

DEBENHAM PARISH COUNCIL
PROTOCOL FOR MARKING THE DEATH OF A
SENIOR NATIONAL FIGURE

OPERATION MENAI BRIDGE

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Protocol
 - 2.1 Implementation of Protocol
3. Flag Flying
4. Proclamation Day Schedule
 - 4.1 Proclamation Day
 - 4.2 Proclamation Day Protocol
5. Books of Condolence
 - 5.1 Online Book of Condolence
6. Events During the Period of Mourning
7. Church Services
8. Flowers
9. Dress Code
10. Marking a Silence
11. Website
12. Letters of Condolence

Action Grids

Appendices

1. INTRODUCTION

These guidance notes have been produced from those issued by the National Association of Civic Officers (NACO). They set out the protocols to which local Councils should follow and observe on marking the death of a senior national figure and to be observed on the death of the Sovereign, which involves the greatest number of ceremonial elements.

From this template, it is possible to select elements that are appropriate when marking the death of, for instance, another member of the Royal Family, a Prime Minister or former Prime Minister, a serving Member of Parliament.

All parts of this protocol apply on the death of the Sovereign (and, of course, those sections around the Accession Proclamation arise only on the Monarch's death). Beyond that, implementation of the Protocol is a matter to be decided locally.

This protocol offers guidance on how to mark a death. It is down to the Parish Chairman and Parish Clerk to decide for whom the protocol is implemented and to what extent.

Flying of flag at half-mast will always be appropriate. Other decisions, may be appropriate as well, such as whether:

- to fly other union flags with mourning cravat
- to read the Proclamation
- to insert mourning front page to website
- to cancel or reschedule meetings or events
- to have designated flower laying area
- to consider dress code
- to open a Book of Condolence, or whether
- to mark a silence (and how and where)

High Sheriffs have responsibility for reading the Proclamation within their counties and so questions about that aspect of the arrangements can be directed to your local High Sheriff or Under Sheriff. In many areas High Sheriffs are working closely with their Lord-Lieutenants and so your Lord-Lieutenant's office is another source of information.

It might also be appropriate to use elements from this guidance when responding to an incident which has led to a large number of deaths, for example: a train crash or terrorist attack.

It is important that plans include out-of-hours contact details for all those who will be called on to act. This plan will be reviewed quarterly to ensure that all the information remains relevant.

2. PROTOCOL

This protocol document had been drawn up to prepare the Debenham Parish Council (DPC) for the death of a senior national figure.

2.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL

See Action Grid 2.1

Plans to mark a death should be implemented only when a formal announcement has been made. So, for instance, if news agencies are saying that "*reports are coming in of the death of ...*" it must be treated with caution. If possible, wait for a more definite announcement (perhaps along the lines that "*it has been announced by Buckingham Palace / Downing Street that...*")

This protocol for DPC identifies those who are authorised to implement the plans. For the Sovereign or another senior member of the Royal Family the decision will be delegated to the Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy, with consultation with the Chairman. For other figures, there may need to be consultation at the time on the appropriate ways in which the death should be marked.

The day of the death of the Sovereigns will be known as D-Day, then D+1, D+2 etc. through the ten days of national Mourning. The state funeral will be held on D+10, except if this date falls on a Sunday, when the funeral will be on D+11.

3. FLAG FLYING

See Action Grid 3.

On the formal announcement of death, the union flag (if one is in place) will be lowered to half-mast until 0800hrs on the morning following the funeral.

4. PROCLAMATION DAY SCHEDULE

In the case of the death of the Sovereign, the day following the death D+1 will be Proclamation Day, which is the day the new Sovereign is proclaimed.

D+1 - The Proclamation will be made at St James's Palace at 1100hrs (or 1400hrs if it is a Sunday) The Proclamation will then be 'cascaded'. At noon on Proclamation Day it will be read at the Royal Exchange in the City of London.

D+2 – At noon on D+2, it will be read: in Edinburgh by Lord Lyon King of Arms at Mercat Cross and at the drawbridge to Edinburgh Castle; in Cardiff by Wales Herald Extraordinary at Cardiff Castle and in Belfast by Norroy and Ulster King of Arms.

