

## **Guidelines for Masonic Websites**

*Prepared by the Information and Communications Committee*

### **Introduction:**

In 2002, the Grand Lodge of Scotland, issued Guidance Notes to all Provincial and District Grand Secretaries, regarding the formation and maintenance of Websites for Lodges and Provincial and District Grand Lodges.

Since that time there has been a dramatic increase in the use of electronic communication which is fast becoming the preferred method of communication. Likewise more and more Lodges, Provincial and District Grand Lodges are creating an internet presence by designing and publishing their own Websites.

The Grand Lodge of Scotland welcomes and encourages the use of this technology, but considers that it is now opportune to set out policies and guidelines on electronic communication and Website content standards in order to encourage consistency, accuracy, and a united direction of purpose.

The creation of Websites dedicated to the Scottish Craft is a significant means of demonstrating the unique nature of Scottish Freemasonry thereby implementing the Internet's full potential to communicate and enhance the image of the Scottish Craft, while at the same time preserving ancient usages, established customs and Landmarks.

Freemasonry is the world's oldest secular fraternal society, with members spread throughout the world. It is therefore entirely fitting that such an Institution should have international representation. The worldwide Web allows Freemasons to be represented internationally and, with proper use, can be a major and effective tool in the process of better informing the public about Freemasonry.

The lack of control over access to and placing of information on the Internet may cause problems. It is with this in mind that this Internet Code of Practice is published. It is emphasised however that individual Lodges, Provincial and District Grand Lodges who have already constructed and published Websites should strive to retain their unique nature while adhering to the following Guidelines.

### **Code of Practice for Masonic Websites**

#### ***Creation of Websites***

Websites may only be created by decision of the Lodge, Provincial or District Grand Lodge concerned and such decision must be recorded in the relevant Minutes. The Website must

focus only on the relevant Lodge, Provincial or District Grand Lodge and should be centred on its events.

The Website should use tasteful colour schemes, standard fonts (a font on a Lodge PC may not be on a visitor's PC, and the default font may alter design intentions) and small quickload graphics. Links should not be ambiguous, but should be clearly marked. Avoid the use of a link which is not finished - nothing is more frustrating to a surfer than a graphic which says "UNDER CONSTRUCTION".

Where a Lodge, Provincial or District Grand Lodge makes use of 'free space' for a Website and/or a 'free' guest book and/or counter it must ensure that all such pages are free of advertisements. Where such 'free' facilities are used they must be regularly reviewed to ensure that no inappropriate material appears on the Website. For a small monthly fee most ISPs (Internet Service Providers) will remove advertising from 'free' guest books and this is to be strongly encouraged.

It should be remembered that Websites are available to any member of the public and are subject to differing human interpretations. Considerable planning will therefore be required and care should be taken that views put forward reflect the practices and policies of The Grand Lodge of Scotland. It should be recognized that any "Masonic" Website produced will undoubtedly be seen as reflecting the views of the "parent" body regardless of who has set up that Site.

No duplication of the information found on the Grand Lodge Website will be permitted. However Lodges, Provincial and District Grand Lodges are encouraged to establish a link to the relevant page(s) of the Grand Lodge Website.

Names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, personal details or photographs of living individuals must NOT be entered on the Website without the written permission of that individual. It is appreciated that this may prove difficult when, for example, the use of a group photograph is being considered. In that case, the Lodge, Provincial or District Grand Lodge should satisfy itself that every effort has been made to obtain permission from everyone concerned prior to the photograph being used.

Lodge summonses, which contain personal details, must not be posted on the open pages of the Website, though there would be no objection to a 'news' page commenting on what in general is to happen at the next meeting e.g. the election of Office-bearers, a talk or which ceremony is to be worked (without giving the candidates' details). Similarly Lodge Minutes and accounts may not be posted on open pages.

Care should be taken to ensure that the Website is kept up to date and is always relevant. 'Old news' ought to be removed regularly and, if thought to be of continuing interest, can be placed in an archive page.

