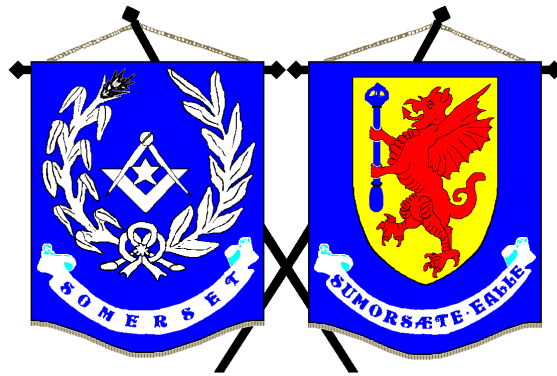


# Provincial Grand Lodge of Somerset



Information Officers Guide

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# 1: Introduction

Good communications are a key element in the success of any organization. In recent years, great progress has been made in providing information for members of the Craft and in making Freemasonry more open. This has helped to dispel some of the longstanding myths about the fraternity and is something the Province is keen to build upon.

The Lodge Information Officers (LIO) role is to keep members well informed about what is going on in the Province, they are also charged with gaining publicity of their lodge's activities, both to members of the wider Province and also the general community in their area.

Not only will these efforts keep their own members up to date with masonic news, it will also project the activities of their lodge (and freemasonry in general) in a positive light to the general public.

Assistant Provincial Communication Officers (APCO) have been appointed to assist LIO's in achieving increased awareness in the local community and to seek opportunities for greater publicity.

## 2: Lodge Information Officer Role Description

Appointment: To be appointed / re-appointed annually by the Worshipful Master.

Suitable skills: The appointee should possess the skills and experience to undertake the key tasks competently. Access to Email and the ability to use a word processor / computer should be regarded as essential. Knowledge of Social Media would be advantageous.

Liases with: Provincial Communication Officer  
Assistant Provincial Communication Officers  
Information Officers of neighboring Lodges  
Editors of Compass, Website and the Provincial Social Media Officer

### Summary of role:

In collaboration with the Information Officers of adjacent Lodges and the Assistant Provincial Communication Officers, promote the presentation of a positive image of Freemasonry in the local community.

Disseminate relevant information from Grand Lodge, Provincial Grand Lodge and other relevant sources to lodge members.

Recognise suitable events and prepare articles / reports for inclusion in the local media, Compass, Provincial website and Social Media.

**Key Tasks:**

- To keep lodge members informed about news from PGL Somerset, UGLE and other Provinces as well as items of general Masonic interest.
- Prepare and submit news items for Compass magazine and the Provincial Website.
- Collaborate with Information Office colleagues and Assistant Provincial Communication Officers, to seek suitable regular publicity for masonic events and activities in the local media.
- Encourage the Lodge to consider ways in which it might raise its profile and be recognised as a positive asset in the local community.
- To maintain a listening watch for negative publicity and where this arises locally to inform the Provincial Communications Officer.
- To regularly peruse the local printed media to identify anything related to Freemasonry in their own area? The article should then be scanned (or cut out) and 'forward' it to the Provincial Communication Officer for inclusion in the clippings file. (Please include with the scanned clipping a note of what newspaper/magazine it came from, including the date of publication and on what page)

### **3: Assistant Provincial Communication Officers Role Description**

Appointment: To be appointed by the APGM with responsibility for PR and Communications, in conjunction with the Provincial Communications Officer

Suitable skills: The appointee should possess the skills and experience to undertake the key tasks competently. Access to Email and the ability to use a word processor / computer should be regarded as essential. Knowledge of Social Media would be advantageous.

Liases with: Provincial Communication Officer  
Information Officers of Lodges and Management Teams of Masonic Centre within their designated area  
The other APCO's  
Editors of Compass, Website and the Provincial Social Media Officer

### **Key Tasks:**

- To offer support to LIO's and Masonic Centres to promote the presentation of a positive image of Freemasonry in the local community.
- To develop relationships with "the Media" and community based organisations in their designated areas.
- To recognise events in their locality where Masonic involvement would be mutually beneficial and bring those to the attention of LIO's and Masonic Centres.
- Where requested, to assist LIO's and Masonic Centres in preparing articles / reports for inclusion in the local media.
- Where requested, to assist LIO's and Masonic centres to produce articles / reports for the Provincial Website and Compass magazine.

For ease of administration the Province has been divided up along the same geographical lines as the Somerset Masonic Friendship Association, with North East, North West, Central, South East and South West areas, each being under the care of an APCO.

Please note the APCO's have not been appointed to replace LIO's but to complement them and there is no compulsion to use their services. They are available to offer advice and support when requested.

