

Wantage Town Council

Flag Hoisting Policy



Introduction

This policy provides guidance on the flying of flags on Wantage Town Council owned flagpoles, ensuring dignity, consistency, and appropriate recognition of national, civic, and community occasions.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the use, management, and display of flags on flagpoles owned and operated by Wantage Town Council, specifically located at the east and west ends of the market square. It applies to all council members, officers, contractors, and other individuals involved in the planning, hoisting, or maintenance of flags on these poles. It does not apply to flagpoles owned or operated by other organisations or individuals within the town.

- Urgent or exceptional decisions (e.g. unplanned half-masting or weather-related action) may be made by the town clerk/deputy clerk.

3. Flag Locations and Capacity

- There are two flagpoles, located at the west and east ends of the market square.
- The superior flagpole is the one at the west end of the market square. Flags of higher precedence (e.g. the Union flag) should be flown here when both poles are in use.
- When both are in use, the Union flag takes precedence unless another designated flag of the day overrides it.
- Only one flag may be flown on a pole unless the pole permits dual hoisting and complies with UK planning regulations. The flagpoles at both ends of the market square do not support dual hoisting.

4. Union and Wessex Flag

- **Union Flag (Union Jack)**

The Union flag is the national flag of the United Kingdom.

- **Wessex Flag**

The Wessex flag, depicting a gold wyvern on a red field, is not officially the town flag of Wantage, but is used by Wantage Town Council to represent the town, celebrating Wantage's historic heritage and links to the Kingdom of Wessex.

5. Default Flag

- The Wessex flag will be flown continuously on both the superior (west) and inferior (east) flagpoles outside designated flag days.
- Substitution of either flag must follow official guidance or be approved by the town clerk and mayor.

6. Flag Days and Calendar

Flown on superior (west) flagpole

- Second Monday in March – Commonwealth Day (Union Flag)
- 23 April – St George's Day (St George's Flag)
- 6 May – Coronation Day (Union Flag)
- 3rd Saturday of June – HM The King's Official Birthday (Union Flag)
- 8 September – His Majesty's Accession (Union Flag)
- 11 November and Remembrance Sunday – Remembrance Day (Union Flag)
- 14 November – Birthday of HM The King (Union Flag)

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Community & Awareness Flags

- 1st week June – Pride Month
- 24 August – Ukraine Independence Day (*Ukraine Flag*)
- 24 October – United Nations Day (*UN Flag*)

7. Half-Masting

Union Flag

Flown at half-mast: (two thirds up flagpole)

- On the death of the sovereign or a senior royal
- From the announcement of death until the funeral, except on Proclamation Day (raised from 11am to sunset)
- On national days of mourning, and at the funeral of a prime minister or former PM Wessex

Flag (Town Flag) Flown at half-mast:

- On the death of a serving councillor, freeman of the town, former mayor, or serving staff member
- The day of the funeral
- As deemed appropriate by the town clerk or mayor.

8. Exceptional Circumstances

The Town Council may choose to fly additional flags or observe unique events at its discretion. Flags will not be flown for sporting events unless there are exceptional local or national circumstances, as determined by the town clerk and mayor. Urgent or exceptional decisions, including unplanned half-masting or weather related actions, may be made by the town clerk or deputy town clerk.

9. Commemorative Anniversaries

From time to time, the Town Council may choose to acknowledge significant commemorative anniversaries related to military, civic, or national history. This may include milestone years (e.g. 75th, 80th anniversaries) of events such as:

- VE Day (Victory in Europe Day)
- VJ Day (Victory over Japan Day)
- D-Day
- Armistice Day

Such anniversaries may be marked by:

- Flying an appropriate flag (e.g. Union Flag, commemorative flags)
- Adjusting flag positions (e.g. half-masting, dual hoisting)
- Holding or supporting commemorative events in the market place

These actions are at the discretion of the town clerk and mayor and will align with national or local guidance when available.



10. International Flags

International flags may be flown alongside the Union flag for special events, commemorations, or acts of solidarity that involve that country, provided the following conditions are met:

- The occasion must be cultural, humanitarian, or national in nature, and must not be political.
- International flags must not be flown on days designated by HM Government for flying the Union Flag (e.g. Remembrance Day or royal birthdays).
- To recognise Wantage's twinning relationship with Mably (France) and Seesen (Germany), the national flag may be flown during official visits.

When flying an international flag:

- The international flag must occupy the inferior (east) flagpole.
- The union flag must occupy the superior (west) flagpole
- International flags will not be flown alone.

11. Maintenance and Protocols

- Flags must be kept clean, undamaged, and properly secured.
- Flags must be hoisted and lowered safely and respectfully.
- Flags shall not be flown during severe weather conditions, particularly when wind speeds exceed 30 mph (48 km/h) or as advised by the Met Office or another relevant authority.
- During high winds, flags must be lowered to prevent damage to the flag, pole, or surrounding area.
- The town clerk (or delegated officer) is responsible for monitoring weather conditions and taking action.
- The town clerk shall designate a responsible officer (such as a member of staff or maintenance contractor) to undertake the hoisting, lowering, and changing of flags. This person must be briefed on appropriate protocols, safe practices, and flag etiquette. A clear schedule and record of flag days should be maintained and be accessible for operational purposes.

12. UK Government Flag Hoisting Guidelines

In accordance with UK Government regulations, the following guidelines will apply to all flag hoisting on flagpoles belonging to Wantage Town Council.

- The Union Flag takes precedence over all other flags and must be flown at the superior position (highest point or main pole).
- When flying multiple flags, the Union Flag should be hoisted first, followed by other flags, and should never be flown at a lower level than any other flag.
- Flags should not be flown during adverse weather conditions, particularly in high winds, to prevent damage.
- In the event of national or significant mourning, flags should be flown at half-mast following the official guidelines, especially for the death of the Sovereign, senior royal family members, or the Prime Minister.

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Union and St George Flags

Date	Occasion	Flag	Pole
Second Monday in March	Commonwealth Day	Union Flag	Superior (west)
23 April	St George's Day	St George Flag	Superior (west)
6 May	Coronation Day	Union Flag	Superior (west)
3rd Saturday of June	HM The King's Official Birthday	Union Flag	Superior (west)
8 September	His Majesty's Accession	Union Flag	Superior (west)
11 November & Remembrance Sunday	Remembrance Day	Union Flag	Superior (west)
14 November	Birthday of HM The King	Union Flag	Superior (west)

Community & Awareness Flags

1 st Week June	Pride Month	Pride Flag (east)	Inferior
24 August	Ukraine Independence Day	Ukraine Flag (east)	Inferior
24 October	United Nations	UN Flag (east)	Inferior

Date of Policy	Approving Committee	Date of Committee Meeting	Policy Reference Version	Supersedes	Adopted by Council	Date for next review
May 2025	Wantage Town Council	26/01/2026	Version 1	N/A	26/01/2026	May 2027