

Provincial Social Media Guidelines 2018



The following guidelines are not intended to curb enthusiasm, but to provide a framework through which we can all embrace social media and reap its undeniable benefits, for ourselves and the Craft.

INTRODUCTION

Social media technologies provide an opportunity for people to gather in online communities of common interest and to create, share and consume content. They are transforming the way in which we as Freemasons can interact with our fellow Brethren and also with many others who have an interest in Freemasonry.

We have introduced this set of social media guidelines not to direct, but to provide guidance for Brethren participating in conversations and sharing information online which have references to, or a potential impact on, the Province of Hampshire & Isle of Wight in particular and Freemasonry in general. Examples of where these guidelines apply include the following:

Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Friendster)

Micro-blogging sites (e.g. Twitter, Socialcast)

Video and photo sharing websites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube)

Weblogs, (using platforms such as Blogger, Typepad, Wordpress) including corporate blogs, personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications

Forums and discussion boards (e.g. Whirlpool) Online encyclopaedias and dictionaries (e.g. Wikipedia, urbandictionary) Review sites (e.g. Amazon)

The list above is not exhaustive and new social media technologies are being developed all the time. These guidelines are intended to cover all new/emerging technologies as well as those listed above.

GUIDELINES

We understand that the use of social media by individual members of the Craft is a private matter for that individual. However, anything posted online is available for all to read and may well be available for viewing for a very long time! Therefore, if you are utilising social media and you choose to make references to Freemasonry, please adhere to the following guidelines:

That your comments or postings are in accordance with the principles and tenets of the Craft. As always, the Book of Constitutions is there for further guidance.

That you are personally responsible for the comments (i.e. postings) you make. Always try to remember that you are speaking as an individual and not 'on behalf of' your Lodge, Province and/or Freemasonry.

Remember that information on the web can remain in place for extended periods of time.

If you have your own website, blog or Facebook page which references Freemasonry in any level of detail, please include the following disclaimer – “The views expressed here are my own and not those of the Province of Hampshire & Isle of Wight in particular, or Freemasonry in general.”

Do not post anything online that you would not be happy to share with a non-Mason, i.e. member of the public.

Naturally, you should not disclose any of the methods of recognition – i.e. signs, tokens, or words.

Ensure that you respect copyright, privacy and confidentiality and all other applicable laws.

When re-posting make sure that you afford due credit to the source, where relevant – i.e. try to avoid blatant plagiarism. When posting on behalf of an area, group or lodge, avoid use of the 'I' and 'Me' – it's 'We' and 'Us'!

Adhere to the Terms of Use of any sites and seek to conform to the cultural and behavioural norms of the social media platform being used.

Remember that public sites are not suitable for internal communications with other Brethren. There are restricted access forums should you wish to share information which is private to Freemasonry, although this Province supports and encourages the practice of complete openness within its social media channels and closed groups do not support that ethos.

Respect all individuals and communities with which you interact online.

A Freemason is taught to be cautious and he already knows to avoid discussions concerning race, creed and politics; also, not to offend through personal insults or obscenity – in summary, not to engage in any conduct which would be unacceptable within Freemasonry itself.

Remember the advice: “What may seem funny to you could easily be offensive to others.”

Be polite and respectful of others' opinions, even in times of animated discussion and debate.

Be aware of your association with Freemasonry and ensure that your profile and content is consistent with how you would wish to present yourself externally (remembering how far social media can extend).

Do not publish material which is defamatory of, or injurious to, any other person or organisation and avoid criticism, harassment or vilification in all cases and at all times.

The above largely relates to postings made by individuals on their own behalf but, in addition, Brethren should never seek to gain business or personal advantage through their use of our Province's Facebook Groups. Those Brethren who have been accepted as official social media representatives of this Province will already be experienced and therefore familiar with the above guidelines. However, it might still be useful to revisit them.

In conclusion Brethren, social media can be a very powerful and highly effective communication channel, enabling and empowering us to interact with a much wider and diverse audience. Used correctly we have a platform to take our message of friendship and openness to a completely new level, encouraging participation from our own Brethren and the general public alike.