The Brethren appointed, their contact details and the Masonic Centres for which they are responsible are in the contact section of this guide.

## **4: Communicating with your own members**

It is vital that members are made aware of what is going on in the Province and the wider masonic world and that this is done in an efficient and timely fashion. LIO's will be sent lots of information and press releases from numerous sources and you need to consider the best way to pass this on.

It is tempting to collect all the information together and deliver a lengthy discourse at your regular meetings. This is perhaps the least attractive option as not all the members will be present, not all that are present will take in what you say, and it prolongs proceedings unnecessarily.

It is much better that you pass information on in a timely fashion by email. Consideration should also be given to creating a regular newsletter that can be emailed to the majority of members and posted to the decreasing number that are not online.

## **5: Publicising your lodge activities**

There are many opportunities to publicise what goes on in your lodge, both to the rest of the Province and the wider world that are not masons. Information can be directed to the Provincial Website, Compass Magazine, and the Provincial Social Media accounts, as well as local non-masonic media.

Everything that goes on in your lodge might be of interest, whether this is a simple comment about a regular meeting via Twitter, right through to a full feature on your Ladies Festival in a local paper.

The various avenues for publicity are detailed in this guide. Many LIO's will be confident to undertake the various activities themselves, however your APCO is always available to offer help and support should you request it.

## **6: Website**

The Provincial Website is viewed not only by Somerset Masons, but also by brethren from other Provinces as well as members of the public. The Web editors are always very keen to receive newsworthy items but it is helpful if a few guidelines are followed when submitting articles.

Articles should be in MS Word or .rtf format so that they can easily be edited to for inclusion. Avoid .pdf or other obscure file formats as these are often difficult to manipulate. Always try to include a good photograph (see photography advice) but send this as a separate file, which the web editors can then use to best advantage.

## **7: Compass Magazine**

Compass magazine is distributed to all members of the Province of Somerset. It is a very useful way of publicising interesting items of lodge news but, unlike the Provincial Website, there is a strict limit on space so only the "best" stories will make it into print. The editor is inundated with stories about cheque presentations so other news items are more likely to be included.

The requirements for "copy" are the same as for the Provincial Website, that is to say the text should be sent MS Word or .rtf files only (not .pdf) with the accompanying photographs in a separate file.

**Freemasonry Today** can afford to be even more selective as it has national coverage, but there is no harm in sending copy to both publications. Articles for publication can be sent direct to Freemasonry Today via a link on their website (in "Contacts").

## 8: Social Media

The use of social media (Twitter, Facebook etc.) in Freemasonry has increased dramatically in the last few years and many Provinces and lodges are making use of the technology to keep members informed and to promote our fraternity to the wider world.

All sorts of lodge news can be publicised through social media as well as dates of upcoming meetings and what ceremonies are being worked.

Significant numbers of lodges in Somerset are actively participating in Twitter (and to a lesser degree Facebook), and there have already been initiates whose first contact was made through social media.

Your lodge might already be participating but, if not, it should be one of the responsibilities of the LIO to seek to establish a presence. This does not necessarily have to be run by the LIO himself, as any suitable member can do it on behalf of the lodge.

The Provincial Social Media Officer is very happy to give advice on the more technical aspects of setting up and running social media accounts.

## 9: Press

The local press is always on the lookout for interesting stories from their catchment area. Whilst space is usually limited in their publications, most have websites where stories often appear even if they do not make it into hard copy so it is worthwhile sending in press releases to publicise your activities. To give your information the best chance of inclusion, it should be sent in the form of a press release.

### Procedure for compiling a press release

- Ensure that content is newsworthy.
- Always produce in double spacing or one-and-a-half spacing.
- Always compile with wide margins.
- Start release with word **Begin** at top left corner.
- Use short but descriptive heading - bold and underlined.
- *Never* produce copy with honorifics - e.g. "W.Bro Smith said.... and W.Bro. Jones added...etc.". If release is published (doubtful), readers will either not have a clue what you are talking about or will get bored and not read further. Just use forenames and surnames. If several in photograph just say 'members of ..... Lodge'.

- Always include an **interesting** photograph. Try to avoid group of imbecilic grinning faces behind large cheque.
- Only use photographs of high resolution that will reproduce well in newsprint. At least 1MB.
- Don't ramble with copy. Keep to the point and try to keep to one A4 side. Journalists are limited to space in printed publications. Use good English and pronunciation and always read through and check spelling at least once prior to forwarding.
- Break up copy into paragraphs. Easier to read.
- When copy is completed use the word **End** at bottom left.
- If photograph is included, state who is featured from *left to right*. Again only use forenames and surnames.
- In single spacing then add line detailing the media contact (normally you!):

Sample press release:

Begin:

**Children's Hospice South West receives £2,150 from Taunton Freemasons**

"The remarkable sum of £1,650 was raised for the Children's Hospice SW at Charlton Farm facility at Wraxall by Freemasons from the Queen's College Lodge at Taunton as a result of a raffle and auction. These fund-raising events were held at their annual Festive Lunch to which Ladies and guests were invited.

