Maldon Canoe Club

Maldon Canoe Club – Social Media and Messaging Policy

1. Purpose

Maldon Canoe Club (MCC) uses WhatsApp and Facebook to communicate with members, promote paddling opportunities, share information and celebrate our enjoyment of kayaking.

We want all our social media channels to be friendly, welcoming and inclusive, helping members feel part of the club and encouraging participation.

This policy sets out what members are encouraged to share, what should be avoided and how our different groups and pages should be used.

2. General Principles

All club WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages or groups should be used in a way that reflects the friendly and inclusive nature of Maldon Canoe Club.

We encourage members to:

- Share information about paddling opportunities that others can join.
- Share interesting and useful kayaking-related information.
- Celebrate club activities, events and achievements.
- Ask questions, exchange advice and support fellow paddlers.
- Treat everyone with courtesy and respect.
- Consider whether a post might make other members feel excluded.

Members are welcome to arrange their own private paddles. However, club communication channels should not be used to publicise exclusive activities in a way that could leave other members feeling left out.

3. MCC Paddlers Forum – WhatsApp

The MCC Paddlers Forum is our main discussion group for sharing kayaking information and opportunities with fellow members.

Posts we encourage:

- **Paddle invitations:** Club paddles, peer paddles and other opportunities that members can express an interest in joining.
- **Paddling events:** Training, competitions, organised activities and events of interest to members.

- **Kayaking information:** Articles, videos, equipment advice, safety guidance and interesting paddling locations.
- **Club news:** Announcements, activities, achievements and information relevant to members.
- **Questions and discussions:** Requests for advice, recommendations and kayaking-related conversations.
- **Club paddle reports:** Updates and experiences from paddles advertised to club members.

Posts we ask members not to share:

- Reports or descriptions of private paddles that were not advertised as opportunities for fellow members to join.
- Announcements about upcoming private paddles where other club members cannot participate.
- Political discussions, chain messages, unrelated advertising or other content not relevant to paddling.
- Offensive, discriminatory, disrespectful or unnecessarily confrontational comments.

4. Private and Personal Paddles

We recognise that members have their own friendships and paddling groups, and often enjoy private trips outside MCC activities.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with arranging or participating in private paddles.

However, sharing reports of private paddles on the main club WhatsApp forum or club Facebook discussion groups can leave other members feeling excluded, particularly if they would have liked the opportunity to participate.

We therefore ask members not to use these channels to publicise or report on private paddles.

If members would like others to join a paddle, we encourage them to advertise it beforehand, making clear any requirements relating to experience, ability, equipment or numbers.

Advertising a paddle does not mean it is automatically suitable for everyone, or that it must be an official club-organised activity. Peer paddles may be advertised in accordance with the club's existing arrangements.

Useful safety information or advice gained during a private paddle may still be shared, provided the focus is on helping other members rather than reporting on an exclusive trip.

5. Post Your Pictures – WhatsApp

The Post Your Pictures group is intended for members to share photographs and videos of their paddling adventures.

Photographs and videos from both club activities and privately arranged paddles are welcome.

When sharing pictures from a private trip, members should make clear that it was not a club-organised or advertised activity.

For example:

> *"A few pictures from a private paddle on the Blackwater today – not an MCC-organised trip."*

This allows members to enjoy each other's photographs without creating confusion about whether everyone had an opportunity to participate.

6. Facebook

MCC uses Facebook to promote the club, share news, celebrate activities and engage with members and the wider paddling community.

Appropriate Facebook content includes:

- Club events, activities and achievements.
- Photographs and reports from club-organised or advertised paddles.
- Information about upcoming activities, training and opportunities to participate.
- Kayaking news, safety advice and other relevant information.
- Posts promoting the club and encouraging new members to get involved.

Private paddles and Facebook

The same general principle applies to club Facebook groups and pages as to the WhatsApp Paddlers Forum.

Members should not use club Facebook channels to publicise or report on private paddles that were not offered as opportunities for other members to participate.

This does not prevent members from sharing their personal paddling experiences on their own Facebook profiles or other personal social media accounts.

Members should not imply that private activities were organised, led or endorsed by MCC when this was not the case.

Official club Facebook pages

Posts made on behalf of MCC should reflect the club's values and present a positive, welcoming image of the club.

Only authorised administrators should publish official announcements or statements on behalf of the club.

7. Photographs, Privacy and Consent

When sharing photographs, videos or information on any club social media channel, members should:

- Respect the privacy of others.
- Avoid posting photographs or videos of anyone who has asked not to be included.
- Obtain appropriate consent before sharing identifiable images of children or young people, in accordance with club safeguarding arrangements.
- Avoid sharing personal contact details or other private information without permission.
- Be particularly mindful that Facebook posts may be visible to people outside the club.
- Avoid sharing sensitive information about incidents, injuries or safeguarding concerns. These should be reported through the appropriate club channels.

8. Respectful Communication

All members are expected to communicate respectfully across MCC social media channels.

Members should avoid:

- Personal criticism, insults or confrontational exchanges.
- Discriminatory, offensive or inappropriate language.
- Bullying, harassment or deliberately provocative comments.
- Repeatedly posting content that has previously been identified as inappropriate.
- Using club channels to pursue personal disagreements.

If a disagreement arises, members are encouraged to resolve it privately or raise concerns with the committee rather than engaging in public arguments.

9. Administration and Moderation

MCC WhatsApp groups and Facebook channels are administered on behalf of the club.

Administrators may:

- Remind members of this policy.
- Ask members to amend or remove posts that do not follow these guidelines.
- Remove inappropriate content where the platform allows.
- Refer repeated or serious breaches to the club committee.

Where appropriate, members will normally be given a friendly reminder before further action is considered.

Persistent failure to follow these guidelines may result in restrictions on access to club social media channels, following consideration by the committee and in accordance with club rules.

10. Our Overall Approach

Maldon Canoe Club wants its social media channels to encourage participation, share knowledge and strengthen friendships.

Our guiding principles are simple:

- **Share opportunities:** If you are organising a paddle that other members can join, let them know about it.
- **Share knowledge:** Interesting kayaking information, advice and experiences that benefit others are always welcome.
- **Share pictures:** Photographs from both club and private paddles are welcome in the appropriate picture-sharing channels, with private trips clearly identified.
- **Respect others:** Consider how your posts might affect fellow members and help everyone feel included.
- **Keep private paddles private:** Members are free to enjoy their own personal paddling activities, but reports of exclusive trips should not be posted in the club's main discussion or promotional channels.

Above all, our social media should reflect what Maldon Canoe Club is about: a friendly, welcoming and inclusive community of paddlers.

Document Control and Review

Reviewed by:	Club Committee
Reviewed on:	November 2026
Next review due:	November 2027