



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Report on the Legislative Consent Memorandum for the Sporting Events Bill

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Powers and Membership

Powers

1. The Committee for the Economy is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of Strand One of the Belfast Agreement and under Assembly Standing Order No 48. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department for the Economy and has a role in the initiation of legislation.
2. The Committee has power to:
 - consider and advise on Departmental budgets and Annual Plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
 - approve relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee Stage of relevant primary legislation;
 - call for persons and papers;
 - initiate enquiries and make reports; and
 - consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by the Minister for the Economy.

Membership

3. The Committee has nine Members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of five Members. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

Mr Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)¹
Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA
Mr David Honeyford MLA
Mr Declan Kearney MLA²³⁴
Mr Peter Martin MLA⁵
Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA⁶⁷⁸⁹
Ms Kate Nicholl MLA¹⁰

¹ On 26 February 2026 Ms Diane Forsythe replaced Mr Gary Middleton

² On 10 February 2025 Ms Emma Sheerin replaced Mr Phillip McGuigan

³ On 24 November 2025 Ms Jemma Dolan replaced Ms Emma Sheerin

⁴ On 2 March 2026 Mr Declan Kearney replaced Ms Jemma Dolan

⁵ On 15 September 2026 Mr Peter Martin replaced Mr Jonathan Buckley

⁶ On 17 June 2024 Mr Doug Beattie MC replaced Mr Mike Nesbitt

⁷ On 9 September 2024 Mr Colin Crawford replaced Mr Doug Beattie MC

⁸ On 7 October 2024 Ms Diana Armstrong replaced Mr Colin Crawford

⁹ On 7 September 2026 Mr Mike Nesbitt replaced Ms Diana Armstrong

¹⁰ On 9 September 2024 Ms Kate Nicholl replaced Ms Sorchá Eastwood MP

Background

4. The UK Government's stated policy objectives for the Bill are to establish a legislative framework that enables the UKG and the devolved governments to attract major sporting events to the UK.
5. The Bill intends to create "an event-agnostic legislative framework that can be applied to support the delivery and successful hosting of major sporting events across the United Kingdom or in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland".
6. The Bill seeks to provide a consistent and flexible approach by moving away from reliance on event-specific primary legislation and enabling commonly required measures to be applied through secondary legislation as needed. The Bill appears to apply to significant sporting events which might attract substantial overseas interest, and which are held entirely in the UK.
7. These measures are intended to support compliance with the requirements of international sporting event rights holders, including protections for commercial rights and the management of activities such as advertising, trading and ticketing. The legislative framework is designed to facilitate the efficient delivery of current and future events and to support the UK and devolved governments in securing major international sporting events.
8. The Sporting Events Bill makes provision:
 - to create offences in relation to ticket touting;
 - to create offences in relation to advertising;
 - to create offences in relation to trading;
 - to create offences in relation to unauthorised association – this refers to the use of a representation (of any kind) in a manner likely to suggest to the public that there is an association between the sporting event and (a) goods or services, or (b) a person providing goods or services;
 - in relation to transport (which will apply in England only);
 - in relation to the enforcement of offences created by the Bill;
 - to allow for the Secretary of State, Scottish Ministers and Northern Ireland departments to provide financial assistance in relation to sporting events in their respective jurisdictions
9. Like other UKG legislation relating to devolved matters, some of the regulation-making powers in the Bill require the consent of Scottish and Welsh Ministers and NI departments (rather than NI Ministers).
10. The Scottish and Welsh Governments were seeking further clarity from the UKG in respect of the Bill and had not yet decided whether to seek the legislative consent of the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments.
11. Although the Bill appears to allow for the framework to apply to sporting events held solely in NI, the Department advised that the scope of the DCMS consultation included organisers of major global events whose activities would extend to Northern Ireland if hosting a major event rather than local organisations. Thus, consultation targeted exclusively at Northern Ireland based organisers was not undertaken.

Consideration of the Legislative Consent Memorandum by the Committee

12. The Committee was briefed by the Department at its meeting of 16 September 2026. A number of key issues were discussed, which included: the Executive's agreement in principle to the Westminster legislation; the need for alignment with the Republic of Ireland for all-Ireland events; the triggering of the provisions by the Assembly or Executive Ministers; and impact for major national events.
13. The Department subsequently clarified that the Bill establishes a common legislative framework that enables the UK Government and devolved governments to assist in the bidding for major sporting events and to give confidence to major sporting event organisers that there is a regulatory framework in place. The Bill would replace the requirement for individual Government Guarantees to be administered each time that NI bids, or is part of a bid, as the framework would already be in place, such as the FIFA Women's World Cup 2035 bid.
14. The Department advised that delegated legislation would have to be applied for each major sporting event to enact the powers, at which time NI could choose if it wishes to use the framework. The Department advised that the Bill is not intended for local sporting representative bodies but rather to provide assurance that the appropriate protections are in place to support the securing of hosting major sporting events and is supported by other major national events organisers which see the benefit of a clear legislative framework, particularly in the areas of unauthorised association and ticket touting.
15. The Department indicated that the devolved powers in the Bill may be exercised by a Northern Ireland department with policy responsibility for a sporting event under the direction and control of its Minister. The Department advised that the powers cannot and will not be exercised by the Executive as a whole. However, a Northern Ireland department would seek Executive approval to exercise powers under the Bill if the sporting event was considered cross cutting, significant or controversial. Further to this, DfE advised that a Northern Ireland department could make regulations through the NI Assembly or request the Secretary of State to legislate on a UK wide basis.
16. The Department advised that there are no implications if the Republic of Ireland was to hold a cross border major sporting event. Northern Ireland can choose to use the Bill's provisions or not. In the case of on an all-island event, an assessment would be made as to whether the provisions set out in the Sporting Events Bill would be beneficial to the requirements of a bid for that specific tournament. Officials indicated that this would involve discussions with authorities in the Republic of Ireland as to whether they would wish to align provisions for the event in question.
17. The Committee noted the Departmental assurances and explanations and welcomed the legislation as an opportunity to promote related economic growth. The Committee therefore agreed to support the related Legislative Consent Motion.

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18. The Committee considered further related correspondence at its meeting on 7 October 2026 in respect of amendments to the Bill relating to provision which would extend the framework to cover recurring events. The Committee agreed to accept Departmental assurances that the amendments would not alter the policy intent of the Bill.
19. The Committee agreed this report on 7 October 2026 and ordered it to be published in order to inform the relevant anticipated Legislative Consent Motion debate.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Written submissions

Departmental written submissions in respect of the Sporting Events Bill

Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence

Minutes of Evidence – 16 September 2026

Appendix 3: Minutes of Proceedings

Minutes of Proceedings – 16 September 2026

Minutes of Proceedings – 30 September 2026

Minutes of Proceedings – 7 October 2026