

Response ID ANON-4W3M-7V3B-D

Submitted to Display of Flags and Emblems - Call for Evidence
Submitted on 2026-09-12 18:39:09

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 fully support giving the DoI the powers to remove flags and emblems where it's in the public interest. I agree flags and emblems have an important role in allowing communities to express and celebrate their culture, history and special events but installed in the wrong location can cause upset, intimidation and make people feel unwelcome. This is the intention of some bad actors. This is not what the overwhelming majority of the people in Northern Ireland want.

Clause 2: Sensitive places

8 Do you agree with Clause 2 of the Bill?

Unsure

9 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

I think clause 2 fails to elaborate on what an interface area is. If this Bill is to be enshrined in law (and if it is to be inclusive for those who aren't familiar with it) this should be better described. I appreciate this is a term in common use in Northern Ireland. But it should be defined or at least examples given to ensure no bad actors can use the current ambiguity as a loophole to place flags and emblems in areas outwith public areas with the intent to cause upset.

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

10 Do you agree with Clause 3 of the Bill?

Unsure

11 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

It's unclear whether members of the public will be able to complain about flags and emblems for which a notification of erection hasn't been made. This needs to be clarified. What is the process for complaining about a flag or emblem that has been erected but not notified?

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:

These are standard timelines.

However slippage is entirely possible if not likely, on such a contentious issue which is going to be politically divisive in a shared administration which struggles to even agree that the sky is blue. It should therefore be clarified what the consequences are if these timelines are not adhered to and what the next steps/processes would be to ensure the Code of Practice is issued as soon after.

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

14 Do you agree with Clause 5 of the Bill?

Unsure

15 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

I agree in principle that there should be consequences for obstructing the DoI in performing this duty. But I'm not sure what a maximum fine 'not exceeding level 3' means. This also assumes that fining offenders is the only recourse for punishment. However it is entirely plausible (likely) that there will be individuals who will persistently/repeatedly obstruct the DoI in performing this duty despite fines. Fines alone are unlikely to be a sufficient deterrent and repeat offending should incur alternative punishment surely? The Bill should clarify what the consequences could be for repeat offenders beyond fines.

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 that DoI personnel should be able to perform this duty safe from threat or harm and avail of police support as needed. See my previous response though about repeat offenders.

Clause 7: Interpretation

18 Do you agree with Clause 7 of the Bill?

No

19 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

'Interface area' is not defined or described and needs to be as the Bill proposes these areas as sensitive areas too. To not define them leaves them open to interpretation and worse, willful misinterpretation by bad actors looking to place flags and emblems in locations with the specific intent of causing upset or intimidation.

Clause 8: Commencement

20 Do you agree with Clause 8 of the Bill?

Yes

21 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

'As soon as is practicable'

To put it mildly, things have a habit of getting stuck in the political process in Northern Ireland.

Is there going to be a plan published with clear timelines to show what is being committed to i.e. what clauses will come into operation when?

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:

Nothing to add