

Response ID ANON-8A9X-7H8P-H

Submitted to Display of Flags and Emblems - Call for Evidence
Submitted on 2026-07-25 08:45:40

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:

Public spaces should be places where everyone feels welcome, regardless of their background, identity or beliefs. While flags can hold deep cultural and historical significance for many people, the widespread display of flags on public streets can also make others feel excluded, uncomfortable or unwelcome. Shared public spaces belong to everyone, and it's important that they remain as neutral and inclusive as possible.

Removing flags from publicly owned infrastructure is not about erasing culture or preventing people from expressing their identity. People remain free to display flags on private property, attend cultural events and celebrate their traditions. Rather, it's about recognising that roads, lampposts and other public spaces are maintained for the benefit of the entire community and should not appear to represent one group over another.

There are also practical benefits to reducing flags in public spaces. Areas with large numbers of flags can sometimes be perceived by visitors, investors and tourists as divided or intimidating, even when residents themselves do not intend this message. Creating cleaner, more neutral streets can help project a more welcoming image of Belfast, encouraging tourism, investment and economic growth while making neighbourhoods feel more accessible to everyone.

Northern Ireland has made significant progress over recent decades in building a more peaceful and shared society. Ensuring that public spaces are welcoming to all is a natural extension of that progress. Small changes that promote neutrality and inclusivity can help foster stronger community relationships, reduce unnecessary tensions and reinforce the principle that everyone has an equal place in society.

Ultimately, the discussion is not about choosing one tradition over another. It's about balancing the right to cultural expression with the responsibility to ensure that shared public spaces serve the interests of the whole community. A more neutral public environment can help create streets where people are judged not by their background but by their shared role as neighbours and citizens.

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:

Schools, healthcare facilities, leisure centres, libraries and other shared public spaces exist to serve the entire community, regardless of background or identity. These are places where people should feel comfortable accessing education, healthcare and other public services without feeling that the space is associated with one particular tradition or community.

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 support this clause because it encourages transparency, accountability and community engagement rather than unilateral decision-making.

An online notification portal gives those wishing to display flags an opportunity to explain their purpose, while also allowing local residents to raise any concerns in a respectful and structured way. This ensures that decisions are informed by the views of all those affected, rather than the interests of a single group.

By considering both cultural expression and the wider public interest, this approach promotes fairness and helps ensure that decisions are balanced, evidence-based and in the best interests of the whole community.

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:

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:

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:

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: