

# Wiltshire Freemasonry



2024

S O C I A L M E D I A G U I D E L I N E S



## Social Media Guidelines

Based on the United Grand Lodge of England's guidelines on Media Strategy and Social Media.

### A word from the Provincial Grand Master....



I am constantly amazed at how the Internet plays such an important role in each of our lives and the life of a Freemasons Lodge. It is difficult to imagine how our predecessors in Freemasonry ever managed without access to Google, email and the World Wide Web.

I am very aware of the powerful aid provided by a web site. Our own Provincial web site has proven to be a significant tool in the armoury of the Communication Team, providing a means to disseminate information, allowing 24 hour access to [InTouch>OnLine](#), and Across the Plain, and by promoting activities throughout the Province, and even beyond its boundaries.

I know that some Lodges are minded to extend their on-line presence with websites, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, and I wholeheartedly support their efforts. However, in much the same way as the Province is bound to observe the guidelines laid down by UGLE, so too must individual Lodges and members adhere to the guidelines as set out by the Province.

The Provincial Grand Communication Officer is the designated officer responsible for establishing and monitoring the rules. To this end I ask that you work closely with the Communication Team who will be able to offer the very best of advice and support. T

All comments, whether on a website, Facebook, Twitter, or via WhatsApp must at all times conform to the highest standards of propriety. Complaints concerning any post or message on any Lodge website, Facebook, Twitter, or WhatsApp page should be made to the Provincial Grand Communication Officer [comms@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk](mailto:comms@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk) who will deal with the matter directly with the individual concerned, the site administrators or the Lodge secretary. The manner in which a complaint might be handled will have regard to the nature of the post or message, and the context in which it has been posted.

John Reid

**Provincial Grand Master**

January 2024

## 1. ALL SOCIAL MEDIA SITES.

The use of any and all social media sites is subject to the written approval of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire, and such granting of permission is delegated to the **Provincial Communication Officer**.

Social media is a very useful tool for driving traffic to your website and for connecting with a younger and more diverse audience.

If you are worried about abuse and spam messages then remember that Twitter, Facebook, etc. all have methods of reporting and blocking users and, ultimately, you can just shut your account.

Ensure that anything that is set up for your Lodge, whether it be a website, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or a WhatsApp group is done in conjunction with the Provincial Communication Officer. This will help to avoid any misunderstanding on what can and what cannot be included in the particular forms of Social media you wish to use, and will avoid any undue delay in approving your Social media presence.

## 2. WEBSITES.

The current policy of the Province is that all Lodge websites must be open and be seen to be open, with no logins or private areas on any publicly accessible area. It is acknowledged that the UGLE and some Provinces have websites with 'password' controlled areas, that does not alter, affect or justify the setting up of similar sites in Wiltshire. Should the Province alter its position on this point, Lodge secretaries will be advised.

Check with the Provincial Communication Officer before you start to build a Lodge website. There are Provincial rules and guidelines to which they can make you aware. In particular the Province has an approved website template, and it is unlikely the Province will approve a Lodge website other than one built using the approved template

A Lodge website **must be approved** by the Provincial Communication Officer **before** it is made public.

### 2.1 General.

Ideally, the URL should be **.org.uk** It is entirely up to your Lodge what details are entered for the owner details. There are no Provincial rules governing the name you use, but the advice of the Province is that it is preferable to have the website in the name of the Lodge, and that it clearly understood from the outset that the website must 'belong' to the Lodge. In the event of a change of Brother managing the Lodge website, the Lodge must have the ability to secure access to the site.

The Province has an approved template for Lodge websites and recommends that Lodges utilise the template whenever possible. The website is managed by the province on behalf of the Lodge. Approval for any other website development is unlikely to be given.

### 2.2 Suggestions on Content.

This is your Lodge's website so look to promote the character of the Lodge.

e.g.: have 'xxx Lodge No. xxx' in the header) and look to incorporate distinguishing features of your Lodge such as your banner (or items from it.)

