Association of Irish Riding Clubs
Club Websites & Social Media

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This document provides guidance for AIRC-affiliated riding clubs and regions when setting up, managing or maintaining a website or social media account. It should be read alongside the current AIRC rules, policies and safeguarding procedures. The guidance applies to all platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and any other platform used by a club or region.

Ownership
A club website or social media account is the property of the club and not any individual member or person who created it on behalf of the club.

In order to safeguard the ownership of a club website or social media account, at minimum, the Club Secretary and /or Club PRO must have the following information:

- Access login details and passwords
- Hosting details including contact information
- Details on how to shut the site if necessary

The Club Secretary may not have the technical knowledge to use this information but they should have the information and have it securely stored. These can then be passed on to new officers of the Club and also technical support, if it changes within the club.

Before a website or social media account is developed, it is important to clarify that the Club will own it when completed, particularly if a member or volunteer is developing it on behalf of the Club.

Content
The Club Committee is responsible for the club online presence. The committee should agree who is authorised to post, what information may be shared and how the account will be monitored.

- Content should be accurate, appropriate, respectful and consistent with AIRC values, rules and policies.
- Check dates, venues, entry details and other event information before publishing. Correct inaccurate information promptly.
- Do not publish confidential committee discussions, complaints, disciplinary matters or personal information.
- Do not post material that is abusive, discriminatory, threatening, defamatory, misleading or otherwise inappropriate.
- Obtain committee approval for significant announcements or statements made on behalf of the club or region.
- Have a clear process for responding to questions and complaints. Move sensitive matters to an appropriate private channel and follow the club/AIRC procedures.

Data protection and contact information
Personal information must be handled carefully and in accordance with data protection requirements. Permission should be obtained before publishing an officer's personal telephone number, email address or other personal contact details.

- Use an official club email address for general enquiries.
- Do not publish membership lists, personal addresses, private telephone numbers, dates of birth or other unnecessary personal information.
- Do not share screenshots of private messages, emails, membership records or internal club communications.
- Only collect information through online forms where there is a clear purpose, and explain how the information will be used.
- If personal information is accidentally published or an account is compromised, remove or secure the information as appropriate and seek advice through the club's data protection procedures.

Safeguarding and Social Media

Although many AIRC clubs have predominantly adult membership, safeguarding responsibilities must still be considered when using club websites and social media accounts.

- Clubs should ensure that anyone involved in managing their social media accounts is aware of the club's safeguarding procedures and knows who to contact if a concern arises.
- Where photographs or videos of under-18s are shared, appropriate consent must be obtained in line with AIRC safeguarding guidance.
- Avoid publishing children's full names alongside photographs or sharing unnecessary personal information.
- Communication with under-18 members should be appropriate, transparent and in line with AIRC safeguarding procedures. Adults should not use personal social media accounts to communicate privately with junior members.
- Any safeguarding concerns arising through social media should be referred to the Club Children's Officer or Designated Liaison Person, as appropriate.

Event Calendars
Your club website should focus on providing information towards its members. For inter-club, and national competitions, you should direct users via a link to www.airc.ie as this is updated regularly.

Club websites should exercise restraint in advertising and promoting events and competitions that are not organised by an affiliated A.I.R.C. riding club.

If you promote non A.I.R.C. activities that may be of interest to your members and at which they would be welcome, these should be presented discreetly on a separate page on your website such as, Non A.I.R.C. Events, and there should be a clear notice indicating that whilst they may be of interest to your members they are not covered by A.I.R.C. Insurance at this event.

A.I.R.C. Link
A link to the Association of Irish Riding Clubs website, www.airc.ie, should be included somewhere on the index page of your website.

A.I.R.C. Forms & Documents
Clubs are **not** permitted to publish official A.I.R.C. documents or forms such as dressage tests, rule books, etc. Instead, Clubs are asked to link to the relevant page or document on www.airc.ie.

These documents are subject to change at any time so the only way to ensure your members and volunteers are using the most up-to-date and current items is to use the publications that are available on www.airc.ie.

Maintenance
You should update your website or social media account regularly if your club has one.

Use it to improve communication within your club and give as much details as possible about events. Members like to see reports and results of what has been happening. Include photographs where possible.

If you have a website or social media account and it's never updated, it's better not to have one at all as visitors get very frustrated and disappointed when they check it and see its months out of date. This can also lead to misinformation and incorrect contact details being available.

Listing on www.airc.ie
As soon as your club has its website or social media account up and running, be sure to submit details to National Office so it can be included on your clubs information page on www.airc.ie.

Club Websites

Design & Layout

Try and lay out your website in a logical manner. You should not need too many pages but refer to the A.I.R.C. website where possible. It should be easy to find information on your website and avoid cluttered and badly laid out pages as any visitor to your website will quickly click away if they don't like it and find it confusing.

Simple guidelines of web design and layout

Many club websites are not developed by professional web designers so you may find the following information useful when arranging to set up or redesign your website.

