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Guidance for the use of Social Media

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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 tools for sharing information about Freemasonry and Masonic activities. However, as with any powerful tool, social media needs to be used with caution, as incorrect use can have a damaging impact on Freemasonry's public image, and therefore on Freemasonry itself.

This guidance applies to posts made by Freemasons on all social media platforms. 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.

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

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 own 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 Grand Lodge of Ireland.

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 exhaustive 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 (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 the Grand Lodge of Ireland) on whose behalf he is not expressly authorised to speak
- identify anyone else as a Freemason without his explicit consent, particularly when posting group pictures
- post any personal information about any Freemason without his explicit consent, such as address, telephone number, or anything else covered by General Data Protection Regulations.
- attempt to use Masonic channels as a vehicle for personal profit, or for any other form of self-promotion
- criticise the Grand Lodge of Ireland or any other legitimate Masonic authority
- there should never be posts related to the business of a Lodge and what is discussed within our tyled doors

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 Facebook group. It should be noted that there is only one way that Masonic vouching can be carried out, so, unless each member of a closed group has been personally vouched, one cannot assume that a closed groups' members are all active Freemasons.