Guidance on Websites

1. If my website is funded from parliamentary resources do I need to acknowledge that?

Yes, there is a minimum requirement for Members to display, prominently, on the homepage of a website a statement that it is funded from Parliamentary resources.

The following form of words shall be used:

“The costs of this website have been met out of parliamentary resources”

The website must make clear that any complaints about the content should be made initially to the SPCB. The following form of words should be used:

“Complaints about website content should be sent by e-mail to sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk”

A Member may also wish to consider adding a link to the Parliament’s official website.

2. Can I describe myself on my website as the [party name] MSP?

On a parliamentary funded website Members shall describe themselves in the following terms:

“[Name]
Member of the Scottish Parliament for [constituency/ region] [(party affiliation in brackets)]”

3. What can be included on a website funded by parliamentary resources?

Without being too prescriptive the following material can be used:

- Information about the Member
- Factual information about Parliament, debates etc
- Details of surgeries and how to get in touch
- Factual material about work undertaken by the Member
- Factual information about local public services e.g. the local authority
4. Are there any limitations on what can be included in a website funded by parliamentary resources?

Yes. Members must ensure that a website funded by parliamentary resources does not include any of the following:

- Any material that promotes the political views of any person, political party, the government, or other organisation involved in political campaigning;
- Any material that criticises any person, political party, the government, or other organisation involved in political campaigning;
- Any material that promotes, criticises or campaigns for or against anyone seeking election;
- Material likely to provide a personal benefit to a Member or other person or organisation;
- Communications that are non-parliamentary in nature including greetings messages or which promote commercial enterprises;
- Fundraising of any kind.

5. Can I put media/press releases on my website?

Yes, provided they are in line with the guidance on the content and presentation of media/press releases.

6. Can I link my parliamentary website to my political party website?

Yes, links to other websites are permitted but only where there is a clear disclaimer. The disclaimer should use the following words and must be clearly visible:

“The Parliament is not responsible for the content of other internet sites”.

7. Can I refer to the Government by its party label on my website?

You can refer to the Scottish Government or, the Government but you should not refer to the Government by political party.
8. Can I undertake surveys on line?

Yes, but surveys must not be used for party political or campaigning purposes and therefore constituents’ personal data cannot be made available to third parties including, in particular, political parties or national political campaign organisations.

To make this clear to constituents, any survey or publication must therefore include the following disclaimer:

‘The personal data provided in this survey is to inform my parliamentary work and will not be shared with third parties including campaign or political organisations’

When seeking information from constituents in the form of a survey or other publication, Members must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

A breach of the Data Protection Act could have significant repercussions including a substantial fine, a claim for compensation from an individual who has been distressed or damaged by reprocessing, or a Member or a member of their staff could be committing an offence.

9. What about on line petitions?

Petitions should be restricted to those initiated by the Member and should not be based on national or local party political campaigns.

10. What about interactive forums?

Should a Member have an interactive forum, it is important that it is regularly monitored by a site administrator in order to remove, or to avoid the publication of, any offensive or inappropriate comments. While it is accepted that this type of open forum is likely to generate some political observations, a Member should not encourage party political comment or engage in party political debate on line.

11. Can I convert my parliamentary funded website to a personal website?

Yes. Any set up costs associated with the original parliamentary funded website would have to be repaid.
Improper use of websites

Members attention is drawn to the Members’ Code of Conduct (paragraph 7.2.11).

Enquiries

Any enquiries on the policy on parliamentary funded websites should be addressed to the Allowances Office on 0131 348 6609.