

CENTRAL MANAGEMENT BRANCH



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Dear Mr Nesbitt

Inquiry into Building a United Community

Please find attached written evidence to the above Inquiry for the Department for Regional Development.

The Written Evidence sets out the Department's responsibilities regarding good relations, shared space and services.

This letter and enclosure is fully disclosable under FOI. This letter has been copied to the Clerk of the Regional Development Committee.

Yours sincerely



ALAN DOHERTY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Inquiry into Building a United Community

Written evidence submitted by the Department for Regional Development (DRD).

Overview of Department

DRD and its Arm's Length Bodies maintain and develop the infrastructure for Northern Ireland. This includes water and sewerage networks, roads and footpaths, and public transport services.

The range of functions carried out by DRD include:

- regional strategic planning and development policy;
- transport strategy and sustainable transport policy;
- provision and maintenance of all public roads;
- public transport policy and performance;
- certain policy and support work for air and sea ports; and
- policy on water and sewerage services and management of the Department's share-holder interest in Northern Ireland Water (NIW).

Written evidence to address the Terms of Reference

1	Explore perspectives on sectarianism, division and good relations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an examination of theory and practice with regard to good relations, shared space and shared services.
1.1	A Section 75 Equality of Opportunity Screening Analysis Form is required to be completed on all new departmental policies and strategies to determine if an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is required. One of the key considerations when completing the Screening Analysis Form, is the impact that the policy or strategy might have on good relations and any of the Section 75 groups. All finalised screening forms are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Published on the Department's website; and• Quarterly updates of completed forms are issued to over 100 voluntary and charitable organisations, on the Department's mailing list, who we consider to be 'Section-75 stakeholders'.

Due consideration is given to any feedback made by the organisations following sight of the screening forms.

Strategies that have required a full EQIA and have been considered to have had an impact on good relations are detailed below.

- **The New Approach to Regional Transportation**

The replacement for the Regional Transportation Strategy 2002-12, The New Approach to Regional Transportation, seeks to support the Executive's commitment to Building a Strong and Shared Community through better designed transportation networks which bring communities together and ensure equitable access to key services and facilities, particularly by sustainable modes. A key element of the vision for transportation set out in this New Approach is to have a transportation system which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone's quality of life.

All potential transport interventions submitted for consideration under the Departmental Spending Plan for 2016-19 were priority assessed on their compatibility with a wide number of criteria, including the potential to build better relations within and between communities through promoting equitable access to key services and facilities, including tourist, cultural and recreational sites.

- **Regional Development Strategy (RDS) (2035)**

The EQIA carried out on the revised RDS identified several aspects of the strategy as potentially impacting positively on good relations.

There are key positive impacts within the guidance on Society, Economy, Londonderry and Belfast. This is due to the involvement in the strategy of promotion of community integration in order to share services and facilities. Regional Guidance 6 is called 'Strengthen Community Cohesion'. Within it, communities are encouraged to work together in a co-ordinated approach towards urban renewal and regeneration and to achieve balanced communities. In addition a better integrated transport system can help to promote a stronger more cohesive community.

- **Rapid Transit**

DRD carried out an EQIA of the proposals for Belfast Rapid Transit. Following public consultation, the Final EQIA was published in April 2012. The EQIA concluded that the Belfast Rapid Transit proposals are likely to be positive for good relations. This will be due to Belfast Rapid Transit allowing for better access to and between East Belfast, West Belfast, Titanic Quarter and the city centre for everyone. It will provide frequent cross-city services linking East and West Belfast. This has the potential to reduce barriers between communities, promote greater integration and build a more cohesive city.

- **Draft Bicycle Strategy**

The DRD Draft Bicycle Strategy sets out a vision “to establish a cycling culture in Northern Ireland to give people the freedom and confidence to travel by bicycle, and where all road users can safely share space with mutual respect”.

A key element of the strategy is a focus on public spaces and creating a desire to spend time in public spaces. It is about improving Northern Ireland for everyone, including those with no particular desire to get on a bicycle.

