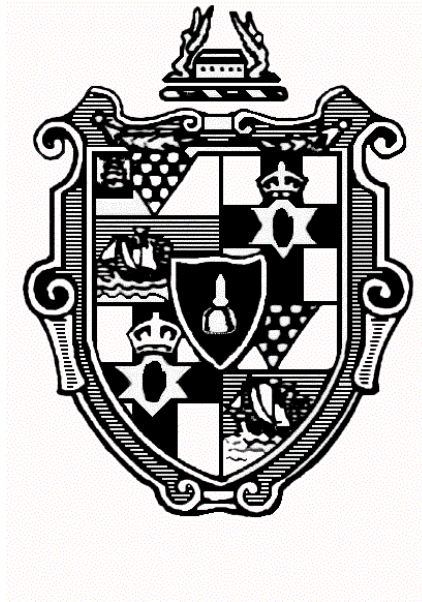


Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim



Guidelines

**For Lodges considering
Amalgamation, Closure
or Transfer of Warrant.**

February 2010

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Introduction

If the Brethren of your Lodge find themselves in the unfortunate situation that it is no longer feasible for the Lodge to survive despite strenuous efforts to save the situation then there are several options which the Brethren should consider.

- The Brethren can affiliate to another Lodge and return their Warrant (follow the guidelines for Lodge closure)
- The Brethren can go their separate ways and affiliate to several other Lodges and return their Warrant (follow guidelines for Lodge closure)
- The Brethren of two (or more) Lodges could form and constitute a new Lodge and return their existing Warrant (a more complicated route to follow)(see also Grand Lodge Law 104 & 106)
- The Brethren of two (or more) Lodges may amalgamate (follow guidelines for amalgamation)

It is important that at an early stage you contact the Provincial Grand Secretary (for guidance and information) and your Provincial Grand Inspector and advise them of the situation.

If after careful consideration your Lodge decides on one of the above options then by following the Guidelines the transition should be straightforward.

Remember that the financial year runs from January to December, so any Lodge closure should be timed to be complete before the end of December. This will prevent Lodges liability for rent, capitation etc and members for dues.

In all cases Grand Lodge Laws & Constitutions, Provincial Grand Lodge Bye-Laws, and Lodge Bye-Laws should be strictly adhered to.

Important. The guidance for Lodges considering amalgamation is only if all Lodges concerned sit in the masonic province of Antrim. Should any lodge involved sit in another Province then the Provincial Grand Secretary of Antrim should be consulted for further guidance.

Guidelines for amalgamation

ALL PROPOSALS SHOULD BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH GRAND LODGE LAWS AND DECISIONS AND PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE BYE-LAWS.

At the earliest possible opportunity the Provincial Grand Secretary / Provincial Grand Inspector should be consulted for information and guidance, and the Provincial Grand Inspectors should be informed. The Provincial Grand Secretary should inform the Provincial Grand Master of amalgamation intent.

The Lodges should have informal preliminary discussions to ascertain if this is the route they wish to follow.

If after preliminary discussions they wish to continue then:-

An amalgamation committee should be formed comprising of the sub committee of each Lodge. At this stage formal approval should be sought from the Provincial Grand Master to proceed, and the bye-laws of each Lodge should be examined to ascertain that there are no bye-laws to prevent amalgamation.

The Amalgamation Committee would meet and discuss in detail:-
(This is not an exhaustive list, there may be other Items)

Name and number of the new lodge

The Committee should agree which number the 'new' Lodge will retain, and the name of the 'new' Lodge.

Location

The Committee should agree the times, days, and months of Lodge meetings and also the meeting place for the 'New' Lodge. (the hall committee should be consulted to ensure any proposals can be accommodated)

Disposal of existing Lodge funds

These should be in accordance with Grand Lodge Resolution p67 (disposal of funds) and any existing Lodge bye-laws.

The closing Lodge (or both (all) Lodges if they decide to start afresh) should in addition to the above:-

- Submit the following information to the Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim:-
 1. A copy of the Receipts and Payments Account of the Lodge, audited, after completion of all financial transactions
 2. Note of confirmation from the bank that all Lodge accounts have been closed.
 3. Confirmation, in writing, from the Lodge Treasurer that there are no outstanding invoices or items of income and that all Lodge Assets have been disposed of.
 4. A list of all Brethren of the Lodge, indicating in each case, if a Clearance Certificate had been issued. In cases where a Certificate has not been issued give reasons and details of arrears of dues.
 5. The names and addresses of Lodge Annuitants in order that their interests may be protected after the closure of the Lodge.
 6. A statement, in writing, giving details of the distribution of any surplus funds of the Lodge. Refer to Grand Lodge Resolution 'Disposal of Funds and Assets of a Lodge' (p67)

Officers for year 1 and the early years of the 'new' Lodge

The committee should agree which Brethren will fill the offices of the 'new' Lodge in the first year and the progression through the offices in the early years.

