

Response ID ANON-6G6Z-6W4C-H

Submitted to Display of Flags and Emblems - Call for Evidence
Submitted on 2026-07-17 12:08:45

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 this clause. Public spaces should be inclusive and accessible to everyone. Where flags or emblems create intimidation or undermine community relations, there should be a transparent process to remove them when it is in the public interest.

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 support this clause because places such as schools, hospitals, GP surgeries, libraries, leisure centres and parks are used by people from all backgrounds. These spaces should feel welcoming, neutral and accessible to everyone. No one should feel uncomfortable or intimidated when accessing essential public services or shared community facilities. I believe it is reasonable to restrict the display of flags and emblems in the vicinity of these sensitive places to help promote inclusion and good community relations.

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 this clause, as it provides a structured and transparent way for both those wishing to display flags or emblems and those with concerns to have their views considered. However, I believe it is essential that the portal allows people to submit notifications and comments anonymously. Given Northern Ireland's history and the sensitivities surrounding this issue, many people may be reluctant to express their views if their identity could be disclosed. An anonymous system would encourage wider participation, help people feel safe in sharing their opinions, and ensure decisions are based on the merits of the concerns raised rather than who has raised them.

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 support this clause. A Code of Practice will provide clear guidance and help ensure decisions are applied fairly and consistently. Consulting the relevant public bodies and reviewing the Code regularly is important to ensure it remains effective and reflects the needs of communities across Northern Ireland.

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 this clause. The legislation would have little practical effect if there were no consequences for deliberately obstructing the lawful removal of a flag or emblem. A proportionate penalty helps ensure that the law can be enforced while encouraging compliance with decisions made through the proper legal process. It is important that enforcement is carried out fairly, consistently and only where a lawful decision to remove a display has been made.

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:

I agree with this clause. Given the sensitivities surrounding flags and emblems in Northern Ireland, there may be occasions where removing a display carries a risk of confrontation or a breach of the peace. Allowing the Department to request assistance from the PSNI is a sensible safeguard to protect staff, contractors and members of the public. However, I believe this power should only be used where there is a genuine and evidenced risk, and any police involvement should be proportionate and focused on maintaining public safety.

Clause 7: Interpretation

18 Do you agree with Clause 7 of the Bill?

Yes

19 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

I support this clause. Clear definitions are essential for consistency, transparency and effective implementation of the legislation. They will help reduce uncertainty and ensure the Bill is interpreted as intended.

Clause 8: Commencement

20 Do you agree with Clause 8 of the Bill?

Yes

21 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

I understand the need for preparation before the Bill comes into force; however, I would question whether implementation should be delayed until 2028. If the measures are considered necessary, they should be introduced within a reasonable timeframe while still allowing sufficient preparation.

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:

I have no specific comments on Clause 9. The clause simply sets out the short title of the Bill.