

## **Title: Flag Flying: UK Government Buildings**

**Sub header: Designated days when the Union Flag must be flown on UK Government buildings. UK Government buildings are also encouraged to fly the Union Flag all year around**

The Union Flag is the national flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Crown Dependencies and the Overseas Territories. It is a symbol of national unity and pride. The first Union Flag was created in 1606 and combined the flags of England and Scotland; the present Union Flag dates from 1801.

There are designated days when the Union Flag must be flown on UK Government buildings by command of Her Majesty the Queen. However, UK Government buildings are encouraged to fly the Union Flag all year around.

This guidance is aimed at UK Government buildings, however we would encourage local authorities and other local organisations to follow suit where they wish to fly flags. This guidance will apply from the summer.

### **Flying the Union Flag**

Where UK Government buildings only have one flagpole, the Union Flag should be flown every day except on certain occasions when you may wish to fly other flags, including but not limited to, the national flags of the constituent nations of the United Kingdom, the Armed Forces flag, the Commonwealth flag, county and other local flags, and other flags which may promote civic pride.

DCMS may issue ad-hoc guidance encouraging UK Government Buildings to fly such flags throughout the year, alongside the Union Flag

Where UK Government buildings have more than one flagpole, and two flags are being flown, the Union Flag must always be flown in the superior position which is either:

- the highest flagpole
- the centre flagpole where there is an odd number of poles of the same height or;
- the left centre flagpole viewed from the front of the building, where there is an even number of poles of the same height.

It may be possible to fly more than one flag on the same flagpole if there is enough space.\* If so, the Union Flag should always fly on top ('in the superior position').

UK Government building flagpoles should not remain empty – the default should be flying the Union Flag if no other flag is being flown.

In Northern Ireland, designated flag flying for Northern Ireland government buildings is governed by legislation rather than this guidance.

## Designated days for flying the Union Flag on UK Government Buildings 2021

9 January: Birthday of the Duchess of Cambridge  
20 January: Birthday of the Countess of Wessex  
6 February: Her Majesty's Accession  
19 February: Birthday of the Duke of York  
1 March: St David's Day (in Wales)  
8 March: Commonwealth Day (second Monday in March)  
10 March: Birthday of the Earl of Wessex  
17 March: St. Patrick's Day (in Northern Ireland)  
21 April: Birthday of Her Majesty the Queen  
23 April: St George's Day (in England)  
2 June: Coronation Day  
10 June: Birthday of the Duke of Edinburgh  
12 June: Official celebration of Her Majesty's Birthday  
21 June: Birthday of the Duke of Cambridge  
17 July: Birthday of the Duchess of Cornwall  
15 August: Birthday of the Princess Royal  
14 November: Remembrance Day (second Sunday in November)  
14 November: Birthday of the Prince of Wales  
20 November: Her Majesty's Wedding Day  
30 November: St Andrew's Day (in Scotland)

*Also:*

The day of the opening of a Session of the Houses of Parliament by Her Majesty; and the day of the prorogation of a Session of the Houses of Parliament by Her Majesty. Flags should be flown on these days even if Her Majesty does not perform the ceremony in person; flags need to be flown in the Greater London area.

### Useful resources

The College of Arms, the Crown body with responsibility for flags and other heraldic matters for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, have published frequently asked questions relating to the Union Flag. <https://www.college-of-arms.gov.uk/resources/union-flag-faqs>

In England and Wales, flags are treated as advertisements for the purposes of the planning regime, but express advertisement consent is not required to fly the Union flag from a flagpole. The Government has published a guide on the planning rules in England on flying types of flag.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flying-flags-a-plain-english-guide>

\*Note: The Government is updating the advertisement consent regulations in England to allow for two flags, including at least one national flag, to be flown from the same flagpole from June.

In Scotland, flag flying is outside the scope of the advertisement control regime.