



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Flags Policy Review

12 September 2024

Reference: SPCB (2024) Paper 57

Executive summary

1. At its meeting on 2 May 2024, the SPCB considered a request from Paul Sweeney MSP:

S6W-24739: To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body whether it will consider commissioning a Scottish Parliament flag, in a similar manner to that commissioned by the House of Commons in 2021, which was designed by Graham Bartram, Chief Vexillologist of the Flag Institute, at the request of the Speaker, Sir Lindsay Hoyle.

2. The SPCB asked officials to provide more information to help inform a decision on whether a Scottish Parliament Flag should be commissioned and the associated costs.
3. The SPCB are invited to discuss the flying of the Scottish Parliament flag.

Background

4. The Right Honourable the Lord Lyon King of Arms, is the Scottish official with responsibility for regulating heraldry in Scotland. Officials have been in contact with the Lord Lyon's office who advised that our heraldic arms were granted on 27 June 2000, when the Parliament's corporate logo was first devised and introduced into daily use. Our heraldic arms are the 'flag element' within the corporate logo.

Laws of Arms, Know Ye Therefore that We have Devised and Do by 20
 These Presents Assign, Ratify and Confirm unto the Petitioners the
 following Ensigns Armorial as depicted upon the margin hereof and
 matriculated of even date with these Presents upon the 1st page of the
 84th Volume of Our Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland,
 videlicet:— Purpure, a saltire equisee Argent and for badge on a
 gonfannon Purpure a saltire equisee Argent, the gonfannon pendant
 between two cords each Purpure and Argent, from a pole pommelèd at
 each end fessways Purpure, the whole ensigned with an ancient crown
 of the Last jewellèd Argent.

Elizabeth Bell
 Lyon Clerk and Keeper of the Records

Matriculated the 27th day of June 2000.

- The heraldic arms, would therefore form the Parliament's flag. It is detailed as "Purple, a saltire equisee Argent" which translates to "A purple background with white saltire which has pointed ends" as follows:



- As the flag has already been designed and permission granted there are no further costs associated with introducing a Scottish Parliament flag, other than a relatively modest sum of around £500 to have the flag made.

Issues and options

Introducing the flag

- If the SPCB were minded to flying the already approved Scottish Parliament flag, it is recommended that this is done to coincide with the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Parliament. The ongoing presence of the flag could be a symbolic welcoming gesture from the Parliament to those who visit and in keeping with the Parliament's open ethos.

8. It is not known what wider support there is from Members, beyond Mr Sweeney, on the flying of a Parliament flag. The SPCB may wish to consider that flags can be contentious, and may attract criticism from Members, the public or media.

Practical considerations

9. The Scottish Parliament has five flagpoles at Holyrood and these currently fly the following flags on a daily basis:
 - The Saltire in the superior position
 - The Union Flag in the second superior position
 - The European flag in the third superior position
 - The Ukrainian flag in the fourth superior position
 - The fifth superior position is unused
10. Should the SPCB approve the flying of the Scottish Parliament flag the recommended use of flagpoles would be:
 - The Scottish Parliament flag in superior position
 - The Saltire in the second superior position
 - The Union Flag in the third superior position
 - The European flag in the fourth superior position
 - The Ukrainian flag in the fifth superior position
 - Any requests for additional flags to be flown (such as Armed forces day, would require the Ukrainian flag to be lowered)
11. When the flag was designed in 2001 it was envisaged that it would fly on sitting days. However, this would require resource to manually move the flag every week. It is recommended that the flag should fly permanently (rather than only on sitting days) this is in line with the approach taken on other flags.
12. There will be modest changes required to the flag flying policy to update with regard to the positions of the flags and recognise the flying of the Scottish Parliament flag, which officials will undertake if required.

Governance

13. The Flag-flying policy is managed by the Facilities Management Office on behalf of the SPCB.

Resource implications

14. There is a one-off cost of around £500 to produce the flag.

Publication Scheme

15. This paper will be published in line with the SPCB's Publication Scheme.

Next steps

16. If the SPCB requests the commissioning of a Scottish Parliament flag, Officials will have a flag produced.
17. The Flag-Flying policy will be updated to reflect the SPCB's agreed position on when the Scottish Parliament flag would fly and in which position.

