

FLAG INSTITUTE

CREATING LOCAL & COMMUNITY FLAGS



An Official Flag Institute Guide



Creating Local & Community Flags - An Official Flag Institute Guide

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FOREWORD

BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR COMMUNITIES & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

We have witnessed a surge in flag flying celebrations over the last few years. From the Olympics to the Royal Wedding to the Diamond Jubilee, flags from all four home nations and from all over the world were flown with passion.

Flags deserve our respect. Not only do they convey power and status but they can create deep pride and bring unbridled joy.

As Secretary of State, I have been championing the cause of flags and those who fly them. My department has flown an astonishing range of flags outside our headquarters – flags of traditional counties; of overseas territories; and foreign national flags.

The power of flags to move people is written deep in our culture - everywhere from the Old Testament to Shakespeare.

And they matter as much as ever today. They give people a way of saying “we belong.” Whether that is to their nation, their county, their sports club or their school.



The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP unveiled his plan to liberalise flag flying regulations at the Flag Institute Spring Meeting

But there was a problem that prevented people from enjoying their flag. Excessive planning rules meant people had to seek permission and even pay a charge in order to fly flags that weren't on a narrowly prescribed list. In England we have now ended this flag folly and changed the rules. We are hopeful that similar changes may soon be considered throughout the rest of the United Kingdom.

A wider range of flags are now able to be flown without seeking express consent, meaning individuals, businesses and community groups are able fly their chosen flag with pride without incurring costs. These changes have increased the number of flags that people can fly and promoted integration and community spirit.

We have made clear that at moments of national pride and celebration - the Royal Wedding, St George's Day and the World Cup - people should feel free to celebrate by flying a flag. And public institutions, from Whitehall to Town Hall, should support them.

Historic counties like Middlesex, the Ridings of Yorkshire or Cumberland - and people's sense of belonging to them - cannot be abolished by the stroke of a bureaucrat's pen. They retain a place in people's memories and affections, despite attempts to wipe it off the map. That is hardly surprising, when the historic English counties are one of the oldest forms of local government in Western Europe.

With the new rules in place, I look forward to seeing a continued surge in interest in people flying them.

The Flag Institute has done more for the cause of flags than probably any other organisation in the world. The Institute has brought together enthusiasts, experts, academics and amateurs to appreciate and navigate the world of vexillology.

I'm delighted they are now devoting their attention and considerable expertise to help spread the word and encourage and educate people to design and register their own flag for the first time. I'm going to make sure that these new flags will find pride of place in Whitehall too, and commend the excellent work done by Charles Ashburner and other members of the Institute.

The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

INTRODUCTION

Flags are important to all UK societies and social groups. They are emotive symbols of unity, revolution, sport, tribalism, protest, patriotism and pride, and remain the ultimate symbol of identity.

There is a place in society for flags chosen in board rooms; a place for elite flags which reinforce the social status of individuals or families; a place for flags designed to make money or to pursue specific agendas; but society reserves its most important place for flags of community - flags which bind people together, and shout 'WE' instead of muttering 'ME'.

The Flag Institute is a uniquely democratic organisation, and we champion the popular use of democratically chosen flags. We're here to support your right to fly a local flag which you feel represents you.

Whether it's the flag of a parish, village, town, city, or historic county this guide has been created to help steer you through the process of developing and registering designs which you and those with whom you share a sense of community can point to and say "this is our flag".

CONTACT INFORMATION

You can contact the Flag Institute at the following addresses, email and telephone numbers:

Flag Institute

38 Hill Street
Mayfair
London
W1J 5NS

or

Chief Executive

Flag Institute
7 de la Beche Street
Swansea
SA1 3EZ

communityflagteam@flaginstitute.org
020 7060 9660 or 01792 650046

When launching a properly registered new local or community flag you may also wish to consider contacting the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to request that they fly your new flag at their London headquarters.