Care should also be taken over the inclusion of copyright material. Copyright subsists not only in the printed word (not just books but also newspapers, magazines and pamphlets) but

also in 'images' such as photographs and art works. If such material is to be used the copyright holder's permission must be obtained. Failure so to do can lead to potentially expensive court proceedings!

If a Website includes a 'visitors book' or 'comments page' these should be carefully and regularly monitored. Any items including profane, religious, political or anti-Masonic comments should be removed as soon as practicable.

Should it be intended that the Website will provide links to other Masonic Websites the authenticity and propriety of these other Websites **MUST** be checked prior to the inclusion of such links.

### ***Responsibility for Content***

All policy and management decisions made in respect of the Website should be recorded in the Minutes of the relevant Committee, or the Minutes of the Lodge, Provincial or District Grand Lodge where no Committee is specifically charged with responsibility for the Website.

### ***Copyright***

Each page of the Website should display the copyright symbol © together with the appropriate text, e.g. Lodge xxxxxx 2006 (the date should reflect the period for which the Website and/or page has been in existence: e.g. 2003-2005 etc)

### ***Maintenance of Website***

The person who is entrusted with day to day control of the Website should be named within the Website and an e-mail address must be provided for contact to resolve technical matters. He should also be designated as the 'Web Master'. Honoraria cannot be paid from Lodge funds for services rendered by a Web Master. However it is competent for a Lodge to engage a 'Web Master', who need not be a member of the Craft, on a commercial basis and for the fees incurred to be met from the General Fund of the Lodge. Similar provisions apply to Provincial and District Grand Lodges.

Another e-mail address may be provided in order that matters of a non-technical nature might be brought to the attention of those responsible for the contents of the Website. The duties of the Web Master are of a technical nature and are appropriate to one individual whereas responsibility for the content of the Website lies, initially, with the relevant Committee and ultimately with the Lodge, Provincial or District Grand Lodge.

It is recommended that, if possible, these two functions be kept separate and distinct so that it is clear who is responsible for the technical maintenance of the Website and who is responsible for the content. Where it is desirable for a Lodge, Provincial or District Grand Lodge to have only one 'point of contact' this should be the Web Master in which case he will have the additional responsibility of referring matters of a non-technical nature to the relevant Committee, Lodge, Provincial or District Grand Lodge for consideration.

Should permission be granted by any individual or organization (Masonic or not) to reproduce any material on a Lodge, Provincial or District Grand Lodge Website, ownership of that material must be clearly attributed immediately following the text, image etc. The copyright symbol © should always be inserted with the details of the copyright holder.

### ***Copyright and Intellectual Property***

Websites must not, under any circumstances publish material which is the property of The Grand Lodge of Scotland, e.g. articles from Year Books, photographs and other images, and other publications. Where a Lodge, Provincial or District Grand Lodge wishes to reproduce material which is the property of Grand Lodge permission must be obtained from Grand Secretary prior to reproduction on the Website.

It is recommended that each Website should include a clear Statement as to Copyright and setting out the Terms & Conditions pertaining to that Website. A specimen Statement is attached.

### ***Privacy Policy***

It is appropriate for each Website to include a Statement detailing that Website's 'Privacy Policy'. Like the Statement on Copyright and Terms & Conditions (see above), the Privacy Policy Statement is intended to remove doubt and ambiguity. Both are designed to provide some protection for unintended omissions, errors etc. as well as preserving Lodge 'property' and the property of those who have contributed to the Site.

### ***Masonic e-mailing***

It is important to note that under NO circumstances should any attempt be made by Scottish Constitution brethren to correspond - whether by e-mail or otherwise - with any other Grand Lodge recognised by The Grand Lodge of Scotland or any Daughter Lodge under such other Grand Lodge (unless the necessary formal approval has been obtained beforehand), for so to do would contravene accepted Masonic protocol.

The following points present some simple guidelines for electronic mail etiquette without setting out any particular styles or rules. Rather they comprise an attempt to highlight important issues affecting electronic mail.