Decision

18. The SPCB is invited to:
 - Confirm whether it would like to fly the Scottish Parliament flag.

Facilities Management Office
September 2024

SPCB (2016) Paper 65

29 September 2016

Policy on the Scottish Parliament's response to events

Executive summary

1. This SPCB recently agreed a minor change to the Parliament's Flag Flying Policy to allow the SPCB or the Presiding Officer to make changes or additions to the policy to reflect exceptional circumstances. There are, in addition to flying flags, a number of methods by which the Parliament can respond to events. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of inquiries relating to the Parliament's response or plans to respond to or commemorate such events and these have been treated largely on an ad hoc basis.
2. While we receive advice from both the UK and Scottish Government about their respective arrangements we consider that in order to provide a degree of clarity and consistency around the Parliament's response, the SPCB is asked to consider the attached draft policy on responses.

Issues and Options

3. A number of mechanisms are available to the Parliament when marking events and have been used in combination in the past. These include:
 - Lowering of flags outside the building
 - Motion of condolence
 - Minute's silence
 - Book of Condolence
 - Letter from the Presiding Officer (to for example, a relevant Consul General or Speaker of a relevant Parliament)
 - Feature panel on the Parliament's website
 - Tweet from the official SP account
 - Tweet from the Presiding Officer's account
 - Visit by the Clerk/Chief Executive to the appropriate Consulate in Edinburgh to sign Book of Condolence
4. Over the course of the last session, there was a steady increase in inquiries and comments relating to the Parliament's plans to respond to events, particularly accidents, natural disasters and terrorism-related incidents. The lack of a policy for marking events has meant that Parliament's response has been largely reactive and, at times, inconsistent.
5. The draft policy recognises that it is appropriate that the Parliament is used to mark events, particularly those that affect the Parliament itself or its

Members. As it is not possible to devise a policy which will fit all circumstances, the draft policy allows for discretion to be applied, allowing for unpredictable elements such as public mood and political pressure to be taken into account. Importantly, however, the draft provides a framework for when the Parliament can be expected to mark an event and what the most appropriate ways of doing so are likely to be. It indicates a proportionate response in order to guard against regular use of the policy devaluing the effect of the Parliament's response.

Decision-Making process

6. Decisions on using parliamentary business time to consider, for example, a Motion of Condolence lie with the Parliamentary Bureau in the first instance and ultimately with the Chamber. Responsibility for implementing any of the other mechanisms referred to in paragraph 3 lie with the Presiding Officer and SPCB. Experience tells us that events often occur in recess, evenings or weekends when it may be more difficult to contact SPCB Members or the Presiding Officer. That being the case, the draft allows the Clerk/Chief Executive to act using his formal delegation from the SPCB to carry out any of its functions.

Resource Implications

7. There are no resource implications from the adoption and implementation of the policy. The policy simply codifies responses currently implemented by parliamentary officials as part of existing duties.

Governance issues

8. The policy improves governance issues relating to the Parliament's response to events. It makes clear that responses fall under the SPCB's responsibility for the use of parliamentary resources.

Publication Scheme

9. As this paper raises potentially sensitive issues around when and how it may be appropriate to respond to often fatal, dramatic or highly personal events, it should not be published.

Decision

10. The SPCB is asked to consider and agree the policy on the Parliament's responses to events.

David McGill

September 2016

Scottish Parliament's responses to events

Introduction

This policy sets out the Parliament's approach to marking incidents or events, such as the deaths of prominent persons, accidents and disasters affecting the Parliament, the people of Scotland and the wider global community.

Responses

The Parliament may, from time to time, wish to respond to national or international incidents or events on behalf of the people of Scotland. It will seek to do so in a proportionate way, mindful of the role of other institutions in responding to such incidents or events. There is a number of ways in which the Parliament may choose to mark such incidents or events. This may include one or more of:

- Lowering flags to half-mast;
- Motions of condolence taken in the Chamber;
- Minute's silence;
- Book of Condolence;
- Letter from the Presiding Officer (to for example, a relevant Consul General or Speaker of a relevant Parliament);
- Feature panel on the Parliament's website;
- Tweet from the official SP account;
- Tweet from the Presiding Officer's account;
- Visit by the Clerk/Chief Executive to the relevant consulate in Edinburgh to sign Book of Condolence

Decisions on motions of condolence are a matter for the Parliamentary Bureau in the first instance and the Parliament as a whole and are not therefore covered by this policy.