Department for Communities and Local Government

Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

contactus@communities.gsi.gov.uk
0303 444 0000

INDEX

Foreword by Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government	1
Introduction.....	2
Local and Community Flags in the United Kingdom.....	3
Establishing a New Local or Community Flag.....	4
Flag Design Guidelines.....	5
Holding a Flag Institute Endorsed Flag Design Competition	6
Registering a Flag in the United Kingdom Flag Registry	8
Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Case Study	10
Notes on Flag Flying Regulations.....	12

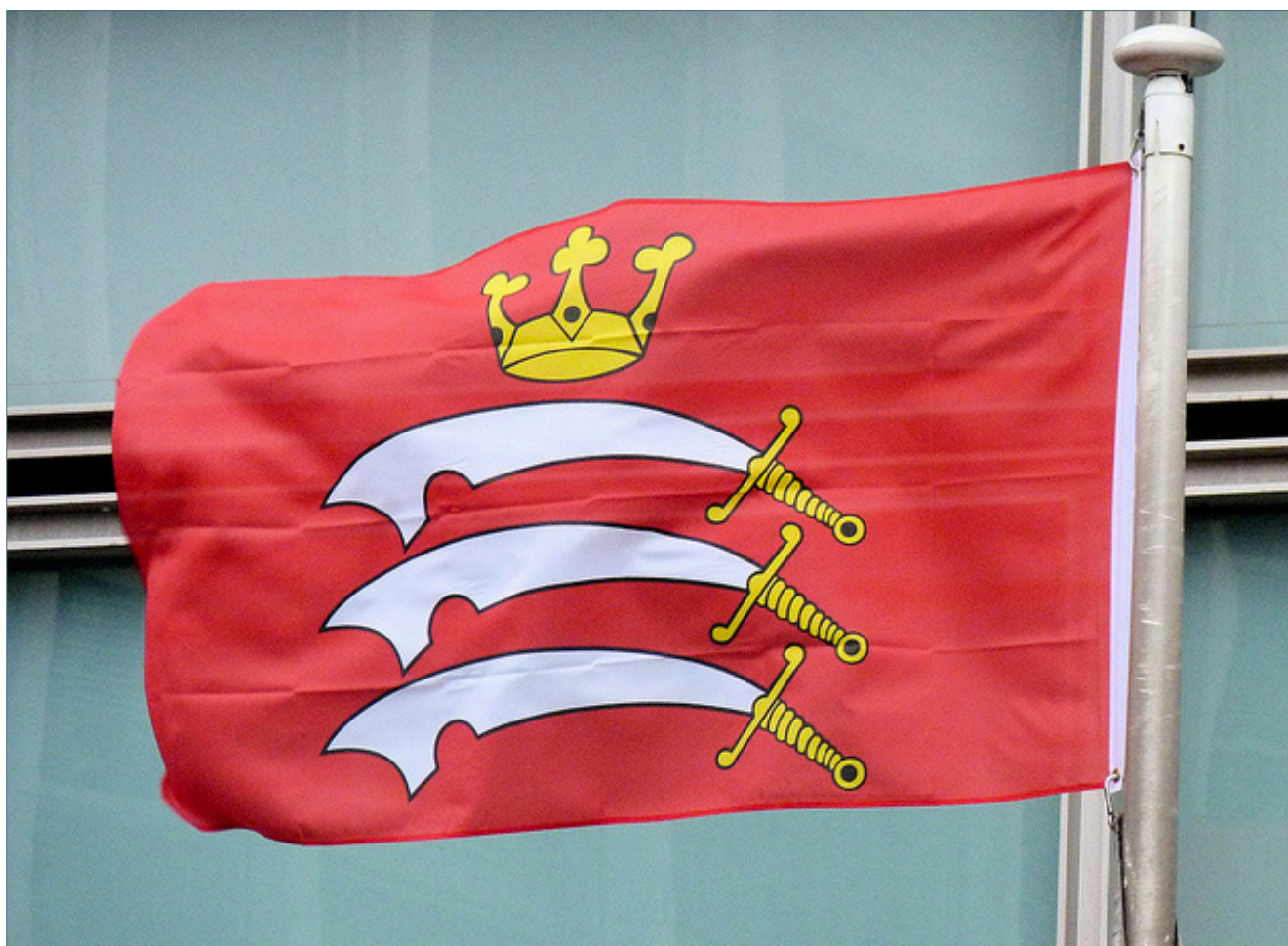
LOCAL AND COMMUNITY FLAGS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

WHY DO WE NEED THEM?

