



COMHALTAS
in Britain

Communications Policy 2022



Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme



An Baine Gníothaí Eachtracha agus Trádáil
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

SOUND SENSE



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Irish
in Britain

Comhaltas in Britain

Communications Policy

Policy as adopted by Council of Comhaltas
in Britain at _____

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Communications Policy

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Statement

The aim of the Communications Policy is to ensure that all staff, volunteers and members are aware of how communications are best conducted externally and internally, and who has responsibility for which aspects of communications. It is also essential in reducing the risk of reputational damage through ineffective or damaging communications which fall below the standards expected by Comhaltas in Britain.

Background

Good communication is a vital component of any organisation and this policy provides members, volunteers & staff with information and guidance on how communications will be made and managed by Comhaltas in Britain. For the purpose of clarity, all references to 'Comhaltas' in this policy refer directly to 'Comhaltas in Britain' as opposed to the wider Comhaltas movement.

The purpose of this policy is to help Comhaltas communicate and operate as effectively as possible, thereby gaining the respect of our members and of other like minded organisations. Courtesy, friendliness, and a spirit of helpfulness are core to this policy and should guide any and all communication with others.

Alongside these values, we are aware that good communication helps to build morale, satisfaction and engagement. By offering our members a voice (which is an increasingly meaningful component of improving volunteers and members satisfaction), we help to drive their commitment and loyalty in Comhaltas.

Adherence to this policy will help lessen instances of misunderstanding and potentially reduce conflicts which may arise as a result of miscommunication.

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Responsibilities

All external communications made by Comhaltas in Britain will be the primary responsibility of the Provincial, Regional and Branch P.R.O.s. who will communicate on behalf of events and issues pertaining to their level within the organisation (i.e. Provincial P.R.O. is responsible for communicating on Provincial events only unless otherwise given permission from the Provincial council).

All internal communications are the responsibility of the Provincial, Regional and branch Secretaries and should be made with prior approval of the Provincial Council.

All Communications, internal and external will be made inline with the Communication policy and our established Equalities Statement, Safeguarding and Data protection policy, and the staff handbook.

Dissemination

The policy will be ratified by Provincial Council and made available directly to all branches and be available from the Comhaltas in Britain resources page: www.comhaltas.co.uk/resources



Introduction

Good communication is crucial to our organisations success in the provision and development of effective functioning and services. This Communications Policy provides members, Branches, Regions, the Provincial Council members and staff with information on how communications will be made and how they will be handled by Comhaltas in Britain.

This Policy acknowledges the importance for Comhaltas in Britain to ensure that effective lines of information sharing are established and maintained and who has primary responsibility for internal and external communications.

Communications have a number of benefits, including:

- Keeping People Informed of Comhaltas in Britain activities and events
- Developing and improving services through feedback
- Maintaining and promoting membership
- Raising awareness of the organisations achievements in quality, excellence and innovation
- Inspiring new innovative events based on the activity and experiences of other units of the organisation

This policy applies to all members, committee officers and staff within the organisation at all levels, and relates to all types of internal and external communications. In all instances, Communication should be two-way, transparent and carried out in a timely and effective manner, inline with our established Equality statement and policies on Safeguarding, Data Protection & Staff Handbook. All our current policies can be found on the resources area of our website:

www.comhaltas.co.uk/resources



Communications Policy

Key Elements

Internal communication encompasses both "official" communication (announcements, memos, publications, policies and procedures, etc.) and "unofficial" communication that occurs among and between staff, volunteers and members (the exchange of ideas, information and opinions via any communications platform)

The following relate to all forms of communications:

- In all our communications, be courteous, friendly, and communicate in a spirit of helpfulness being mindful of the other person(s) views.
- When there are differences of opinion, they should be handled privately and discreetly. Gossip and backbiting are to be avoided. Communicate directly with the person or persons involved to resolve differences.
- Constructive criticism (pointers which will improve processes by clarifying or instructing) should be welcomed when delivered with respect and tact. Destructive criticism (criticism which is designed to harm our organisation or another person) is not to be practiced.
- Staff, volunteers and members should strive to maintain a civil atmosphere at all times and refrain from raised voices, using vulgarities or swearing.
- The standards set by Comhaltas are for an environment free from disparaging remarks about religion, ethnicity, sexuality, appearance and any other characteristic, in line with our existing Equalities statement



Roles and responsibilities

Structure of Comhaltas in Britain

Comhaltas are a membership based organisation with Units at varying levels. Comhaltas in Britain are a Provincial Unit of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, and within Comhaltas in Britain we have 4 regions with each region in turn having a number of branches. For each Unit of the organisation, we have a similar committee structure and the roles of relevant communicators within this structure are listed below.

