



# Marking The Death of a Senior National Figure Protocol Policy

**February 2026**

Marking The Death of a Senior National Figure Protocol Policy 2026  
Next review: February 2028

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## **1. Reason for this Protocol Policy**

This protocol offers guidance to the elected Members, staff and population within the parish covered by Spilsby Town Council on marking the death of a senior national figure. It sets out the protocols to be observed on the death of the Sovereign, which involves the greatest number of ceremonial elements.

This document is derived from the template supplied by the National Association of Civic Officers (NACO) and is the adopted template of interpretation and implementation within Spilsby.

This protocol is constructed in a way to enable appropriate elements when marking the death of other members of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister/former Prime Minister, a serving Member of Parliament (Louth and Horncastle constituency) a serving Mayor, a serving Councillor or other prominent person.

All parts of this protocol apply on the death of the Sovereign (note: those sections around the Accession Proclamation arise only upon the Monarch's death).

- His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen will be given a State funeral.
- The Duke of Edinburgh and the Prince of Wales will be given a Ceremonial Royal Funeral
- The Princess of Wales, The Duchess of Cornwall, The Duke of Cambridge, The Duchess of Cambridge, Prince George of Cambridge, Princess Charlotte of Cambridge, Prince Louis of Cambridge, Prince Henry (Harry) of Wales, 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 and Princess Alexandra will be given Non-Ceremonial Royal Funerals.

Flying of flags at half-mast across the Town will be appropriate and in partnership with the British Legion.

The marking of a Silence (how and where) will be decided by Spilsby Town Council by taking into account individual seniority (other than the Sovereign) within the Royal Family or reflect any close connections they have with the town.

Please note that on the death of the Sovereign or a senior member of the Royal Family, the Buckingham Palace switchboard will be inundated with calls.

In the first instance, the Town Clerk (or representative) will request clarification or submit questions about town arrangements as necessary (details held within the Town Clerk's office).

The High Sheriff of Lincoln has responsibility for the primary reading of the Proclamation (produced/circulated by Buckingham Palace/Central Government) within the county of Lincolnshire. The Town Clerk (or representative) should forward any questions in regard to this matter via the High Sheriff of Lincoln's office.

Elements of this protocol may be used when responding to another incident which has led to a large number of deaths (i.e. a local disaster or terrorist attack).

The Town Clerk's office will hold out-of-hours contact details for all those who will be called on to take action. This will be reviewed annually ensuring information remains current. Individuals and organisations must submit changes to the Town Clerk's office.

## 2. Implementation of the Protocol on hearing of the Death

Plans to mark a death **must only be implemented** when a **formal announcement** has been made (i.e. where news agencies say *"reports are coming in of the death of ..."* **PLEASE TREAT WITH CAUTION**). Wherever possible wait for a more definite or specific announcement (i.e. *"it has been announced by Buckingham Palace/Downing Street that ..."*).

For the death of the Sovereign or another senior member of the Royal Family, the Town Clerk or representative will cascade information through the community to ensure timely decisions and notifications can be made. For other figures, there may need to be consultation at the time on the ways in which such death should be marked.

## 3. Flag Flying

(See 8 below – Proclamation Day)

The flags at the War Memorial at St. James Church Spilsby will be flown at half-mast. Flags flown on any other major buildings within the Town will also be flown at half-mast.

Guidance on flag flying and what is meant by "half-mast" is shown at Appendix 1.

The Town Council retains responsibility for lowering the flag, however it is envisaged this will be carried out in conjunction with the Royal British Legion.

On the formal announcement of death, all flags are to be lowered to half-mast **until 08:00 hrs** on the morning following the Funeral.

In the case of the death of the Sovereign, the day following the death will be '**Proclamation Day**' (the day when the new Sovereign is proclaimed). On Proclamation Day flags must fly at half-mast at the start of the day.

All Flags will then be flown at the Mast-head from 11:00hrs on D+1 (Proclamation Day) to coincide with the Reading of the Principal Proclamation and until 13:00hrs.

The following day (D+2, as the Proclamation firstly having been read in London on Proclamation Day) will then be read in Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff on the day following Proclamation Day.

## 4. Books of Condolence

The provision of Book(s) of Condolence will remain within the power of East Lindsey District Council.

