guest or third party and Senior Site Manager will be responsible for moderating this content.

b. WhatsApp

Only members of the community who have completed a full induction and orientation (i.e. key holders) at the Reserve will be invited to join the official Trust WhatsApp groups.

Individuals will be invited to the private WhatsApp group(s) that is relevant to their role and key-holding responsibilities.

The account administrators will have ultimate discretion to decide who is invited to the Trust private WhatsApp groups.

4. Principles and guidelines

Staff, volunteers and trustees that use social media must review and adhere to:

- our [Code of Conduct](#);
- this [Social Media Policy](#) (including relevant social media guidelines below); and
- other relevant Trust policies including the [Child Safeguarding Policy](#), [Adult Safeguarding Policy](#) and [Data Protection Policy](#).

a. **Using Trust social media channels**

When you have been granted access and given the right to post content on behalf of the Trust (e.g. on the Trust Instagram account or website), we expect you to follow these principles:

- Be respectful. Always treat others with respect, and don't post any messages that are threatening or could break the law (e.g. racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, hate speech etc).
- Be an ambassador for the Trust. The Trust uses social media to promote itself and seek wider engagement from the public. When posting, users should ensure that the Trust's values are reflected and that there is a purpose and a benefit for the Trust of the content. Any content should accurately reflect the Trust's agreed position. If you are the slightest bit unsure about something you are about to post, please review it and think before you post. You can always reach out to the channel moderators for their input before posting.
- Consult the Trust on potentially controversial topics. Topics that are potentially controversial, either locally (e.g. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods around the Reserve) or more globally (e.g. political party advocacy) should be formally discussed and cleared with the Trust before posting about them. The process in the "Controversial Topics" section below should be followed before posting on these topics.
- Engage responsibly with third parties and third-party content. The Trust social media channels can be used to engage with third parties and to share third-party content if it is directly related to the Trust's aims, mission, and values. Enquires and supportive comments from the public can be responded to in a positive and friendly way (taking account of this policy and the *Code of Conduct*). Any complaint about the Trust received via social media should be dealt with in accordance with our *Internal Grievance Handling Policy*.
- Report abusive and threatening communications. If you become aware of any abusive, spam or threatening communication directed at the Trust, then this should be reported on the social media platform and also internally at the Trust to the relevant administrators of the social media channel.
- Refrain from offering personal opinions. You should refrain from offering personal opinions via the Trust social media accounts, either directly on the account or by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'reposting'.
- Don't use Trust social media channels for private purposes. The Trust social media channels should not be used for private communications. You should always remember that you are representing the Trust whilst communicating through these channels even when the communications are private messages.
- Keep confidential information to yourself. You should never reveal non-public information about the Trust on social media.
- Staff, volunteers, and trustees should not set up other social media channels on behalf of the Trust. This could confuse messaging and organisation awareness. By having official

social media accounts in place, the Trust can ensure consistency of messaging and focus on building an ongoing and meaningful exchange with audiences.

- Review the rules of the social media platform. In addition to this policy, you should also be aware of the rules or any codes of conduct of the social media platforms that you are using.
- Always check facts. You should not automatically assume that material is accurate and you should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation. There are risks associated with spreading false information, particularly if this is shared with intent to mislead.
- Remember that the Trust is not a political organisation. The Trust is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We have every right to express views on policy, including the policies of parties, but we can't tell people how to vote.

b. Participating in the Trust private WhatsApp groups

When sending messages in the official Trust private WhatsApp groups, you should consider the following principles:

- Always treat others with respect and communicate with them as you would do in a face-to-face environment. Refrain from sending any messages that are threatening or could break the law (e.g. racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, hate speech etc).
- We encourage all WhatsApp users to consider the amount of content that they are sending through the groups - we don't want to overwhelm other users with the volume of content posted.
- Any messages sent in the groups should be relevant and connected to our work at the Reserve. Any messages for non-Trust related reasons should be limited and you should always keep the Trust's values and this policy in mind.
- Users are invited to take up longer conversations directly with each other, outside of the official Trust WhatsApp groups. Where appropriate, announce to the group that you are taking the conversation to a direct chat.
- Only Adults (anyone over the age of 18) will be added to the WhatsApp groups.
- We recommend that any disagreements be moved to a face-to-face conversation, which can be mediated by a member of staff at the Trust.
- No member of our community should feel pressured to engage or reply to a WhatsApp message. Any bullying or pressurised interactions on WhatsApp should be reported to one of the moderators of the group.

c. **Using personal social media accounts**

This policy is not intended to inhibit personal use of social media - trustees, staff, and volunteers are free to post or share personal content and viewpoints on their own social media accounts – however we flag some areas where conflicts / risks might arise.