Provincial Cathaoirleach (Provincial Chairperson)

In addition to the main responsibilities of the Provincial Cathaoirleach as chief spokesperson and officer, chairing meetings, assisting the provincial secretary with agendas for meetings, and signing off minutes from previous meetings, the Provincial Cathaoirleach has ultimate responsibility for all internal and external communications made by and on behalf of Comhaltas in Britain, in consultation with the officers of the Provincial Council.

Provincial Secretary

The Provincial Secretary is primarily responsible for ensuring internal communications are shared with the regional Secretaries, and that any relevant correspondence is brought to the attention of the Provincial Cathaoirleach and wider Provincial Council. The Provincial Secretary will also work closely with the Provincial P.R.O.

Provincial P.R.O. (Public Relations Officer)

Is primarily responsible for overseeing all external communications in agreement with the Provincial Chair and the Provincial council officers, and is also responsible for keeping the Regional P.R.O.'s informed of the Provincial councils activities, and promoting good communication between the Province and it's units.



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Provincial Council

Should be made aware of the types of information being shared, internal or external, by the Provincial Secretary and, or Provincial PRO.

Regional Secretaries

Regional secretaries have the same responsibilities as the Provincial Secretary, in terms of being the 'Hub' for information exchange and dissemination, and are responsible for ensuring all internal communications are shared with the Branch Secretaries in their Region

Regional P.R.O.

Has primary responsibility for ensuring external communications from the Provincial PRO are shared with the branch PROs they have Regional responsibility for, and are responsible for sharing information on the Regional Committee's activities, with the branches in the Region.

Branch secretaries

Are responsible for ensuring that internal communication from the Region, and Communication for the Province via the Region, is shared with the branch Committee and members

Branch P.R.O.

Has responsibility for sharing any external Communication from the Region, or from the Province via the region with the branch Committee and members, and for promoting good communication between the Branch Committee and Members.

Staff

Any information or Communication from staff should be made inline with this policy. Details of how staff share information on projects and their activities can be obtained from the Provincial Council, in agreement with the Staff Management Committee, upon request.

Members

All members have a responsibility to promote the organisation in a positive and consistent way - Inline with this policy, and all other relevant policies adopted by Comhaltas in Britain



Methods of Communication

Comhaltas in Britain members, Committee officers and staff should expect to receive and send communications via a wide variety of methods, both internal and external to the organisation. These may include, but are not be limited to, emails, newsletters, forms of social media (e.g. Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp etc), Comhaltas in Britain website, public meetings etc.

Internal Communications

Internal Communication is any information that relates to our members and can be described as 'Official Business'. This will include but not be limited to, Meeting minutes, Agendas, arranged meetings, correspondence from Ard Chomhairle, official reports, information on relevant training etc.

Our members are our biggest asset and they act as the day to day ambassadors for Comhaltas in Britain. Developing effective communication, involvement and participation skills is essential to ensure a positive experience of being a member of the organisation, it's operation and reputation.

When communicating internally, all messages should be consistent with Comhaltas values, up to date, consistent, relevant and presented in a clear and concise manner.

They should be available in a range of different formats and disseminated in a manner appropriate for the type and nature of the communication.

The Provincial Secretary will take the lead in facilitating and promoting effective communication strategies and will offer advice and support to Regional Secretaries as requested.

Internal communications may take various forms, similar to (but not limited to) those listed above.



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External Communications

Comhaltas in Britain puts out a wide range of external communications that can include but are not limited to; Mail shots, Emails, Facebook Posts & Comments, Twitter Posts and Comments, Instagram Posts and using other social media platforms, information on our website, Television coverage, Radio and Print media.

Prior to any communication being made, Comhaltas may decide how it wants the communication to be received and composed in an appropriate manner. Whatever the reasons behind the communication, they must all be credible, open, honest, timely, realistic and professional. Target audiences should be identified and the most appropriate and effective method of delivery chosen to ensure maximum effectiveness and reach.

