**Commoners’ Key Messages and Social Media Guide**

## Good Practice

* Be social. Make our social media truly “social” – fun, engaging, and informative. Ask questions, and offer positive, genuinely helpful advice that is likely to be welcomed. If someone criticises the CDA or commoning, show that you are listening, aiming to tell genuine criticism from malicious attack.
* Use our Key Messages. The Communications Strategy (2018) offers a set of key messages about commoning. Weave them into your social media activities.
* Support the CDA website and official social media activities. Do whatever you can to push people to engage with CDA communications.
* Refer any problems or concerns to an officer.
* Aim to put a human face on commoning, and to dispel false impressions of hostility, nimbyism, and self-interest.
* Be friendly and interesting, making people want to engage with us for their own enjoyment and understanding.
* Exercise particular caution with anonymous accounts. Ask yourself whether it is worth any engagement with such an account.

## Things to Avoid

* Discussion of confidential CDA information. If in doubt check first with an officer as to whether specific information is in the public domain. Take a lead from the CDA website and official communications.
* Criticism of other Forest organisations. The CDA works with many groups in the Forest, and engages in vigorous debate with them, but mutual respect is vital to our work.
* Grievances with other CDA members. These are best managed through traditional channels.
* Legal disputes. If a legal process is underway, it is highly inadvisable to discuss the details through social media, and it may well prejudice the outcome or even create further evidence for one side or the other.
* Adult humour or colourful language.
* Potentially offensive posts: racist, sexist or homophobic comments or images for example.
* Derogatory generalisations about groups of people: If we describe visitors as “grockles”, for example, we cannot expect them to like us and want to learn more about commoning.
* Division & sarcasm. Try to be inclusive, avoiding language that implies “them” and “us”. Use questions and offer positive, genuinely helpful, advice that will be welcomed.
* Speculation. It is too easy to start harmful rumours and conspiracy theories on social media.
* Engagement with abusers. If someone is clearly using social media to stoke division and conflict, avoid them. It is usually easy to spot these keyboard warriors and engaging with them benefits no-one. Most platforms offer a means to either hide their posts from your timeline or to block them from it entirely. They also offer the capacity to report offensive content. Use these facilities whenever necessary.
* Images that breach copyright, privacy, or child protection considerations. Seek permission from those featured (parents of children) and the creator of any image used. Be particularly careful with images featuring other Forest organisations.
* Images that could portray the CDA or commoning in a prejudicial way.This could be on grounds of animal welfare, health and safety, or actions that conflict with our advice to other Forest users.
* Heated argument: Judge when a discussion is going nowhere and just making you appear “angry”. Politely disagree and walk away.