## 5. Official Correspondence

The Mayor (as the Authority's Civic Head) will agree a form of words for a message, expressing sorrow at the news of the death. This will be the official form of words to be included in any Press Release, Twitter or Facebook message and also placed on the home page of the Town Council website. An external link to the Buckingham Palace e-Book of Condolence ([www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk)) (or other appropriate site) will be made.

This link will be removed at the end of the day following the day of the funeral (i.e. if the funeral falls on a Thursday the link will be removed at 17:00 hrs on the Friday).

## **6. Organisation of Local Events during the Period of Mourning**

On the death of the Sovereign, large numbers of people may wish to pay their respects and to take part in events that mark not just a sad passing, but a moment in history.

The focus will inevitably fall on London, which many will perceive to be the centre of events, however, the Town Council along with partnership organisations in order for those affected to come together and take part in well-planned, properly advertised and appropriate events.

The reading of the Proclamation by the High Sheriff of Lincoln will stand as the first opportunity for people to gather and this will be followed by the Proclamation reading in districts, towns and parishes across the United Kingdom.

Residents may choose to express their sadness by laying flowers; in order to manage such activity safely, the Town Council has identified the following sites within the town:

- War Memorial, St. James' Church
- Statue of Sir John Franklin

The Mayor (or Deputy/representative) will read the official Proclamation (simultaneously) in each of the above locations and begin the 'flower laying gesture' by laying their own flowers at the end of the reading of the Proclamation. A growing carpet of flowers must be effectively managed and the above identified places will provide strong visual images and focal points.

All flowers will be removed the week after the funeral has taken place (or once the flowers have died). Weather conditions will have an effect on the above but decisions will be made giving forethought and sensitivity to the needs of the community.

Church Services may also provide a setting for people to come together and collectively express sadness. Councillor and staff attendance at such services is encouraged to add to the sense of the community coming together in a unified expression of grief. It will be important to ensure that such services bring together other denominations and other faiths and they address the wants and needs of those within the parish having no personal beliefs to enable effective bringing together of the whole community.

## **7. Cancellation of Existing Planned Events**

From the day of the death until the day after the funeral, careful thought will be given to the type of events and activities which the Town Council hosts and Councillors attend.

It is not appropriate to attend lunches, dinners or receptions and, as a mark of respect, such events may need to be cancelled or postponed. Where school or community visits are planned it might be helpful for the Mayor (or Deputy/representative) to spend time with parishioners to talk about the unfolding events. This must be done with great sensitivity and the Mayor (or Deputy/representative) should not be pressed into attending such events where they do not feel comfortable taking on such role.

It is impossible to create hard and fast rules around cancelling long-planned events which fall in the period between a death and the funeral. There are so many ‘unknowns’. The sense of public shock, anger and bewilderment following deaths that have occurred in violent terrorist attacks in the past has differed drastically (i.e. public reaction at the time of The Queen Mother’s death, peacefully at the age of 102, was more akin to a quieter sadness and acceptance). However, in both circumstances there has been a wish to see the passing marked in a dignified, solemn and appropriate manner.

It is best practice to remove the importance of ‘cost and inconvenience’ when cancelling events, remaining mindfully guided by the public mood. Public opinion can be volatile and change quickly in such emotional circumstances and there is risk of public criticism if the decision to go ahead is seen to ‘go against the grain’.

It is hard to envisage any civic event that should carry on in the period between a death and the funeral as it would risk negative publicity at a time when the rest of the country and the Commonwealth are in mourning.

When the time comes, the question to ask is **not** “do we cancel?” but **“is it really necessary and appropriate for this event to go ahead?”**

### **8. Proclamation Day**

As stated in **2** above, **Proclamation Day** is set to be the day following the death of the Sovereign (Day of Death plus 1).

- i. The Proclamation will be made at St. James’s Palace at 11.00 hrs (or 14.00 hrs on Sunday).

The Proclamation is then “cascaded”.

- ii. At noon on Proclamation Day, it will be read at the Royal Exchange in the City of London.

At noon on D+2 it will be read:

- iii. 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; In Belfast by Norroy and Ulster King of Arms

- iv. Once those Proclamations have been made it is appropriate for the Proclamation to be read at County, City, Borough and Parish level.
- v. The High Sheriff of Lincolnshire will cause the Proclamation to be read at County level (with the Lord Lieutenant alongside) at 12:30 hrs.
- vi. The Mayor (or Deputy/representative) will make their Readings at some point after 13.30 hrs on D+2 (flags having been lowered to half-mast at 13.00 hrs).