It is important that our organisation develops robust two-way communication channels between members, Branches, Regions and Province to provide reassurance and promote confidence in effective and valued communication. Feedback on service provision, is essential for the future development of the organisation and provides information on the challenges being faced at any time.



Media Handling

To protect the reputation of Comhaltas in Britain, all Communication with outside media organisations should be made inline with this policy and adhere to the values and principles of the organisation, portraying the organisation in a positive light at all times. Suitable Fonts, logos and Headings should be used where appropriate. The importance of keeping external communication consistent in appearance is set out in section 'Corporate Branding'.

Any correspondence with media outlets regarding an event must be with prior consent of the relative level of the organisation (i.e. Regional Committee must approve any articles written regarding Regional Fleadhanna and so on). A unit of the organisation reserves the right to review editorial content ahead of it being submitted to any 3rd party agency for print.

If an outside request for information is deemed sensitive, the contacted party should consult with their Branch PRO and Secretary, Regional Secretary and PRO in the second instance and Provincial PRO, Secretary and Chair if deemed appropriate.

Websites (Provincial, Regional & Branch)

For guidance on the type and tone of information made available through the Provincial, Regional and Branch Websites, refer to all aspects of the external information description and guidance for use, set out in this policy. All information should be clear and concise, and should make clear how information about visitors is collected and stored, in an easily accessible privacy policy.

All information should be presented inline with Comhaltas in Britain's core values, in line with our Equalities Statement, GDPR and Sageguarding policies. All are available on our website www.comhaltas.co.uk

Information should not be of a political nature. It should be made clear if individual opinions are being expressed.



Communications Policy

Social Media

Defining Social Media

Social media is the term commonly used for interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation or sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Such technologies can include instant messaging, post sharing, media sharing and other similar services.

Social Media Guidance for Units

Units are encouraged to make full use of social media platforms in order to further promote the aims and objectives of Comhaltas in Britain. One of the best features of digital media is that it is constantly evolving, so it's important for us to keep on top of trends, be open minded and consider the potential value of new tools and techniques.

Social media can be used to promote unit activities, share important news with existing members, and to encourage the engagement of potential new members and supporters.

The unit officers hold overall responsibility for the social media of that unit. However, the unit should select the most appropriate person(s) to see to the day-to-day management of their social media accounts for example the posting of content. The responsible person(s) shall also monitor engagement with accounts to ensure that questions and comments are responded to promptly; ensure that all engagements are relevant/ appropriate and meet guidelines and ensuring the removal of any engagements that are irrelevant/inappropriate.

Social media is particularly useful for information sharing and it would be hoped that units would share relevant information from other neighbouring branches which may be discovered through social media.

Personal data and visual content including members (such as pictures and videos) should not be posted on social media without prior consent of those concerned. Do not post any confidential information on any social platforms.



In the unlikely event that a breach of personal data does occur, this should be corrected as promptly as possible in line with our GDPR policy. Furthermore, anything you publish must be true and not misleading. If you are unsure whether or not to post something, err on the side of caution and don't post, or else check with a higher authority.

Social media content posted to branded Comhaltas accounts should be in line with the aims and objectives of Comhaltas, and should be respectful, relevant, and should ensure the security of the good reputation of Comhaltas. Branded Comhaltas accounts should also not be used for personal or private use.

Social Media for Comhaltas in Britain

The social media accounts for Comhaltas in Britain should follow the guidance as set out above. Furthermore, social media should be used to promote the aims and objectives of Comhaltas in Britain; to connect units across the Province; and share news and events from across the Province that maybe relevant to members and the wider public.

Comhaltas in Britain social media is the responsibility of the Provincial Council. Day-to-day management of social media is the responsibility of the Provincial P.R.O. and the relevant staff.

Participation of Individual Volunteers and Staff in Social Media

Many of our volunteers and staff already use social media, interactive and collaborative websites and tools, both in a personal and professional capacity.

Rather than try to restrict this activity, Comhaltas in Britain wishes to embrace it as a demonstrable element of our commitment to a culture of openness.

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We recognise that there is an increasingly blurred line between what was previously considered 'corporate social networking', which could be useful to business, and 'social networking', which is for personal use, to an extent where it may no longer be possible, or desirable, to make that distinction.