The Province does not encourage multiple page Lodge websites, and recommends that 'less is more' when developing a website. In the event that you already have an approved multi page website, the navigation should be consistent. Ideally, the same navigation should be shown in the same position on each page. Similarly your header, footer, and the page width should be consistent.

Possible pages you might want to include (this is by no means an exhaustive list):

- **Home / Welcome Page:** this can set the tone and guide users round the rest of the site, try not to make it too cluttered
- **About Us / History:** Information about the Lodge as it is now, its history, the personalities, officers, etc.
- **Meetings:** where and when you meet; you could include a map (e.g.: Google map or Streetmap) either linked to or embedded in the page.
- **Charity:** particularly non-masonic charities. Linking to charities will bring this aspect to life.
- **Links:** to specific pages on the Provincial site.
- **Enquiries for membership** MUST be signposted to the Provincial website and not to a Lodge specific page or contact.
- **Images** [also see the Data Protection paragraph below]: The addition of images really brings sites to life – whether they are included throughout the content, or are in a specific Gallery section. Remember to caption all images, otherwise they will be meaningless to future members, and non-members.

### 2.3 Data Protection (GDPR).

- If people have a problem having their details on a site they can ask for them to be removed. It is always preferable, and courteous, to obtain permission to include personal details.
- Similarly with images, if you obtain permission and make it clear that the image is going to be used for the site, and consent is given (preferably in writing) future problems will be avoided..
- Children are the exception and are covered by specific rules. It is easiest not to include images of children.

### 2.4 Cookies.

The use of cookies on websites is legally controlled. This law is extraordinary as virtually every website in the world uses cookies, and needs to do so for them to work correctly – as well as to collect analytics on how the site is used, sharing through social media, etc. Websites approved by the Provincial Communication Officer are free to copy and use our ‘Privacy & Cookies’ policy which can be found in the footer of all our sites, and which we will update as this develops.

### 2.5 Getting your UGLE and Provincial Charter Mark.

Make sure the Provincial Communication Officer approves your site **before** it is set to go live. Once your website is live the Provincial Communication Officer will undertake an initial check of your website before initiating the process for obtaining your UGLE Charter Mark, and awarding the Provincial Charter Mark.

Typically you can expect to receive your Charter Mark within 1-3 months, but please note that at certain times of year, for example in the run-up to Grand Lodge meetings, it will take longer.

### 2.6 Things you just mustn’t do.

- 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 Wiltshire does not give a Freemason the authority to speak on behalf of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire)
- 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 GDPR:
- 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.

### 3. X (formerly known as TWITTER).

Twitter is a very immediate form of communication. As many users follow Twitter on their mobile phone it is an extremely useful tool by which to disseminate information. You should always consider carefully, and make thorough checks, before tweeting, remembering that an ill-advised tweet can be re-tweeted to a global audience in a matter of minutes, if not seconds. The words you type and send can also be 'remembered' in years to come, often with distinctly unfortunate consequences. There is no such thing as a private tweet.

#### 3.1 The Province requires all Masonic twitter sites in Wiltshire to follow and retweet @wiltspgl

3.2 Please follow other Masonic feeds, such as @UGLE\_GrandLodge, @GrandChapter @mcf, and @FreemasonsHall

3.3 The Province encourages Lodges to follow other Wiltshire lodge Twitter accounts.

3.4 When tweeting about charities that your Lodge has been supporting, include their Twitter name (@mycharity) so that they can pick up your tweet and re-tweet it to their followers. If you alert them before doing this, you will greatly increase the chances of this happening and your tweet gaining a much wider audience.

3.5 You can retweet (RT) any tweets from others to your own followers (nb: always retweet, and never copy and tweet as your own: tweeters want / need to know the reach of their tweets)

3.6 The words 'secret' or 'secrecy' should **never** be used in a Masonic tweet.

3.7 Avoid the use of Masonic titles and ranks.

### 4 FACEBOOK and other interactive sites.

4.1 Set up a Page or an Open Group; a Private Group can be used as an Administration Area (its existence will not show up to non-members and users can only join if invited to. Invitations to join must only be to personal contacts – the group cannot be advertised).

