



London Sustainability Exchange

## London Sustainability Exchange E-mail, Internet and Communications Policy

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### Introduction

E-mail, the Internet and telephone are highly useful communication tools that LSx would now find extremely difficult to do without. On the other hand they open the LSx up to a potential security risks, excess costs, and legal liability, and have the potential to create information overload causing stress and affecting employee productivity.

Key drivers for how we manage communication tools should therefore be:

- Employee Productivity and Learning
- Network Performance
- Legal Liability
- Security
- Responsible use of LSx funds

### Managing Expectations

Setting limits on use of communication technologies can however be an emotionally charged subject linked as it is to issues of personal privacy and individual responsibility. Encouragement and leadership are therefore more likely to succeed than a policy based on prohibition. The policy is therefore, more about dealing with a people issue rather than a technical one!

Employees have grown to expect to use e-mail and the Internet as freely as they do the phone; because e-mail seems like an informal mode of communication, we may tend to forget its legal status. E-mail in particular is subject to Data Protection legislation with regard to data about employees, donors and partners.

Staff therefore, need to know what constitutes acceptable use of all communication systems as well as the consequences, both personally and to LSx, of unacceptable use. All users of these systems need to understand and formally agree to abide by the policy.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that users of the LSx communication systems understand the way in which these systems should be used in the organisation. It aims to ensure that such systems are used effectively for their intended purpose without infringing legal requirements or creating unnecessary cost and business risk.

## **Scope**

All users of LSx communications systems are subject to this policy, including paid and unpaid staff of LSx and subsidiaries, contractors, temporary staff, interns, secondees and volunteers. Failure to comply may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal. At the same time your conduct and/or action(s) may be unlawful or illegal and you may be personally liable.

This policy applies to any use of E-mail, the Internet, and telephone using LSx equipment and systems, including but not limited to PCs, laptops, palmtops, personal organisers, fax machines, telephones, voice mail systems and mobile phones. The policy applies whether the equipment is used as part of the LSx network or on a standalone basis, and whether on or off LSx premises.

Use of personal equipment, accounts or other communications systems for LSx business is subject to the same considerations regarding confidentiality, Data Protection, copyright, and acceptable use as when using LSx equipment. Reimbursement of cost for use of personal equipment is not covered by this policy; it will be covered in a separate expense policy.

References throughout this policy to the name, logo, or reputation of LSx also apply to the name, logos and reputation of Greener Food, LSx and any other brands employed by LSx.

## **General Principles**

LSx provides telephones, e-mail systems and access to the Internet to support its charitable activities. Access to these systems is granted to users for this purpose. E-mails and other communications sent and received on LSx systems and/or using LSx equipment are not private property; they form part of the administrative records of the organisation.

## **Personal use**

Incidental and occasional personal use of e-mail, the Internet, telephones and other communication equipment is permitted, subject to the restrictions in this policy. Any personal use is expected to be on the employee's own time and is not to interfere with the person's job responsibilities, the ability of other staff to work effectively, or the efficiency of the system itself. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that personal use of the communication systems does not conflict with LSx policies and values, conflict with your contractual obligations, contravene law, and/or harm the LSx's reputation. LSx will not be responsible in any way for private transactions conducted on LSx systems. Care should be taken to ensure that recipients of personal messages understand that the content is not sent on LSx's behalf, for example through the use of a disclaimer or alternate signature when sending personal e-mails.

Employees are responsible for reimbursing LSx for the cost of personal calls on LSx mobile phones, or personal long-distance calls using the LSx telephone system.

As noted in section 11 it may be necessary to access personal e-mail and voicemail accounts to retrieve urgent information when the account owner is absent. Users are advised that this may lead to personal voicemail messages being heard by other staff, or personal e-mail messages being seen by other staff. You are encouraged to mark any

personal e-mails clearly or to file them in clearly marked 'personal' folders so that other users who need to access your account in your absence will know not to examine such messages.

### **Use of approved accounts and equipment**

LSx is responsible for providing you with IT equipment, telephone extensions, individual e-mail accounts, software, security systems and training to enable you to use LSx communication systems. Mobile phones will also be issued on the authorisation of the line manager and budget holder, for frequent travellers or where it is expected that the cost of using a LSx mobile phone will be less than the reimbursement for calls from a personal phone. You may not install alternative e-mail and Internet products onto LSx equipment or use external Internet-based e-mail systems for LSx business correspondence without the express permission of the IT team. You may not use access methods that incur unnecessary cost or risk to LSx. You may not set up web sites using LSx's name, logo or information without authorisation, or set up personal web sites on LSx servers or systems.

You are responsible for helping to maintain the security and efficiency of the IT, e-mail and voicemail systems. You must ensure that your passwords are kept secure and that other users cannot access your e-mail or voicemail without your permission; where you need to give regular access to your email account or online diary to a co-worker, IT can advise on the best way to do this. If you suspect that your password is known to others or that your e-mail account, telephone or other equipment is being abused, you should report this immediately to the IT staff. You must comply with any procedures for preventing virus infection. You should keep your e-mail database within approved size limits. Activities that cause congestion on the network should be avoided; where possible, you should send links or shortcuts rather than entire documents, particularly when sending to large groups of users.

### **Use of E-mail**

Care should be taken when using e-mail; although e-mail appears to be less formal than written communication, it has equivalent legal status. Intention and opinion expressed in e-mail messages can be held against you or LSx in the same way as verbal and written expressions. Contracts made by e-mail are as binding as contracts on paper and LSx may be liable for anything contained in an e-mail message; you should take care not to enter into contracts inadvertently when sending e-mail messages. E-mails are not privileged in law and may have to be disclosed in the event of a suit against LSx. You or LSx may be liable for any idle and malicious gossip, unsubstantiated allegations or other unwarranted criticism communicated by e-mail.

