

Response ID ANON-8N5H-9W8Z-5

Submitted to Display of Flags and Emblems - Call for Evidence
Submitted on 2026-08-19 12:50:31

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:

Too many flags displayed in public places are left up for very long periods of times (for example, on the Shore Road in Belfast leading into Newtownabbey there are flags that have been left up for more than a year. Hazelbank Park as a torn faded flag which has been there for at least two and possibly three years. This is disrespectful to the flag, they are not taken down until they fall down.

Donegall Park Avenue in Belfast has had flags and bunting strung across the road for a number of months. Buses and high vehicles going up that Avenue have to drive on the other side of the road at points.

There has been a tendency to display flags representing paramilitary organisation that have been banned. Recently the use of supposed 'religious' flags which are clearly there to make anti-muslim and anti-immigrant statements has become common in the north Belfast/Newtownabbey area and elsewhere. This has been supplemented by other semi-permanent racist displays such as murals in plain view of main roads.

Flags and emblems put up for particular events should be taken down again within a reasonable time by those who put them up (say 4 weeks after the event). People have a right to display flags that are not illegal or otherwise offensive but that right also brings responsibilities.

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:

We live in a divided society. Everyone should have a right to access public facilities without feeling threatened or not welcomed. I would also include churches and places of worship where flags and emblems are clearly aimed at making members of those churches feel intimidated.

The display of flags along the West Link and other main roads and roundabouts is clearly unacceptable and unnecessary. Many people will welcome flags and emblems in their own communities but this is clearly different when these are displayed on roads, public parks other communal spaces and places. Where in doubt there should be a requirement on the organisations placing the flags to consult with a wide range of possible users.

A body which could consider and rule on such matters might be necessary (similar to the body which adjudicates on marches). I know this is the subject of a later Clause.

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:

It is unfortunate but this is clearly necessary. Any public display (with the exception of within a person's own property) has to be regulated. Some people use flags and emblems to intimidate and display dominance over others. A celebration in one community or group should not lead to the intimidation of another. This body should also regulate the length of time flags and emblems are allowed to remain up and remove help diminish to number of torn, tattered and faded displays that are currently occurring.

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:

Some would like to see an end to all public displays of flags and emblems. Others would argue that flags and emblems can help community cohesion and legitimate celebration. Ideally this would be achieved through self regulation but that has clearly failed. A Code of Practice would help us all to know what is and what is not acceptable.

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:

The biggest problem on managing public displays of flags and emblems is removal of these in ways that do not exacerbate a sensitive situation or cause riots or other disturbances. I have witnessed a riot on the Shore Road Belfast near Mount Vernon estate some years ago and this seems to have been the result of the removal of a bonfire near the Shore Road. Flags and emblems will not be an easy issue to resolve but that is not a reason to tackle it. This offence will make clear that obstructing those removing a display is illegal and comes with consequences.

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:

Intimidation of those carrying out any removal is likely to occur. This Clause goes along with Clause 5.

Clause 7: Interpretation

18 Do you agree with Clause 7 of the Bill?

Yes

19 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

This is standard practice in legislation. it is always important that the terms used are clearly defined. Without this the flags and emblem issue cannot be resolved.

Clause 8: Commencement

20 Do you agree with Clause 8 of the Bill?

Yes

21 Please provide information to support your answer here

Accessible:

Ideally it would be sooner but new legislation always needs time for the interested parties to become familiar with what it means and what is and is not acceptable. it also gives enforcements bodies time to prepare.

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 think this makes clear what the legislation is aimed at. This is probably the least important Clause.