Local flags help to foster a sense of identity. They create a symbol which members of the community can relate to – often something celebrating the unique character of the area. The Devonshire flag, created in 2003, symbolises the beautiful green of hills of the countryside, the salt of the sea and the black rocks on the moors. Worcestershire’s flag, registered in 2013, features the county’s famous black pear, the cricket team’s green shirts and the blue of the River Severn.

A flag brings an area’s diversity together under one banner – literally. It creates the personality of the place. It cements the idea of combined responsibility and gives community members something to feel proud of. In the West Country, if you fly the flag of Devon you’re announcing that you’re Devonian: and other Devonians have an instant device for recognising a shared investment in where you live.

In big cities, boroughs or named areas often have a sense of community too – but the pride, and some of the positive force for change that goes with it, can get lost in the noise of the city. Imagine a borough flag for Hackney in London; a standard for Skewen in South Wales. Something tangible, promoting the idea of local togetherness, which residents could feel connected to.



The flag of Middlesex flying outside the offices of the Department for Communities and Local Government to mark Middlesex Day.

THE UNITED KINGDOM FLAG REGISTRY

The Flag Institute maintains and manages the national United Kingdom Flag Registry, the only definitive record of national and local flags in the United Kingdom.

In keeping with our democratic principles and charitable objectives, the Flag Institute provides this service entirely free of charge.

ESTABLISHING A NEW LOCAL OR COMMUNITY FLAG

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

When considering designs for new community and local flags, begin by looking at:

- meanings of local place names;
- local legends and folklore;
- traditional emblems and colours;
- achievements of local people;
- local industries (past and present);
- accepted nicknames for local people: Jacks, Baggies, Cockneys, etc.



Angel of the North. Symbols may be found in the countryside as well as in villages, towns and cities.

ADVICE ON THE INADVERTENT USE OF OFFENSIVE SYMBOLS.

Under the Terrorism Act 2000, the Home Secretary may proscribe an organisation if he/she believes it is engaged in terrorism. It is a criminal offence to use symbols which suggest membership or support of any proscribed organisation. Penalties for these offences can be a maximum of 10 years in prison and/or a £5,000 fine.

By checking proposed flag designs with the Flag Institute the likelihood of any inadvertent use of proscribed symbols will be reduced.

THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING INCLUSIVE

A community is a living thing, connected to its economic and political environment like a tree to the ecosystem in which it grows, or an endangered animal to its surroundings. Like the tree, and the animal, if it isn't equipped to cope with change it will find it harder to survive.

Even extremely poor communities, when blessed with a diversity of cultural influences, thrive. Colourful markets sell food that brings the local residents out to spend every day; cafes and local shops become meeting places; schools encourage learning, understanding and a rich cross-pollination of cultural ideas. Cultures that work and play together mix a wider palette of skills, knowledge, and art – all the things, in other words, which flow in the heart of a resilient community.

A flag, designed sensitively to represent the inclusive life of an area, gives the members of evolving communities a focus for a real sense of pride and unity. It becomes a symbol of the combined identity of the area: something to point to, and celebrate, without fear that the cultural diversity of the place is lost in a homogenising identity. Properly done, the flag symbolises a place with a special kind of freedom.

A new flag can be a statement of intent: a declaration of another enclave of colour, culture, vibrancy and life within the context of overall Britishness.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY MAKES BRITAIN A STRONGER, HAPPIER PLACE

It can be hard to feel a sense of identity in today's world. Advances in transport and communication have made the world smaller, but often leaving individuals isolated and feeling out of place.

Britain's emergent communities, and the flags that give them their sense of identity, are capable of reconstituting a country with a positive pride in diversity. Whose independent parts are stronger and happier: a celebration of the intoxicating diversity of the products, landscapes and characters unique to each area, and of the cultures and beliefs that have chosen to settle there.

FLAG DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Flag Institute has a series of guidelines which may be useful to anyone setting up a flag design competition:

KEEP IT SIMPLE

The flag should be simple enough that a child can draw it from memory; else it will be too hard for people remember and reproduce.