You should therefore consider the following points when using your personal social media accounts:

- If you are posting on a personal social media account, it is always worth bearing in mind that people may read your opinions as that of the Trust. For example, a personal account can be associated with the Trust either through mixing both personal and professional content or because it lists your role at the Trust. We therefore ask that you make it clear that opinions are your own and do not represent the position of the Trust.
- Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with the Trust and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public, colleagues, partners and funders of the Trust.
- Never use the Trust's logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the moderators and/or board of trustees.
- We encourage staff to share tweets and posts that we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support the Trust and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy, we encourage you to do this as it provides a human voice and raises awareness of our work. However, if the content is controversial or misrepresented, please highlight this to relevant moderators who will respond as appropriate.

d. **Controversial Topics**

When considering a post on a potentially controversial topic, please engage the moderators of the account. The trustees will then be engaged to make a decision on the Trust's position related to the topic. The trustees will consider the following points:

- the risks to the charity and potential harm to the Trust community, including its reputation, and actions that can be taken to mitigate the risks. These include informing key stakeholders of our plans and thinking about how the charity's conduct on social media may help manage potential criticism (for example by acting with tolerance and respect);
- the impact on our resources and staff, for example the possibility of receiving significant number of complaints or negative attention; and
- other rules or regulations that might apply, for example rules on advertising and broadcasting administered by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

e. **Crisis Management:**

Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis situation because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the Trust's reputation or may have an impact on the Trust community cohesion and wellbeing. Examples might include being trolled, threatening & abusive comments, backlash against the Trust, threats of damage to the Reserve etc.

The account moderators regularly monitor our social media channels for mentions of the Trust so we can catch any issues or problems early. If there is an issue that could develop or has already developed into a crisis situation, the moderators will consult the trustees and any associated individuals to determine the best way to deal with the issue.

If any individuals other than the moderators become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on the Trust social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the relevant moderators immediately. All trolling or abusive behaviour should be archived, shared with a moderator and also reported to the social media platform directly.

5. Handling policy breaches and problematic content

The administrators of each social media channel pro-actively review and moderate content.

Any content that is deemed to be in breach of this policy will (where possible) promptly be deleted by the moderators. Where deemed appropriate, the offending person will also be removed from the WhatsApp group or blocked on Instagram (as relevant).

If there is ambiguity as to whether certain content breaches this policy, then the administrators should discuss amongst themselves to reach a mutual decision. Where there is disagreement between moderators, the issue should be escalated to the trustees.

Whilst the administrators will do their best to proactively monitor content for compliance with this policy, any member of staff, volunteer or trustee can report breaches of this policy to the administrators or follow our [Internal Grievance Handling Policy](#).

All incidents of abusive messages should be reported via the [Internal Grievance Handling Policy](#). The Trust has a duty of care to anyone in our community subjected to abuse via our social media platforms. We will check in with the victim of abuse and offer any help that we can. Please see our [Adult Safeguarding Policy](#) for more information on this.

Following a policy breach, the administrators will also raise the issue in accordance with the [Internal Grievance Handling Policy](#) in order to take appropriate action and mitigate the risk of the event happening again.

In the case of serious incidents and breaches of this policy, there will be a meeting of trustees to decide the most appropriate course of action. This may result in a public statement apologising and explaining what has happened, and if seen as appropriate, a report to the Charity Commission. Following serious incidents, the social media policy will be reviewed.

If an unknown person or someone with no connection the Trust has posted problematic content which impacts or affects the Trust, the relevant administrators will take steps to:

- delete content and report it via the relevant social media platform;
- ban or block relevant users from further engagement with the Trust;
- report matters to the police or take legal advice where appropriate. For example, if there is a material risk to the personal safety of you, an employee, volunteer or beneficiary of the Trust; and
- consider using tools that can further help moderate content, including managing who can comment, and settings to hide or delete comments from certain users.

6. Staying safe online

We also recommend that you take steps to learn how to stay safe online, particularly with respect to cyber security. There is useful guidance available here: 'Social Media and how to use it safely' - National Cyber Security Centre: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/social-media-how-to-use-it-safely>

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. The Trust will amend this policy, following review, where appropriate.