For example, there is a tendency for people to maintain just one Facebook account, which is used to post a mixture of business related and personal content. However, posts made through personal accounts that are public can be seen, and may breach organisational policy if they bring the organisation into disrepute. This includes situations when you could be identifiable as a volunteer or employee whilst using social networking tools or occasions when you may be commenting on Comhaltas in Britain related matters in a public forum.

Volunteers and staff should use their own discretion and common sense when engaging in online communication, should follow the standards set as an identifiable volunteer or employee, and should not post content that may bring the organisation into disrepute. In the unlikely event that a member of the public may make a complaint or negative comment about Comhaltas in Britain, this should be escalated to the officers of the relevant unit to consider and manage.

If, for whatever reason, a volunteer or staff member needs to use their private social media profiles for official Comhaltas in Britain business, they should indicate this in the post and should state their relationship with the organisation.



Corporate Branding

It is advisable that any form of communication including documentation or information being produced, has a consistent appearance. The Province of Britain has specific Logos, Colours and fonts that are used on internal and external communications, public and 'In house' Publications. These can be made available through a request to the provincial council Chair, Secretary or P.R.O. and they are visible towards the end of this document to view. These are designed to present a consistent image of the organisation.

This policy takes in to account the individual nature of branches that have adopted their own Logos, Colours and designs. This policy encourages consistency in the appearance of communications an individual unit might make, so that they are easily recognisable and represent the organisations core values. It is also recommended that where Comhaltas has designated a specific year for focus or celebration, that specific Logo be displayed on websites and communications where appropriate. The Special designated year logos should be removed at the end of that year.

Consent and copyright

Copyright laws dictate that work such as photographs, films, sound recordings etc require the permission of the owner prior to its use. Members, Committee Officers and Staff should always ensure that appropriate permissions are sought prior to the work being used.

Should a person be photographed, consent must be obtained prior to it being used in either internal or external publicity. Our GDPR Policy should be consulted by Members, Committee Officers and staff should they have any concerns.



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Further reference and related policies

Comhaltas in Britain GDPR www.comhaltas.co.uk/resources

Comhaltas in Britain Safeguarding: Child and Vulnerable adults Policy 2020
www.comhaltas.co.uk/resources

Helpful information for PROs, 'Connecting with our Public' Public Relations and Brand Communication in action – By Martin Gaffney.
Available through www.comhaltas.ie/downloads



Appendix

Communications Policy at a Glance

Comhaltas in Britain strives to be a positive force in the community. At local grass roots and as a global family, Comhaltas bonds together all those who have an affinity with Irish traditional culture. The Comhaltas movement is its members and as such, at all times, people will be valued and treated with dignity and respect.

The following relate to all forms of communication.

- In all our communications, courtesy, friendliness, and a spirit of helpfulness are important and very much in keeping with our culture.
- When there are differences of opinion, they should be handled privately and discreetly. Communicate directly with the person or persons involved to resolve differences.
- Constructive criticism should be welcomed when delivered with respect and tact. Destructive criticism — that which is designed to harm our organisation or another person — is not to be practiced.
- Staff, volunteers and members should strive to maintain a civil atmosphere at all times.
- The standards set by Comhaltas is for an environment free from disparaging remarks about religion, ethnicity, sexuality, appearance and any other characteristic, in line with our existing Equalities statement
- Each individual has the responsibility to foster an understanding of others' differences in order to create an environment where those differences contribute to a better organisation. This means that remarks based on race, religion, ethnic origin, physical attributes, mental or physical disability, color, ancestry, marital status, and/or age are inappropriate and unacceptable.

- Inappropriate remarks include those that treat a group of people in a uniform way, assign a behavior in a disparaging way, imply inferiority of a group, are supposedly funny at someone else's expense, and/or cause embarrassment or distress to others based on comments about a particular group of people.

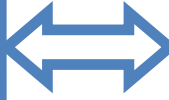
We recognise that being accessible and being inclusive are not the same thing and we actively encourage and welcome all people into our Comhaltas family, working to reduce barriers preventing anyone's enjoyment of our traditional Irish culture.