Decisions on whether and how to mark incidents or events will be taken on a case-by-case basis. This policy does not attempt to provide an exhaustive list of incidents or events, but provides the basis on which decisions will be taken. The full circumstances of an incident or event will determine the final response by the Parliament.

Incidents or events affecting the Scottish Parliament or its Members

EXAMPLE	RESPONSE
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Death of UK Head of State	As set out in official state documents
Death of Presiding Officer (sitting or former)	Flags lowered Book of Condolence Feature panel on website SP tweet to communicate response
Death of MSP (sitting)	Flags lowered Book of condolence in Main Hall Feature panel on website PO tweet to communicate response Short message of condolence by PO at start of next parliamentary business
Death of First Minister (sitting or former)	Flags lowered Book of condolence Feature panel on website PO/SP tweet to communicate response Short message of condolence by PO at start of next parliamentary business
Death of UK sitting Prime Minister or First Ministers in devolved institution	Flags lowered PO letter of condolence to relevant Deputy or Acting PM/FM PO/SP tweet to communicate response Short message of condolence by PO at start of next parliamentary business
Death of former UK Prime Minister or First Minister in devolved institution	PO letter to sitting Prime Minister or First Minister
Death of Commonwealth Parliament Speaker (sitting)	PO/SP letter of condolence to relevant Deputy or Acting Speaker PO tweet to communicate response
Death of Consul General (sitting)	PO letter of condolence to relevant country's UK Ambassador PO tweet to communicate response

Other Major Incidents or events

EXAMPLE	RESPONSE
Natural disaster (flood, earthquake etc)*	PO/DPO or Clerk/Chief Executive to visit consulate in Edinburgh to sign any book of condolence PO/SP tweet to communicate response Short message of condolence by PO ahead of business proceedings

	PO letter to Speaker of relevant country's Parliament
Terrorist incident (UK)	Flags lowered PO/SP tweet to communicate response Short message of condolence by PO at start of next parliamentary business
Terrorist incident (outwith UK)*	PO/DPO or Clerk/Chief Executive to visit consulate in Edinburgh to sign any book of condolence PO/SP tweet to communicate response Short message of condolence by PO at start of next parliamentary business
Accident (plane crash etc): (UK)	PO/SP tweet Short message of condolence by PO at start of next parliamentary business
Accident (plane crash etc): (International)	PO/SP tweet Short message of condolence by PO at start of next parliamentary business

* The extent of involvement of Scottish or UK nationals may be a guiding factor here

Anniversaries shall not normally be marked, except at the discretion of the Presiding Officer.

The Parliamentary campus shall not be used for memorials such as commemorative stones or trees, or for the scattering of ashes.

Decisions

As the above responses involve the use of Parliamentary resources, responsibility for implementing responses lie with the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB). Decisions will be taken by the Clerk/Chief Executive under his delegated authority from the SPCB. Wherever possible, the Clerk/Chief Executive will consult the Presiding Officer before deciding on a course of action

SPCB (2000) Paper 116

SPCB**Scottish Parliament Flag****Purpose**

1. To inform the SPCB on the results of discussions with the Lord Lyon about using the logo on a flag, and to seek its approval for the next steps.

Priority

2. Not immediate since the Parliament is not reliant on a flag for its work. However, the SPCB will want to have an early resolution of whether or not the Parliament should have its own flag, and the form and usage of that flag.