Once these Proclamations have been made it is appropriate for the Proclamation to be read at County, City, Borough and then at Parish level. High Sheriffs will read the Proclamation at County level along with Lord-Lieutenants. Most High Sheriffs are expected to make their readings at 1400hrs on D+2. It is suggested that local civic leaders should therefore make their readings at or after 1600hrs.

In all cases, following the county level Proclamation, where a local authority wishes to make the Proclamation, it is important that thought is given to following issues:

- Who will read the Proclamation?
- Where is the location that the Proclamation will be read?
- What are the arrangements that will be made to tell the public in advance of the reading of the Proclamation?
- Who will be invited to be present?
- Who will be in the platform party?

4.1 PROCLAMATION DAY

See Action Grid 4.2

On Proclamation Day flags will, at the start of the day, be flying at half-mast.

All flags will then be flown from the mast-head from 1100hrs on Proclamation Day (D+1) to coincide with the reading of the Principal Proclamation, until 1630hrs the following day, (D+2). This is due to the official schedule of the Proclamation (see below for more details), it will be read in London on Proclamation Day (D+1), then read at noon in Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff on the day following Proclamation Day (D+2). Once those Proclamations have been made at 1400 hrs on D+2, High Sheriffs will then read the Proclamation at County level and Lord-Lieutenants will be alongside them.

4.2 PROCLAMATION DAY PROTOCOL

The NACO guidance has now been reviewed and the latest version of the protocol is attached. The key points arising from the review are:

Flag Timings:

Having flown at half-mast since the announcement of the death of the Sovereign, all flags will be raised to full-mast at 1100hrs on D+1 (the day after death), when the Proclamation is read at St James's Palace in London. They will continue to fly at half-mast until 1300hrs on D+2 to allow for the Accession Proclamation to be read out in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh. These times are fixed as part of the National plan for Mourning and should not be interpreted locally. It is important that all flags are raised to full-mast at 1100hrs on D+1 and are returned to half-mast following the Debenham Proclamation reading on D+2.

Reading of the Proclamation:

There is benefit in coordinating the reading of the Proclamation on D+2 after it has been read in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh. The High Sheriff's Association is encouraging its members to agree that High Sheriffs will read the Proclamation at 1400hrs on D+2. In some areas Mayors are being invited to be present at that reading so that they can then return to their areas and read the Proclamation within their own communities. It is strongly recommended that Mayors, Chairs and Chairmen of Councils should therefore aim to read the Proclamation from 1600hrs onwards. It is recognised that in some large rural areas, it will not be possible for a civic leader present at the County reading by the High Sheriff to return that swiftly and that is why that degree of flexibility has been included in the timings.

Form of Words:

The wording of the Accession Proclamation will be on the Buckingham Palace website and the Privy Council website soon after it has been read at St James's Palace on D+1, and that is probably the easiest way to get a copy for reading on D+2.

Suggested Words for the Ceremony:

For the Chairman:

"We come together this afternoon following the passing of our late Sovereign, King Charles the Third. Our sadness at this time is shared by people across the globe, as we remember with affection and gratitude the lifetime of service given by our Monarch. But the basis on which our Monarchy is built has ensured that through the centuries the Crown has passed in an unbroken line of succession. Today's ceremony marks the formal Proclamation to the people of Debenham and the beginning of our new King's reign.

Yesterday, the Accession Council met at St James's Palace to proclaim our new Sovereign. The flags which had flown at half-mast since The King's death are raised briefly to their full height to mark the start of His Majesty's reign.

The Accession Council also made an order requiring High Sheriffs to cause the Proclamation to be read in the areas of their jurisdiction. It was that task which the High Sheriff of the County of Suffolk discharged earlier this afternoon and with my humble duty I now call on [Name] to read the Proclamation to the people of Debenham. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Proclamation of the Accession."

READS THE PROCLAMATION

At the end of the Proclamation, the Chairman will say "God Save the King."

Official guests will repeat "God Save the King."

All present join in saying "God Save the King."

The band (if there is one present) will play one verse of the National Anthem. Finally, the Chairman will call for three cheers for His Majesty the King. Dispersal.

5. BOOKS OF CONDOLENCE

See Action Grid 5.

