



Guide to Social Media

Social media is a useful and free tool for campaigners. It's a fast-track way of bringing like-minded people together, helping us make contacts with others who share our interests and campaign objectives – wherever they are in the world.

It's also a great way of discussing events, sharing ideas and making plans. And because it updates all the time, things can move far more quickly.

Not everything you see or the people you hear from may be positive. You may experience harassment when communicating online, here is [our guide about how to deal with it](#).

Here are some social platforms you can use to campaign.

X (previously Twitter)

How to use X

X allows you to set up your own profile that you can use to publish short messages ('posts') - a maximum of 280 characters long for free accounts.

Most people who use X do so publicly. That means that everyone can see their posts, which is what X thrives on - open discussion. Some people choose to set their account to 'private', so you must request to see their posts. You can tailor who you see posts from and what shows on your timeline by 'following' people and hashtags.

The age range of users is highest among 25 – 34-year-olds.

Pros

- Many public figures and organisations e.g. Councillors use X and can be followed and contacted.
- You can search for topics and local issues by using hashtags e.g. #BanPavementParking
- Living Streets has a strong follower base

Cons

- This can be quite a divisive platform. You are likely to find people that disagree with you, but it is important to maintain a balanced tone in reply.

Instagram

How to use Instagram

Instagram is a photo and video sharing social networking service owned by Meta Platforms (Facebook). It allows users to upload media that can be edited with filters, be organised by hashtags, and be associated with a location via geographical tagging.

The age range of users is highest among 18 – 34-year-olds.

Pros

- Visual platform that thrives on photos and videos.
- Content can be very localised.
- Informal way of contacting people and organisations.
- Can be linked to your Facebook page.

Cons

- The app thrives on videos or 'reels' and photos so it can be time consuming to gather this content.

Facebook/Meta

How to use Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website where users can post comments, share photographs, and post links to news or other interesting content on the web, chat live, and watch short-form video.

Shared content can be made publicly accessible, or it can be shared only among a select group of people via Facebook Groups, or with an individual.

The age range of users is highest among 25 – 34-year-olds.

Pros

- By using the groups function you can set up a community that is localised and have members interested in the same topics as you.
- Linked to Instagram so you can share content between both platforms.

Cons

- You are only likely to reach one audience.

Other platforms to consider:

Whatsapp – a messaging platform where you can create channels for sharing information and groups for discussion.

TikTok – short form video.

Twitch - live streaming website.

Top Tips for content

Tone of voice

How you say something is just as important as what you say on social media. It is important to be respectful and avoid swearing and slang. Look at Living Streets' X for inspiration.

The tone of voice we employ from our main Living Streets account seeks to reflect our inclusive, positive and dynamic personality.

1. Inclusive: We are the experts, but we are also part of a growing movement of people walking and wheeling. Instead of "us" and "them", use "we". Involve your audience with what you're saying. Be aware of different levels of ability when suggesting activities or planning events.

2. Positive and encouraging: Focus on solutions rather than getting bogged down in problems. Avoid sounding preachy or judgmental and don't appeal to people's guilt to induce change. Instead, use encouraging language and ideas to motivate your audience.

You can of course challenge local decisions, schemes etc., but please make sure you are solutions focused, and that you praise the positives of any schemes. Social media can encourage users to be reactive; make sure you know the background to anything you reply to and do ensure you contact people outside of social media in a positive, supportive way to maximise campaign success.

3. Dynamic: We are an organisation on the move. Our writing should embody the spirit of walking and feel purposeful - having a sense of movement. Choose words that urge action and inspire your audience. Let your passion come through in your writing.

4. Clear, simple, succinct: Clarity is a prerequisite for understanding. Keep your message quick, straightforward, and direct. Check your writing for any unnecessary repetition and eliminate it. No need to complicate or create detailed explanations. Never use ten words when five will do.

5. Expert, authoritative: Use one or two carefully chosen facts to drive home your message when appropriate. Your writing should sound confident and assured, without being stuffy or fact heavy.

- **Resources**

You can link out to Living Streets resources and images, which you can access via this page: <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/localgroupresources>

If you're using your own images, you must ensure you have permission from whoever is in them.

Accessibility

Being accessible and inclusive is extremely important and this applies to how we communicate online.

Top tips:

- Add alt text to all graphics and images. When you add an image, make sure you add 'alt text' to briefly describe what is in the image – this text is used by screen readers for people who are visually impaired.

- Write in sentence case (instead of all caps or all lowercase).
- Use capital letters at the start of each word on hashtags – this is called ‘camel case’ (ThisIsCamelCase. Thisisnot.)
- Break up large blocks of text with line breaks.
- Don't repeat the same emoji more than 2-3 times and place them at the end of a sentence.
- Avoid using emojis in your display name.
- Upload a caption file with videos to ensure high-quality, correct captions or use third-party apps and tools to create caption (<https://www.kapwing.com/subtitles>).
- Avoid special characters. If posting ASCII art, post an image of the art and write an image description of it.
- Avoid using non-standard symbols like mathematical symbols as a replacement for words and messages as they confuse screen readers.
- Don't use ableist language.
- Ensure key messages are included in post copy as well as a graphic
- Is there representation of disabled people? Consider the people in your area and reflect them in images that you share if possible. Ask permission of any members of your group if they are in images.

What should you post?

Think about the type of people that are in your group and who you would like to attract – what motivates them? What do they care about?

A good rule is 80/20 - share 80% of other people's content vs 20% of your own.

You can post photos of things you spot when out walking/wheeling, details of local events or even videos you've created to explain a project your group is working on. Be inspired by what you see other people do and have fun.

Post frequency

It's good to be consistent with your content, make sure you can post regularly but be realistic. It is fine not to post every day but maybe set yourself a goal of three times a week.

Timeline

Your timeline will be full of content from people you follow and is a great place to start when deciding what to post. Sometimes posts from people you don't follow will appear on your timeline – these have been promoted by the platform and you should ignore them if they're not relevant to you.

Living Streets

Look on our website for links to our campaign pages, news and blog articles. Our newsletters should provide inspiration too and remember you can contact us with any news that your group has.

Themes/topics

There is masses of content available on climate change, the environment and other topics you and your followers will be interested in. Articles, podcasts, authors, books and blogs are great ways of exploring what is important to you.

Engagement

Your content doesn't have to all be static – ask questions, add polls and try and start conversations.

Online harassment

Not everything you see or the people you hear from may be positive. You may experience harassment when communicating online, here is [our guide about how to deal with it](#).

Got a problem?

Contact us on localgroups@livingstreets.org.uk and we'll see what we can do to help.