



ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Item: 17

Policy and Resources Committee: 25 November 2025.

Review of Flag Flying Protocol.

Report by Director of Education, Communities and Housing.

1. Overview

- 1.1. The Council has a flag flying protocol which details the flags to be flown from Council buildings on specific dates or events each year. This protocol was originally developed through the Councillors' House Working Group approximately eleven years ago and was last reviewed by the Policy and Resources Committee on 21 February 2023.
- 1.2. Following various queries around the protocol and some occasions where it lacked detail on particular situations, it was felt necessary to consider a review of the flag flying protocol.
- 1.3. A revised flag flying protocol has now been developed with the aim of establishing a clear and consistent framework for the flying of flags at Council-owned buildings, specifically the Council Offices at School Place and Kirkwall Town Hall, and is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.4. To support the flag flying protocol, a list of flags to be flown from Council properties on specific dates or events for each calendar year will be prepared and the schedule for 2025 is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
 - i. Approve the Council's Flag Flying Protocol, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3. Revised Flag Flying Protocol

- 3.1. In the updated protocol it is proposed that the Orkney flag is flown at all times at the Council Offices, School Place, and the Town Hall, and is only removed for other flags to be flown on their official date.

- 3.2. If the revised protocol is approved, the flag flying protocol and schedule for 2025 will be communicated to relevant Council officers and the public via the Orkney Islands Council website.
- 3.3. Once the regular flag flying dates are available for each subsequent year, a briefing will be provided for Councillors including an updated schedule. This schedule will also be published on the Orkney Islands Council website.

For Further Information please contact:

Alex Rodwell, Head of Performance and Business Support, extension 2281, Email alex.rodwell@orkney.gov.uk

Implications of Report

1. **Financial:** There are no financial implications directly arising as a result of this report.
2. **Legal:** There are no legal implications directly arising as a result of this report.
3. **Corporate Governance:** Not applicable.
4. **Human Resources:** Not applicable.
5. **Equalities:** An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.
6. **Island Communities Impact:** Having reviewed the draft protocol, it is not considered that there is any potential differential impact for Island Communities, therefore a full Island Communities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.
7. **Links to Council Plan:**
 - ☐ Growing our economy.
 - ☒ Strengthening our Communities.
 - ☐ Developing our Infrastructure.
 - ☐ Transforming our Council.
8. **Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan**
 - ☐ Cost of Living.
 - ☐ Sustainable Development.
 - ☒ Local Equality.
 - ☐ Improving Population Health.
9. **Environmental and Climate Risk:** There are no environmental or climate implications arising from this report.
10. **Risk:** There are no risk implications arising from this report.
11. **Procurement:** Not applicable.
12. **Health and Safety:** Not applicable.
13. **Property and Assets:** Not applicable.
14. **Information Technology:** Not applicable.

15. Cost of Living: Not applicable.

List of Background Papers

None.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Orkney Islands Council Flag Flying Protocol.

Appendix 2: Flag Flying Schedule for 2025.

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment.



Flag Flying Protocol

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this protocol is to establish a clear and consistent framework for the flying of flags at Council-owned buildings, specifically the Council Offices at School Place and Kirkwall Town Hall.
- 1.2. This protocol ensures that flag flying practices are respectful, appropriate, and aligned with both local priorities and national guidance, including the most recent Scottish Government Flag Flying Guidance. It provides a mechanism for considering requests to fly flags for events or causes not currently included in the Council's standard flag flying schedule, while maintaining flexibility and discretion in decision-making.

2. Standard Flag Flying Arrangements

- 2.1 As a symbol of local identity and civic pride, the Orkney Flag shall be flown continuously at the following locations:
 - Council Offices, School Place.
 - Kirkwall Town Hall.
- 2.2 The Orkney Flag will remain in place at all times except when it is temporarily replaced by another flag being flown to mark a specific occasion or event, as outlined in the Council's annual flag flying schedule.
- 2.3 Where another flag is to be flown it shall be flown from 08:00 to 20:00 on the designated day. In instances where the designated flag flying occasion falls on a weekend, the relevant flag shall be raised on Friday at 20:00 and remain in place until Monday at 08:00, ensuring appropriate recognition of the event across non-working days.

3. Requests to Fly Additional Flags

- 3.1 From time to time, the Council may receive requests from external organisations or individuals to fly flags from the Council Offices and / or Kirkwall Town Hall, in recognition of events, campaigns, or causes not currently included in the Council's flag flying schedule. In order to ensure that such requests are considered fairly and consistently, the following criteria must be met:
 - There is no political element to the activity
 - There is no commercial element to the activity
 - There is no significant cost to the Council

- Flying the flag does not conflict with another event already included in the schedule
- 3.2 Where requests satisfy these criteria, the final decision is delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Convener, Leader and Depute Leader.
- 3.3 Approved flags may be flown at:
- Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall.
 - Kirkwall Town Hall.
- 3.4 This approach ensures that decisions are made in a timely and informed manner, while maintaining appropriate oversight and accountability.

4. Half-mast protocol

- 4.1 Flags shall be flown at half-mast, defined as two-thirds of the way up the flagpole, on the following occasions:
- Death of a former Elected Member: The Orkney Flag shall be flown at half-mast from the time of public announcement of the death until the date of the funeral. This shall be at the discretion of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Convener, Leader and Depute Leader.
 - Royal funeral: The funeral of members of the Royal Family, subject to official instructions in each case issued by the Palace.
 - International Workers Memorial Day: flags shall be flown at half-mast to honour those who have lost their lives in the workplace.
- 4.2 These occasions reflect solemn and respectful observance of significant events and individuals.

