

Our Heritage, Our Stories

Social Media for Heritage

Guidance

This guidance has been produced from a *Social Media for Heritage* online training session. This was delivered in April 2026 by Wakefield Council marketing and audience development officers from the Arts, Culture and Leisure service.

The session was aimed at heritage-focussed groups working across Wakefield district, to provide an overview on:

- Which social media platforms work best for heritage content
- Techniques for creating engaging posts that highlight local stories and community activities
- How to increase group visibility and reach new audiences
- Practical tips for planning and scheduling posts
- How to use photos, video, and accessible content to strengthen a group's digital presence

The session and this guidance are part of the [Our Heritage, Our Stories](#) project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players.



Why use social media?

- **81.5%** of the UK population use at least one social media platform - *DataReportal*
- UK adults spend an average of **1 hour and 48 minutes** daily on social media – *Sprout Social*
- Social media is a **free** way to reach audiences and share your organisation's key messages



Social Media Platforms

- There are many social media platforms out there. Select the platforms most relevant to your audiences and the types of content you produce
- If you're not sure where your audience are, it is worth asking them!
- It is better to have fewer platforms but use them more consistently than have many social media profiles
- If you have more than one platform, it is important to make sure they have consistent images/logos, tag lines and social media handles*

*a social media handle is a unique identifier for a person or organisation on social media, usually prefixed with "@" - used to find, tag, and interact with an account. E.g. @nationalarchivesuk

Facebook



Pros:

- Easy to get-to-grips with the basics
- Facebook groups = ready-made online communities - Lots of groups exist for heritage purposes, particular interests, places, hobbies – they are a good way to tap into audience who are already interested in what you have to offer
- Can write longer text (but be mindful - avoid really wordy copy as people will move on if they have to read a lot)
- Can act as a website substitute - You can create events on Facebook and a 'business page' for an organisation with your contact details etc.
- Works well with combination of content types and allows clickable links to be embedded

Cons:

- Rise of AI-generated content – can raise uncertainty around trustworthiness of content
- Need to regularly monitor comments for inappropriate content – if left unmonitored, content could potentially raise concerns about your organisation
- Can be hard to get your content to reach new audiences without a) a lot of effort and b) money
- Not as commonly used by younger audiences (but others feel a lot more confident with it)

Instagram



Pros:

- Very visual platform – it is the best place to share good quality images/visuals
- Can be the ideal platform to reach new, younger audiences (if done well)
- Content can be ‘pinned’ on maps - Your pinned location can show up in a map of the area and bring your content up in local context
- ‘Collaborative’ posts can utilise audiences of all participating accounts at once
- Instagram is like a Facebook partner as both owned by Meta, so they can ‘talk’ to each other and you can cross-share across platforms

Cons:

- Very hard to get your content to reach new audiences without a) a lot of effort and b) money - The platform rewards consistency to reach new audiences
- Need to have only high-quality photos / video
- Typically, fewer users comment on this platform than Facebook (more about likes) – it is harder to have threads of conversation in Instagram
- Can’t use web links in copy (they are un-clickable in posts)

X (formerly Twitter)



Pros:

- (Previously) strong networks of heritage orgs, researchers and interested users
- Easy to use
- Can find related content / users with hashtags
- The platform focuses more on text, so it is less important to have an image

Cons:

- A vast majority of orgs (including us) have left the platform because of its recent change in values
- Some content and features behind a paywall
- Character limit on text
- Lack of moderation of hate speech & inappropriate content

Bluesky



Pros:

- Many heritage orgs, researchers and interested users have moved here from X/Twitter
- Easy to use – very similar interface to X/Twitter
- ‘Lists’ are a great way to reach new like-minded users and new audiences through linking in with themes
- Lots of different niche interest groups already on there e.g. different periods of history, archaeology, books/literature etc.
- Hashtags work similarly to X/Twitter

Cons:

- Still very new - awareness of the platform is less strong, but it's growing
- Character limit on individual posts – you have to be creative with how you post
- Need to prove age with ID to use DMs (difficult for an org instead of a person!)
- Not the easiest to find new orgs unless already in a ‘list

TikTok



Pros:

- Is the ideal platform to reach new, younger audiences (if done well)
- Used as an alternative 'search engine'
- Has a community feel in the comment sections (unlike Instagram)

Cons:

- Need to have only high-quality video (or photo carousel, but it's predominately video)
- Is a very labour-intensive platform
- Have to post very regularly to maintain performance

Choosing your social media platform(s) – What to consider

- What sort of content do you feel most comfortable producing?
- How much time do you have to create content?
- How regularly can you create and share content?
- How regularly can you monitor comments and messages?
- What sort of content are you wanting to share? Is it more text or have you got photos/videos to share?
- How strong are your visuals (photo & video)?
- Who is the target audience for your content, and what platforms are they using?
What are their personal values? – if you're not sure, ask them!



