

Marshland St James Parish Council

Operation London Bridge

Introduction

Operation London Bridge is the codename of the plan for what will happen in the days following the death of HM King Charles III or Prince William. Following the official announcement from Buckingham Palace, 10 days of state mourning will follow. D day is death day and D10 is the date of the full state funeral in Westminster Abbey, unless D10 falls on a Sunday in which case the funeral will be held on D11 Monday.

Work started on the plan in the 1960s, and nationally is a collaboration between the Royal Household, the Government, Armed Forces, Royal Parks, Church of England and Metropolitan Police Service. 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 document had been drawn up to prepare Marshland St James Parish Council for the death of a senior national figure. It will be reviewed annually to ensure that all the information remains relevant.

Implementation of the Protocol

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 Marshland St James Parish Council identifies those who are authorised to implement the plans. The decision will be delegated to the Parish Clerk or duly authorised Deputy, in consultation with the Chairman.

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 Town 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.

The Chairman of Marshland St James Parish Council will publish a statement on the Marshland St James Parish Council website once the Proclamation has been read at District Level.

Books of Condolence

Books of Condolence will be opened on the first working day after the day of death D+1.

All books will be placed in an easily accessible location at Marshland Hall 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 and a small arrangement of flowers.

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, on whether they should be permanently excluded.

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 Marshland St James Parish Council's archive, so that future generations are able to gain access to them easily 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.

On-Line Book of Condolence

A link to the Buckingham Palace e-Book of Condolence will be included on the website: www.royal.gov.uk

Events During the Period of Mourning

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/Town 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.

Church Services

Marshland St James Parish Councillors will be sent details of all Church services being held in the Parish/Town.

Flowers

The designated area allocated as a place for residents and visitors to lay flowers during the period of mourning will be posted on the Parish Council Noticeboard.

Should residents wish to lay flowers during this time, they may do so. 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. Any message cards will be kept with the Condolence Books as part of the local archive.

Dress Code

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 and arms bands to be worn by Council members. A supply of armbands for councillors will be held by the Clerk.

Marking a Silence

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).

The Chairman will lead the silence in an appropriate public place. The information will be made public through our website and social media pages.

Website

After the official announcement from Buckingham Palace The Clerk 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 page will be activated as soon as an official announcement is made.

Letters 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 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.

The 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 Marshland St James Parish Council on hearing the announcement.

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.

Reviewed on 13th March 2023