- **Flags and Emblems**

With regard to flags and emblems, DRD has signed up to the Joint Protocol on the display of flags in public areas that was launched in 2005. The protocol aimed, with support from communities and their representatives, to address the removal of flags from arterial routes, town centres and from particular locations, such as interface areas or near schools, hospitals and churches.

The protocol recognises that an effective resolution to the issues surrounding flags and emblems is more likely to be achieved through co-operation with local communities. It requires widespread community

support, for the partnership established by the Protocol to be effective.

DRD is generally not perceived to be the lead agency under the current protocol. In most cases, other parties such as the PSNI, OFMDFM, NIHE, or DSD are better placed to assume the lead role in arranging for the removal of flags and emblems through their contacts with community groups, local elected representatives and other relevant contacts.

When inter agency consultation is required by the protocol, the Agency that is in the most effective position to consult, negotiate or resolve the situation will take the lead, with the PSNI assuming this responsibility, where appropriate. The PSNI also take the lead where the display of any flags or emblems is causing tension, or having a detrimental effect on the quality of life in a community.

Under the protocol, Transport NI, when called upon by the lead agency, provides the access equipment and resources to remove unwanted flags, once agreement has been reached on their removal, particularly if their location proves to be inaccessible to members of the community concerned. In doing so, as a responsible employer, Transport NI has to take account of the possible risk to their workers in removing flags and emblems.

With regard to the erection of traditional arches, under Article 73 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 the Department has the discretionary power to issue consents in respect of the erection of traditional arches.

DRD's primary consideration in determining whether consent should be issued is the safety of all road users. However, it does recognise the differing views that members of the public will have on this issue, depending on their political/religious background.

2.	<p>Consideration of best practice, both locally and internationally, in bringing divided communities together, and in developing shared space and shared services.</p>
	<p>Draft Bicycle Strategy</p> <p>The afore mentioned DRD Draft Bicycle Strategy sets out a vision “to establish a cycling culture in Northern Ireland to give people the freedom and confidence to travel by bicycle, and where all road users can safely share space with mutual respect”.</p> <p>A key element of the strategy is a focus on public spaces and creating a desire to spend time in public spaces. It is about improving Northern Ireland for everyone, including those with no particular desire to get on a bicycle.</p>
3.	<p>Seek views on what good relations means and how sectarianism and division can be addressed, with a particular focus on the challenges at interface areas, both urban and rural. This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seeking views on what issues need to be addressed in order for interface barriers to be removed.
	<p>As detailed in feedback on the Flags and Emblems protocol effective resolution is more likely to be achieved thorough co-operation with local communities as it requires widespread community support for the protocol to be effective.</p>
4.	<p>Examining the role of communities in policy and decision making in relation to community integration and particularly, the removal of interface barriers.</p>
	<p>Liaison with communities and representatives plays an important part in the operation of the flag protocol. The protocol recognises that an effective resolution to the issues surrounding flags and emblems is more likely to be achieved thorough co-operation with local communities. It requires widespread community support for the partnership established by the protocol to be effective.</p>

5.	Consideration of the effectiveness of the Good Relations Indicators in monitoring and measuring the progress of government interventions.
	<p>None of the Good Relations Indicators relate to DRD's specific functions.</p> <p>Regional Development Strategy</p> <p>The RDS 2035 annual Progress Report provides information on the 'provision' of shared space, how the local councils will involve the community in local planning, provision of mixed housing and community engagement. However, the indicators used by OFMDFM seek to measure 'use' of shared space rather than provision.</p> <p>These indicators measure what people think and will therefore require a different method of measurement.</p>
6.	Make recommendations in order to support and enhance policy and decision-making with regard to building a united community, including on actions to tackle sectarianism, racism and other forms of intolerance, and to help deliver the Executive's commitment on removing interface barriers.
	Any policies/strategies developed to tackle sectarianism, racism and other forms of intolerance to unite communities are more likely to be achieved through co-operation with local communities and require widespread community support.