FLAG FLYING POLICY

Executive summary

1. At its meeting on 30 June 2016, the SPCB agreed the Flag Flying Policy contained in the Annex. The policy provides (among other things) for only three flags – the Saltire, the Union Flag and the European Flag – to be flown routinely by the Parliament, with any other flag being flown only in exceptional circumstance and with the consent of the SPCB.

2. This paper offers an opportunity to revisit the policy in light of experience since the SPCB last considered the matter.

Issues and Options

3. The SPCB may recall that requests were made for the “rainbow flag” (also known as the gay pride flag or the LGBT pride flag) to be flown from the Parliament’s masts to coincide with the annual Pride Edinburgh march on 17 June this year. The march was organised to assemble and leave from the Parliament’s grounds in front of the building.

4. The rainbow flag was flown by the Parliament for the first time in 2016 as a mark of respect to the victims of the terror attack on a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida which killed 49 people and injured many more. This incident took place shortly before the annual Pride Edinburgh march in June that year and the decision to fly the rainbow flag for the march was taken under the “exceptional circumstances” clause to show solidarity with the LGBT community in Edinburgh and Scotland in relation to that attack.

5. The Parliament receives a small number of requests each year from individuals and organisations for particular flags to be flown at the Parliament on particular days of the year. The SPCB’s Flag Flying Policy is drawn narrowly in order to both protect the dignity of the Parliament and to ensure that the importance of flying particular flags is not diluted by over-use of the exceptional circumstances clause.

6. In light of the above events, the SPCB is asked to consider whether the Flag Flying Policy remains fit-for-purpose. The SPCB could decide:

- that no changes are made and that reliance on the exceptional circumstances clause is retained for all requests;
- that a specific change is made to permit the flying of the rainbow flag on an appropriate day each year to coincide with Pride Edinburgh events; or
- that a wider amendment is made to relax the Parliament’s approach to requests of this nature by removing the requirement for exceptional circumstances to be demonstrated.
Resource Implications

7. There are no resource issues raised by the matters covered in this paper.

Governance issues

8. The SPCB is responsible for the use of parliamentary resources in line with its statutory obligations. It has therefore previously agreed to agree a written policy on the use of the Parliament’s masts.

Publication Scheme

9. This paper can be published.

Decision

10. The SPCB is asked to consider whether any changes should be made to its Flag Flying Policy in light of recent events.

David McGill
September 2017
FLAG FLYING POLICY

Extent of application

These guidelines apply to the Scottish Parliament.

Flags to be flown

The Saltire, Union flag and European flag shall be flown daily and will meet the requirements of the listed dates below.

- European Day – 9th May
- Official Celebration of Her Majesty’s Birthday – usually the 2nd Saturday in June
- Official Opening of the Scottish Parliament
- Remembrance Day – usually the second Sunday of the Month of November
- St Andrew’s Day – 30th November
- In addition to the daily flags the Commonwealth flag, the Armed Forces flag and the United Nations flag shall be flown on the listed dates below
  - Commonwealth Day – Usually 2nd Monday of the month of March
  - The Armed Forces flag shall be flown on Armed Forces Day - usually the last Saturday of the month of June
  - United Nations Day – 24th October

Flying of other flags

No other flags will be flown unless in exceptional circumstances where a case is made to and approved by the SPCB.

Superior Position

The Scottish Parliament has flag poles all of the same height and the superior position is the central pole. The next superior position is the flag pole to the left of centre flag pole viewed from Horse Wynd towards the front of the building followed by the flag pole to the right of the central flag pole.

Position of flags

The Saltire must be flown in the superior position, with the Union flag in the second superior position and the European flag in the third. Any additional flags to be flown, approved by the SPCB shall be flown in the fourth and fifth superior positions dependent on importance.

How the Union Flag should be flown

The broader diagonal white stripe should be at the top left hand side of the flag nearest the flagpole.
Her Majesty The Queen present in the Scottish Parliament

The Royal Arms of Scotland (the “Lion Rampant”) is The Queen’s official banner in Scotland and will be hoisted when Her Majesty The Queen enters the Scottish Parliament building and will be lowered when The Queen departs. It is not to be hoisted when The Queen is only passing in procession. The Royal Arms of Scotland shall be flown in the superior position with the Saltire in the second superior position, the Union flag in the third and the European flag in the fourth.

Visits by heads of State

On visits by heads of state, the appropriate flag of the visiting dignitary shall be flown in the superior position with the Saltire in the second superior position, the Union flag in the third and the European flag in the fourth.

Flying of flags at Half Mast

“Half Mast” actually means that the flag is flown two-thirds up the flagpole.

The occasions on which flags are to be flown at Half Mast are:

1. From the announcement of the death up to the funeral of the Sovereign, except on specified times on Proclamation Day (the day the new Sovereign is proclaimed), when flags are flown at Full Mast.

2. The funerals of members of the Royal Family, subject to discussion with the Palace.

3. The day of the announcement of death, funeral and day of any motion of condolence for all serving Members of the Scottish Parliament.

4. The day of the announcement of death, funeral and day of any motion of condolence for former Presiding Officers and former Scottish First Ministers.

5. The day of the announcement of death and funeral for serving and former Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom.

The death and funeral of serving and former heads of State

In the event of the death and funeral of serving and former heads of State, flags may be flown at Half Mast.

“Day of the announcement of death” means Parliament’s flags fly at Half Mast until sunset or if the death is announced after 1.00pm on the day, flags will also fly at Half Mast on the following day.

Changes and additions may be made to these arrangements by the Corporate Body to reflect exceptional circumstances.