

## **The Beaconsfield Society - Trolling Policy**

We define a troll as a person who sows discord on our social media profiles and accounts by starting quarrels or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory, extraneous or off-topic messages in our online community with the intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal, on-topic discussion by deliberately misrepresenting information and calling valid debate in to disrepute by misrepresenting facts and debates.

To this end, we try to address, hide or delete sexist, ableist, heterosexist, racist, derogatory, harassing or abusive posts, as well as posts that incite or threaten violence, involve poor or disability bashing, or personal attacks between participants. However, it is impossible for volunteer administrators to read everything posted and be here 24/7 as they do have a life. As this page grows, it will become harder to do. So, we appreciate help from participants who point out posts that disturb, attack, and incite and be mindful that we may not be able to respond immediately.

We do not stifle debate and genuine comment, however malicious debate brings discord to the Internet and social media and we think it occasionally necessary to take action to make sure debate is open and forthright.

At the same time, we must also say it is a fine balancing act in deciding what to address or remove. For example, if we come across an ableist comment, is it better to keep it visible because it generated a good conversation or learning experience or because site participants effectively addressed the issue rather than to hide it and make it seem that such comments do not exist and all is well?

In regards to trolls, sometimes it is hard to tell whether someone is trolling. For instance, is someone providing constructive criticism. The difference, constructive people seek solutions while trolls seek conflict and will be contrary as a matter of course. In many cases, trolls will just not cease their discourse and will go on and on if given the opportunity.

Provocative statements not aimed at debate but merely to gain a reaction or spread discontent and mistruths are something we feel is necessarily important to confront and address.

We employ a policy of removing content we believe is from trolls and blocking their access to our accounts and comments and platforms.

This decision is to be reviewed by the editorial committee but individual committee members can block or delete comments and accounts for speed and proficiency or safety reasons.

Our approach to trolls is as follows:

1. We will attempt to contact the troll to ask them to meet or discuss the issues they are raising if they feel they are legitimate and ask for them to amend their behaviour or withdraw their comments and activity.
2. We will ask trolls to state their reason for trolling us and if there is anything we can do to persuade them of our intentions

3. We will attempt to identify the real person behind the troll account to ascertain they are who they say they are or their position / job to ensure they are not having their name used maliciously

4. We will restrict access to our accounts and platforms while this process is underway.

5 This policy applies to all.

6. Should we satisfy ourselves the troll is reformed we will reinstate them.

7. As a general principle we will block users who also block us as this means we cannot enter in to debate or communicate with the user effectively.

8. The Beaconsfield Society reserves the right to restrict access to its page if followers are repeatedly negative in their comments, or do not share the ambitions of the page and seek to disrupt rather than engage.

Still, we are a community of sorts with diverse views and opinions. We remain committed to supporting the inclusion of diverse views, where controversial and unpopular views are offered and received with the same grace and respect as views that have widespread support among participants. People should be prepared that when they post anything that there will be a possibility that someone will disagree with them and will say so.

A final caution: Trolls thrive on attention. Usually, the best way to deal with their efforts to disrupt communications is to ignore them and inform the site administrators. In other words....  
'Do not feed the trolls.'

The Beaconsfield Society - approved by the Committee 3 September 2018