- Your web site should be easy to read

  You should choose your text and background colours very carefully. You don't want to use backgrounds that obscure your text or use colours that are hard to read.

  Dark-coloured text on a light-coloured background is easier to read than light-coloured text on a dark-coloured background. You also don't want to set your text size too small (hard to read) or too large (it will appear to shout at your visitors).

  All capitalized letters give the appearance of shouting at your visitors.

  Keep the alignment of your main text to the left, not centered. Center-aligned text is best used in headlines. You want your visitors to be comfortable with what they are reading, and most text is left aligned.

- Your web site should be easy to navigate

  All of your hyperlinks should be clear to your visitors. Graphic images, such as buttons or tabs, should be clearly labeled and easy to read. You should select the colours, backgrounds, textures, and special effects on your web graphics very carefully. It is more important that your navigational buttons and tabs be easy to read and understand than to have "flashy" effects.

  Link colours in your text should be familiar to your visitor. If you elect not to use the default colours, your text links should be emphasized in some other way (boldfaced, a larger font size, set between small vertical lines, or a combination of these). Text links should be unique -- they should not look the same as any other text in your web pages.

- Your web site should be easy to find

  How are your visitors finding you online? People will not come to your web site unless you promote your site both online and offline. A good way for a club website to be found is to have a link on your club profile page on www.airc.ie.

  Once you have created a web site, you should include it on all printed material such as letterhead, newsletters, flyers, emails, etc.

  Not only should your web site be easy to find, but your contact information should be easy to find. People like to know that there is a person at the other end of a website

who can help them in the event that they need answers to questions or some element on your site is not working.

- Your web page layout and design should be consistent throughout the site
  Just as in any document formatted on a word processor, all graphic images and elements, typefaces, headings, and footers should remain consistent throughout your site.

  Consistency and coherence in any document, whether it is a report or a set of web pages, project a professional image. For example, if you use a drop shadow as a special effect in your bullet points, you should use drop shadows in all of your bullets. Link-colours should be consistent throughout your web pages. Typefaces and background colours, too, should remain the same throughout your site.

  Colour-coded web pages, in particular, need this consistency. Typefaces, alignment in the main text and the headings, background effects, and the special effects on graphics should remain the same. Only the colours should change.

- Your web site should be quick to download
  Studies have indicated that visitors will quickly lose interest in your web site if the majority of a page does not download within 15 seconds. Even web sites that are marketed to high-end users need to consider download times.

  A good application of this rule is adding animation to your site. Sure, animation can be eye catching but they tend to be large files and take a long time to download.

  Finally, before you consider the personal preferences of your web page design, you should consider all of the above rules first and adapt your personal preferences accordingly. The attitude "I don't like how it looks" should always be secondary to your web site's function. Ultimately you website should be attractive and easy to use for the visitor/user.

Facebook

1. Register Your Page
   You must register your page with National Office when affiliateing your club each year.

2. Choose Your Page Name
   Your page name should be in the following format - 'Club Name' Riding Club

3. How to Create a Page
   In order to create a Facebook Page for your club you will need a personal Facebook profile. Facebook require this for security, as every page must have a verified owner.
   - Log in to your personal Facebook profile.
   - On the top right hand corner of your screen, click on the drop down arrow and choose 'Account Settings'
   - In the next screen, click on 'Create a Page'
   - In the next screen, choose Entertainment
   - Then choose 'Amateur Sports Team' and enter your club name, then click 'Get Started"
   - For now, skip steps 1, 2 and 3. As we will be walking you through those in more detail and your page has now been created.

4. Manage Permissions
   - Next click on "Manage" in the top right hand corner and then click "Edit Page"
   - The page will open by default on the Manage Permissions tab. Set the profanity setting to 'strong', and click 'Save Changes"

5. Your Settings
   - Now choose the "Your Settings" tab on the left hand side. We recommend you select posting preferences and email notifications and save changes
     - *Posting Preferences:* It is important that you post to your page wall, as the voice of your club. Choosing this setting ensures that you are doing just that, instead of posting to your page wall under your personal username
     - *Email Notifications:* It is useful to get email updates when users post or comment on your page, if you do not check your page as frequently as your email. Once you are aware that the comments are there, you can visit your page and respond if needs be.

6. Basic Information
   - Next choose the Basic Information tab.
   - On this tab fill in all your club information and click "Save Changes"
   - It is advisable to include your comments policy and disclaimer within your description. Here is an example
     Comments Policy
     - This is an open forum. We encourage you to get involved. However, this is also a family-friendly forum, so we ask that you follow these guidelines. Posts and comments that breach these guidelines will be removed.

- We do not allow comments or submissions that are violent, sexually explicit, obscene, racist, abusive, hateful, defamatory, libelous or inappropriate relating to other members.
- We do not allow comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity.
- We do not allow solicitations, advertisements, promotion or endorsements of unapproved products or services.
- You take part in this forum at your own risk, taking personal responsibility for your comments, username and any information you provide.