Books of Condolence will be opened on the first working day after the day of death D+1. St Mary's Church will be used to house the condolence books. A table with suitable cloth will be set up, along with a portrait of the deceased and a small arrangement of flowers

All books will be placed in an easily accessible location, though it is important the place is quiet enough to enable those signing the books a moment of privacy and quiet reflection.

Books will be placed on a good-sized table, covered with a suitable cloth, a chair, a supply of pens along with a suitable framed photograph on the table.

A good supply of paper with a black border and wide left-hand margin, hole-punched to fit in a loose-leaf binder will be provided and kept well stocked. A loose-leaf folder offers an opportunity to act if the book is defaced or offensive comments included. Pages including any questionable comments should be quietly removed until such time as a decision can be taken by the Chairman, Parish Clerk and/or Duly authorised Deputy on whether they should be permanently excluded.

The Chairman may wish to agree a form of words for a message, expressing sorrow at the news of the death. This may be the form of words included in a press release, Twitter or Facebook message or on the home page of the website.

Dependant on local circumstances it is suggested that Books of Condolence should be closed at the end of the day following the day of the funeral (i.e. if the funeral falls on a Thursday, Books should close at 1700hrs on the Friday). Books of Condolence are essentially a local record of the sentiments expressed by local people on the death of a national figure. As such, they should form part of the DPC's archive, so that future generations are able easily to gain access to them and find out the way in which national events were marked in the area.

It is simply not feasible for every book from all sad occasions to form part of the Royal Archives. However, in a letter of Condolence from the Chairman reference should be made to the Book of Condolence and its existence in the local archives. The letter will then be stored in the Royal Archives and act as an effective cross reference.

5.1 ONLINE BOOK OF CONDOLENCE

See Action Grid 5

DPC will be accepting online submissions for the Book of Condolence through a contact form on our website: debenham.onesuffolk.net The submissions will then be collated and included in the Book of Condolence. Alternatively, a link to the Buckingham Palace e-Book of Condolence will be included on the website: www.royal.gov.uk

6. EVENTS DURING THE PERIOD OF MOURNING

See Action Grid 6.

From the day of the death until the day after the funeral, careful thought will be given to the types of events and activities which the Chairman should host or attend. Scheduled Parish Council meetings will be reviewed for postponement or rescheduling. Also, any Civic Lunches, dinners, receptions and so forth, may not fit with the mood of the nation and as a mark of respect may need to be cancelled or postponed. This is a local decision and one which need to be reached with great sensitivity.

Visits to local schools and care homes will be scheduled, for the Chairman to spend time with the community, talking about the events that are unfolding. This again will need to be done with great

sensitivity and should not be pressed upon a Chairman who does not feel comfortable taking on such a role.

7. CHURCH SERVICES

See Action Grid 7.

Debenham Parish Councillors will be sent details of all Church services being held in the Parish.

8. FLOWERS

See Action Grid 8.

A designated area will be allocated as a place for residents and visitors to lay flowers during the period of Mourning. Should residents wish to lay flowers during this time, they may do so on the Village Green. It is important to note that all of the plastic wrap should be removed before laying them. At the end of the mourning period, at 9am the day following the funeral, there will be a ceremonial removal of the flowers. All flowers will then be taken away to be composted, with the compost a tree will be planted at a location in the community, agreed by the Council, in memory of the Sovereign.

9. DRESS CODE

See Action Grid 9.

A view will be taken locally on what is the correct dress in the event of the death of a senior national figure. Whilst flags are at half-mast, it will be appropriate for black ties, ribbons and arms bands to be worn by Council members and senior officers. Please note: the black arm bands are for Members of Council and staff. An adequate supply of these items will be available from the Parish Council Offices.

During the public mourning period when the Chain of Office (if in use) is worn, a small black bag or purse will fit over the jewel, so that only the chain is seen.

10. MARKING A SILENCE

See Action Grid 10.

On the death of the Sovereign there will be a two-minute silence at 1100hrs on the day of the funeral (D+10). Which will be a public holiday (unless D+10 is a Saturday).

It may be that silence will be kept for other member of the Royal Family, perhaps on the day of the funeral as part of the funeral service. However, action on a silence for members of the Royal Family other than the Sovereign should await an announcement from Buckingham Palace.