USE MEANINGFUL SYMBOLS

The flag's elements, colours, or patterns should relate to what it will represent. The flag should symbolise the area as a whole rather than any other entities which are better served by having their own flags (ie. try not to symbolise specific towns or the country)



Simple yet distinctive designs are easily recognisable at a distance.

TRY TO USE TWO TO THREE BASIC COLOURS

Limit the number of colours on the flag to three, which contrast well and come from the standard colour set: red, orange, yellow, green, light blue, dark blue, purple, black and white. Dark and light colours will contrast well against each other, in particular yellow or white will work well on any of the other colours and vice versa.

NO LETTERING OR SEALS

Avoid the use of writing of any kind or an organisation's badge, seal or coat of arms. Writing and other intricate detail is difficult to see at a distance and will likely be unrecognisable when the flag is flying in the wind. It is better to use elements from an appropriate coat of arms as symbols on the flag.



Complex designs, especially those with text, can be hard to make out even close-up.

BE DISTINCTIVE

Avoid duplicating other flags, if designs look too similar then the flags could be mis-identified.

HOW WILL IT FLY IN THE WIND?

Remember, the design must be distinctive when flying on a high pole in a strong wind, and when hanging in windless conditions too. Also remember that it will almost always have ripples caused by the wind.

HOLDING A FLAG INSTITUTE-ENDORSED FLAG DESIGN COMPETITION

Flags should not be imposed on people. They should be chosen and embraced by the people they purport to represent. The best way to ensure this is to run a Flag Institute endorsed flag competition.

There are many advantages to holding a flag competition. Not only does it allow a wider group of people to have their input and engage with the design process, but it also promotes greater community involvement in the final flag.

There are three types of flag that might qualify for inclusion in the UK Flag Registry: local community flags (including cities, towns and villages), historic county flags and flags for other types of traditional areas, such as islands or provinces.

The UK Flag Registry only records flags freely owned and used by the people in the community or local areas represented. Flags for modern administrative entities (local authorities etc.), and flags subject to copyright restrictions would not be included.

WHO CAN ESTABLISH A COMPETITION?

For a flag design competition to be accepted by the Flag Institute it would generally be fronted by one or more organisations or groups indigenous to the area it claims to represent; a competition could be established by a resident's association, a civic society, a local museum, or even a local media outlet.



Flag designer and Assistant to the Flag Institute's Chief Vexillologist, Philip Tibbetts

It is vital that at least one of the stakeholders is able to deliver formal press releases; hence a media outlet would be a good organisation to have on board. Individuals who do not have this ability should avoid publicly fronting the competition.

Involve the Flag Institute prior to the launch of the competition. We're here to help, and our services are free of charge. By securing our early involvement the competition project plan and registration requirements can be agreed before the competition is made public.

Even if your local authority is not a formal participant in the competition, it's worth approaching them in advance to seek their approval of the idea of having a competition to design a local flag. No reasonable local authority will oppose such a plan, and they may be able to offer additional advice and assistance.

RUNNING THE COMPETITION

There are usually several stages to a flag design competition, including: preparation, launch, competition entries, shortlisting, voting, registration and unveiling.

The preparation stage requires all formal stakeholders to agree a launch plan. Once the plan is agreed, an official press release will be organised, following which a period of at least one month should be allocated to take in submissions to the competition. Further press releases and advertising are recommended in order to drum up as much excitement about the competition as possible; this will also attract more submissions from the local community.

In terms of judging the completion, this stage should take no longer than one month, and the initial goal should be to narrow the entries down to a fixed number of shortlisted finalists (more on this below). There should then be a period of at least two weeks where the finalists receive votes, and this should be accompanied by another press release to encourage maximum voting numbers.

Once the final votes are in, and the winner is decided, registration of the new flag can be completed. In

addition to this, an official launch should be planned to formally to announce the winner and unveil the winning flag design. This should be no more than a month after voting.

COMPETITION ENTRIES

Competition entries should be submitted in line with the Flag Institute's standard terms and conditions, which are available as a free download from the Flag Institute website. This covers a range of basic common-sense requirements and ensures a level playing-field for all entrants. Entrants must also declare that they are happy for their entry to be released into the public domain.

