North Somerset Beekeepers

(a Branch of Avon Beekeepers Association Reg Charity No 271717)

Introduction to the Social Media Policy

North Somerset Beekeepers (NSBK) is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. The most commonly used social networking sites are Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and other applications like WhatsApp, snapchat and TikTok. There are other site/applications. These are just examples.

The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and with a degree of flexibility, within the spirit of education rather than regulation.

However, it is also important to ensure that we balance such flexibility with our reputation. This policy and associated guidance are to protect volunteers and advise the NSBK committee on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites and applications. For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults. The policy requirements in this document aim to provide a balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

Introduction

Objectives

This policy sets out NSBK's policy on social networking. New technologies are an integral part of our lives and are powerful tools which open up teaching and learning opportunities for society /volunteers/members in many ways. This document aims to:

- Assist NSBK volunteers working with members to work safely and responsibly with the Internet and other communication technologies and to monitor their own standards and practice.
- Set clear expectations of behaviour and/or codes of practice relevant to social networking for educational, personal or recreational use.
- Give a clear message that unlawful or unsafe behaviour is unacceptable and that, where appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken.
- Support safer working practice.
- Minimise the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations made against adults who work with members.
- Reduce the incidence of positions of trust being abused or misused.
- Ensure that NSBK is not exposed to legal risks.
- That the reputation of NSBK is not adversely affected.

Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that this policy cannot 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 volunteers will always advise the NSBK Chair of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed.

This policy takes account of employment legislation and best practice guidelines in relation to social networking in addition to the legal obligations of governing bodies and the relevant legislation.

Scope

This document applies to all volunteers who volunteer at NSBK. This includes Committee member, volunteers, members and contractors. It should be followed by any adult whose work brings them into contact with members. References to volunteers should be taken to apply to all the above groups of people in the Branch. Reference to members means all members of NSBK including those over the age of 18.

This policy should not be used to address issues where other policies and procedures exist to deal with them. All NSBK representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to Copyright, Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation.

Principles

Adults who work with members are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions. Volunteers in the Branch should work and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.

Volunteers of NSBK should continually monitor and review their practice in terms of the continually evolving world of social networking and ensure they follow the guidance contained in this document.

Safer Social Media Practice in the Society

What is Social Media?

For the purpose of this policy, social media is the term commonly used for websites and web based applications which allow people to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social networking websites such as Facebook, Bebo and MySpace are perhaps the most well-known examples of social media but the term also covers other web based services such as blogs, video and audio podcasts, wikis, message boards, photo document and video sharing websites such as YouTube and micro blogging services such as X (Twitter).

This definition of social media is not exhaustive as technology develops with new ways of communicating advancing every day.

For the purpose of this document the terminology social media is not exhaustive and also applies to the use of communication technologies such as iPads, mobile phones, cameras, PDAs / PSPs or other handheld devices and any other emerging forms of communication technologies.

Overview and Expectations

All adults working with members have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of members. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct to maintain the confidence and respect of their colleagues, members or students, public in general and all those with whom they work. Adults in contact with members should therefore understand and be aware that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting.

The guidance contained in this policy is an attempt to identify what behaviours are expected of Branch volunteers who work with members. Anyone whose practice deviates from this guidance may bring into question their suitability to work with children and young people and may result in disciplinary action being taken against them.

Branch volunteers should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour, during their use of the internet and other communication technologies, which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential to the chair of the Committee as soon as possible.

Safer Online Behaviour

Managing personal information effectively makes it far less likely that information will be misused. In their own interests, volunteers need to be aware of the dangers of putting personal information onto social networking sites, such as addresses, home and mobile phone numbers. This will avoid the potential for members or their families or friends having access to volunteers outside of the Branch environment. It also reduces the potential for identity theft by third parties.

All volunteers, particularly new volunteers, should review their social networking profiles when they join the Branch to ensure that information available publicly about them is accurate and appropriate. This includes any photographs that may cause embarrassment to themselves and the Branch if they are published outside of the site.

Volunteers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that their personal information is secure. This means that no members should be able to freely search for or access their details.

Volunteers should never ‘friend’ a member of NSBK onto their personal social networking site. Volunteers should never use or access social networking sites of NSBK members and should never accept an invitation to ‘friend’ a member.

Confidentiality needs to be considered at all times. Social networking sites have the potential to discuss inappropriate information and members need to ensure that they do not put any confidential information on their site about themselves, their employer, their colleagues, members or members of the public.

Members need to ensure that when they are communicating about others that they give due regard to the potential for defamation of character. Making allegations on social networking sites (even in their own time and in their own homes) about other members or other individuals connected with the Branch could result in formal action being taken against them. This includes the uploading of photographs which might bring the Branch into disrepute.

Volunteers are also reminded that they must comply with the requirements of equalities legislation in their on-line communications. Volunteers must never post derogatory or abusive remarks or offensive comments online or engage in on-line activities which may bring NSBK into disrepute.

Some social networking sites and other web-based sites have fields in the user profile for job title etc. You should not put any information onto **personal** social media sites that could identify where you work. A judgement should be made to balance personal and professional reputations. In some circumstances, publishing of such information on personal social media sites could damage the reputation of NSBK.

Social media must not be used by Volunteers to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring NSBK into disrepute.

Social media must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to Branch matters, volunteers or members.

Any member wishing to set up a social media presence to:

- Aid Branch work or communication in an official manner.
- Promote themselves professionally where the Branch's name is required

will be required to inform the Chair of Committee prior to the creation of such an account.

Communication between Members / NSBK Volunteers

Communication between members and volunteers, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites and blogs.

Members should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny. They should also be careful in their communications to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as 'grooming' in the context of sexual offending.

NSBK Chair: Heather Pitch

Web Officer: Adam Evans