

Acceptable Use: Email, Internet, and Social Media

1. The Purpose

This policy sets out the guidelines for the use of Social Media, Email, Internet, communications equipment and electronic devices such as mobile phones, Blackberries, Data Cards, Personal Digital Assistants etc provided by the Forestry Commission (FC). Further policy on acceptable usage is contained in the Information Services' [Information Assurance](#) page and Corporate and Forestry Support's [Security](#) page on eConnect, which should be read in conjunction with this Policy.

2. The Principles

The principles of our policy are to:

- treat all employees fairly and consistently;
- ensure everyone who uses FC equipment, systems, networks, and resources such as Email, Internet, communications equipment and electronic devices e.g. mobile phones, Blackberries, Data Cards, Personal Digital Assistants etc is aware of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable use;
- remind you that the standards for use of FC equipment, systems, networks, and resources should mirror our values and the standards of conduct expected of FC employees;
- remind you that when using social media, whether in a personal or official capacity, your behaviour should mirror the standards of the Civil Service Code of Conduct.

3. The Policy

This policy:

- meets good practice requirements;
- replaces Staff Notice 74;
- should be read in conjunction with Security and Information Assurance Policies;
- has been developed in consultation with the Departmental Security Officer.

The FC allows limited personal/private use of FC equipment, systems, networks, and resources such as Email, Internet, communications equipment and electronic devices. However, in allowing such personal/private use, the FC does not tolerate:

- misuse of business resources;
- excessive personal/private use;
- access of pornographic, obscene, inappropriate, or offensive material;
- distribution of slanderous or defamatory material;
- harassment or bullying;
- the disclosure of official, proprietary information, intellectual property and sensitive or personal information as defined in 'Protective Markings – A guide for FC staff';
- any behaviour that breaches the standards of conduct expected of FC employees.

When using social media, whether in a personal or official capacity, the FC does not tolerate any of the above nor you:

- making public statements or remarks in terms which the FC could find objectionable;
- misrepresenting the FC;
- giving the impression that you are acting or speaking on behalf of the FC when you are not;
- damaging the reputation of the FC or bringing its name into disrepute.

Any breaches of this policy will be regarded as a disciplinary offence and if deemed gross misconduct, the penalty may result in dismissal.

The FC will monitor usage of FC equipment, systems, networks, and resources from time to time to ensure usage is in line with the HR Policy and Procedure.

3.1 Your responsibilities as an employee

You are expected to:

- read, understand, support, and comply with this policy;
- understand what constitutes acceptable usage of FC equipment, systems, networks, and resources;
- follow the guidelines for using social media, whether in a personal or official capacity.

3.2 Your responsibilities as a manager

You are expected to:

- make sure that you and your teams understand, support, and comply with this policy and associated procedures and implement them effectively;

- deal with any misuse of FC equipment, systems, networks, resources or social media in a fair and prompt manner;
- lead by example in your own use of FC equipment, systems, networks, resources or social media.

3.3 Human Resources responsibilities

Human Resources have responsibility for:

- monitoring and reviewing this policy in consultation with the Departmental Security Officer;
- giving advice, guidance, and support to line managers on applying this policy, its procedures and guidelines;
- making sure HR Case Managers are fully trained in the policy and procedures and can advise and help those involved with any concerns, problems, or complaints.