

Flag Flying Protocol



16 December 2014

Request for Information.

Thank you for your request received 19 November in which you asked:

I am enquiring about the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) used in Wales for the Flying of the National Flag and/or others on your Assembly Building.

In this connection I would like you to please answer, if possible, the following questions:-

- a) What is the name of the National Flag flown at present?*
- b) How often is it flown? (1. Daily over whole week. 2. Only when the Assembly is sitting 3. Only during working week of Assembly Building 4. Or other periods)?*
- c) Has the Welsh Assembly agreed an EIA policy for the name of flag to be flown or is it still under consideration?*
- d) Has the policy of which Flag to be flown on the Assembly Building been determined initially by UK Government at Westminster or Welsh Government?*
- e) Has the Flag policy ever been contentious from commencement of Assembly, or become such afterwards and then finally agreed by vote in the Assembly?*

The National Assembly for Wales has three groups of four flagpoles – these are located outside the Assembly’s offices in Tŷ Hywel (Cardiff Bay); opposite the adjoining Senedd and outside our North Wales office in Colwyn Bay.

The following flags are flown every day unless other arrangements have been agreed in accordance with our protocol:

- European Union Flag
- Union Flag
- Y Ddraig Goch (The Welsh Dragon) – the Welsh National flag
- National Assembly for Wales flag

Precedent has also been established for the flying of specific flags at certain times (for instance the Commonwealth flag on two days in March) and when the Assembly is welcoming particular visitors, including the British Royal family and heads of state and government. When a guest flag is flown (and

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for a visiting Head of State) it will replace the National Assembly for Wales flag.

It would appear that when the Assembly was established, it followed UK flag flying protocol which stated that precedence should be given to the Union Flag. However, on 10 October 2002, the First Minister took the decision that the Welsh flag should be given precedence over the Union Flag on the Welsh Assembly Government building in Cathays Park. This did not require a vote in the Assembly and it hasn't been contentious.

Since the official separation between Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales in 2006, the Presiding Officer has been responsible for any decision on which flags are flown across the Assembly estate. The attached protocol ([Annex A](#)) informs and directs his/her decision.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport often circulate flag flying notices to the Presiding Office. The decision regarding if flags are to be flown rests with the Presiding Officer and s/he should then be consulted to see if he or she is in agreement with the notification.

We are currently piloting our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) toolkit with colleagues across our organisation, ensuring that EIA's are embedded in all policy and project development. EIA's have been piloted in certain areas, however to date we have not carried out an EIA on our flag flying policy.

Your request has been considered according to the principles set out in the Code of Practice on Public Access to Information. The code is published on our website at http://www.assemblywales.org/abthome/about_us-commission_assembly_administration/abt-foi/abt-foi-cop-pub.htm

If you have any questions regarding this response please contact me. If you feel you have cause for complaint, please follow the guidance at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Buddug Saer
Freedom of Information and Project Support Officer
National Assembly for Wales

Cause for concern or complaint with your FOI response?

If you believe that I have not applied the Code correctly or have not followed the relevant laws, you may make a formal complaint to the Chief Executive and Clerk at the National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay. Details of the Assembly's complaints principles are set out in the Code of Practice on Complaints available on the Internet at <http://www.assemblywales.org/conhome/con-complaint.htm>. Please advise me if you wish to receive a printed copy.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Annex A

Protocol for the flying of flags at the National Assembly for Wales

Purpose of protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to:

- outline the usual arrangements for the displaying of flags;
- provide a record of established precedents;
- clarify the appropriate procedure should a request for the flying of a specific guest flag or flags be received;
- Clarify the procedure for flying the flags at half mast.

Usual arrangements

The National Assembly for Wales has:

- four main flagpoles between the Senedd and the Pierhead in Cardiff Bay;
- four flagpoles outside Tŷ Hywel in Cardiff Bay; and
- four flagpoles outside the office in Colwyn Bay.

The following flags are flown every day unless other arrangements have been agreed in accordance with this protocol:

- European Union;
- Union Flag;
- Y Ddraig Goch;
- National Assembly for Wales.

Variations in flags

There are some established arrangements for variance in the flags displayed at the Assembly. These are outlined below:

- **Annual days**

A precedent for flying specific flags on identified days annually has been established by the Assembly. Annex A identifies these dates.

- **Official Visits**

Precedent has also been established for the flying of specific flags when the Assembly is welcoming particular visitors, including the British royal family and heads of state and government. The flags to be displayed during official visits are identified in Annex A.

- **Other circumstances**

At the Presiding Officer's discretion, flags other than those identified in Annex A may be displayed. Requests should be made to the private office.

Half mast

In circumstances of local or national mourning, the Presiding Officer may call for a period of silence in the first Plenary following the event, and may invite tributes and condolences from relevant parties as appropriate. In such circumstances all flags displayed by the Assembly may be flown at half mast as outlined below.

In circumstances of local mourning, at the Presiding Officer's discretion, flags may be flown at half mast on the day that the death is announced, and/or on the day that the period of silence or condolences are expressed in Plenary and/or on the day of the funeral. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- the death of a serving or retired Assembly Member,
- the death of a distinguished serving or retired senior politician; or
- exceptional circumstances particular to Wales.

In circumstances of national mourning, such as the death of senior members of the royal family, flags will be flown at half mast from the day of death until sunset on the day of the funeral.

The UK Government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport may contact the Assembly to request that flags be flown at half mast, although the final decision as to whether the Assembly is in local or national mourning, and whether flags should be flown at half mast, rests with the Presiding Officer.

Flags at half mast should be flown two-thirds of the way up the flagpole, with at least the height of the flag between the top of the flag and the top of the flagpole.

Procedure

Enquiries about flags displayed at the National Assembly should be directed to the Presiding Officer's private office. All enquiries and requests will be dealt with in accordance with this protocol. All decisions on the flying of flags will be taken by the Presiding Officer. The Security Team will act on the instructions of the Presiding Officer, both initially and in terms of when to return the flags to the usual arrangements

Requests to vary the flags flown at the Assembly should be submitted at least one month in advance and should include details of which flag is to be flown, why it is appropriate for the Assembly to fly the guest flag and on which date(s) the guest flag is to be flown. The final decision on which flags may be displayed and when rests with the Presiding Officer.

Guest flags will normally replace the Assembly's own flag on the main flagpoles, although the final decision on this rests with the Presiding Officer.

The International Relations team holds a stock of flags. Any flags which are not on this list must be provided by the organisation or individual who has made the request. The provider of the flag is responsible for ensuring that the flag is provided to the Assembly in advance and collected in a timely fashion. They must also ensure that the flag provided is of a similar standard, quality and size as those usually displayed. All flags displayed by the Assembly must be clean and in good repair. If the flags provided do not meet these requirements, a decision not to fly it may be taken.

Annual days

Event	Date	Flag
St David's Day	1 March	St David's flag (yellow cross on black background)
Commonwealth Day	Second Monday in March	CPA or Commonwealth flag
Merchant Navy Days	May and November	Red Ensign (on Senedd flagpole nearest the monument)
Armed Forces Week	Week leading up to the last Saturday in June	Armed Forces flag

Official visits

Visitor	Flag
British royal family	Royal standard - dependent on which royal.
National heads of state, government or parliament	National flag
Regional heads of state, government or parliament	National or regional flag - as appropriate