



Communications Policy

Approved by the Board on 5th March 2017

Contents

Purpose.....	1
Scope	1
What is PaganAid?	2
Our core values and beliefs.....	2
The Natural World	2
Poverty	3
Sustainable development.....	3
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	3
Legal Framework.....	4
PaganAid and Politics	4
Representation of Pagans, Paganism and other Faiths.....	5
Representation of people living in poverty.....	5
Responsibilities and Procedures	6
Media	6
Social Media	7
Supporter Mailings.....	7
Style Guide	7

Purpose

This policy aims to guide and support the officers and volunteers of PaganAid to communicate effectively with internal and external audiences so that:

- PaganAid's values and beliefs are expressed both in what we say and in the way that we say it.
- Our audiences have a clear understanding of what PaganAid is, what we do and how we do it.
- We increase support for sustainable development in general and PaganAid in particular.

Scope

This policy covers all written, electronic and verbal communications of PaganAid and those acting on its behalf, whether directed at external or internal audiences.

PaganAid is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered by the Charity Commission of England & Wales – registered charity number 1158075

Registered address: Apex House, Thomas Street, Trethomas, Caerphilly, CF83 8DP, UK



What is PaganAid?

PaganAid is a registered charity that seeks to promote sustainable development. It was set up in 2014 by Pagans who want to protect our precious planet and end extreme poverty, but who felt that other development charities did not sufficiently reflect their values, priorities and identity as Pagans.

Run entirely by committed volunteers and with minimal running costs, PaganAid receives donations from concerned Pagans. That money is then given as grants to other trusted organisations to fund projects that help poor and marginalised communities to protect and develop their own livelihoods and the environment about them – projects that put equal value on ending poverty and protecting Mother Earth.

PaganAid's official charitable objects are:

- 1) *To promote sustainable development for the benefit of the public by:*
 - a) *the preservation, conservation and the protection of the environment and the prudent use of resources;*
 - b) *the relief of poverty and the improvement of the conditions of life in socially and economically disadvantaged communities;*
 - c) *the promotion of sustainable means of achieving economic growth and regeneration.*
- 2) *To advance the education of the public in subjects relating to sustainable development and the protection, enhancement and rehabilitation of the environment and to promote study and research in such subjects provided that the useful results of such study are disseminated to the public at large.*

Note that the Charity Commission and its regulations defines “Sustainable Development” as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

As a charity run entirely by volunteers, we believe in the power of collective action. We wish to grow through having a large network of active volunteers who collaborate in a variety of ways whilst sharing our vision.

Our core values and beliefs

Our beautiful, sacred Mother Earth is under attack. Her forests are being cleared. Her minerals are being plundered. Her rivers and seas are being poisoned. Her sky is being choked and her climate changing. Her creatures are being driven to extinction.

Meanwhile millions of people live in extreme poverty. Some of them are poor as a result of the exploitation and industrialisation of the environment. Some of them have no choice but to deplete their local environment because of their poverty.

PaganAid wants to break this cycle of destitution and destruction by helping people to meet their basic needs through living in harmony with nature.

The Natural World

We feel a deep reverence for Mother Earth and all she represents as well as for all the life that she sustains. We see the intrinsic value of the natural world and believe its worth cannot be measured in economic terms. Nature is not a resource to be extracted – we must give back to the environment more than we take, not just for our children's sake but for nature's sake.

Poverty

Poverty has many faces and has multiple dimensions. Subsequently, there are many different definitions and concepts of poverty, including absolute poverty, extreme poverty and relative poverty. Recognising the limits to any one definition, PaganAid is content with the following statement made by the UN in 1998:

“Fundamentally, poverty is the inability of having choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one’s food or a job to earn one’s living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation”.

We believe that poverty is not a natural state and is caused by the actions of human society. In this respect, our beliefs are reflected in these quotes by Nelson Mandela:

“Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings”.

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life”.

Sustainable development

We believe that all our lives will be enriched materially and spiritually if humans live in closer harmony with nature.

We do not believe that global poverty can be overcome through traditional models of economic growth that rely on greater exploitation of natural resources or that create dependence on the benevolence of the rich world. The short-term gains that may be achieved in this way cannot be sustained.

Instead, we are committed to forms of development that are sustainable. Development where communities are empowered to meet their basic needs. Development that protects and enhances the natural environment. Development that is equitable and respects fundamental human rights.

