

WHPC Meeting 7th February 2023

Agenda item 23/043-3

Purpose: Cllrs to decide whether or not to remove the National Association of Local Councils' (NALC) promotional video from the WHPC webpage created to promote becoming a Councillor

Reason:

Cllr Bennett has criticised our use of the NALC Jackie Weaver promotional YouTube video on the Parish Council website. His recent email specifically refers to "pornographic, mysoginistic [Sic] and violent videos" which appeared as "recommended videos" in his YouTube feed after he had viewed the NALC Jackie Weaver video.

Background:

NALC has produced a range of promotional materials under the banner Make A Change, aimed at encouraging people to become Councillors. The materials, ranging from leaflets/posters to a short video featuring infamous Handforth Clerk Jackie Weaver, were designed for use by Parish Councils. Indeed NALC specifically encourages Parish Councils to use these shared resources and WHPC has used them as well as our own material on a dedicated webpage aimed at encouraging residents to stand as Councillors in the May 2023 Parish Council election.

How YouTube recommends videos:

When an organisation makes a video, it needs to be hosted on a platform so that people can see it. The most common video platform is YouTube, popular because it is free and easy to use. NALC has chosen YouTube to host its Jackie Weaver video to make it easy for Parish Councils to share it on their own websites.

Because the video is hosted on YouTube, anyone wishing to link to the video is also tied to the YouTube platform. Offering its services for free entails a quid pro quo by the viewers, namely that YouTube will do everything it can to encourage people to click on other videos, not just the one they originally wanted to watch. These are called "recommended videos" and pop up at the end of the original one, or, if you are on the YouTube website, appear in a sidebar or somewhere on the page.

Every user will see a different set of "recommended videos". Why? Because the service feeds over 80 billion pieces of information into an algorithm to determine which videos to recommend to which users. YouTube is owned by Google. So the user information collated by the algorithm includes things like their YouTube watch history, Google search history, information from Gmail accounts, website subscriptions and lots of other little breadcrumbs of information that we all leave lying around when we're on the internet.

Conclusion:

- We as a Parish Council are not responsible for which follow-up videos are recommended to viewers by YouTube. That is tailored to each user based on data gathered by Google YouTube.
- There is no inappropriate content in the NALC video.
- NALC chose YouTube to platform their video and allow Parish Councils to link to it.
- The Jackie Weaver video is a fun way of promoting the idea of becoming a Parish Councillor, has been professionally made by NALC at some expense for Parish Councils to use.
- You have to be over 18 to stand as a Councillor and every user has the option of not viewing follow-up videos if they are not interested in the content. Indeed this is how the algorithm learns what to recommend in the future.
- When the election has taken place, the Become A Councillor webpage on the WHPC site will be archived, so will only be visible for 3 more months.

For these reasons, I recommend that we keep the NALC Jackie Weaver video on the WHPC website.

Community Engagement WG, 7th February 2023