Representatives to the various committees (BoGP, Inspection and Charities etc.)

Consideration should be given to the 'permanent' officers. (Treasurer, Secretary etc.)

Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes Decision No12 on p74 should be noted.

Grand Lodge Approval

At an appropriate time in the process (ie after Motions have been passed by both (all) Lodges to amalgamate) all details of the new Lodge and proposed Officers for year 1 should be sent to the Grand Secretary for Grand Lodge approval and at the same time details to the Provincial Grand Secretary for information.

Charity donations (local district charity committee)

The committee should agree how Charity donations to the Lodge will be disbursed.

Widows, Annuitants, Elderly & Infirm Brethren

It is **Very Important** that none from this group 'go missing' during the transition.

Secretaries should ensure that the new Secretary has full details of all, and that the Benevolent Institutions and Charity Committees are made aware of the changes.

Dues

The Committee should agree the dues per member taking into consideration any existing Emeritus Members, Hall rent, Provincial and Grand Lodge Capitation fees etc.

Arrears

Both (all) Lodges should ensure that all arrears of dues and any Brethren to be 'struck off' are cleared and completed well before any amalgamation.

Festive Boards

The Committee should agree the format and frequency of Festive Boards following Lodge meetings.

This should include Installation Dinner which may be held in a different location to festive boards.

Nomination of PGL Officers

The Committee will have to agree how they nominate Provincial Grand Lodge Officers in the early years (or they may decide not to nominate for a few years)

Method of affiliation of members

A possible solution could be (and with the approval of the Grand Secretary):-

At the point of amalgamation the members of both (all) Lodges would cease to be members of their existing Lodges and all would immediately become members of the 'new' Lodge. The details having been previously provided to Grand Lodge.

This I feel would prevent a 'us and them' situation as all would be making a new start.

New bye-laws

It would be advisable to have the Amalgamation Committee draw up the bye-laws for the new Lodge and have these agreed by both (all) Lodges.

In the drafting of new bye-laws the amalgamating committee should consult with the Provincial Grand Secretary prior to the bye-laws being placed before the Lodges. (This will prevent having to return to the Lodges in the event of any recommended changes by Provincial Grand Lodge)

PM Jewels

If the new Lodge agree to use the standard Past Masters Jewel then no further action is required.

If the new Lodge agree to strike a new Past Masters Jewel then the new design will require Provincial Grand Lodge and Grand Lodge approval

Warrants

The Lodge(s) not retaining their Lodge number will have to return their Warrant and this should happen at the Lodges last meeting prior to amalgamation

The Lodge retaining the Lodge number will after amalgamation have their Warrant endorsed with the new agreed Lodge name.

Timeline for amalgamation

When these details have been agreed by the Amalgamation Committee (possibly after several meetings) the sub committee from each Lodge would present the amalgamation details to their Lodges for discussion.

When all details have been agreed by each Lodge a formal Notice of Motion can be placed before each Lodge and if approved then events along the timeline may proceed.

Lodge Closure

General

When the Brethren of a Lodge consider that they can no longer continue to operate and decide to close and return their Warrant then the following procedures should be followed.

At the earliest opportunity the PGS and PG Inspector should be informed of the Lodges intention
PGS should advise the PGM

Any Brother intending to continue in membership of the Order should affiliate to another Craft Lodge before the date of closure of the Lodge using his Clearance Certificate as eligibility to do so.

A Brother cannot remain a member of other branches of the Order if he ceases to be a member of a Craft Lodge.

Should a Lodge or any of its members require further guidance regarding affiliation, contact may be made with the office of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim

The Decisions

- An appropriate Motion must be formed proposing that the Lodge should cease to exist. Notice of Motion must be given and the Proposal announced at a Stated or Emergency Communication of the Lodge.
- In order that all Brethren in the Lodge will be notified of the situation the Motion must be printed on the circular convening the next Communication of the Lodge.
- At that Communication the Motion will be proposed, seconded and discussed and the Lodge members present will make a decision (Lodge bye-laws must be adhered to)
- If the Motion is defeated the Lodge will continue to meet as usual.

