

Submitted to Display of Flags and Emblems - Call for Evidence
Submitted on 2026-07-27 21:10:56

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:

n/a

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:

As someone who has lived in GB, Canada and France before moving to Northern Ireland in 2022, I have been struck by the very different nature and experience of flags and emblems displays in North Ireland compared to other jurisdictions. In the other jurisdictions, the display of flags and emblems, other than in public institutions, has been entirely for celebratory or remembrance purposes.

In Northern Ireland displaying flags and emblems in places other than public institutions is for overwhelmingly political purposes. The volume of flags/emblems displayed in anyone location is far beyond what is required to express legitimate pride in the nation or organisation it represents. My experience is that high concentration of flags and emblems as intimidatory rather than celebratory. For any individual who does not share the identity aligned with the flag are given a clear message of being other, not welcome and excluded. This is intimidatory impact runs counter to the long term goal of creating a state of peaceful co-existence between communities that recognise and respect each others contribution to society and economy, that is also welcoming and inclusive to people from other other cultures.

The opportunity to have a clear statement of the conditions under which the display of flags and emblems is in the public interest; and the specification of the right and/or duty to remove displays which do not align with these conditions, will be a useful tool in reducing the incidence of public spaces in Northern Ireland that do not contribute to the long term vision for this country.

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:

Shared public spaces should never be intimidating to any members of our community. Placing flags and emblems that are not inclusive in close proximity to shared public spaces/facilities such as those identified can be intimidating and impede those spaces/facilities from fulfilling their function for all

members of our communities. Government and law enforcement require a clear legal basis for the removal of flags and emblems that negatively impact the societal function. However, it is important that the definitions of flags and emblems are tightly drawn, and the definition or list of sensitive spaces is not so extensive that the bill interferes with citizen's rights to free speech and protest.

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:

The ability of the public to notify the government of displays that are of concern is essential to the good functioning of the proposed bill. There will undoubtedly be vexatious use of the system on some occasions, but as long as the definitions and conditions are clearly specified, it should be possible to deal with these cases with out major resource implications. It will be important that those without out easy access to the internet have a convenient mechanism for notifying displays of concerns. Given the concern that displays are intimidatory to individuals born outside Northern Ireland, consideration should also be given to enabling notification for communities for whom English is their second language.

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:

Without a code of practice, it is difficult to see how individuals and organisations who may wish to display flags or emblems will be able to ensure their actions align with the act. The 6 month time period seems to be an unnecessarily long delay. This is an important issue and the Department should do preparatory work to make sure it can move with all possible speed once the bill is approved. The direction to the department should, at the very least, be to deliver the code of practice no later than 6 months after the bill becomes an act.

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 am unsure whether this is sufficient disincentive. Would the fine be per flag/emblem displayed - which could make the total cost of 'spacially intensive' displays a sufficient disincentive. Should consideration be given to non-financial penalties (eg community work, restoration work) for repeat offenders?

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:

Without support from PSNI to ensure the safety of public employees removing flags and emblems that breach the conditions, it is likely that the the proposed legislation would be effective.

Clause 7: Interpretation

18 Do you agree with Clause 7 of the Bill?

Unsure

19 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

See comments provided in my answers to the previous questions.

Clause 8: Commencement

20 Do you agree with Clause 8 of the Bill?

Yes

21 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

It is likely unrealistic to expect the bill to come into operation any sooner than the proposed date. However, the speed of implementation of the code of conduct and notification system should be a priority for the Department.

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:

It is accurate and not obviously open to misinterpretation.