NOTE: Decide if you want design entries from local people only or from a wider audience. Remember that a wider participation may result in a greater and more varied range of entries.

SHORTLISTING

The number of designs selected for the shortlist of finalists should generally be between three and six, so that the public vote isn't spread too thinly.

Designs making it to the shortlist of finalists must meet Flag Institute design guidelines to ensure that all potential winning designs are capable of being registered.

Flags are intended to perform a specific, important function. In order to do this there are basic design standards which need to be met.

THE SELECTION PANEL

The selection panel should consist of representatives from each of the formal stakeholders of the competition, including a representative from the Flag Institute (who will ensure that final designs are of sufficient graphical quality to fulfil their purpose as flags). Additional judges (including celebrities aimed at raising the competition's profile) may be drafted in at the discretion of the competition stakeholders.

In addition to ensuring the flags meet graphical guidelines, the shortlisting panel will also have the power to edit, modify or merge designs in cases where they feel it would improve the graphical or symbolic properties of the flag.

VOTING

Voting methods should be agreed by all formal competition stakeholders, but the actual organising of the voting should be done by the public front of the competition, such as the media outlet. The vote can be held physically or online; according to the organisers' wishes, and they are also responsible for deciding whether to make voting open to the general public or restricted to the local area.

Artwork for the finalists should be of a consistent standard, so as not to give advantage to one design over another when being compared by the voters.

Once all votes have been counted and a winner is decided, that result is final, and once the Chief Vexillologist has verified the result, the winning design may then be adopted into the UK Flag Registry.



Graham Bartram
Flag Institute Chief Vexillologist

PUBLICITY: HOW TO MAXIMISE YOUR FLAG LAUNCH EXPOSURE

Publicity is the responsibility of the individuals managing the competition, but it is important that any public communications, including complaints, are handled through the designated press office. It is also important for regular press releases to be circulated via newspapers, radio and websites to promote and support every stage of the competition. Be proud of your competition and help people get involved!

GETTING THE SUPPORT OF FLAG MANUFACTURERS

Before people can fly their new flag, someone will have to make it. Liaise with flag makers and ensure that they know what the new design is. A full list of Flag Institute Registered British Flagmakers and flag traders is available on the Flag Institute website.



REGISTRATION

Once a winning design has been decided, and is deemed graphically acceptable, the Chief Vexillologist will ensure that the flag appears in the UK Flag Registry. This should happen no more than a month after the result is decided, unless a specific date is requested by the stakeholders. There is no charge for this.

REGISTERING A FLAG IN THE UK FLAG REGISTRY

Before registering a new flag on the UK Flag Registry the Flag Institute will ensure that a flag design:

- Meets basic graphical standards.
- Has been chosen in a democratic and free referendum or vote.
- Is free to use by all.

Because there are several different types of flag that can be registered, there are also several different ways to register them. Each type of registration has different requirements that must be met.

NEW DESIGNS

A new design refers to a flag which is original in design, though which may still include elements of traditional icons and symbols.

For a new design to be accepted it must have followed one of the following routes to registration:

- Public Competition.
- Via a relevant local authority. For such a new design to be accepted the Flag Institute would require a letter, on headed paper, from the relevant authority, detailing their relevance to the area in question, outlining their intended use for the flag and the symbolism of the design.
- Where a flag has been in use (unregistered) for a long period of time. Such an application may be made by anyone (again in writing), but must be accompanied by compelling evidence of provenance and local use.

Caernarfonshire



Flag Type:	County Flag
Flag Date:	c.17th Century
Flag Designer:	Unknown
Adoption Route:	Traditional
UK Design Code:	UNKG7426
Aspect Ratio:	3:5
Pantone® Colours:	Green 354, Yellow 109
Certification:	Flag Institute Chief Vexillologist, Graham Bartram
Notes:	This is a banner of the arms attributed to Owain Gwynedd whose kingdom covered most of the present day county, the eagles represent the legendary ones of Snowdonia whose welsh name of Eryri means 'nest of Eagles'. This design was used a lot by local aristocracy in the middle ages and was mentioned by the seventeenth century poet and historian Michael Drayton as the banner borne by the men of Caernarfonshire at Agincourt. The county's long association with the three eagles was maintained in the design of the seal and arms borne by the later county council and can still be seen in the emblems of a number of local organisations. The design was called an "authentic" and "significant" badge for the county in Frederick Hackwood's 'Story of the Shire'. The full history the design can be found here: [1]