The Chairman may wish to lead the silence in an appropriate public place and thought needs to be given as to where that might be, who will be present and how the beginning and end of the silence will be marked (perhaps the firing of a maroon, a drum roll, bugle call or similar). It should also be established in the protocol how this information will be made public. The list of suggested guests is detailed in appendix 4 and the information will be made public through our website, social media pages and through the local radio stations.

11. WEBSITE

See Action Grid 11.

After the official announcement from Buckingham Palace DPC will activate a website holding page with a black background featuring: a photograph of the deceased, the year of birth to the year of death, and links to the following information: Council Services, Condolence Books, Church Services, Flowers and Flying of Flags. The holding page can be closed, for visitors to then access the main

homepage. Each of the links will lead to a website page with the relevant information. The website mourning page has been drafted with all the correct information but remains unpublished. The page will be activated as soon as an official announcement is made.

12. LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE

See Action Grid 12.

It is usual, in the case of the death of a member of the Royal Family, for letters to be sent to the Private Secretary of the deceased, asking that condolences be passed to the next of kin and other members of the Royal Family. Except in the case of the Sovereign's death, in which case they should be sent to the new Sovereign's Private Secretary asking that condolences be passed to the new Sovereign. In each case, other than exceptional local circumstances, one letter of Condolence only should be sent.

ACTION GRIDS

2.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF PROTOCOL

Action Required	Implemented By	Other Notes
DPC's mourning protocol will be implemented on the formal announcement of the death of any one of those persons named in appendix 1.	Implementation will be authorised by Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	

3. FLAG FLYING

Action Required	Implemented By	Other Notes
Immediately at the request of the Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy, flags will be lowered to half-mast.	At the War Memorial by the Churchwarden.	An appendix to this protocol sets out the correct procedure for flying a flag at half-mast. Note: If the death falls on St. George's Day or the period of mourning includes St. George's Day, the flag of the Patron Saint should be replaced by the Union Flag at half-mast.

Applicable only following the death of the Sovereign: On Proclamation Day (D+1) (the day following the death of the Sovereign, when the new Sovereign is proclaimed) flags will - at 11.00 - be raised to full mast and flown throughout the day at full mast. On the day following	At the War Memorial by the Churchwarden.	
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4. 1 PROCLAMATION DAY

Action Required	Implemented By	Other Notes
In Debenham the Proclamation will be read as follows:	By the Chairman at 1600hrs on the day following Proclamation Day from the Village Green. Alternatively by the Vice Chairman.	
All those listed in appendix 4 to be invited to be present. Councillors will have a black tie and armbands available to them.	Notification of the reading of the Proclamation to be given by Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy to those identified in appendix 4.	
Reading of the Proclamation to be publicised.	Facebook, website and local press.	

5. BOOKS OF CONDOLENCE

Action Required	Implemented By	Other Notes
On the day following the announcement of the death of the Sovereign,, The Prince of Wales or The Duchess of Cornwall, a Book of Condolence will be opened at St Mary's Church. Consideration will be given at the time of each death on whether Books of Condolence should be opened for other members of the Royal Family.	Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy to ensure there is adequate paper available in the book. Pages that have been defaced or include offensive or other questionable comments should be quietly removed until such time as a decision can be taken at senior level on whether they should be permanently excluded.
On the death of the Sovereign a second Book of Condolence will be opened.	Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	
A contact form will be set up on the mourning pages of the website, for visitors to submit their condolences online.	Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	These condolences will then be collated and added to the book of Condolence.

6. EVENTS DURING THE PERIOD OF MOURNING

Action Required	Implemented By	Other Notes
To review the programme of engagements undertaken by the Chairman to ensure it is appropriate in a time of national mourning and that it sits comfortably with the national mood.	Chairman and Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	

7. CHURCH SERVICES

Action Required	Implemented By	Other Notes
Council Members will be sent the details of any services in Debenham	Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	

8. FLOWERS

Action Required	Implemented By	Other Notes
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Allocate a designated area for residents to lay flowers during the period of mourning. DPC have allocated the Village Green.	Parish Clerk or Duly authorised Deputy.	Ensure there is enough space for the flowers, without impeding any access routes.
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9. DRESS CODE

