



Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to request the following information:

1. A copy of Wigan Council's flag flying policy or protocol (if one exists).
2. Details of when and where the St George's Cross is flown on Council buildings.
3. Information on the order of precedence when multiple flags are flown together.
4. Who has the authority to approve exceptions or guest flags (e.g., civic or community flags).
5. Clarification on whether residents in Wigan are permitted to fly the St George's Cross on their own private property, and if there are any restrictions or conditions that apply.

A copy of the Council's Flag Flying Protocol, which was approved in November 2019 is attached to this response.

The St George's Cross is not normally flown on Council Buildings, unless there is a specific request from the Leader of the Council. The Union Flag is flown all year round.

Information on the order of precedence of flags can be found in 'Flying Flags in the United Kingdom' guidance document (attached to this response).

The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, has the authority to approve exceptions or guest flags, as outlined in the attached protocol.

Clarification in relation to residents being permitted to fly flags and any restrictions in relation to this, can be found on the Council's website, via the following link:-

- [Wigan Council Position on Flags](#)

Wigan Council Flag Flying Protocol

(Updated September 2025)

This protocol is set out to give clarity over the occasions on which the Union Flag is flown on public buildings in the Borough and has been drawn up in consultation with the guidance and information from the National Association of Civic Officers (NACO) protocol and the Flag Institute.

For many years the flag was only flown on the official 16 days per year (as set out in government guidance) as well as on the occasion of the death of a local dignitary.

This position was altered in 2005, reviewed in 2017 and 2021, because of the costs involved in sending staff specifically to raise and lower flags. It is more cost-effective to leave the flag flying and replace it annually, than to send staff out on specific occasions. As a result, the common practice across the Borough is for the Union Flag to be flown at full-mast throughout the year, being lowered to half-mast when the occasion demands.

The Government is seeking ways to increase the use of the Union Flag as a symbol of national identity and therefore the practice that has been adopted in Wigan in recent years fits in with this aspiration.

What is the protocol?

Wigan's protocol is that the Union Flag will be flown continuously from the flagpoles listed below:-

- Hindley Town Hall
- Leigh Town Hall (note: this protocol relates to the main flagpole on the roof, not the four flagpoles across the front of the building)
- Tyldesley Town Hall
- Wigan Town Hall (note: at Wigan, this protocol relates to the main flagpole on the roof, not above the front door)
- Believe Square
- Atherton Town Hall

Maintenance and operation

The lowering of flags to half-mast at the above buildings will be dependent on Facilities Management and Depot staff availability, as these staff are not based at all the buildings where the Council has flags. The flag poles on Council buildings should be inspected on a regular basis to ensure that there are no issues with the raising and lowering of the flags.

Other flagpoles – serviced by Council

These flagpoles are serviced by the Council and as such, the protocol does apply:-

- Aspull Cenotaph

Other flagpoles – not serviced by Council

These flagpoles are not serviced by the Council and as such, the protocol does not apply:-

- Standish Cenotaph – maintained by Standish Community Forum
- Atherton Cenotaph – maintained by the British Legion, Royal Navy Association and Scouts – four flags flying continuously

Flag Flying

All flag flying is subject to standard conditions and all flags must be:-

- maintained in a condition that does not impart the overall visual appearance of the site; and
- be kept in a safe condition.

Wigan's Union flags are replaced once a year, prior to Remembrance Day.

Can other national flags be flown?

Some days during the year may justify flying an additional national flag:-

- 23 April: St George's Day: the St George's Cross is flown at Wigan and Leigh Town Halls and Believe Square.

This has not been the practice in the Borough, but should it be desired to do so the second flag must be flown below the Union Flag on a single flagpole. Should it be so desired, the additional flag would only be flown at Wigan and Leigh Town Halls

Can other flags be flown?

There have also been requests to fly specific flags for events or festivals, e.g. Royal British Legion Flag, Race Hate Week, Pride, 999, National Suicide and Lancashire Day. The protocol allows for the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader to agree any suitable requests where:-

- a) the event or festival is one which the Council has endorsed by adoption of a supporting policy;
- b) the organisers of the event/festival supply the flags concerned and pay the costs of raising and lowering the flags;
- c) the flag will be in place of the Union Flag, since it would be inappropriate to fly such flags under the Union Flag;
- d) in the case of the Royal British Legion, the flag is flown in place of the Union Flag in the 2 weeks leading up to Remembrance Day; or
- e) should an event requiring the flying of the Union Flag occur during this period, that event shall take precedence.

