



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT

IMPORTANT REMINDER OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

It is expedient at this time to remind Brethren of the UGLE policy concerning the use of Social Media, an extract of which appears below. In particular, please note that no post on Social Media should “identify anyone else as a Freemason without his explicit consent.” This will include any photograph taken in any setting which may identify anyone as a Freemason.

An Extract of the UGLE policy appears below, and all Brethren who make use of Social Media are asked to make themselves acquainted with it and ensure that they comply with it.

UGLE - SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Summary

Social media platforms have become an increasingly popular channel for communication in the 21st century. They provide ways to share content with a wide audience, and as such are excellent tools for sharing information about Freemasonry and Masonic activities. However, as with any powerful tool, social media need to be used with caution, as incorrect use can have a damaging impact on Freemasonry’s public image, and therefore on Freemasonry itself. This document has been written to assist individuals and Masonic units to use these platforms effectively, confidently, and within the compass of propriety.

Social media and Freemasonry

Scope

This policy applies to posts made by Freemasons on all social media platforms, whether those platforms are open to the public (such as Facebook and Twitter), or just to Freemasons (such as Porchway, a web-based portal set up by the Metropolitan Grand Lodge of London). The term ‘post’ refers to any action taken on social media, whether sharing original content, making a comment on content someone else has shared (including ‘liking’ Facebook posts and Tweets), or re-sharing content to one’s own connections.

Masonic websites do not fall within the scope of this document. The reason for this is, broadly speaking, that web content is static: the creator of the website adds content which can be viewed by others, but not significantly interacted with. While websites provide a one-way method for dissemination of information, social media platforms are by nature vehicles for conversations about any content shared, as anything posted to them can be commented on or re-shared to other members’ networks. The purpose of this document is

to emphasise the highly public nature of social media channels, and ensure Freemasons use these powerful channels for public conversation in a responsible way.

Digital Ambassadorship

As a citizen every Freemason has a duty not to engage in conduct which is contrary to the laws of the land. As a Freemason he also has a duty not to engage in activity which may bring Freemasonry into disrepute.

Excerpt from Rule 179 of the book of constitutions.

It is important to note that any interactions a Freemason has on social media may be visible to anyone in the world, for, while it is possible to restrict the audience of one's posts, it is not possible to control how someone will react to them. A private post can easily be shared and reposted publicly by anyone who has access to it. Even if an original post is deleted or edited, someone could already have shared it in its original form. As far as social media are concerned, everything one does or says is permanently recorded, and there is no such thing as a truly private post.

Therefore, acting as an ambassador for Freemasonry online is part of a Freemason's duty. Rules (civic and Masonic) and expectations that apply to one's daily conduct apply equally within the digital sphere, as comments may be taken out of context and used as representative of the views of the United Grand Lodge of England.

Here is a list of behaviours and topics to avoid when posting on social media. These apply to personal accounts, as well as to accounts that individual Freemasons may manage on behalf of a Lodge, Province, District, or other Masonic entity. They apply to any Freemason who has identified himself as a Freemason online, whether he is posting in Masonic or non-Masonic channels. This list is not comprehensive, but is intended to act as an introductory guide to topics or behaviours that are considered inappropriate for posting to any audience on social media.

When posting on social media platforms, a Freemason must not:

- produce, link to, or refer to any content that is illegal, defamatory, or likely to offend others
- cause or contribute to any hostile or unproductive arguments, or exercise any private piques or quarrels (that is to say, good-natured debate is fine, but one should be prepared to abandon the exchange if it ceases to be friendly)
- discuss or allude to any of the Masonic Signs, Tokens, or Words (see the Obligation of the First Degree)
- claim to speak for any Masonic body (e.g. a Lodge, a Province or District, a charity or committee, or UGLE) on whose behalf he is not expressly authorised to speak (for instance, membership of a Lodge in London does not give one the authority to speak on behalf of Metropolitan Grand Lodge)
- identify anyone else as a Freemason without his explicit consent
- contain any personal information about any Freemason without his explicit consent, such as address, telephone number, or anything else covered by the Data Protection Act 1998: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/>



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- attempt to use Masonic channels as a vehicle for personal profit, or for any other form of self- promotion
- criticise UGLE or any other legitimate Masonic authority

Best Practice

This section provides some guidance on the kinds of content to share using social media platforms. This is by no means an exhaustive list — rather, it is intended to stimulate the mind to consider what other types of content might be interesting to one’s social media audience. That is to say, a Freemason may share content or participate in conversations online as long as the content or conversation presents Freemasonry in a positive light, does not contravene any of the principles outlined in the Digital Ambassadorship section above, and is relevant to the channel in which it is being posted.

Subject matter

A Freemason may publicly share any Masonic content that contributes to a positive public image of Freemasonry, such as charitable work and events, good causes supported by Freemasons, and information about Masonic history.

Social media channels can also be used to share information only relevant to Freemasons, but care should be exercised to use a more restricted channel, such as a closed or secret Facebook group (see the guide in the appendix). Topics that might be discussed here include:

- discussions about Masonic allegory and symbolism (as long as there is no mention of any Masonic Signs, Tokens, or Words)
- background information about other Masonic Orders (as long as it does not ruin the experience for those who are not members)
- unusual visits to other Lodges (e.g. for a special ceremony, or because a group of members of a Lodge, Province, or District have travelled a long distance to visit another Lodge)

end of extract

The UGLE policy continues by giving examples of the practical use of Social Media. The full policy may be found by following this link:

<http://ugle.org.uk/2-uncategorised/292-social-media-policy-guidelines>