- What is the goal of your content? – do you want visitors to come and see you in person, interact and send you photos etc.?
- Might you benefit from just focusing on one platform and doing that well, rather than stretching to perform on several ones?

Consistency is key

See the following examples of social media pages of The National Archives. They are consistent with their profile image as logo and have nearly the same profile name/social media handle and bio descriptions. Ensuring these details are the same or very similar across different social media platforms will build consistency and trust with audiences and help them to identify your profiles.



Techniques for creating engaging posts

- Think about what you want your content to achieve – ideally one 'call to action' per post.
- Call to actions – e.g. if you're holding an event, the call to action might be for visitors to come along, if it's a historical research publication, it

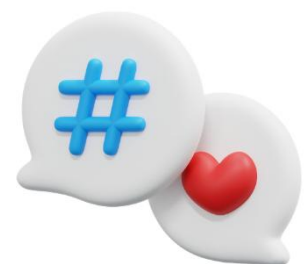


might be asking your audiences to comment and share thoughts

- Use strong, eye-catching photos and good quality video & audio
- Have a 'hook' in the top line of your copy – e.g. “who remembers this historical book?”
- Don't waffle – keep copy to a minimum. Longer-form pieces might be better suited to a blog, and then you can use social media with a call to action for audiences to visit and read your blog
- Make your content accessible – e.g. alt text can make an image description accessible for screen readers, subtitles for those with hearing impairments can help them to still enjoy a video, ensuring your copy has an appropriate reading age can make it accessible to wider audiences
- (alt text, subtitles, reading age)
- Tag relevant accounts and hashtags – e.g. if you're researching an archive object, tag the archive and you may get a wider reach if they repost it
- Consider when your users might be most active online – e.g. if targeting people of working age you might avoid posting between 9-5 and post in commuter hours
- Use Facebook community groups and / or Bluesky lists
- Feature people as much as possible in your visuals -audiences like to see the people behind the scenes/behind the group
- Respond to comments where appropriate – drives up engagement and generates conversation

How to reach new audiences and increase visibility

- Post regularly, consistently and with high quality content
- Tap into trends and cultural moments (where appropriate)
- Try collaborative posts with other organisations
- Encourage engagement with the post – i.e. 'share your memories in the comments'; reaction polls



- Seek out appropriate Facebook community groups / lists
- Consider where your target audiences are
- Ensure your content is accessible
- If you have budget, try ads and boosted posts

Planning and scheduling tips



- Keep it simple – it's better to post one or two engaging posts a week rather than post daily with weaker content
- You can schedule posts in some platforms in advance so you can programme your content in one weekly session rather than trying to remember to do it in the moment e.g. Meta Business for Facebook
- Utilise Excel and similar resources to plan what you're going to post and when. Can feature as much or as little information as needed.
- Lots of free social media plan templates online

Simple social media schedule example:

Month	w/c	w/c	w/c	w/c
Monday	Upcoming HODs events			
Tuesday			Heritage talk at the weekend	
Wednesday		Archive research – story highlight		
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				Creative heritage workshop
Sunday				

Analytics

- Data informed decision making - review what works and what doesn't.
- There is a lot of data that can be obtained, but it's key to just keep it simple



Key stats to consider:

- **Reach:** Reach refers to the total number of people who have been exposed to a social post or ad.
- **Engagement:** Engagement is any form of interaction with your brand on social media. Likes, comments, and shares are all forms of engagement.
- **Followers:** Followers are people who have liked (or “followed”) your accounts on social media.

To obtain this data, there are in-house platform options (e.g. [Meta Business Suite](#)) or external providers like [Hootsuite](#).

Resources

- Arts Marketing Association, Digital Heritage Hub: www.culturehive.co.uk/digital-heritage-hub
- Arts Council England, Digital Culture Network: www.digitalculturenetwork.org.uk/knowledge
- Hootsuite Blog: www.blog.hootsuite.com
- Sprout Social Blog: www.sproutsocial.com/insights
- Reading age checker – Hemingway: www.hemingwayapp.com