The UK Flag Registry

TRADITIONAL DESIGNS

Traditional designs refer to existing flags, such as St. Piran's Cross of Cornwall, banners of local authorities, such as the banner of the former Cheshire County Council, and historical emblems that are used as flags, such as the flag of Buckinghamshire (all of which can be seen in the UK Flag Registry).

Where the flag design belongs to a local authority, that authority must agree to publicly release the flag, and allow it to be used freely by the community. Their consent must be expressed through a formal letter to the Flag Institute, on headed paper.

If a traditional design doesn't belong to a local authority it can be registered by any local representative group (including a local authority) in writing, on headed paper, detailing the group's relevance to the area in question and the provenance of the traditional design.

A traditional design can also be entered into a public design competition of the kind described elsewhere in this guide.



The Flag of Cornwall

MORE INFORMATION

The design requirements of a flag may be simple, but they are a vital factor in the registration of a flag, whichever of the aforementioned routes are chosen.

The Flag Institute should be engaged as early as possible, to allow sufficient time for consultation on the design in question.

The Flag Institute can provide advice and support with the overall design, and the final artwork quality.

Contact the Chief Vexillologist at chiefvexillologist@flaginstitute.org

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE & DERBYSHIRE CASE STUDY

BBC Radio Nottingham Breakfast Show presenter Andy Whittaker was named *Presenter of the Year* in 2009 for "... encouraging everyone who tuned in to think about their city and county in a positive and different way." He has led flag creation campaigns in two counties:

BACKGROUND

"I have been involved in the creation of two county flags, Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire, through my radio shows. In both locations the idea was first suggested by listeners who wanted a flag to call their own and longed to have something similar to Cornwall. In Derbyshire's case there had never been a county flag but in Nottinghamshire it emerged that a little-known design was already being sold by a handful of flag makers. No-one seemed to know where it had come from, it seemed to be generally disliked and the Flag Institute was not aware of it. As such, the quest began to find a design that everyone could unite behind."



Andy Whittaker with the first Derbyshire flag



Joe Pasquale & Andy Whittaker with the Nottinghamshire flag.

DESIGN IDEAS

"Both flag designs came about from lots of discussion on the radio. The Flag Institute had offered some initial advice, recommending simplicity and an avoidance of any words. The discussions began by looking at colours and emblems associated with each county, and this process really captured the imagination of people listening. Design ideas flooded in! In both counties, it wasn't long before themes started to appear."

"Many of the designs sent in, were posted online and then other people were able to comment on what they liked and what they didn't. In Derbyshire, the common emblems were the Stag, the Tudor Rose (the county emblem) and the Ram. Popular colours were green and blue. In Notts, the overwhelming majority of suggestions included Robin Hood, and there was strong sense that the St George's Cross should feature too."

SELECTION

"The next stage was to come up with three potential designs to put to a public vote. In Derbyshire, there were three designs that were clearly ahead of the others in terms of

feedback and in Nottinghamshire I put together a 'flag committee' of well-known local people, to amalgamate the ideas into three final designs. The public votes took place on the BBC website and although a clear winner was established in both counties, this was not revealed at this point."

THE LAUNCHES

"After the public vote, the winning designs were sent to flag makers and the Flag Institute. A launch day was set, by which time a handful of flags were made ready to fly in prominent locations. In Derbyshire the flag was flown for the first time simultaneously in four locations during my radio show and in Nottinghamshire, it was three. Hundreds of people came to the launch locations in both counties to see the winning design for themselves. There was also coverage on TV and in the local press. As the design had already been passed to flag makers (under embargo), people could buy the flag on the launch day."