'Matched funding' of £500 was added by the Somerset Masonic Charities committee, bringing the total donated to £2,150. The cheque was received by Kylie Gallagher, the Community Fundraiser for the Children's Hospice.

"Details of how donations can be made to the Children's Hospice SW may be found on: [www.chsw.org.uk](http://www.chsw.org.uk)

"Details of Somerset Freemasons may be found on [www.somersetfreemasons.org](http://www.somersetfreemasons.org)



End

Media Contact:

Your name, \*\*\*\*\* Lodge Information Officer  
Add your own email address.

Further advice and details of local press contacts can be obtained from the Assistant Provincial Communications Officer responsible for your lodge.

## 10: Photographs

As LIO you should be equipped with a camera at all lodge meetings. Nothing fancy is required, a simple compact digital camera with inbuilt flash will suffice. Smartphones are increasingly equipped with good quality cameras and can be used if nothing else is available.

### **Tips on submitting a photograph for publication.**

**Make your photo interesting.** Take your time. Remember what you see through the viewfinder / on the screen is what readers will see. Check it afterwards and re take if necessary. Try to avoid photographs of people holding up an oversize cheque. There are too many of these. Shaking hands with the beneficiary is better. Use your imagination.

**Take several shots,** even if your subject has remained stationary. Out of five shots you should get one good one.

**Compose your picture.** Take a moment to centralise your main subject. Don't rush, people like to look their best. Pay attention to detail – straighten collars, make a special note of the position of arms and hands. If someone is seated make sure they have their knees together. In a group shot those seated look better with their hands on their knees. Check out the background, avoid fire exit signs, clutter etc. Move anything that looks out of place.

**Make sure they look at YOU when you take the shot.** Do not allow distractions.

**Set your Camera on the highest possible picture quality.** Printed material requires a higher quality original than one viewed on a computer or published on the web. Please do not edit your photographs – this can reduce the quality. The end user will make them look their best.

**Send the photograph as a separate file.** If you are preparing an article for publication by someone else, please do not incorporate your photographs into a Word document or PDF file. Just send it in by e-mail as an attachment (.jpeg or .jpg) with a separate file containing the text, they can be combined to the best advantage by the recipient depending on the intended use.

## **11: Contacts**

### Provincial Communications Officer

W.Bro. John Cole PAGDC.

Email: [jcole1701@btinternet.com](mailto:jcole1701@btinternet.com)

Tel: 01934 811424/07721 633996

### Assistant Provincial Communications Officers

**NorthEast:** Bath, Keynsham, Frome and Midsomer Norton

W.Bro. David Hogg - [david@mochdre.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:david@mochdre.eclipse.co.uk)

Tel: 01225 783092

**North West:** Weston Super Mare, Nailsea, Clevedon, Yatton and Blagdon

W.Bro. Garry Hawkes - [garryhawkes@sky.com](mailto:garryhawkes@sky.com)

Tel: 01934 641554

**Central:** Burnham on Sea, Wedmore, Bridgwater, Glastonbury, Wells and Shepton Mallett

W.Bro. Richard Kilburn - [richardkilburn@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:richardkilburn@tiscali.co.uk)

Tel: 01934 713158

**South West:** Taunton, Wellington, Wiveliscombe, Minehead, and Watchet

W.Bro. Roger Seaton - [roger.seaton@hotmail.com](mailto:roger.seaton@hotmail.com)

Tel: 01823 480223

**South East:** Yeovil, Crewkerne, Ilminster, Chard, Langport, Bruton and Wincanton

W.Bro. Derek Marpole - [derek.marpole@btinternet.com](mailto:derek.marpole@btinternet.com)

Tel: 01935 863055

### Compass Magazine Editor

W.Bro. Barry Davies PPrGSwdB

Email: [compass@somersetfreemasons.org](mailto:compass@somersetfreemasons.org)

Tel: 01458 851122

Provincial Social Media Officer

W.Bro. Richard Dredge

Email: [rjdsingers@aol.com](mailto:rjdsingers@aol.com)

Tel: 01373 467145/07966 107094

Provincial Website

Email: [web\\_team@somersetfreemasons.org](mailto:web_team@somersetfreemasons.org)

Freemasonry Today

<http://www.freemasonrytoday.com>