

Protocol for flying of flags at Sheffield City Council sites and other commemorative activity

Issued March 2024

Purpose

1. This protocol governs the flying of flags from Sheffield Town Hall and other SCC buildings that have a flagpole.
2. It also sets out the other types of commemorative activity (such as the lighting up of buildings) and the circumstances in which these should be considered.

The flying of flags is governed by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. These regulations are summarised in the Government's guide to flying flags: [Flying flags: a plain English guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flying-flags-a-plain-english-guide). This protocol is considered to be compliant with those regulations.

Flying of flags at Sheffield Town Hall

3. There is one flagpole at Sheffield Town Hall. Only one flag may be flown at any one time.
4. At all times the Union Flag will be flown at full mast unless one of the conditions in paragraphs 5 to 10 is met.
5. The Union Flag will be flown at half-mast in the following situations:
 - a. from the announcement of the death of the Sovereign, except on Proclamation Day (D+1), when the flag will be flown at full mast from 11am until 1pm the following day (D+2);
 - b. In the following cases, the flag will be flown at half-mast only by special command from His Majesty:
 - i. the death of a member or near relative of the Royal Family or the funeral of members of the Royal Family
 - ii. the funerals of foreign Rulers
 - iii. the funerals of Prime Ministers and ex-Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom
 - iv. the funerals of First Ministers and ex-First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (unless otherwise commanded by the Sovereign, this only applies to flags in their respective countries)
 - v. any other occasions as commanded
 - c. On the announcement of the death of a serving city councillor, South Yorkshire Combined Authority Mayor or Sheffield MP, for a period of five working days and on the day of funeral
 - d. Honorary Freeman, on the day of funeral
 - e. Former Lord Mayor, former Combined Authority mayor, former Council Leader or former MP, on the day of funeral

- f. Member of Armed Forces from the City, on the day of funeral, where the death occurs on active service
 - g. On the decision of the Chief Executive in relation to a request made under paragraph 9 of this protocol.
6. The flag of the patron saint of each of the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom shall be flown on their respective saint's days (see Appendix B)
 7. Commemorative flags will be flown as set out in Appendix B (as may be amended from time to time by the relevant committee). Where a commemorative flag is flying or due to be flown during a time when the union flag would otherwise be at half-mast, the commemorative flag should be removed/not flown and the union flag raised at half-mast in its place.
 8. The national flag of another country when there is an official civic or other delegation from that country, following a decision by the Chief Executive
 9. Requests may be made by the relevant Government department or the chair of any policy committee or by the leader of any political group to the Chief Executive to fly the flag of a particular country or cause following a national or local disaster or major humanitarian or terrorist incident. This can also include flying the union flag at half-mast if the disaster or incident has taken place in the United Kingdom. The Chief Executive should have regard to the guidance set out at Appendix C of this protocol in considering such requests.

Flying of flags at other Sheffield City Council buildings

10. At other Sheffield City Council buildings with a flagpole, the union flag will normally be flown at full mast.
11. The Union Flag will be flown at half-mast only in the circumstances described at paragraphs 5a and 5b of this protocol
12. For buildings with more than one flagpole a secondary flag as described at paragraphs 6 and 7 of this protocol may be flown. The Union Flag should always occupy the superior position.

This protocol is kept under review by the Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement. Any changes can only be made with the agreement of the relevant policy committee.

Appendix A – Flying the Union Flag

The Union Flag must be flown the correct way up: this is with the wider diagonal white stripe above the red diagonal stripe in the half nearest to the flagpole. The wider diagonal white stripe should be above the red diagonal stripe at the top left-hand side of the flag nearest the flagpole.

Appendix B – Commemorative Flag calendar

The following commemorative flags will be flown on the dates shown each year. The calendar may be amended from time to time by the relevant policy committee but should never include national flags.

The programme of important flag days will be reviewed annually, and Facilities Management will arrange for flag changes to be made automatically on the agreed days.

Ad-hoc flag changes or half-mast requests should be made to Facilities Management via pfmcontactcentre@sheffield.gov.uk. Requests for books of condolence or other commemorative activities should be made to the Lord Mayor's Office at lordmayor@sheffield.gov.uk.

Patron Saints

The flag of the national Patron Saint is used. These are the heraldic crosses.