Following the County-level Proclamation, the Town Council will make the Proclamation (as identified in v. above). Upon official notification of the passing of the Sovereign, the Town Clerk will collate the necessary documentation and issue to the Mayor (or Deputy/representative) to be read out.

No official invites will be issued and all Proclamation events will be open to all residents, and elected Members are encouraged to attend the Proclamation reading nearest to their respective Ward.

The wording of the Proclamation to be read out will be easily available. The Town Clerk will gain access via the Buckingham Palace website ([www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk)) or the Privy Council website ([www.privycouncil.org.uk](http://www.privycouncil.org.uk)). The High Sheriff of Lincolnshire's office may also make copies of the Proclamation available.

## **9. Dress Code**

Whilst flags are at half-mast it is appropriate for black ties/scarves to be worn by the Mayor, Councillors and staff.

On occasions where a full Council meeting falls during the period of mourning, or on the death of the Sovereign and when the Proclamation is read, it is appropriate for all Councillors and members of staff to wear either a small black rosette (self-supplied) or a black arm band (issued by the Town Clerk (and to be returned)).

On the day of the death and on the day of the funeral and on days between when public mourning is observed, thought should be given to the way in which the Chain of Office is worn. Best practice advises that the jewel should be fully or partially covered (in black).

## **10. Timings**

It is difficult to plan for or give definitive information on timings.

For Royal funerals, planning largely assumes that when a death occurs it will be on an ordinary day of the week and the funeral will follow a given number of days later.

That is because when someone asks "what if...?" it soon becomes almost impossible to anticipate every conceivable set of circumstances. Easter, Christmas and Remembrance Sunday all throw up possible problems.

Also, there remains a possibility that if death occurs late in the day, arrangements for the ceremonial on D+1 could not be put in place swiftly enough and may have to slip slightly.

NACO advises that Town Council's should remain flexible in respect of planning events surrounding the circumstances ensuring, in the case of the Monarch's death, subsequent Proclamation readings by High Sheriffs take place at 12.30 hrs or later on the same day as the readings in Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff, with readings by Mayors and Council Chairmen following on later in the day.

When reports of a death are received, it will be possible to take a view of whether it is a "straightforward" time of the year, which gives a clear run, or whether other elements like Easter or Christmas are likely to complicate matters.

When the announcement is made of the first reading of the Proclamation at St. James's Palace, it will be possible to establish (via television coverage) when the Proclamations are being read in the three other capital cities. Local timings should be taken from this.

A Royal funeral will not take place on a Sunday. Should Remembrance Sunday fall between D and the day of the funeral it is likely that the National commemorations would go ahead in some form, but again the lead on local ceremonies should be taken from indications on television and in the media of plans for the Cenotaph.

Should it happen that between the day of death and the funeral there is a period when local authorities are scheduled to fly the Commonwealth flag, the Merchant Navy flag or the Armed Forces flag, local Authorities can choose to let those days pass unmarked, instead continuing to fly the Union flag at half-mast as a symbol of National mourning.

It would be inconsistent to celebrate the Commonwealth, the Armed Forces or the Merchant Fleet by flying their flags at half-mast, but it would be inappropriate to fly them at full mast during a period of mourning; it is better therefore not to fly them at all.

### **11. Council Meetings**

Where a meeting of the Council takes place in a room where a picture of the ruling monarch usually hangs, the picture does not need to be removed. Appendix 3 shows how Spilsby Town Council will reflect the passing of the person pictured using black ribbon.

The length of time pictures should be draped in ribbons and when the picture(s) should be moved to a new position will be made by the Town Clerk following receipt of updates or by judging public mood/opinion but should not be a matter that needs to be rushed. It is noted that it may be many months after a death has occurred that it becomes appropriate for a picture to be moved.

### **12. Marking a Silence**

The death of a Senior National figure may be marked by a National Two-Minute Silence.

On the death of the Sovereign there will be a Two-Minute Silence at 11.00 am on the day of the funeral (D+10).

It may be that Silence will be kept for other members of the Royal Family; advised for 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 wait** for an official announcement on such arrangements or protocol from Buckingham Palace.