Background

3. At its meeting on 5 September the SPCB reviewed its flag flying policy and received advice from the Office of the Lord Lyon that the Parliament could not fly the badge on a white background, but that it had been granted the right to fly as a flag the purple saltire équisee only. Members were concerned that this would not be readily differentiated from a standard saltire and wanted to use the badge itself on a flag. This would be consistent with the original aim of employing the badge alone so that it became recognised over time as the symbol of the Parliament. The Presiding Officer agreed to meet with Lord Lyon to ask him how this might be done. It was also proposed that the Regal Saltire should be considered should it not be possible to use the badge on a flag.
4. A meeting with the Lord Lyon took place on 3 October 2000 and he responded positively to the unusual proposal of granting a second coat of arms that would be used on flags. The attached letter from the Lord Lyon confirms that he would be willing to do this and describes how this might be done.

The New Ensign Armorial

5. Lyon's letter (attached) proposes that the SPCB should petition for and on behalf of the Parliament of Scotland for an Ensign Armorial of a silver/white background with the badge in purple in the centre to be granted. The Legal Office confirms that, although the Parliament is not a body corporate and does not own property (an Ensign Armorial being an item of property), because the Scotland Act provides that it is for the SPCB to provide the Parliament with the property it requires for its purposes, it would be appropriate for the SPCB to acquire this new Ensign Armorial for the Parliament.
6. Lyon's letter goes on to say that it would be appropriate for this design to be used on flags at buildings occupied by the Parliament and on appropriate car flags used by the Presiding Officer. Under the petition for the original logo, the SPCB acquired the Arms for the use of the Parliament, the SPCB and members. It is clear that, before taking the petition further, the SPCB should decide on how and when it might be appropriate for the flag to be used so that it can gain most flexibility from the petition. It is recognised that the actual use may be restricted at any time by custom and practice of individuals or the Parliament.
7. In particular, the SPCB should consider who might appropriately use the flag. There are several options for who could use the flag:
 - The Parliament only, on buildings as suggested by Lord Lyon.
 - Individual members
 - The SPCB.

- The Presiding Officer, possibly also on a car.

Financial considerations

8. The cost of petitioning for the current badge was just under £1200. It is estimated that the cost of a second petition would be the same.

Decisions

9. The SPCB should only petition for the new Ensign Armorial if it is sure that it wishes to enable the Parliament to fly a flag using the logo. If either the purple saltire équisee or the Regal Saltire is still an option, then the petition should not be lodged.
10. Once the SPCB has considered how it wishes to take things forward, staff from the Communications Directorate and the Legal Office will begin discussions with Lyon Clerk on the form of the petition. The SPCB is requested to consider:
 - Whether it wishes to make a petition for a second ensign armorial to fly as a flag, or whether it is content to use either the purple saltire équisee or the Regal Saltire.
 - If it wishes to petition for a second ensign armorial, whether it would want the flag to display the new ensign armorial alone or with the words The Scottish Parliament.
 - If the SPCB wishes to petition for a second ensign armorial, how it might be appropriate for the flag to be used. The options are one or more of the following:
 - a) By the Parliament
 - b) By individual members
 - c) By the SPCB
 - d) By the Presiding Officer.

Scottish Parliament flag - SPCB (2000) paper 116 - minute

It was noted that Sir David Steel had met the Lord Lyon to discuss the use of Coats of Arms on flags. The Lord Lyon had proposed granting a second Coat of Arms to the Parliament to use specifically for flags. The SPCB felt that the Royal Saltire should be kept under consideration.

The Corporate Body agreed that the flag should not have words and that a flag should be used on days the Parliament was sitting. Colour mock-ups were requested of the two proposed flags to allow the Corporate Body to judge how they would look as a flag. The flags should show the logo in purple and white or silver and the Lord Lyon would need to be consulted for the colours of the Royal Saltire. It was suggested that, for a modest amount, consultants could be asked to produce realistic mock-ups as the Corporate Body would need to be confident in their choice of flag as it would be used long-term.

It was agreed that the flag would be used by the Parliament, the Presiding Officer and the DPOs, if they were representing the Parliament. A further caveat may be required on use of the flag, with the Presiding Officer's permission, in exceptional circumstances. There would also be occasions when the flag could be used on an official car, for visits by foreign dignitaries etc. Paul Grice agreed to research this usage and consider when pennants may be required. Other Parliaments would be contacted to provide a comparison. **Action: Paul Grice/ Lesley Beddie**