Users should never send anything they would not want to see in the next day's newspaper! There are no security guarantees with electronic mail. Avoid sending ANY confidential or sensitive information via e-mail. Remember, it is very easy for someone to forward messages someone else thought were confidential!

When the sender is upset or angry the intended message should carefully be reviewed after he has had time to calm down.

Abusive, harassing or threatening messages must not be sent.

Be cautious when using sarcasm and humour as without the benefit of facial expressions and tone of voice they do not translate easily or effectively through e-mail.

Keep messages and replies brief.

Always use e-mail in a professional manner. Remember that the sender cannot always control where his messages might be sent.

Do not send chain letters through e-mail – and this includes any message containing a request to circulate such letters or the information therein to various other people.

Don't leave an e-mail account open when the computer is not in use as anyone could sit down at that keyboard and send out any libellous, offensive or embarrassing message ostensibly under the name of the computer owner!

Don't send replies to "all recipients" unless there is a very specific need for everyone to receive the message. It wastes disc space, clutters up inboxes and can be annoying.

Avoid including all recipients in the 'to' box as this could result in the circulation of private e-mail addresses of colleagues without their prior consent – and this might constitute a possible breach of the Data Protection Act. Mark mail as "cc'd" as this shows others have been copied in. Including the address in the sender's "bcc" protects the recipient's e-mail address.

When replying, keep messages brief and to the point. Don't reproduce a message in its entirety. Be selective as to what is reproduced and only do it as needed.

Remember that the laws affecting copyright, defamation, discrimination and other forms of written communication also apply to e-mail.

Use "receipt requested" sparingly as some might view it as a sign of distrust. It is perfectly acceptable to use it if there is reason to question whether the intended recipient will log on to receive the message.

Check all e-mail regularly and, whenever possible respond to incoming mail.

Senders should briefly identify and describe themselves if the recipient doesn't already know who the sender is.

Be aware that e-mail can be archived and, under certain circumstances, may not be secure. Internet Service Providers will generally protect the confidentiality of their subscribers' e-mail. However many companies and employers consider employee e-mail sent over the office network to be company property and therefore subject to scrutiny, and that can result in problems both for the sender and the recipient. Remember that all archived e-mail can, if

necessary, be legally obtained by authority of the relevant court and may thereafter become public, with potentially serious consequences.

Avoid labelling your e-mail as “Urgent” or “Priority” unless it really is.

Use capital letters sparingly as using them for an entire message can be perceived by many as equivalent to SHOUTING - and can make e-mail harder to read.

### **Suggested Statement of the Website Copyright Terms and Conditions**

“This and the following pages contain information about Lodge xxxxxx (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Lodge’) copyright and links to external Websites. They also contain an important liability disclaimer.

#### **Copyright**

The information contained on this Website is the copyright © property of the Lodge (unless stated otherwise) and is protected by international copyright laws.

The Lodge Website is provided for personal, private and non-commercial use only. No user or recipient has any right to modify, copy, distribute, transmit, display, perform, reproduce, publish, license, create derivative works from, transfer, exchange or sell any information, material, software, images, graphics or source code obtained from the Lodge Website.

No part of the Lodge Website may be reproduced in any form whether electronically or otherwise (other than temporarily in the course of using the Website) without the express prior written consent of the Lodge.

#### **Links to External Web Sites**

The Lodge has included, or may include, links to third party Internet Websites controlled and maintained by others. When accessing these links the user leaves the Lodge Website. These links are included solely for the convenience of users and their presence does not constitute any endorsement by the Lodge of the Websites linked or referred to nor does the Lodge have any control over, or responsibility for, the content of any such Websites.

#### **Liability Disclaimer**

The Lodge Website is produced and made available in absolute good faith. For the avoidance of any doubt, neither the Lodge nor any of its Trustees, Office-bearers or members give or make any representations or warranties of any kind, whether express, actual or implied, in relation to all or any part of the Lodge Website or any contents thereof or any Website or Websites to which the Lodge Website is linked. All warranties and representations of every kind and howsoever arising are hereby absolutely and expressly excluded to the fullest extent permitted by law.