#### 4.2 The Province requires all Masonic Facebook sites in Wiltshire to follow @wiltshirefreemasons .

Please follow the main Masonic pages, such as [UnitedGrandLodgeofEngland](#), [FreemasonryToday](#), and [FreemasonsHall](#). If you **like** them, they will **like** you back, and your audience will start to build.

4.3 The Province does not support the use of Facebook as a 'chat forum' or for Brethren to air political or religious viewpoints. In particular interactive social sites, such as WhatsApp, SnapChat, Microsoft Teams etc., set up on behalf of a Lodge, Masonic club or society must not be used to convey messages of a political nature, or promote or support any cause which may 'sow the seeds of discord among members'. Brethren are reminded that while content is not monitored, feedback and complaints will always be investigated. Instances of crude, extreme or offensive religious, racist, sexual or inappropriate content will not be tolerated. **In setting up a Facebook or any other interactive site the Lodge accepts the jurisdiction of the Province as to the suitability of content posted, and agree to take whatever action is requested by the Provincial Communication Officer in the event that the Province considers the material to contravene the principle of being within the bounds of propriety. This may be a request to amend the post, or to remove it.**

## 5. YOUTUBE

5.1 YouTube allows you to share videos with a wide audience and is also a useful place to store videos so that you do not use up your own bandwidth when users view them.

5.2 **The Province requests Masonic YouTube sites in Wiltshire to subscribe to Wiltshire Freemasons**

## 6. BLOGS.

6.1 A blog is a website where opinions and stories are shared, and is updated often. It's a great place to start when entering into the world of social media. The key is to make your blog about things you would talk about in public.

6.2 The Province of Wiltshire does **NOT** encourage the use of Lodge 'Blog sites'

## WILTSHIRE FREEMASONS - SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR X (formerly TWITTER).

### 7. Introduction.

The term '*social media*' covers a wide variety of communication channels which includes Twitter and Facebook.

In general terms social media has a single aim; to allow easy connectivity between the sender and recipient of a message.

The perceived advantage of sites such as Twitter is the immediacy of the message to the community '*following*' the Twitter account and the ability of numerous recipients to re-send or re-tweet the original message.

### 7.1 WILTSHIRE FREEMASONS – X (formerly known as TWITTER).

The Province of Wiltshire has an account under the user name of **Wiltshire Freemasons**. The address is **@wiltspgl**.

The primary objective in having a site is to provide a service that allows Wiltshire Freemasons to receive content from Province that both informs and interests. The site will also enable members to respond to Provincial messages and share their contributions with others.

The Province acknowledges and respects the ownership of the content that users tweet and share. Each user is responsible for the content they place on the site. The Province will not automatically re-tweet, nor will the Province '*follow*' as a matter of course.

The Province has a policy of not using the words '*secret*' or '*secrecy*' in any Twitter (or other social media post) and requires Wiltshire Masonic users to observe this policy in any posts they generate.

The Province does not proactively monitor social media sites. However, the Province is often made aware of infractions and reserves the right to request users to moderate or remove posts which it considers inappropriate. In the event of a user refusing to co-operate with the Province, action of a disciplinary action may be invoked.

The Provincial Twitter account is managed by the Editor of the Provincial Website [www.wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk](http://www.wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk) All requests regarding the use of Twitter or these guidelines should be referred to him in the first instance addressed to. **comms@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk**

## 7.2 Lodges:

Individual Lodges are encouraged to use **X** as a form of communication with members. The information given to members through the medium of **X** should be carefully thought through and Provincial guidance adhered to. Lodges should not use **X** or Facebook for attraction (recruitment) campaigns.

## 7.3 Content.

In order to provide a Provincial **X** site and communicate and stay connected with others, there are some limitations on the type of content that can and should be published. It is of course a fundamental tenet of the Provincial **X** site that anything placed on it should at all times be accurate and honest. The same conditions apply to Lodge **X** sites.

Nothing should be placed on the site which might be adjudged inappropriate or in breach of the criminal or civil law.

**X** is a very immediate form of communication, with many people following favourite sites on smart phones. This immediacy comes with the need to be vigilant. Once sent the content of the tweet can be re-tweeted within seconds. More importantly, in today's society where context is often disregarded, a Tweet may well be misinterpreted either unintentionally or wilfully, the impact on the sender can be 'literally' life changing.

The watchword should always be - **“think before you tweet”**.

Following other sites is one of the joys of social media. It is therefore very important choosing who to follow. Every Brother should be aware that there are sites, and **X** users designed to trap the unwary and to create disharmony within Freemasonry.

Just because an **X** site has a 'masonic' inclination does not make it a legitimate masonic site. The need to be cautious cannot be over stressed.

When tweeting about charities and organisations supported by the Province or Lodges, include their **X** name so that they can easily pick up a tweet and re-tweet it to their followers, will ensure tweets gain a wider audience and provide much needed publicity for the charity.

## 7.4 Things to be aware of.

To assist in understanding the Province's aims and objectives with regard to social media and **X** in particular, the following should be considered:

1. The person posting the tweet is legally responsible for the integrity of the content.
2. It is the personal responsibility of the person posting to ensure that laws are not infringed – including:
  - Intellectual Property - copyright and trade marks
  - Law of Confidence
  - Defamation
  - Data Protection (GDPR)
  - Privacy - Human Rights.

3. Not everyone will agree with the content of a tweet; it is easy to upset or offend.

**Do:**

- Engage in appropriate conversations.
- Be genuine and transparent.
- Keep personal details private.
- Share content - but always attribute the original author.
- Think twice before tweeting or re-tweeting - is it relevant; is it correct; is it necessary; is it legal?

**Do Not:**

- Use a false account to impersonate another person or organisation.
- Give infer or imply that your views are those of Provincial Grand Lodge or the UGLE.
- Divulge any personal information.
- Use people's names unless it forms part of their **X** identity - e.g. @fredbloggs or if re-tweeting or quoting something that is already in the public domain.
- Forget that a social media presence becomes part of a 'brand image'; posts, pictures, images, tweets, status updates can stay online forever.
- Bring Freemasonry into disrepute: at first glance 280 characters appears a lot of words; it really isn't. However, one word or phrase incorrectly used may be enough to give offence and may bring Freemasonry into disrepute.
- Use images (even with selfies) unless you have the permission of **everyone** in the photograph.
- Use images which may be considered vulgar, rude, profane or likely to cause offence.
- Do not use the UGLE Coat of Arms or the Provincial logo/crest.
- Do not use any image of the Square and Compasses which includes the symbol **G**.
- Never claim to be tweeting on behalf of the Province or Freemasonry in general.
- Post Tweets of a personal nature on a **X** account operated on behalf of the Lodge.
- Forget your **X** posts are written under the name of your Lodge, and must not be attributed to or claimed to be made on behalf of the Province of Wiltshire.

**WILTSHIRE FREEMASONS - SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR WhatsApp.**

**8. WhatsApp**

**In setting up a WhatsApp site the Lodge (its members) accepts the jurisdiction of the Province as to the suitability of content posted, and agree to take whatever action is requested by the Provincial Communication Officer in the event that the Province considers the material to contravene the principle of being with in the bounds of propriety. This may be a request to amend the content, or to remove it.**

WhatsApp is an instant messaging and voice-over-IP service. It allows users to send text, voice messages and video messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user locations, and other content. It is a popular social media platform used by over 2.7 billion people worldwide.



WhatsApp boasts end-to-end encryption which simply means that only the sender and recipient can read what's sent. It doesn't mean that others cannot receive messages placed on the WhatsApp page.

Lodges are encouraged to use WhatsApp as a means of internal social communication. However, it should be noted that WhatsApp messaging is not a substitute for the exercise of good manners in communicating with Lodge Officers. In particular notifying the Lodge Secretary of any apology for non attendance, the dining Secretary/Steward to book a meal, or to advise the Director of Ceremonies of your attendance/availability for a Masonic event.

**8.1** Just because WhatsApp has a 'masonic' inclination does not make it a legitimate masonic site. The need to be cautious cannot be over stressed.

**8.2** To assist in understanding the Province's aims and objectives with regard to social media and **WhatsApp** in particular, the following should be considered:

1. The person posting on WhatsApp is legally responsible for the integrity of the content.
2. It is the personal responsibility of the person posting to ensure that laws are not infringed – including:
  - Intellectual Property - copyright and trade marks
  - Law of Confidence
  - Defamation
  - Data Protection (GDPR).
  - Privacy - Human Rights.
3. Always remember that not everyone in the group may agree with the content; it is easy to upset or offend.

### **8.3 Rules when using WhatsApp**

1. WhatsApp must not be used to communicate on Lodge business, the proper route is via email addressed to the Lodge Secretary using the designated Lodge email address.
2. The fact that WhatsApp is 'encrypted end to end' is not to be used as justification for using it to conduct or discuss Masonic business, especially anything directly related to a Lodge.
3. WhatsApp must not be used to challenge, or criticise Lodge Officers, Ritual workings, or Lodge policies. The proper route is via email addressed to the Lodge Secretary using the designated Lodge email address.
3. It should be remembered that once sent the content of a WhatsApp message can be forwarded to people outside of the group. In today's society where context is often disregarded, a message may well be misinterpreted either unintentionally or wilfully. The consequences of which can be far reaching. It is for these reasons the following guidance is offered to Lodges.
4. Points to bear in mind and to follow.
  - Use a false account to impersonate another person or organisation.
  - Give infer or imply that your views are those of Provincial Grand Lodge or the UGLE.
  - Divulge any personal information.
  - Use people's names unless it forms part of their **X** identity - e.g. @fredbloggs or if re-tweeting or quoting something that is already in the public domain.

- Don't Forget that a social media presence becomes part of a 'brand image'; posts, pictures, images, tweets, status updates can stay online forever.
- Do nothing to bring Freemasonry into disrepute: One word or phrase incorrectly used may be enough to give offence and may bring Freemasonry into disrepute.
- Don't use images (even with selfies) unless you have the permission of **everyone** in the photograph.
- Don't use images which may be considered vulgar, rude, profane or likely to cause offence.
- Do not use the UGLE Coat of Arms, the Provincial logo/crest, or the logo of the Lodge without the written permission of the appropriate authority
- Do not use any image of the Square and Compasses which includes the symbol **G**.
- Never claim to be posting a message on behalf of the Province, or Freemasonry in general.
- Never post comments of a personal nature on a WhatsApp account operated on behalf of the Lodge.
- Never comment under the name of your Lodge, and you must never claim to be 'speaking' on behalf of the Province of Wiltshire.

**IF IN DOUBT 'JUST ASK' [comms@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk](mailto:comms@wiltshirefreemasons.org.uk)**

The Province does not support the use of WhatsApp as a 'chat forum' for Brethren to air political or religious viewpoints. A Lodge or Masonic specific WhatsApp should not be used to disseminate material of a nature likely to give or cause offence.

WhatsApp, SnapChat, Microsoft Teams etc., set up on behalf of a Lodge, Masonic club or society must not be used to convey messages of a political nature, or promote or support any cause which may 'sow the seeds of discord among members'.

Using such sites as an alternative method of communicating with Officers of the Lodge in particular the Lodge Secretary, Treasurer, Director of Ceremonies, or Dining Steward is unacceptable.

Brethren are reminded that while content is not monitored, feedback and complaints will always be investigated. Instances of crude, extreme or offensive religious, racist, sexual or inappropriate content will not be tolerated. Any member contravening the policy may be liable to Masonic sanction.

