

The flags were first put up in Henderson Park in 2014 following a request from Scottish Borders Council to the Community Council to dress up the park and add some colour to mark the Commonwealth Games being held in Scotland and the baton being carried through the town by Olympic athletes. The chairman of the Community Council asked David Shepherd to do this as he is a very respected local signwriter with experience in creating displays that comply with all health and safety legislation and make the town more attractive (e.g. the Coldstream sign on the ground at the end of Guard's Road in the town). Since then the flags have been up each year at Henderson Park to mark the town's Civic Week (first full week in August) and remain up until after the anniversary of Flodden Day on 9th September.

This year a message was given to David on 7th September (copies available if required) that "a complaint" was "received about a saltire flag flying on Council property" and that the flags should be removed immediately. Despite requests, no reason was given at this point in this email exchange as to the nature of the complaint and the flags were removed on 7th September (and therefore were not flying on Flodden Day for the first time since 2014).

Scottish Borders Council have since gone on record in an FOI request that there was no complaint, merely an enquiry and that the "flags were erected/attached to Council property with no prior permission".

The FOI response continues:-

"Whilst these may have been erected in this location in previous years to mark Coldstream Civic Week, this year they have remained in place for over a month." ... "This decision was taken by officers and is solely related to these items being on Council property and is in no way related to the type of flag flown".

In the 1990s the tourist information service was moved out of the town but Scottish Borders Council were at pains to assure the town that Coldstream would be promoted strongly as a Gateway town but none of that happened. We have a Gateway Centre but that was brought about by local individuals. It is sad that Scotland's "first true border town" has very little to attract the kind of tourists who were happily having their photos taken next to the flags even as David was taking them down.

From research online it is clear that the Council has a protocol for "the flying of flags from Council buildings" which (from the Equality Impact Assessment on line) seems to have been updated last in April 2016. The document suggests that it is reviewed every two years so perhaps a review now might allow the arrangement for flags to be flown at Henderson Park between Civic Week and Flodden Day to be formalised?

The decision making on flag flying appears to be reserved to the Convenor per the protocol itself and we would like to know his involvement in this complaint/ enquiry if any.

Interestingly the Equality Impact Assessment prepared re the Flag Protocol talks about "the many benefits that help Scottish Borders Council contribute well to it's (sic) obligations under the Equality Act. Examples include: *(my highlighting)*

...

- Ensures Scottish Borders Council demonstrates **dignity and respect for the tradition of flag flying within the United Kingdom ...**
- **Encourages flag flying which allows Scottish Borders Council to promote positive messages including pride, inclusiveness, respect and celebration**

We would like to understand why this year the people of Coldstream were not allowed to have the flags flying on the anniversary of the Battle of Flodden in 1513, why a complaint is suddenly not a complaint any more and whether the council would like to work with the community to formalise what it had previously accepted as the norm (and in actual fact itself commissioned in 2014).