Liability for material reproduced on the Lodge Website remains with the author(s) and/or originator(s) of the material concerned and not with the Lodge. Responsibility for errors and/or omissions in all material remains with the author(s) and/or originator(s) and not the Lodge.

The content of the Lodge Website does not constitute the dispensation or giving of any kind of advice, recommendations or guidance by or on behalf of the Lodge and must not be relied upon in making, or refraining from making, any decision.

There is no guarantee that the Website will be free of infection whether by viruses or from any other cause or source which may be harmful or destructive. All parties use the Lodge Website entirely at their own risk and without recourse to the Lodge, its Office-bearers, Trustees and members or any of them.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, the Lodge and, separately, its Trustees, Office-bearers and members, all jointly and severally, hereby disclaim all liability (howsoever arising) in connection with any loss or damage, arising out of or in connection with any use of, or inability to use, all or any part of the Lodge Website or any site to which the Lodge Website is linked or any action taken (or not taken) as a result of access to the use of any of these.

### **Editorial Control**

The Lodge can exercise editorial control only over material commissioned and/or produced by it. The Lodge cannot, under any circumstances, change, add to, or subtract from, any material previously produced by others, that is prior to reproduction by the Lodge. Errors and omissions in such previously reproduced material are the responsibility of the original author or commissioning body and not the Lodge. Errors and omissions in material reproduced on the Lodge Website which do not occur in the original material should be brought to the attention of the Web Master. If correction is required, the full text of the original material, author, source, dates and place(s) of primary publication must be submitted to the Lodge which will then make appropriate adjustments and corrections having regard to the submission.

### **Lodge xxxxxxxx No. xxxx**

All references in the Lodge Website and in these pages to “the Lodge” include references to all of the members of the Lodge and the Lodge Trustees and Office-bearers, all jointly and severally. Lodge xxxxxxxx No. xxxx is a Daughter Lodge of The Grand Lodge of Scotland and that Grand Lodge is the ultimate authority on all matters relating to Scottish Freemasonry.”

### **Privacy Policy**

#### **Privacy**

Lodge xxxxx No. xxxx (herein after referred to as the ‘Lodge’) recognises the importance of protecting the privacy of the visitors to the Lodge Website. Any personal data collected through the Lodge Website will be regarded and treated as confidential and in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998. However, the collection of such data is unintentional as the Lodge has not designed or consciously put in place any system designed to collect personal information.

### **Disclaimer**

The Lodge intends that the information published on the Lodge Website is up to date and accurate. However, the information on the Website does not constitute legal or professional advice, guidance or recommendation and the Lodge, its Office-bearers, Trustees and members, and each of them, will not accept any liability for actions arising from its use nor will they be held responsible for the contents of any Website or other source referenced by any external link.

### **Cookies**

A cookie is a small data file that certain Websites write to a hard drive when a user visits that Website. The only personal information a cookie can contain is information a user personally supplies. A cookie cannot read data from a user’s hard disk or read cookie files created by other Websites. Cookies, however, enhance a Website’s performance in a number of ways including providing a secure way for to identity verification during a visit to a Website and personalising the user’s experience with the Lodge Website while making it more convenient for the user.

The Lodge may therefore use cookie technology to track or record information about visitors to the Lodge Website. These cookies are “session specific” and are not used to record personal information or to associate personal information with the use of the Lodge services. Privacy and security are not compromised if and when the user accepts a cookie from the Lodge Website. Users can refuse cookies by turning them off on their web browsers (see under “Tools” and then “Internet Options”) and users do not need to have cookies turned on to successfully use the Website.

### **Questions or Suggestions**

If ANYONE has any questions or suggestions regarding this policy or considers the Lodge is not properly adhering to it then the Lodge invites information and contents to be sent to the Lodge through the undernoted contact :-  
Jock MacKenzie@Lodgexxxxxxxx.org.uk