



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Our Ref: CSD/003/2015/SK

Mr Billy Crawford  
Department for Social Development  
Lighthouse Building  
1 Cromac Place  
Ormeau Road  
Belfast BT7 2JB

Dear Billy

**Regeneration Bill**

At its meeting on 28 April 2015, the Committee for Social Development considered the clauses of the Regeneration Bill with the aim of identifying amendments and recommendations.

During its consideration, the Committee agreed to ask the Department to amend clause 1 as follows:

Clause 1

- (1) A council may provide financial assistance to any person doing, or intending to do, anything which promotes economic regeneration in its district.*
- (2) Financial assistance may be provided under this section for -  
(a) to (e).*

- At end of Clause 1(2) insert

*"or for anything not falling within paragraphs (a) to (e) which directly contributes to economic regeneration within the district."*

- At the end of Clause 1 insert

*No assisted project may promote or denote, by title or content or in any way, the actions of anyone convicted of a serious criminal offence, as defined in Section 5 of the Civil Service (Special Advisers) Act (Northern Ireland) 2013.*

- The Committee noted that as a statutory minimum, adverts must be published in one or more local papers as laid out in clauses 6(2), 11(2) and 11(6). However, the Committee recommends that the Department:
  - amends these clauses to include a requirement that councils also publish this information on their websites; and
  - sets out in guidance other methods that councils should consider using to publicise schemes.
- Also, in respect of development schemes under clause 13, members voiced concerns that, should the Department retain powers to take forward such schemes, this could lead to duplication and that a council alone, or in conjunction with another council, should be able to take forward such schemes themselves. Related to this, the Committee was concerned that the Department did not use Clause 13 of the Bill as an opportunity to encourage councils to work together on regionally important schemes and recommends that Department considers promoting this to councils.
- The Committee also notes from a previous evidence session that the Bill confers powers on councils to enable them to carry out regeneration and community development but it doesn't transfer departmental programmes. It appears to be the rationale of the department that because any programmes to address social need will be the council's *own* programmes it would be inappropriate for the Department to monitor these. The Committee also notes that should the Department feel that a council is not living up to its responsibilities in respect of the transferred powers it can intervene using powers under the Local Government Act. Notwithstanding the Committee's comments on clause 1, the Committee is concerned that the lack of monitoring will lead to an inconsistent approach by councils in how they address social need. The Committee is also unsure how the Department will determine that a council is living up to its responsibilities if it is not monitoring the programmes. The Committee is seeking clarity on this and an explanation of how this will be addressed in accompanying guidance.

I would be grateful if you could provide this information as soon as possible in order to assist the Committee in its scrutiny of the Bill.

Yours sincerely

*Kevin Pelan*  
Dr Kevin Pelan

**Clerk, Committee for Social Development**