However, we recognise that the causes of poverty are complex and there is no single ‘silver bullet’ that can ‘solve’ poverty. We make our small contributions in partnership with affected communities, taking baby steps on the path to a better tomorrow.

We also recognise that over-consumption drives global poverty. As Mahatma Gandhi said *“The world has enough for everyone’s need, but not enough for everyone’s greed”.*

Therefore, we will not enter into any commercial partnerships or fundraising schemes that encourage consumerism.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

We acknowledge and honour the fundamental value and dignity of all individuals, and are committed to equitable treatment and elimination of discrimination in all its forms.

We actively value and welcome diversity. In our actions and communications, we will never discriminate or stereotype on the basis of colour, race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexuality, (dis)ability, social class, or any other aspect that can marginalise communities or undermine their dignity.

We will strive to meet best practice on accessibility for people living with disabilities, including the WCAG 2.0 standards¹ set by the Web Accessibility Initiative.

Legal Framework

PaganAid is registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with the Charity Commission of England & Wales, and is subject to its rules and regulations.

It is also subject to a number of UK laws and regulations, including:

- The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The ASA administers the British Code of Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing (The CAP Code) to ensure that advertisements are legal, decent, honest and truthful. Since 1993 this Code has applied to charities and pressure groups. As a matter of good practice, charities should take all reasonable steps to comply with the ASA Code.
- The Communications Act 2003, particularly for charities considering using broadcast advertising; the Act prohibits political advertising in the broadcast media - the definition of 'political advertising' includes advertising aimed at influencing public opinion on matters of 'public controversy'.
- The Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005, particularly for charities organising a demonstration about an issue; the Act places new restrictions on campaigning, including demonstrations.
- Other legal requirements, including the civil law concerning defamation (slander and libel) and the criminal law concerning incitement.

Because of the globalised nature of digital communications, we may also be subject to laws and regulations in other countries.

PaganAid and Politics

The Charity Commission has published ***Speaking Out: Guidance on campaigning and political activity by charities*** (CC9). The full document can be downloaded [here](#), but in brief it states that:

A charity can make public comment on social, economic and political issues if these relate to its purpose, or the way in which the charity is able to carry out its work.

Charities can campaign to achieve their purposes. But a charity can't:

- *have a political purpose, or*
- *undertake political activity that is not relevant to the charity's charitable purposes*

Trustees must not allow the charity to be used as a vehicle for the expression of the personal or party political views of any individual trustee or staff member.

Charity trustees must carefully weigh up the possible benefits against the costs and risks in deciding whether the campaign is likely to be an effective way of furthering or supporting the charity's purposes. They should think about what laws may apply to their proposed methods of campaigning and political activity.

Breaching these guidelines could have serious consequences for the charity and its trustees.

¹ <https://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php>

Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that supporters of PaganAid, or Pagans in general, will hold similar political views.

In conclusion, we shall not shy away from commenting on issues of public policy and corporate behaviour that directly relate to sustainable development or our ability to operate, but we will not comment on other issues, no matter how much they are of concern to our supporters or the wider Pagan community.

Representation of Pagans, Paganism and other Faiths

We were founded to enable Pagans of all paths and in all countries to give a practical and public expression of their values and beliefs by supporting efforts to overcome extreme poverty and protect the environment. We anticipate that the overwhelming majority of our supporters will identify themselves as Pagan, but we also welcome support from others who share our values.

As one of only two Pagan registered charities (the other being The Druid Network), it is likely that we will gain attention from non-pagan media and community and become, by default, one of the public faces of modern Paganism. So although it is not one of our charitable objects, we have a responsibility to represent Paganism clearly and positively.

The Pagan Federation (PF – www.paganfed.org) defines² a pagan as “a follower of a polytheistic or pantheistic nature-worshipping religion”. However, due to the breadth and diversity of pagan beliefs, there may be some people who identify as pagans who would not fit within that definition. The PF goes on to say: “Pagans may be trained in particular traditions or they may follow their own inspiration. Paganism is not dogmatic. Pagans pursue their own vision of the Divine as a direct and personal experience”.

Like the PF, we recognise the rich diversity of traditions that form the body of modern Paganism. We will not imply in our actions or our communications that any one Pagan path is better or more valid than any other.

We hope, but do not assume, that Pagans will share our vision and values.

We respect those of other faiths as well as atheists and humanists. We will never denigrate any faith or stereotype their followers.

Our beneficiaries can be of any faith or of no faith. Our grant giving will not discriminate on the basis of faith.

Representation of people living in poverty

We will adhere to the **Code of Conduct on Images and Messages** agreed by Concord (the European NGO confederation for Relief and Development) in 2006. The full text of the Code can be downloaded here: <https://concordeurope.org/2012/09/27/code-of-conduct-on-images-and-messages/>

The Code of Conduct’s guiding principles stipulate that “choices of images and messages will be made based on the paramount principles of:

- Respect for the dignity of the people concerned;
- Belief in the equality of all people;
- Acceptance of the need to promote fairness, solidarity and justice.

² <https://paganfed.org/index.php/paganism/introduction-to-paganism> (accessed 3/2/17)



Accordingly, in all our communications and where practical and reasonable within the need to reflect reality, we strive to:

- Choose images and related messages based on values of respect equality, solidarity and justice;
- Truthfully represent any image or depicted situation both in its immediate and in its wider context so as to improve public understanding of the realities and complexities of development;
- Avoid images and messages that potentially stereotype, sensationalise or discriminate against people, situations or places;
- Use images, messages and case studies with the full understanding, participation and permission of the subjects (or subjects' parents/guardian);
- Ensure those whose situation is being represented have the opportunity to communicate their stories themselves;
- Establish and record whether the subjects wish to be named or identifiable and always act accordingly;
- Conform to the highest standards in relation to human rights and protection of the vulnerable people.

An illustrated guide to the Code produced by the Irish NGO platform Dóchas can be downloaded here:

http://dochas.ie/sites/default/files/Illustrative_Guide_to_the_Dochas_Code_of_Conduct_on_Images_and_Messages.pdf

Responsibilities and Procedures

We want to encourage our volunteers to communicate who we are and what we are doing to our audiences in a variety of creative ways. So, although Trustees are responsible in law for all that PaganAid says and does, we do not want the dead hand of censorship or bureaucracy to hold them back.

We do expect every volunteer to have read this communication policy, clarified any areas of which they are uncertain, and reflect the policy in their communications on behalf of PaganAid.

When volunteers are communicating about PaganAid with their own groups and networks, we see no need for any prior consultation or approval. However, there are some circumstances where the opportunities and risks merit special treatment, and some communication channels that we want to manage in a planned and coherent manner.

Media

In most cases, we expect Pagan media and Pagan bloggers to be sympathetic with our mission. Volunteers are encouraged to talk to them about the areas of work for which they are responsible. If the Pagan media or blogger wants an interview about PaganAid in general, or about aspects that the volunteer is not working on directly, then it is recommended that they refer the request to the Media Officer, Chair or Vice-Chair of the charity.

Non-pagan media (print, radio, tv and on-line) are likely to be less informed about Paganism and may be unsympathetic to our mission and values. All requests for



interviews or statements from non-pagan media **must** be referred to the Media Officer, Chair or Vice-Chair of the charity.

Social Media

Social media is very important for us in engaging with the wider Pagan community, and we will set out more detailed plans for the use of our social media channels in our annual Supporter Engagement Plan. We aim to increase our visibility and encourage Pagans to visit our webpage where they can join our mailing list and/or make a donation.

Content will be created and shared on social media by a team of volunteer 'mavens', who will also moderate discussions to ensure that meet community standards. This team, which will be given Editor or Moderator status (or equivalent) will be self-managing as much as possible but they will be led by a Social Media Coordinator who will be part of PaganAid's management team. Only a Trustee can have Administrator status.

Working on the basis that two heads are better than one, all original Facebook posts will be drafted in advance and shared for comment by other members of the team before being scheduled for posting.

Supporter Mailings

We have a growing number of supporters who have signed up to our mailing list, made a one-off donation, or set up a direct debit for a regular donation. We want to maintain and grow their support as donors, campaigners and volunteers and will do this using emailed letters and newsletters.

More detailed plans and a schedule for our direct engagement with our supporters will be set out in our annual Supporter Engagement Plan. Mailings and newsletters will be prepared by a Supporter Development Coordinator (who will be part of PaganAid's management team) and approved for sending by the Chair or Vice-chair.

Style Guide

We value creativity and so don't want to put limits on how our volunteers communicate, provided that they adhere to the values, beliefs and legal restrictions set out in this policy. We have only two other requirements:

- Pagan and Paganism should always be capitalised.
- English should use British spellings rather than American.

This Communications Policy shall be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees of PaganAid to ensure its continued relevance and utility.