

IWA Email Policy

1. Introduction

This document sets out The Inland Waterways Association's policy regarding the use of email by IWA employees, officers and others working in a voluntary capacity on behalf of the Association. The policy applies to any use of email for IWA purposes and applies to all sections of the Association including subsidiary companies, regions and branches.

The policy also contains some guidelines relating to personal use of email, especially by employees and by officers of the Association where it might be perceived that they were representing the Association. These guidelines are aimed at ensuring that both the individual and IWA are adequately protected against misrepresentation and misinterpretation. The term 'officer' in this document means anyone appointed or elected to any title-bearing position within the Association or its subsidiary companies.

2. Objectives

- To set out a code of best practice that will protect the Association and its employees, members and officers
- To provide clarity on the parameters of email use
- To ensure that any representations on behalf of IWA are in line with its aims and objectives.

3. Email Messages:

This section applies to all employees and officers of the Association. It should also act as a guide to good practice for all other volunteers who undertake work for the Association.

3.1. Clearly identify yourself and your position

Messages sent on IWA business should have a signature with your name, position within IWA and the mandatory information required under the Companies Act 2006 (IWA's company registration number, that IWA is a company limited by guarantee and the registered office) Failure to comply with these requirements puts IWA at risk of a fine of £1,000. [Note: The duty has existed for business letters for many years, but some people were unsure whether this duty extended to email communication. Any doubt was removed by an amendment to the Companies Act 2006 and the duty is now contained in the Companies (Trading Disclosures) Regulations 2008. IWA's charity registration number should also be included to ensure compliance with the Charities Acts.

This detail is not required for internal emails. See IWA's House Style Guide for more details.

3.2. Differentiate between official and personal messages

IWA email accounts should not be used for personal messages.

If you use your personal email address for IWA correspondence, please ensure you use a different signature for IWA and personal messages.

3.3. Answer IWA email promptly

Messages received in the course of IWA's activities should ideally be responded to within a week. Emails marked as urgent should be responded to within 48 hours. This does not apply to advertising communications, junk emails and spam.

Even if the matter cannot be dealt with fully at that time, a holding reply stating that the message has been received and when a full response can be expected. Replying to emails promptly helps to build important campaigns, activities and relationships. In the case of negativity, the longer someone waits for a reply the more angry that person can become. Let the individual know that you have heard their frustration or problem and that you're addressing it. Where holidays, work commitments, illness or other activities mean that any emails cannot be responded to within the designated timeframe, then consideration should be given for an appropriate auto-response message to be set. Where these are used, care should be taken (a) not to redirect enquiries to absent employees or other officers who are not available, and (b) not to disclose information that might assist burglary and theft by identifying an empty residence.

3.4. Ensure your emails are well written and well presented

The content and presentation of emails makes an impression in just the same way as written letters. Make sure your emails have appropriate headers and are set out in an easily readable fashion. See the House Style Guide for appropriate fonts, tone of voice and writing style.

Read your emails through and check spelling before sending it.

3.5. Do you really need to send it?

Is your email really necessary? The proliferation of junk emails is an increasing burden to many people. Think whether you really need to send your email and whether you really need to copy it to everyone on your list. When replying to messages, check to whom you are sending it and consider whether all the recipients are both intended and necessary.

3.6. Representation of IWA policy

IWA Officers should be aware that any comment or message they send is likely to be regarded as an official statement unless they explicitly state otherwise.

3.7. Email is not a secure medium

Email should not be used for highly sensitive or confidential messages. There is also a risk that your email may not be received, as the sender's Internet Service Provider may treat the message as spam or fail to deliver it. If this matters, ask the recipient to acknowledge receipt, and if this fails to arrive within 48 hours, chase up for a response or consider a telephone call or letter by Royal Mail.

3.8. The Law of Libel applies to email

Do not write anything in an email that you would not write in a letter.

3.9. Contract Law applies to email

The courts have established a legal precedent in the UK that email has virtually the same status as a letter. Therefore, do not commit yourself or the Association to any obligations or course of action by email unless you have both the authority and the intent to enter into such an agreement.

4. Email Addresses

The use of IWA email addresses establishes a more professional 'corporate identity'. Email aliases also allow for redirection of email to Head Office, or to a more appropriate recipient, should roles change, or officers retire, cease working for the Association or become unable to collect email for an extended period of time.

4.1. Email aliases

An IWA email address that redirects to your personal or IWA email address can be provided to all IWA officers.

4.2. Email inboxes

IWA officers are also encouraged to make use of an IWA inbox, which enables them to store all IWA emails in one place and send emails from firstname.lastname@team.waterways.org.uk.

The account should be set up with an IWA signature (see House Style Guide), and this inbox should only be used for IWA business.

IWA Email accounts will be suspended when the officer ceases to undertake work for the Association.

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