Flow of Internal Information

Provincial Council Secretary to all
Regional Secretaries and vice-versa

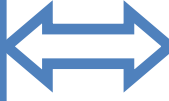


Northern Regional
Secretary to
Regional
Committee and all
Branch Secretaries
and vice-versa



Branch Secretary
to all Members

Scottish Regional
Secretary to
Regional
Committee and all
Branch Secretaries
and vice-versa



Branch Secretary
to all Members

Midlands Regional
Secretary to
Regional
Committee and all
Branch Secretaries
and vice-versa

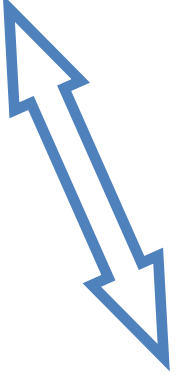
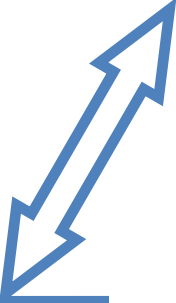


Branch Secretary
to all Members

London &
Southern Regional
Secretary to
Regional
Committee and all
Branch Secretaries
and vice-versa



Branch Secretary
to all Members





Branding Kit

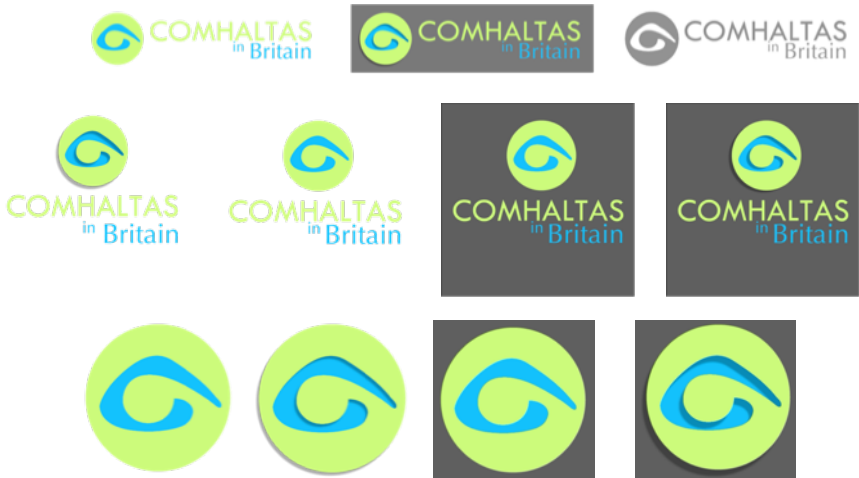
Logo Font : 'COMHALTAS' Is produced with the font 'Tw Cen MT'
'In Britain' Is produced with the font 'Optima'

Colours: Primary (Greeny Yellow) Colour: #CCFF66 / R:204 G:255 B:102
Secondary (Blue) Colour: #0099CC / R:0 G:153 B:204
Background (Grey) Colour: #999999 / R:153 G:153 B:153

When displaying logo, use the appropriate version for the space, and to fit with general look of document (i.e. Coloured v Monochrome, Shadow versus Non-Shadow)

The Logo is available in 3 distinctive shapes, 2 of which include text in both long rectangle, and square sizes.

The third version is the Comhaltas 'C' device only which may be used when in colour only - this is not appropriate for use in monochrome printing.



For Headings - use Tw Cen MT font. For body text use a mixture of Optima or Futura Bk BT font. All body text should be in 'Greeny Yellow', 'Blue' or in Black or White depending on background.

As a requirement of our ongoing funding through the Irish Government Emigrant Support Programme, the appropriate logos from the Department of Foreign Affairs must also be visible on all publications. This logo is refreshed regularly so please contact our project officers by emailing info@comhaltas.co.uk to ensure that you are using the most up to date logo.

The current logo at time of print is listed here:



Do's and Dont's

Do



Use Comhaltas social media platforms for the purposes of highlighting events & positive news



Send emails to multiple people using 'Blind Copy' (Bcc) so that no-one can access the email addresses of all recipients



Pass on relevant information to other interested parties within the organisation or even externally if appropriate



Be kind, professional, and mindful of others feelings when communicating

Dont



Use Comhaltas social media platforms for sharing personal information or sharing political/controversial content



Send emails to multiple people using the 'To' line so that everyone can see who received the email



Keep information which is of benefit to others to myself meaning that others may miss out on events / opportunities



Communicate in a way which may be interpreted as unkind and unhelpful to others

Comhaltas in Britain
England & Wales - St. Michaels Irish Centre
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www.comhaltas.co.uk
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