Disclaimer

- "The [insert name of your club] does not accept any responsibility for the opinions expressed on this forum, which are those of the individuals expressing them, and do not necessarily represent the views of [insert name of your club]."

7. Profile Picture
   - Choose the profile picture tab and we advise that you use your club ;logo as your profile picture.
   - Follow the simple steps to upload your logo.
   - Once completed make sure to choose "Edit Thumbnail" as this is the image that will appear beside your posts. You may need to choose "Scale to Fit" if your image is too big.

8. Manage Administrators
   As you created the page, you are the only administrator of the page. You must ensure that the Club Secretary and Club PRO are, at minimum, made administrators of the page.

   To add multiple admins to your page, visit the Manage Admins tab then type their name or email address in the text box (note you must be friends with a person on your personal profile, in order to make them an Administrator on the Page).

9. Get Started
   Here there are 3 important steps, which Facebook walks you through:
   - Invite your Friends
   - Invite Email Contacts
   - Write Status Updates

10. What to Post
    You can post comments, links, photos, videos, questions, etc.

11. Who to 'Like'
    It is recommended that you only 'Like' the Official Association of Irish Riding Clubs Page, regional pages and other affiliated clubs relevant to your area.

12. How to Convert a Profile Page into a Page

It is recommended that you set up your account as a page (with likes) rather than a profile (with friends). Some clubs may have already set up an incorrect account but it is possible to convert your account to a page.

If converting your profile to a page, be sure to back up your current profile and follow the instructions provided earlier in this document for creating a page.

Instagram

1. Create an account specifically for the club, using the club name and logo.
2. Use a club-controlled email address and secure the account with a strong password and two-factor authentication.
3. Keep the account as a professional or creator account if the available features are useful for club administration; choose settings that allow the committee to manage the account appropriately.
4. Limit account access to authorised committee members or approved volunteers and review access at committee handover.
5. Check privacy, tagging, mentions, comments and message settings. Consider limiting who can tag or mention the account and use comment filters where available.
6. Monitor comments, tags, story mentions and direct messages. Do not use Instagram direct messages for private one-to-one communication between an adult representative and an under-18 member.
7. Use captions and hashtags responsibly. Do not add children's personal details or disclose their location or routine

X (Formally Twitter) and other platforms

1. <u>Choose Your Name</u>
   Your account name must be in the following format - <Club Name> RC (i.e. KildareRC).
   Note: Twitter limits usernames to a maximum of 15 characters in length.

2. <u>How to Create an Account</u>
   - Go to www.twitter.com , fill in your details and click 'Sign up for Twitter.' Once you get four green ticks, indicating that your name, email, password and username are OK, then select Create my account.
   - Twitter will send you a confirmation email. As instructed, click on the link to confirm your Twitter account. This will bring you to your new twitter home page.
   - You will be shown suggestions on who to follow, ignore this for now and click on your name 'KildareRC' to bring you to your profile page.
   - Next click Edit your profile, in the top right hand corner and fill in your details and save changes.

3. <u>How & What to Tweet</u>
   Twitter users have developed short-form syntax to make the most of 140 characters. Here are the fundamentals:
   - ***@Reply:*** A reply is any update posted by clicking the "Reply" button on another Tweet. People say lots of things on Twitter, and sometimes you want to say something back. Your reply will always begin with @username (insert username

of the person you are replying to). Any one Tweet that is a reply to you will show up in your @Mentions tab on your homepage.

- ***@Mention:*** A mention is any Twitter update that contains @username anywhere in the body of the Tweet (this means that replies are also considered mentions).
- ***Retweet:*** When you see a Tweet by another user that you want to share, click retweet below it to forward it to your followers instantly.
- ***Message:*** If you want to privately Tweet to a particular user who's already following you, start your Tweet with DM or D to direct-message them, eg: "DM @joebloggs are you going to the festival this year?"
- **Hashtag:** The # symbol, called a hashtag, is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet. For example #ridingclubs. It was created organically by Twitter users as a way to categorise messages. Think of hashtags as the theme of your Tweet. Users can then click on a hashtag to see other similarly-themed tweets and find yours in search.

To add a link to a tweet, type your message and copy and paste your desired URL into the message. Once you click Tweet, the link will appear shortened.

To tweet an image, click on the camera icon in the bottom left hand corner of the text box, this will allow you to browse your computer for the image that you wish to upload.

4. <u>Who to Follow</u>
   It is important for you to follow others on Twitter. We recommend that you follow @airc_ie, regions and other riding clubs in your area.

If a club is unsure whether a role requires vetting or safeguarding training, or how to deal with an online safeguarding concern, it should consult the current AIRC safeguarding policy and contact AIRC or Horse Sport Ireland for clarification. This document is guidance and does not replace the relevant policies.