- If the motion is carried then the date of the final Communication will be agreed by the Brethren. (It should be noted that the financial year runs from January to December)

Preparation for Closing

Well in advance of the final Communication of the Lodge you should:-

- Notify the Grand Lodge of Ireland and the Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim in writing that the Lodge will cease to meet/working, giving details of the Motion and the date of closure.
- Make arrangements for a representative of Grand Lodge (usually the Provincial Grand Secretary) to receive the Warrant at the final Communication of the Lodge on behalf of the Grand Lodge of Ireland
- Issue a Clearance Certificate (Demit) to each Brother who is a fully paid up member of the Lodge.
- Contact each Brother who is not a fully paid up member of the Lodge so that they may settle any arrears and become eligible to receive a Clearance Certificate
- Submit the following information to the Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim:-
 1. A copy of the Receipts and Payments Account of the Lodge, audited, after completion of all financial transactions
 2. Note of confirmation from the bank that all Lodge accounts have been closed.
 3. Confirmation, in writing, from the Lodge Treasurer that there are no outstanding invoices or items of income and that all Lodge Assets have been disposed of.
 4. A list of all Brethren of the Lodge, indicating in each case, if a Clearance Certificate had been issued. In cases where a Certificate has not been issued give reasons and details of arrears of dues.

5. The names and addresses of Lodge Annuitants in order that their interests may be protected after the closure of the Lodge.
6. A statement, in writing, giving details of the distribution of any surplus funds of the Lodge. Refer to Grand Lodge Resolution 'Disposal of Funds and Assets of a Lodge' (p67)

Transfer (move) Warrant (G.L. Law 112)

If a Lodge is considering transferring the warrant to another place of meeting:-

- Ascertain if suitable accommodation is available in new location.
- Seek permission from Provincial Grand Master to transfer the warrant.
- Notice of Motion in the lodge to transfer (see GL Law 112) the warrant.
- Apply (or have Provincial Grand Secretary apply) to Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes for approval.
- When approval (from Grand Lodge) is granted then have Lodge bye-laws amended. (Provincial Grand Lodge bye-law 59)

Lodge Widows

When a Lodge returns the Warrant and all the Brethren affiliate to another lodge:-

- The Lodge returning their warrant will complete the required Charity Returns Sheet with all details. When duly signed off the Lodge Secretary must return it to the P.G.L. Secretary who will inform the PGL Charity Registrar and also send a copy to their P.G.L. Inspector.
- The Lodge to which the Brethren are affiliating will complete a Charity Returns Sheet with all their widows, elderly or distressed Brethren this will include the additional 'new' details. When duly signed off the Lodge Secretary must return it to the P.G.L. Secretary who will inform the PGL Charity Registrar and also send a copy to their P.G.L. Inspector.
- If any Fund annuitants are being moved to new lodges or adopted, the relevant information must be sent to the respective Charity.
- In the case of elderly Brethren who are not affiliating to another Lodge and intending to demit from the order, the Secretary should include their details on the Charity Returns Sheet.

When a Lodge returns the Warrant and the Brethren affiliate to other Lodges:-

- The Lodge returning their Warrant will complete the required Charity Returns Sheet with all details. When duly signed off the Lodge Secretary must return it to the P.G.L. Secretary who will inform the P.G.L, Charity Registrar and also send a copy to their P.G.L. Inspector.
- Honorary and Emeritus Brethren should be included on the Charity Return Sheet.
- All possible avenues to have the widows, elderly or distressed Brethren placed with a Lodge should be extensively sought by the Brethren of the Lodge with the assistance of the P.G.L. Charity Officer and the District Charity Committee.
- If any Fund annuitants are being moved to new lodges or adopted the relevant information must be sent to the respective Charity.
- In the case of elderly Brethren who are not affiliating to another Lodge and intending to demit from the order the Secretary should include their details on the Charity Returns Sheet.

When two Lodges return their Warrants and forming a New Lodge:-

- Both Lodges should complete the required Charity Returns Sheet with all the details. When duly signed off the Lodge Secretary must return it to the P.G.L. Secretary who will inform the P.G.L. Charity Registrar and also send a copy to their P.G.L. Inspector.
- The New Lodge Secretary will complete a Charity Return Sheet with all the widows, elderly or distressed Brethren. When duly signed off the Lodge Secretary should return it to the P.G.L. Secretary and a copy to their P.G.L. Inspector who will forward it to the P.G.L. Registrar.
- Honorary and Emeritus Brethren should be included on the return.
- In any fund annuitants are being moved to new lodges or adopted. The relevant information must be sent to the respective Charity.
- If there are any annuitants on a Fund should be notified of the relevant change.
- In the case of elderly Brethren who are not affiliating to another Lodge and intending to demit from the order the Secretary should include their details on the Charity Return Sheet.

	Surname	Given Name	Address	Postcode	Husbands Name	Husbands Lodge (s)	Annuitant Fund	Contact Tele:	Contact Name	Relationship	New Lodge
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12											

W. Master

Lodge Steward of Charities.....

Lodge

Lodge Almoner.....