- St David's Day – 1st March (The flag of St David)
- St George's Day – 23rd April (The cross of St George)
- St Patrick's Day – 17th March (The cross saltire of St Patrick)
- St Andrew's Day – 30th November (The cross saltire of St Andrew)

Other Commemorative Flags

Commonwealth Day – second Monday in March (Commonwealth Flag)

Armed Forces Day – May or June dates vary (Armed Forces Day Flag flown from Sheffield Armed Forces day to National Armed Forces day)

Pride Month – all of June except 22nd June (Pride Flag)

*Windrush Day – 22nd June (Windrush Day Flag)

Yorkshire Day – 1st August (Yorkshire Flag)

*Merchant Navy Day – 3rd September (Red Ensign)

*Emergency services 999 day - 9th Sept (Emergency Services Day Flag)

United Nations Day – 24th October (UN Flag)

Armistice Day – 11th November (union flag to be flown at full mast if otherwise flying at half-mast)

Remembrance Sunday – second Sunday in November (union flag to be flown at full mast if flying at half mast)

*World Aids Day – 1st December

**Flags marked with an asterisk require planning consent to be flown.*

Appendix C – Decision-making guidance

The flag protocol sets out scenarios where the decision on whether or not to fly a flag is to be made by the Chief Executive.

This guidance sets out a process to support the Chief Executive in reaching a decision. It should usually be followed, but the circumstances of each request will be different, and the Chief Executive has discretion to depart from it if needed, as set out at paragraph 14.

1. There are two ways in which a request to fly a flag may be made:
 - a. By a Government department
 - b. By the chair of a policy committee or a political group leader
2. Upon receiving a request, the Chief Executive must commission an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). The council has an obligation under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and to eliminate discrimination.
3. The Equality Impact Assessment must be used to inform the decision that is reached.
4. The usual process for completing an Equality Impact Assessment must be used. This includes completing an initial assessment to understand whether there are likely to be any significant equality impacts, and, if so, to complete a full assessment. As part of a full assessment, a range of evidence may be used to inform it, including qualitative information and undertaking initial consultation with those likely to be affected.
5. The EIA may indicate that there is insufficient information available to support an informed assessment of the potential impact of flying a flag. In which case, the Chief Executive must undertake to consult further with any community groups, established forums or other stakeholders to gain additional information that may be helpful in coming to a decision.
6. If it has not been possible to complete an EIA within a set timescale for the flying of the flag (e.g. if a Government department has suggested that a flag is flown on a specific date), then the Chief Executive should decide not to fly the flag, but may choose to keep the decision under review pending the completion of the EIA and further consultation that may be required.
7. The Chief Executive may also choose to commission other types of supporting evidence. This could include a Community Tension Impact Assessment.
8. The Chief Executive must take into account, as part of the decision-making process, the other commemorative options available to the council, which may be more appropriate for some circumstances (see paragraph 13).

9. The Chief Executive must consult with the Leader of the Council before reaching a decision and may choose to consult with other Elected Members as he/she considers appropriate. This could include the leaders of other political groups represented on the Council.
10. The Chief Executive must consider all the evidence available before coming to a final decision. The options open to the Chief Executive are:
 - a. To fly the flag as requested (and, if so, for how long), potentially in conjunction with another form of commemoration (see paragraph 13)
 - b. Not to fly the flag but commemorate the event in another way (see paragraph 13)
 - c. Not to fly the flag and not to commemorate the event in another way.
11. Once a final decision has been reached, the Chief Executive must respond to the requester setting out the basis for the decision. That response should explain the rationale for why the decision has been made.
12. Once the decision has been made, consideration should be given to how that decision will be communicated to the public, stakeholders and to staff and Elected Members. It will normally be appropriate for the decision to be published on the Council's website, alongside the Equality Impact Assessment.
13. There are a number of other commemorative options available if flying a flag is inappropriate. Some of these options have a cost associated with them.
 - Holding of periods of silence to recognise key activities such as Armistice day. This can be undertaken at all main SCC sites.
 - We are able to alter the Town Hall bells to change the sounds that are played or chiming at key times. We have used this to recognise some key times/days e.g. bells striking at 7am to commemorate over the top on the 100 year anniversary of the Battle of the Somme.
 - Changing the colour of the lights in the Town Hall clock
 - Altering the colour of the water in the Peace Garden fountains
 - We can also undertake one off signs of support e.g. lights off in SCC buildings for environment day or single light in Town Hall on Holocaust Memorial Day
 - Opening a book of condolence in the Town Hall or other venue
14. The Chief Executive may depart from this protocol only where, in their opinion, the circumstances of the request are such that the requirements of the protocol cannot be fulfilled or where the risks to community cohesion or other implications are such that the request should not even be considered.