5. Management and operational responsibility

- 5.1 The responsibility for the physical management of flags, including raising, lowering, and maintenance, rests with Council Officers. Flags owned by the Council shall be stored, cared for, and flown in accordance with this protocol and any relevant operational procedures.

2025 Flag Flying Schedule

Date.	Occasion.	Flag.	Flown.
10 March.	Commonwealth Day.	Commonwealth. 	Town Hall.
16 April.	St Magnus Day.	Orkney. 	Council Offices and Town Hall.
28 April.	International Workers Memorial Day.	Saltire. 	Council Offices and Town Hall. On this day, the Saltire should be hoisted right up and then lowered to half-mast for the day.
8 May.	VE Day (Victory in Europe Day) – 80 th anniversary.	Union. 	Council Offices and Town Hall.
17 May.	Norwegian Constitution Day.	Norwegian. 	Town Hall.

Date.	Occasion.	Flag.	Flown.
7 June.	Orkney Pride (dates advised annually).	Progress Pride. 	Town Hall.
14 June.	Official Celebration of The King's Birthday.	Union. 	Council Offices and Town Hall.
28 June.	Armed Forces Day.	Armed Forces. 	Council Offices.
17 July.	Birthday of The Queen	Union. 	Council Offices and Town Hall.
23 July.	Historic County Flag Day.	Orkney. 	Council Offices and Town Hall.

Date.	Occasion.	Flag.	Flown.
15 August.	VJ Day (Victory Over Japan Day) – 80 th anniversary.	Union. 	Council Offices and Town Hall.
3 September.	Merchant Navy Day.	Red Ensign. 	Town Hall.
08 September.	Anniversary of Accession.	Union. 	Council Offices and Town Hall.
09 November.	Remembrance Sunday.	Union. 	Council Offices and Town Hall.
11 November.	Remembrance Day.	Union. 	Council Offices and Town Hall. (Two-minute silence at School Place at 1100 when 11 th falls on a working day).
14 November.	Birthday of His Majesty the King.	Union. 	Council Offices.

Date.	Occasion.	Flag.	Flown.
29 November.	Kirkwall Tree Lighting weekend. Flag flown Friday – Monday.	Norwegian. 	Town Hall.
30 November.	St. Andrew's Day.	Saltire. 	Council Offices.



Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a proposal or changes by anticipating the consequences and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

Should you have any questions or wish for your draft EqIA to be reviewed by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, please contact OD@orkney.gov.uk.

1. Identification of the Proposal or Change

Name of proposal or change being assessed.	Flag Flying Protocol.
Responsible Service and Directorate.	Performance and Business Support Education, Communities and Housing
Date of assessment.	6 October 2025.
Is the proposal or change existing? (Please indicate if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	Existing.

2. Primary Information

What are the intended outcomes of the proposal or change?	To determine which flags are flown from Council buildings on approved dates set by the Scottish Government.
Is the proposal or change strategically important?	No.
State who is or may be affected by this proposal or change, and how?	The general public.
How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this proposal or change?	This protocol sets out the arrangements for flying flags from Council buildings following requests from Council Services and local organisations.

Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking.	Existing data exists on flag flying protocols in other local authorities and for the Scottish Government buildings. Public sector bodies subject to the general equality duty are required to demonstrate due regard to the need to: • Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act. • Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. • Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. Good relations can be defined as 'Communities of all kinds living and working together with understanding and respect, so that people experience: • Freedom from discrimination, stereotyping, harassment or violence. • A shared sense of belonging and acceptance. • The ability to participate equally in economic, political, civic and social life. • Freedom to agree or disagree respectfully, without fear of reprisal or rejection. Examples of taking active steps include developing clear policies, recruiting and promoting diverse candidates, monitoring staff diversity and supporting events like Pride and LGBTQ+ History month as well as displaying LGBTQ+ friendly posters to show customers that the organisation supports equality.
Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.	Not applicable.

Could the proposal or change have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?	Please provide any evidence – positive impacts / benefits, negative impacts and reasons:
1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.	None.
2. Sex: a man or a woman.	None.
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	Flying the Progress Pride Flag would have a positive impact by demonstrating support for the LGBTQ+ community.
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	Flying the Progress Pride Flag would have a positive impact by demonstrating support for the LGBTQ+ community.
5. Pregnancy and maternity.	None.
6. Age: people of different ages.	None.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	None.
8. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	None.
9. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	None.
10. Caring responsibilities	None.
11. Socio-economic disadvantage.	None.
12. Care experienced	None.
3. Impact Assessment	
Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	No.

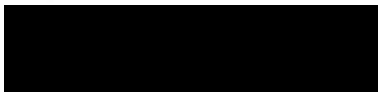
Does the analysis above identify any potential negative impacts?	No.
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes.

4. Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Please complete the following action plan where you have identified any differential impacts or potential negative impacts in Section 3 of the Equality Impact Assessment.

Impact Identified	Action to be taken	Owner	How will it be monitored	Date Action to be completed

5. Sign and Date

Signature:	
Name:	Melanie Slater.
Date:	6 October 2025.