All private Lodge Facebook pages, Twitter & Instagram must be treated as if it is a normal website – **i.e. be open and seen to be open.** The only exception being that of Chat Forums & General Group pages within an Area. We understand the need for such pages to be moderated and this can be safely achieved in a 'closed environment'

Brethren are reminded to be vigilant in the current and unsettling times that affect most parts of the world. If somebody makes threats of terrorism or sympathises with such institutions on Lodge Facebook or Twitter accounts, the correct action is to report it immediately to the Police and inform the Provincial Secretary and the Provincial Communications Officer. If possible a screen shot of the comment should be made and the post removed.

A Lodge member who has been nominated as the social media representative must always ensure that any posts which are created on either the Lodge Twitter or Facebook accounts, must represent the Lodge itself and its membership and not be solely or personally related to the individual posting them.

In relation to the advertising of Lodge social events on flyers or posters which are being distributed via email, or displayed in Masonic Centres, and the contacting of outside organisations via electronic means - these should not display a 'business' brand, image or descriptor if one is in business for oneself. Use of an employer's branded email address (as long as it is authorised) should be avoided if at all possible. Most Internet Service Providers allow for multiple free email addresses, so please consider setting one up for your specific Masonic purposes.

INFORMATION FOR THE GUIDANCE OF MEMBERS OF THE CRAFT – 2017

over the last twelve and a half years the Board has found it necessary to draw attention on three occasions to the misuse of cameras, mobile telephones and other electronic devices (e.g. tablets) during or in connection with Masonic meetings. In 2009 the Grand Lodge approved a consolidated statement on the matter (which was modified slightly the following year). The Board regrets that it appears necessary to revert once more to the subject. The last few years have seen significant technological advances, with the result that the use of such devices is less obtrusive – and therefore less easily detected – than was previously the case.

The Board, however, remains firmly of the view that any objection to the use of such devices is based on the impropriety of taking an electronic record of proceedings in open Lodge at least as much as on any distraction that the process may afford to the individual and others in his vicinity.

At the same time social media, such as Twitter, have evolved, enabling the almost instantaneous transmission of information to a wide range of recipients. The Board considers that relaying information by such means from within a meeting

while that meeting is in progress falls within the scope of Rule 177 of the Book of Constitutions. It accordingly hopes that the Grand Lodge will approve the following new consolidated statement:

(a) All mobile telephones must be switched off during meetings of the Grand Lodge, Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Lodges or Private Lodges. If an urgent call is expected, arrangements should be made for it to be received by the Tyler.

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2. **(b) Whilst there is no objection to the taking of group photographs in a Lodge Room in connection with a special meeting after the Lodge has been closed, the taking of photographs during meetings (including any procession immediately before or after a meeting of a Private Lodge) is prohibited. The prohibition extends to any purported reconstruction after a Lodge has been closed of any part of the proceedings while the Lodge was open, but does not, subject to compliance with (c) below, preclude the taking of a photograph of a procession into or out of a Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Lodge by the express permission and under the control of the Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Master.**
3. **(c) Within Freemasons' Hall such specially posed group photographs may, subject to the permission of the Grand Secretary, be taken in a Lodge Room, but photographs in or of other parts of the building, and in particular in or of the Grand Temple, must not be taken unless special permission has been given by or on behalf of the Board of General Purposes.**
4. **(d) The transmission of any photograph or information (whether in the form of text, images or otherwise) by electronic means from within a Lodge Room relating to a meeting in progress there, whether transmission is to a single individual or to any group of individuals, is also prohibited.**
5. **(e) Brethren are reminded that Rule 177 of the Book of Constitutions imposes a prohibition on the publication of the proceedings of any Lodge (which includes the Grand Lodge and any Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Lodge) and that the taking of any photograph during a meeting is likely to lead to a breach of that Rule.**
6. **(f) The submission of any such photograph for inclusion in *Freemasonry Today* will be met with a curt rejection, and it is expected that those responsible for the publication and content of Provincial or District magazines or newsletters will adopt the same policy.**
7. **(g) Disciplinary action is likely to be taken against the Brethren concerned in cases of failure to comply with the above policy in respect of photography or use of social media.**
8. **(h) Whilst the taking of photographs during the after proceedings of a Lodge (and, less importantly, during a reception between a meeting and dinner) is unlikely to offend against any Rule of the Book of Constitutions, it can nevertheless be intrusive and distracting. Accordingly Brethren are reminded that good manners dictate that the agreement of the individuals concerned should be obtained before they are photographed informally in such a context, and that such photographs be taken during the after proceedings only with the permission of the Master or whoever presides at the dinner.**

(Extract from the report of the Board of General Purposes, adopted 10 September 2014)