Action Required	Implemented By	Other Notes
A stock of black ties, ribbons and black arm bands will be held in and available from the Clerk.	The stock to be issued and maintained in good order by the Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	At the time of the annual review of this protocol consideration will be given to the number of items in stock, their condition and the need for cleaning, repair or replacement.
On the death of the Sovereign, Chains of office (if used) will be worn with a black purse covering the jewel.	Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	The black ribbon for the mace and the black neck ribbons to be held with the black ties, ribbons and arm bands in the Council Offices

10. MARKING A SILENCE

Action Required	Implemented By	Other Notes
Where the death of a senior member of the Royal Family is to be marked by a silence, an announcement will be made by Buckingham Palace.	Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	Consideration will be given at the time of each death on whether a Silence will be kept for other members of the Royal Family.

11. WEBSITE

Action Required	Implemented By	Other Notes
Contact the website provider to design an appropriate hold page.	Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	The hold page will have a black background featuring: a photograph of the deceased, the year of birth to the year of death, and links to the following information: Council Services, Condolence Books, Church Services, Flowers and Flying of Flags.

The information for the Condolence Books, Church Services and Flying of the Flags to be drafted for the content of the website.	Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	
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12. LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE

Action Required	Implemented By	Other Notes
As soon as is practical, a letter of Condolence will be drafted and circulated to the Chairman and Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy.	

APPENDIX 1

PROTOCOL FOR MARKING THE DEATH OF A SENIOR NATIONAL FIGURE OR LOCAL HOLDER OF HIGH OFFICE

This protocol sets out the action to be taken in the event of the death of:

The King
 The Prince of Wales
 The Duchess of Cornwall
 The Duke of Cambridge
 The Duchess of Cambridge
 Prince George
 Princess Charlotte
 Prince Louis
 The Duke of Sussex
 The Duchess of Sussex
 Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor
 Lilibet Diana Mountbatten-Windsor
 Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor
 The Earl of Wessex
 The Princess Royal
 The Countess of Wessex
 The Duke of Gloucester
 The Duchess of Gloucester
 The Duke of Kent
 Prince Michael of Kent
 Princess Michael of Kent
 Princess Alexandra
 The Prime Minister
 Any former Prime Minister
 The Members of Parliament for the constituencies

APPENDIX 2

FLYING FLAGS AT HALF-MAST

Authoritative information on flag flying can be found on the website of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Information is also carried on the website of the Flag Institute (www.flaginstitute.org). but bear in mind that the Institute is not an official body and whilst its guidance can assist it does not carry the same weight as information from the Government.

Half-mast means the flag is 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. Flags cannot be flown at half-mast on poles that are more than 45° from the vertical, but a mourning cravat can be used instead (see the Flag Institute's website for further details).

When a flag is to be flown at half-mast, it should first be raised all the way to the top of the mast, allowed to remain there for a second and then be lowered to the half-mast position. When it is being lowered from half-mast, it should again be raised to the top of the mast for a second before being fully lowered.

When a British national flag is at half-mast, other flags on the same stand of poles should also be at half-mast or should not be flown at all. Flags of foreign nations should not be flown, unless their country is also observing mourning.

APPENDIX 3

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

A statement will be issued by the Chairman on the announcement of the death of a senior national figure or other prominent figure.

The statement should begin with a suitable expression of the sadness of Debenham Parish Council on hearing the announcement.

It might go on to state that flags will be flown at half-mast. If it is an occasion when Books of Condolence will be opened, then reference could be made to that.

When a decision has been taken on the Chairman's programme of events and engagements it might be stated that events are being cancelled as a mark of respect or that they will begin with a period of silence.

If in doubt, do not rush out a statement which commits the Authority to action before that action has been discussed and has the necessary agreement from political leadership.

APPENDIX 4

Those who might be invited to be present at the Reading of the Proclamation on the accession of a new Sovereign and at the Public Observance of a two-minute silence.

- The Chairman and all Members of the Council
- Mid-Suffolk District Council representatives
- Suffolk County Council representatives
- Deputy Lieutenants
- Former Chairmen
- Schools
- Church Leaders
- Care Homes
- Other Community Groups

Reviewd: 14th April 2025

Next Review: March 2026