LEGACY

“Both flags needed further publicity to get the message across that they existed, but both are now widely flown on flag poles in locations ranging from people’s gardens to council buildings. There is no copyright on the flags as they belong to the people of each county! As such, anyone can use them however they wish and the flags have been turned into car stickers, pin badges, embroidered on clothing, incorporated into letter heads, used on businesses websites etc.”



The flag of Nottinghamshire on launch day

NOTES ON FLAG FLYING REGULATIONS

All flag flying in the United Kingdom is subject to a few standard conditions which broadly require that flags must:

- be maintained in a condition that does not impair the overall visual appearance of the site;
- be kept in a safe condition;
- have the permission of the owner of the site on which they are displayed (this includes the Highway Authority if the sign is to be placed on highway land);
- not obscure, or hinder the interpretation of official road, rail, waterway or aircraft signs, or otherwise make hazardous the use of these types of transport;
- be removed carefully where so required by the planning authority.

In addition prevailing planning regulations (and in the case of Scotland other legal restrictions) may also apply.

ENGLAND

Following an overhaul of flag flying regulations launched by Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP at the Flag Institute Spring Meeting in May 2011 and implemented by the Department for Communities and Local Government in September 2012, England now has the most free and liberal flag-related planning regulations in the United Kingdom.

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 mean that in England you do not need planning permission to fly the flag of any island, county (current or historic), district, borough, burgh, parish, city, town, or village within the United Kingdom, in addition to areas like the Black Country, East Anglia, Wessex, parts of Lincolnshire and any Riding of Yorkshire.

The Department for Communities and Local Government's
PLAIN ENGLISH GUIDE TO FLYING FLAGS

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15438/flying_flags_guide.pdf

SCOTLAND, WALES & NORTHERN IRELAND

Planning constraints (if any) on the display of local and community flags in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are a devolved matter; advice should be sought from the local planning authority.

In Scotland, uniquely, use of flags is also controlled by the Lord Lyon King of Arms; the head of Lyon Court, and one of the Great Officers of State in Scotland.

Before launching a flag design competition in Scotland you should first contact Lord Lyon's office:

The Court of the Lord Lyon

HM New Register House
Edinburgh
EH1 3YT

lyonoffice@scotland.gsi.gov.uk



Share your new flag with us at the Flag Institute's annual Spring Meeting - the World's foremost annual vexillological gathering.



Andy Strangeway is an adventurer and campaigner who first became interested in county flags through his hobby of sleeping in remote UK locations. During 2011/12, he slept on the summit of all 52 county tops of England and Wales. If a county had a registered flag, he took it to the top with him. To date he has successfully organised the East, North and West Riding flag competitions and is currently organising a flag competition for County Durham.

<http://andystrangeway.wordpress.com/county-tops/>



Jason Saber has been interested in flags since the age of two and joined the Flag Institute in his teens. His particular fascination is with county flags and for the past 25 years he has tirelessly encouraged local groups and flag campaigners to press ahead with the often daunting prospect of introducing new flags. His efforts led to him promoting county flags on behalf of the Association of British Counties, and with Andy Strangeway, to creating the British County Flags website:

<http://britishcountyflags.wordpress.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/BritishCountyFlags>



The Flag Institute

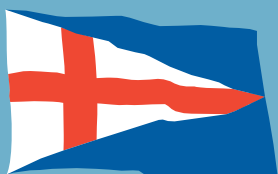
The Flag Institute is the UK's National Flag Charity (1152496) and is dedicated to serving and educating the citizens of the UK in all things flag-related.

The Flag Institute is democratic and apolitical. It is managed by a board of five trustees, advised by a Council of eminent vexillologists, and run by expert volunteers.

The world's leading research and documentation centre for flags and flag information, the Flag Institute is the largest vexillological membership organisation in the world. It was founded on 23 April 1971.

Members receive the journal, *Flagmaster*, every quarter and are entitled to attend the meetings of the Institute, which take place twice a year. All members resident in the UK can take part in the government of the Institute. Members have exclusive free access to the extended library of the Flag Institute and to the Members' Area of the website, which contains a number of papers and resources.

The Institute provides vexillological services to HM Government in the UK and to many other organizations around the world, including the United Nations. These services include advising on the use of flags, designing new flags and collating information on flags of the world.



FLAG INSTITUTE

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