As LSx's name is part of your LSx e-mail address, care should be taken when using this address externally. Staff participating in newsgroups, discussion forums and mailing lists should take full account of the fact that they will be speaking publicly on behalf of LSx; any contributions that are incompatible with their role as LSx staff should not be sent from a LSx address or system.

### **Confidentiality**

You are expected to treat confidential electronic information with the same care as you would confidential paper-based information. You must keep all such information secure, use it only for the purpose(s) intended and not disclose the same to any unauthorised third party (which may include other LSx staff). You should not forward e-mails or voicemail messages that may contain confidential or personal information to third parties without permission of the sender.

At the same time, you should be aware that e-mails or voicemails sent by you may not be secure and private. Messages may be forwarded or distributed to others without your

permission. Appropriate caution should be used when handling confidential or personal information.

### **Data Protection**

E-mails constitute part of the formal records of LSx and are subject to the Data Protection Act 1998 and subsequent regulations. Persons have a right to see on demand any e-mails where they are named as the subject. E-mails containing information about individuals should not be kept for longer than is necessary and reasonable. Using e-mail or any other communications medium to disclose personal information without proper authority is contrary to this policy and may also constitute a criminal offense.

### **Copyright**

E-mails, attachments, and material downloaded from the Internet are covered by copyright and should not be used, forwarded or stored in a way that would violate copyright.

### **Inappropriate Use**

You should not engage in any activity that is illegal, distasteful or likely to have negative repercussions for LSx. You must not create or forward messages in any format, upload, download, use, retain, distribute, or disseminate any images, text, materials or software which:

- Are or might be considered indecent, obscene, pornographic or illegal
- Are or might be offensive or abusive in that the context could be considered to be a personal attack, harassment or bullying, sexist, racist or otherwise discriminatory, malicious gossip or unsubstantiated allegations
- Might be defamatory or incur liability on the part of LSx or adversely affect the image of LSx
- Encourage in or promote activities that make unproductive use of LSx time e.g. sending personal worthy-cause appeals or other non-work-related e-mails to All Staff, chain letters, unsolicited advertisements, spam, etc.
- Abuse the privilege of limited, occasional and incidental use of LSx communication systems for personal purposes
- Use LSx's name, logo or information outside the scope of your job responsibilities without authorisation
- Might affect or have the potential to affect the performance of, damage or overload LSx's IT system, network or external communications in any way.
- Publicize or use a LSx address for purposes not related to LSx's purpose or your LSx capacity
- Would be a breach of copyright or license provision with respect to both programs and data
- Modify previously sent messages without the agreement or permission of the sender without noting the changes, in such a way as to misrepresent the original text

- Breach privacy or confidentiality with respect to LSx, our partners and donors, or other members of staff
- Use LSx e-mail, internet or other communication systems for commercial business unrelated to your contract with LSx
- Inadvertently create a binding contract
- Contravene existing policies, procedures or contracts of employment

In general, you should not use LSx communications equipment for anything that you are not prepared to take responsibility for within the context of your LSx role.

The following activities are expressly forbidden:

- The introduction of any computer virus
- Seeking to gain unauthorised access to restricted areas of the network or other hacking activities
- Attempts to access others e-mail or voicemail without authorisation; or attempts to forge, impersonate or amend e-mails or voicemails by others.

Suspected misuse of e-mail, the Internet, telephone or other communication systems should be reported to your line manager or the Director of Resources, who may judge such misuse to require use of the formal disciplinary procedure. This could result in disciplinary measures, including dismissal. If a user receives any unacceptable messages in any format they should report them; the message in question should not be deleted until any necessary investigations are completed.

## **Monitoring**

All LSx's resources are provided solely for business purposes. At any time and without prior notice maintains the right to examine any systems and part or all of the data on those systems. Any information stored on a computer, hard drive, diskette, voicemail system, mobile phone, fax or in any other manner may be the subject of scrutiny by LSx if we have reasonable grounds to believe that criminal offences or breach of LSx policies are taking place, or to prevent such activities from taking place.

LSx reserves the right for authorised personnel to access, retrieve, read and delete any communication that is created on, received through or sent in LSx communication systems to ensure compliance with company policy. Any amendments, modifications or deletions of communications must comply with relevant Data Protection law and whistle-blowing regulations.

If employees are absent for any reason and there are good business reasons for checking their e-mail or voicemail without their permission, this will be done at the discretion of Senior Management. Persons accessing the accounts of other staff in their absence are advised that it is contrary to Data Protection legislation to make use of any personal information which may be inadvertently seen during such access, unless it is in the interest of the person whose account is being accessed, or unless it reveals activity that no employer could be expected to ignore.

It is not currently LSx's practice or intention to intercept or monitor communications on a routine basis for the purpose of monitoring general employee conduct or performance. If

this changes, LSx will consult with staff, conduct a full impact assessment and notify staff of the nature and extent of such monitoring.

### **Communication records of former staff**

When staff leave LSx, any further mail to their address will be forwarded to another member of staff to be determined by the relevant manager. Historical e-mail records will also be made available for research purposes if necessary. Telephone, voice mail and mobile phone accounts will be closed. It is the responsibility of the staff person to notify their contacts of how to reach them after they leave LSx.

### **Keeping this policy up to date**

This policy will be reviewed each year by the Operations Coordinator to incorporate any changes in law, LSx business needs and best practice.