### **13. Letter of Condolence**

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 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 one 'official' letter of condolence will be sent on behalf of the Town Council by the Town Clerk.

Once adopted, this protocol will be shared with organisations, businesses and individuals within the community and the wider population at the time of necessity.

# Appendix

## Appendix 1

### Flags at Half-mast

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 or have fixed point fixings. A mourning cravat can be used instead in this case (see illustration(s) below).

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.

The Royal Standard never flies at half-mast. It represents the Monarchy, which is continuous, and it would therefore be inappropriate for it to fly at half-mast.

Flags should be flown at half-mast on the following occasions:

- From the announcement of the death until the funeral of the Sovereign, except on Proclamation Day when flags are flown at full-mast following the proclamation.
- From the announcement of the death until the funeral of a member of the Royal Family styled 'Royal Highness', **subject to special commands** from the Sovereign in each case.
- On the day of the announcement of the death and on the day of the funeral of other members of the Royal Family, **subject to special commands** from the Sovereign in each case.
- The funerals of foreign Rulers, **subject to special commands** from the Sovereign in each case.
- The funerals of Prime Ministers and ex-Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, **subject to special commands** from the Sovereign in each case.
- The funerals of First Ministers and ex-First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, **subject to special commands** from the Sovereign in each case. Unless otherwise commanded by the Sovereign, this only applies to flags in their respective countries.
- At British Embassies, High Commissions and Missions when flags in the host country are flown at half-mast, subject to the discretion of the Chef de Mission.
- Any other occasions where the Sovereign has given a special command.



Full Mast



Half Mast



Mourning Cravat



fixed point pole

## Appendix 2a

### Proposed Words for High Sheriff's Reading the Proclamation at County level (subject to change by official instruction) (for information only)

#### a. Speech

The High Sheriff (or in his/her absence the Under Sheriff/the immediate past High Sheriff) to say:

*We come together this afternoon following the passing of our late Sovereign, (...King Charles III). 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 the County of Lincolnshire of 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 were 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 is that task which as High Sheriff of Lincolnshire and with my humble duty I will in a few moments discharge here today.*

*When I have read the Proclamation, I will present copies to the Mayors and Chairmen of Boroughs and Districts within this County so that they in turn may return to read the Proclamation in their own communities.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen, the Proclamation of the Accession.*

#### **b. The High Sheriff will read the Proclamation**

At the end of the Proclamation the High Sheriff will say: **God Save The King**

Official Guests repeat: **God save The King**

All present join in saying: **God save The King**

**One verse of the National Anthem may be played.**

#### **c. The High Sheriff will call for three cheers for His Majesty The King.**

As the High Sheriff leaves the dais, they will pass along a line of District Council Chairmen/Mayors and hand each a copy of the Proclamation to read in their own communities. The Mayors and Chairmen will then follow the High Sheriff in Procession as the principal guests depart.

## **Appendix 2b**

### **Proposed wording for Mayor/Council Committee Chairperson(s)**

#### **Reading the Proclamation**

(subject to change by official instruction)

##### **a. Speech**

The Mayor (or in their absence the Deputy Mayor or Committee Chairman) to say:

*We come together this morning/afternoon following the passing of our late Sovereign, (...King Charles III). 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 Spilsby of 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 were 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. The High Sheriff of Lincolnshire discharged that duty earlier today and now, with my humble duty, I now bring the words of the Proclamation to the residents covered by the Town Council of Spilsby.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen, the Proclamation of the Accession.*

##### **b. The Mayor / Deputy then reads the Proclamation**

At the end of the Proclamation the Mayor will say: **God Save The King**

Official Guests repeat: **God save The King**

All present join in saying: **God save The King**

Where possible it is appropriate to play one verse of the National Anthem.

##### **c. Mayor will call for three cheers for His Majesty The King**

##### **d. Laying of Flowers**

e. Dispersal

**Appendix 3**



Where a local Authority displays an image of a member of the Royal family (usually the Sovereign) it is appropriate to mark the death of the person depicted in some way. Spilsby Town Council will mark the death by:



Placing black ribbon across the top right-hand corner of the picture (as illustrated).

There will come a point, after the funeral, when it will be appropriate to replace or reposition the picture. In the case of His Majesty, this is likely to be before the Coronation of The King. However, decisions on pictures and where they hang should not be rushed and must be determined by taking into account both the public mood and availability of new pictures.