

# Flag flying policy

16 January 2020

Reference: SPCB(2020)Paper 1

## Purpose

1. This paper invites the Corporate Body to agree to amending the flag flying policy to remove references to the routine flying of the European (EU) flag and for the flag to be removed from its flag pole on 31 January 2020.

## Background

2. The current flag flying policy (attached) makes provision for the routine daily flying of the EU flag to recognise Scotland's place in the EU. The policy requires the flag to be flown on the third flagpole, with the Saltire flown in the superior position and the Union flag in the next prominent position. Additional flags may be flown with the agreement of the Corporate Body or at the discretion of the Presiding Officer to reflect exceptional circumstances.

3. Within the UK legislatures and governments, we understand that only the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales fly the EU flag routinely. At Westminster it is only the Union flag that is flown daily. It is also the case that the EU flag is not flown daily on Scottish Government buildings.

## Issue

4. Members will know that legislation is progressing at Westminster to confirm that the UK will leave the EU at 11.00pm on 31 January 2020.

5. Members may also be aware that Alasdair Allan MSP has lodged a motion "that the Parliament believes that it should continue to fly the EU flag on its grounds, in line with the democratic decisions of Scotland's voters and MSPs to remain in the EU".

6. Given we will no longer be members of the EU on 31 January, it is proposed that the EU flag be removed from the flag pole on that date. As the policy on the flying of flags is one for the SPCB, it is invited to agree to amend this policy to remove references to the EU flag.

7. The removal of the flag at the Parliament may attract some interest from the media and from the public. If this was the case, we would ensure that we had the necessary arrangements in place to respond appropriately.

## Publication

8. This paper can be published.

## Recommendation

9. The Corporate Body is invited to agree:
  - 9.1. The removal of the European flag from the point at which the UK leaves the EU; and
  - 9.2. The removal of references to the European flag in the flag flying policy.

**Chief Executive / Facilities Management Office**

## 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** – 1st July
- **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
  - 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, or at the discretion of the Presiding Officer, to reflect exceptional circumstances.**