Flag Flying Days

Days upon which the Union Flag is to be flown at full mast over public buildings:-

- **9 January:** Birthday of Catherine, Princess of Wales
- **20 January:** Birthday of Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh
- **25 January:** Burns Night Celebrations
- **1 February:** Start of LGBT History Month
- **10 March:** Commonwealth Day (2nd Monday in March)
- **10 March:** Birthday of Edward, Duke of Edinburgh
- **9 April:** Wedding Anniversary of HM The King
- **23 April:** St George's Day (in England)
- **28 April:** International Workers Memorial Day
- **6 May:** Coronation Day of HM The King
- **8 May:** Victory in Europe (VE Day)
- **9 May:** Europe Day
- **17 May:** International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia
- **14 June:** Official Birthday of HM The King (announced annually)
- **18 June:** Autistic Pride
- **21 June:** Birthday of HRH The Prince of Wales
- **28 June:** Armed Forces Day (last Saturday in June)
- **17 July:** Birthday of HM The Queen
- **23 July:** Historic County Flags Day
- **15 August:** Birthday of HRH The Princess Royal
- **3 September:** Merchant Navy Day
- **8 September:** Accession Day of HM The King
- **9 November:** Remembrance Day (2nd Sunday in November)
- **14 November:** Birthday of HM The King
- **20 November:** Transgender Remembrance Day
- **27 November:** Lancashire: First Representatives Sent to Parliament, 1295
- **1 December:** World AIDS Day

When should the flag be at half-mast?

- From the announcement of the death until after the funeral of the Sovereign, except on Proclamation Day when they are hoisted right up;
- To comply with the London Bridge arrangements in the event of the death of the Sovereign;
- The funerals of members of the Royal Family, subject to special commands from His Majesty in each case;
- The funerals of Prime Ministers and Ex-Prime Ministers of Great Britain;
- Other occasions by special command of His Majesty;
- On the death of the Mayor or Mayoress from the announcement of the death until after the funeral; or
- From the announcement of the death, until after the funeral of the following:-
 - an Honorary Freeman;
 - an Honorary Alderman;
 - a serving Councillor;
 - an Ex-Mayor or Mayoress/Consort;
 - a serving MP representing Wigan; or
 - a Chief Official (deceased in post).

The Council approved a motion on 7 September 2005 in relation to flying the flag on the Sovereign's birthday and agreed: *"that this Council will, on the Sovereign's birthday, adopt the precedent that the Union Flag will always be flown at full-mast on all public buildings in Wigan Metropolitan Borough."*

NB – the Union Flag should be flown at full-mast on Remembrance Sunday and Remembrance Day.

This was also endorsed in 2017 by the Leader of the Council.

Terrorist Attacks

Following the event of any national or international terrorist attack(s) and at the special request of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Union Flag can be flown at half-mast as a mark of respect, following consultation with the Chief Executive and Leader.

Advice should be sought for extended periods of mourning from the Government and the Lord Lieutenant's Office.

Flags of foreign nations should not be flown at half-mast unless that country is also observing the mourning.

Flag Flying by residents

Wigan Borough is committed to fostering communities where everyone feels safe, valued, and included. Inclusion is not just a principle - it's central to everything the Council does. Wigan Council proudly flies the Union Flag, following established protocols aligned with other local authorities.

Residents are free to display flags on private property, however, flags or street painting in public areas must not pose safety risks or result in criminal damage. Please be aware that the removal or clean-up of such displays can incur costs to members of the public.

The Council recognises that flags can evoke strong emotions and differing views. As such, the Council encourages respectful expression that reflects its shared commitment to inclusion and civic pride.

Sources / More Information

This protocol has been devised using guidance and information from the following resources:-

- Government Services and Information: www.gov.uk
- National Association of Civic Officers: www.NACO.com
- Flag Institute: www.flaginstitute.org
- Wigan Council Position on Flags: www.wigan.gov.uk