

Submitted to Display of Flags and Emblems - Call for Evidence
Submitted on 2026-08-06 12:03:36

Introduction

1 Confirmation of having read the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee's Privacy Notice.

I confirm that I have read the privacy notice.

2 What is your name?

Name:

[REDACTED]

3 What is your email address?

Email:

[REDACTED]

4 If you are providing a submission on behalf of an organisation or business, please state its name.

Organisation:

5 The Committee for Infrastructure has agreed to publish all responses as part of the survey results. If you would like to have your survey results anonymised and for us not to publish your name or organisation, please indicate so here.

I would like my views to be anonymous and understand that my name and organisation details will be withheld, along with any identifiers in the response, but my views will still be published.

Clause 1: Removal of flags or emblems in the public interest

6 Do you agree with Clause 1 of the Bill?

Yes

7 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

I agree with Clause 1 because public spaces should be welcoming and accessible to everyone, regardless of their community background, political opinion, religion, or national identity. In Northern Ireland, the display of certain flags and emblems can sometimes be viewed as territorial, intimidating, or exclusionary by members of other communities. Where there is evidence that a flag or emblem is causing community tension, fear, or division, the Department should have the power to remove it in the public interest.

I believe public spaces funded and shared by all members of society should remain neutral wherever possible. This does not prevent individuals from expressing their cultural identity on private property or during recognised cultural events, but it helps ensure that shared spaces are welcoming to everyone. The proposed clause provides a balanced approach by requiring consideration of the context, impact on the local community, and wider public interest before any decision is made.

Clause 2: Sensitive places

8 Do you agree with Clause 2 of the Bill?

Yes

9 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

I agree with Clause 2 because the locations identified as sensitive places are used by people from all backgrounds and should remain neutral, welcoming, and accessible to everyone. Public services such as schools, hospitals, health centres, libraries, and leisure facilities exist to serve the whole community. No individual should feel uncomfortable, excluded, or intimidated when accessing essential services because of the display of flags or emblems associated with a particular political, national, or community identity. Neutrality is especially important in healthcare and education settings. People attending hospitals, medical facilities, and schools may be vulnerable, distressed, or seeking essential services. These environments should focus on providing care, support, and education rather than displaying symbols that may be perceived as representing one section of the community over another. The same principle applies to shared communal spaces such as shopping centres, public parks, and major roads. These are spaces that belong to and are used by everyone. Maintaining neutrality helps promote good community

relations, encourages people from all backgrounds to feel welcome, and reduces the risk of public spaces being perceived as belonging to one community rather than the whole population. While people should remain free to express their cultural identity in appropriate contexts, shared public spaces and public service locations should be inclusive and politically neutral

Clause 3: Procedure for / notification of, or giving views on, flags or emblems

10 Do you agree with Clause 3 of the Bill?

Yes

11 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

I agree with Clause 3 because it creates a transparent and consistent process for considering the display of flags and emblems. The proposed notification system gives everyone an opportunity to express their views and helps ensure that decisions are based on evidence, community impact, and the public interest rather than on competing claims or tensions. It is a constructive approach that promotes dialogue, accountability, and respect for all communities.

Clause 4: Code of Practice

12 Do you agree with Clause 4 of the Bill?

Yes

13 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

I agree with Clause 4 because a clear Code of Practice will provide consistent guidance on the display of flags and emblems across Northern Ireland. Having agreed standards will help reduce uncertainty, promote fairness, and support good community relations. The requirement to consult organisations such as the Human Rights Commission, Equality Commission, and PSNI will help ensure the Code is balanced, practical, and respectful of the rights and interests of all communities. Regular review is also important to ensure the guidance remains relevant and effective over time.

Clause 5: Offence of obstructing the Department in removal of flag or emblem

14 Do you agree with Clause 5 of the Bill?

Yes

15 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

I agree with Clause 5 because laws and regulations are only effective if there are consequences for those who deliberately obstruct their implementation. Where a decision has been made to remove a flag or emblem through the proper legal process, individuals should not be permitted to prevent that action without consequence.

Obstruction can also result in additional costs for public authorities through delays, enforcement activity, and the need for further staff, legal, or police involvement. These costs are ultimately borne by the public purse and divert resources away from essential public services. A clear offence and appropriate penalty provide a deterrent, support compliance with the law, and help ensure that disputes are resolved through established processes rather than confrontation.

Clause 6: Request for assistance from police

16 Do you agree with Clause 6 of the Bill?

Yes

17 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

agree with Clause 6 because it provides a sensible and proportionate mechanism to protect public safety during the removal of flags or emblems. Where there is a risk of confrontation, disorder, or obstruction, the Department should be able to seek assistance from the PSNI to ensure the process is carried out safely and lawfully.

Clause 7: Interpretation

18 Do you agree with Clause 7 of the Bill?

Yes

19 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

Clause 8: Commencement

20 Do you agree with Clause 8 of the Bill?

Yes

21 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

Clause 9: Short title

22 Do you agree with Clause 9 of the Bill?

Yes

23 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible: