



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Northern Ireland Assembly Filming and Photography Policy and Procedure

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Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to streamline the process for assessing, permitting and facilitating photographic and filming requests both within Parliament Buildings, and within its curtilage. It does not attempt to restrict visitors from taking photographs as part of a tour of Parliament Buildings or as a memento of their visit.

One of the Assembly's strategic aims is to 'Ensure that the Assembly and its work is accessible to all and communicated widely'. It is with this in mind that this policy has been developed, to balance the needs of the Assembly and the dignity of Parliament Buildings with the desire of individuals and groups who wish to take photographs or footage of the Assembly or Parliament Buildings for personal/promotional purposes.

Aims and Objectives

This policy:

- Amalgamates the photographic and filming policies/directives which currently exist over a number of business areas.
- Gives the lead to the Communications Office, for assessing and giving permission (or denying permission) in consultation with other relevant business areas (i.e. Usher Services and the Events Office) for filming and photographic requests.
- Provides a clear approval process for both filming and photographic requests, including those involving MLAs.

FILMING AND PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY

Responsibility for Policy

The Communications Office is responsible for assessing and granting requests for photography and filming in Parliament Buildings and within its external curtilage.

The Office will consult with Ushering Services on matters such as use of regalia/banners; health and safety; and the dignity of the building. Where applicable, the Communications Office may consult with the Director of Parliamentary Services, Directors from other relevant business areas, the Speaker's Office, the Events Office, the Chief Executive and/or the Assembly Commission.

All requests for photography or filming must be directed to the Communications Office. This does not include photographs or filming taking place in a private or sponsored event, photographs taken during a tour or where an MLA is in the photograph, as long as the photographs/filming takes place in approved locations i.e. the Great Hall or the Long Gallery

The policy is not designed to address ad hoc photographs taken by visitors to Parliament Buildings, or demonstrations / protests which are covered by the Policy on the Conduct and Behaviour of Visitors in Parliament Buildings.

Where requests for photography are initially sent to other business areas (i.e. the Events Office), the relevant email or paperwork should be forward to the Communications Office for processing.

Where there are requests to use the Assembly Chamber for either filming or photography, these requests should, in the first instance, be directed to the Communications Office. The Communications Office will forward these to the Speaker's Office, as it is the Speaker who is responsible for the use of the Chamber.

N.B. Filming/photography in the Chamber is not usually permitted.

Photography and filming will usually be permitted Monday – Friday between 9am and 4pm. Photography and filming requests outside of these times will be considered on a case by case basis.

Where the Assembly decides that the photograph or filming should not take place in Parliament Buildings or within its external curtilage, the organisation seeking permission may be directed to the Department of Finance (DoF) Estate Management Unit to request the use of the Apron in front of the Parliament Buildings outside of the external curtilage (or other areas in the Stormont Estate). It will be the responsibility of the organisation to liaise directly with DoF.

Flying a Drone above Parliament Buildings/in Stormont Estate

The Northern Ireland Assembly does not allow drones to be flown either within the curtilage (the black metal fence surrounding Parliament Buildings) or over Parliament Buildings and its environs.

Stormont Estate is within the George Best Belfast City Airport's flight restriction zone. Those wishing to fly a drone within the Estate must first gain permission from Air Traffic Control; their email is: drones@bca.aero.

Once permission to fly a drone has been approved by Air Traffic Control, those wishing to fly a drone in the wider estate must contact Department of Finance's Stormont Estates Management Unit (SEMU) to seek its approval and provide the relevant documentation. The SEMU can be contacted on: stormontemu@finance-ni.gov.uk.

Please note, should permission be granted by SEMU to fly a drone within the Estate, you would still not be able to fly the drone above Parliament Buildings or within the curtilage.

Filming and Photography during Elections

During the period of dissolution before an Assembly election, no photography or filming is permitted for political purposes. This includes any filming or

photography that seeks to promote a particular party or person who is seeking election to the Assembly.

During this period, the media is also prohibited from filming any political or election related programmes/pieces to camera or interviews in Parliament Buildings or its environs.

Those standing for the Assembly election are prohibited from using any filming obtained or carried out before the period of dissolution in their election materials.

Photography

For the purpose of this policy, 'photography' is taken to mean:

- requests from organisations where the photograph is to launch/publicise a project/programme, such as:
- community
- voluntary
- charities
- public sector
- joint ventures between business and charities
- photography of those associated with an officially sponsored event being held in Parliament Buildings
- requests to take photographs of Parliament Buildings and its environs (this includes students (i.e. photography/architecture)
- photography of Assembly held art or artefacts
- Photography as described above will be permitted, once the Communications Office has assessed the request, in the following areas:

- Great Hall
- steps of Parliament Buildings (down to the curtilage)
- within the curtilage of Parliament Buildings (e.g. on the lawns to the front and sides of Parliament Buildings)
- other locations within the building will be considered on a case by case basis. These areas may include the Assembly Library, Committee Rooms etc

Where an organisation has the agreement of an event sponsor, photographs may be taken within the room that the function is being held. These rooms include the - Long Gallery / Members' Dining Room / Room 115 / Private Dining Room or other rooms which are being used for a function, in accordance with the 2016 Events Policy.

NB: Photography for the purposes of direct monetary/commercial gain for a company/individual is not permitted.

Filming

For the purposes of this policy, 'filming' refers to any filming taking place in Parliament Buildings or within the curtilage except for those who hold a permanent media pass and are undertaking news reporting / news interviews / press conferences / journalist pieces to camera.

Permission to film in the Assembly Chamber is rarely granted for interviews, pieces to camera or as part of a commercial film or documentary. Any requests for filming in the Chamber should be directed to the Communications Office, however, permission can only be granted by the Speaker, through the Speaker's Office.

Where the filming requires extra Assembly resources such as catering / ushering / security, the Assembly will require the organisation to reimburse the Assembly on a cost recovery basis.

An organisation filming in Parliament Buildings and its environs will also be required to sign an Assembly Location Agreement. The Assembly does not sign location agreements provided by an outside organisation

NB: Filming for the purposes of direct monetary/commercial gain for a company/individual is not permitted.

The policy includes, but is not limited to:

- Documentaries
- Politics programme (such as Spotlight/Panorama)
- Student films
- Educational films
- Filming of Assembly held art or artefacts
- Films (such as using Parliament Buildings as a film location)
- Using Parliament Buildings and its environs for historical / political programmes
- Using Parliament Buildings and its environs for special one off programmes (such as Antiques Roadshow)

PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING PHOTOGRAPHIC AND FILMING PERMISSION IN PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS AND ITS ENVIRONS

Photography

The request for photography should be made to the Communications Office. If the request is made to any other Business Area, that request must be relayed to the Communications Office.

The Communications Office will contact the organisation and provide them with an application form (see forms below) to be completed and returned to the Communications Office.

Once the Communications Office has received the form, a Communications Officer (or the Head of Communications) will discuss the request with the Head of Usher Services to ensure that any photograph complies with the Conduct and Behaviour of Visitors in Parliament Buildings Policy and that the photograph will not contravene any health and safety or general security concerns.

If permission for the photograph is granted, the individual / organisation will be informed in writing via email. Usher Services and any other relevant business area will also be informed in writing, provided with a copy of the completed photography form and a record kept of the communication.

If permission for the photograph is denied, the individual / organisation will be informed in writing via email. The individual / organisation will be advised that once a decision has been made, that decision is final and there is no right of appeal.

The Communications Office may direct the organisation to the Department of Finance Estate Management Unit for permission to take the photograph on the Apron directly outside of the curtilage or within the Stormont Estate.

Filming

The request for filming should be made to the Communications Office. If the request is made to any other Business Area, that request must be relayed to the Communications Office.

The Communications Office will contact the organisation and provide them with an application form (see forms below) that will need to be filled in and sent back to the Communications Office.

Once the Communications Office has received the form, a Communications Officer (or the Head of Communications) will discuss the request with Usher Services and the appropriate business areas affected such as, but not limited to, the Director of Parliamentary Services, other Directors, the Speaker's Office, the Clerk/Chief Executive's Office and/or the Assembly Commission.

If permission for filming is granted, the individual / organisation will be informed in writing via email. Usher Services and any other relevant business area will also be informed in writing, provided with a copy of the completed filming application form and a record kept of the communication.

If permission for filming is denied, the individual / organisation will be informed in writing via email. The individual / organisation will be advised that once a decision has been made, that decision is final and there is no right of appeal.

The Communications Office may direct the organisation to the Department of Finance Estate Management Unit for permission to film on the Apron directly outside of the curtilage or within the Stormont Estate.

[Download the application for photography opportunity at Parliament Buildings form](#)

[Download the application for filming at Parliament Buildings form](#)