



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Sponsored Events in Parliament Buildings Policy

Assigned Policy Owner: Public Engagement Manager

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 In this policy, a sponsored event is defined as a planned activity which takes place in a designated event space within Parliament Buildings and its immediate curtilage (Parliament Buildings). Sponsored events include exhibitions and private tours.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the process, and associated requirements, for booking designated event spaces in Parliament Buildings for sponsored events other than parliamentary business (as listed on the Business Diary i.e. Assembly plenary meetings and committee meetings).
- 1.3 All sponsored events must meet the following criteria:
- Be linked to the work of the Northern Ireland Assembly or to help foster understanding and awareness of the Northern Ireland Assembly;
 - Be inclusive and comply with the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's (the Assembly Commission) equality and good relations obligations;
 - Be impartial and non-party political;
 - Respect the dignity and reputation of Parliament Buildings and its primary purpose as the home of the Northern Ireland Assembly;
 - Be for exclusively non-commercial purposes; and
 - Not unduly affect the day-to-day operation of Parliament Building's or involve risk or damage to the building's infrastructure and/or fabric.
- 1.4 The Visitor Experience Team is responsible for taking bookings for sponsored events and for supporting the Primary Sponsor's delivery of their event.
- 1.5 The Assembly Commission reserves the right to refuse permission for any sponsored event. Wedding receptions, wedding ceremonies and school formals, or events of that nature, are not permitted to take place in designated event spaces in Parliament Buildings.

2. Sponsorship

2.1 Sponsorship requires that one of the following must take responsibility for the event i.e. act as the event's Primary Sponsor:

1. The Speaker
2. An MLA
3. An Executive Minister
4. Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors of the Assembly Commission
5. Comptroller and Auditor General
6. Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
7. Attorney General for Northern Ireland

2.2 Approval of MLA-sponsored events, except for private tours, requires a Primary Sponsor and two additional sponsors. Collectively, the three MLA sponsors must reflect cross-designation support in the Assembly. Cross-designation support means that one of the three sponsoring MLAs must be designated as "nationalist", and one must be designated as "unionist". In instances where the Primary Sponsor is designated as nationalist or unionist, they are encouraged to also seek the sponsorship of an MLA designated as "other".

2.3 Primary Sponsors may be supported by an event organiser(s). However, sponsors of events **must not** accept any fee, gifts, hospitality or any other benefit in kind or privilege in return for their sponsorship of the event (even if entered on the Register of Interests).

3. Designated Event Spaces

3.1 Sponsored events may only take place in the following areas within Parliament Buildings:

Space	Availability <i>(always subject to Assembly business)</i>
Long Gallery	During normal opening hours (Mon – Fri 8am to 6pm) and outside these by agreement (Mon – Fri 6pm to Midnight and Sat 10am to Midnight).
Room 115	During normal opening hours (Mon – Fri 8am to 6pm) and outside these by agreement (Mon – Fri 6pm to Midnight and Sat 10am to Midnight).
Members Dining Room	Availability determined by public dining.
Private Dining Room	For fine dining only. During normal opening hours (Mon – Fri 8am to 6pm) and outside these by agreement (Mon – Fri 6pm to Midnight and Sat 10am to Midnight). Bookings may be subject to cancellation at short notice.
Senate Chamber	During normal opening hours (Mon – Fri 8am to 6pm) and outside these by agreement (Mon – Fri 6pm to Midnight and Sat 10am to Midnight).
Great Hall	Only available on non-sitting days and outside normal building opening hours by agreement (Wed – Fri 6pm to Midnight and Sat 10am to Midnight).
Members Coffee Lounge	Only available on non-sitting days after 4pm and during normal business hours on Fridays (8am to 6pm) and Saturdays 10am to Midnight).

Space	Availability <i>(always subject to Assembly business)</i>
Members Bar	Only available on non-sitting days after 4pm and during normal business hours on Fridays (8am to 6pm) and Saturdays 10am to Midnight).
Committee Rooms (21, 29 & 30)	Available for meetings only and for booking by Parliament Buildings passholders only. Availability is determined by Assembly committee meetings.
Rotundas	Assembly rotunda is only available on non-sitting days and outside normal building opening hours by agreement (Wed – Fri 6pm to Midnight and Sat 10am to Midnight). Senate Rotunda is only available on non-sitting days and outside normal building opening hours by agreement (Wed – Fri 6pm to Midnight and Sat 10am to Midnight). Availability is determined by Assembly committee meetings.
Assembly Chamber	Not a bookable event space.

- 3.2 The Visitor Experience Team can advise on capacities and layout options for each event space. Primary Sponsors and event organisers must not exceed the recommended number of guests for their event and must follow guidance and protocols around evacuation procedures.

Exhibitions

- 3.3 Exhibitions in the Long Gallery may remain in place for a maximum of four weeks. Requests for exhibitions in any other area of Parliament Buildings require the approval of the Assembly Commission.
- 3.4 Before final approval is granted, all exhibition content will be reviewed by the Visitor Experience Team against the criteria listed at paragraph 1.3.

Tours

- 3.5 Private tours can be booked from 10am to 8pm Monday to Friday and between 10am and 4pm on a Saturday. MLA-sponsored private tours without hospitality **do not require** cross-designation support.
- 3.6 MLA-sponsored private tours with hospitality **do require** cross-designation support, as defined in paragraph 2.2, if provision of hospitality requires the use of one of the designated event spaces.
- 3.7 Private tours are routinely delivered by a member of the Visitor Experience Team and a request for that service must be submitted ten days in advance. The maximum tour group size for a Visitor Experience Team guided tour is 50 and there is no minimum.
- 3.8 Private tours can also be provided by an MLA, an Assembly Commission staff member, or any Parliament Buildings passholder to a maximum of 6 attendees. Notification of such private tours must be submitted ten days in advance and the Visitor Experience Team may give direction that the tour is limited or not possible in the stated time.

4. Other Requirements

Catering

- 4.1 If catering is required for a sponsored event, the Visitor Experience Team will pass this request on to the Assembly Commission's Catering contractor, who will contact the Primary Sponsor or event organiser directly to discuss options and ordering. **Only the Assembly Commission's catering contractor is permitted to provide catering and cleaning services within Parliament Buildings.**

Invitations

- 4.2 Invitations for sponsored events must follow the recommended layout (**Annex A**) and must be issued in the name of the Primary Sponsor. All invitations must be approved by the Visitor Experience Team before they are issued.
- 4.3 Sponsored event guests are required to bring an invitation to present to security and reception teams. Those arriving without an invitation will not gain entry unless vouched for by the Primary Sponsor or event organiser.

Event end times

- 4.4 All guests must vacate Parliament Buildings by the time agreed between the Primary Sponsor or event organiser and the Visitor Experience Team. In most cases Parliament Buildings should be fully vacated by midnight. If the Primary Sponsor or event organiser wishes to request an extension beyond midnight, this will be facilitated, based on full cost recovery. Any exception to this requirement will require the approval, in advance, of the Assembly Commission.

Visitor Behaviour

- 4.5 All guests at sponsored events must adhere to the [Northern Ireland Assembly's Conduct & Behaviour of Visitors Policy](#).

- 4.6 Primary Sponsors must ensure that their guests using rooms or facilities in non-public areas are supervised by a Parliament Buildings passholder. The Visitor Experience Team and Assembly Ushers are not available for this purpose.

Bookings

- 4.7 Bookings may be made for sponsored events from Monday to Saturday, except public holidays unless agreed by the Assembly Commission in advance.
- 4.8 Sponsored events on Sundays require the approval of the Assembly Commission. The full cost of sponsored events on Sundays will be charged to the Primary Sponsor or event organiser unless agreed by the Assembly Commission in advance.
- 4.9 The Assembly Commission may determine exemptions or additional conditions on any booking.

Commercial Use & Fundraising

- 4.10 The use of Parliament Buildings for commercial purposes is not permitted. Therefore, sponsored events with the direct or tangential purpose of generating financial gain, commercial gain or non-monetary benefit/benefit-in-kind for the Primary Sponsor, the event organiser, or any other individual, organisation, party or cause cannot take place in a designated event space in Parliament Buildings. The Assembly Commission reserves the right to cancel any event that is being organised or promoted with the purpose of achieving financial gain, commercial gain or non-monetary benefit/benefit-in-kind for the Primary Sponsor, the event organiser, or any other individual, organisation, party, or cause.
- 4.11 Other than charities registered as such with the Northern Ireland Charity Commission, event organisers may only charge guests to attend sponsored events on a cost recovery basis. If event organisers (other than charities as defined in this paragraph) intend to sell tickets for sponsored events, they

must provide the Visitor Experience Team with a breakdown of their costs and a plan for managing any unexpected income so that a profit is not made. Tickets must be sold **in advance of** the sponsored event taking place, and may not be sold in Parliament Buildings.

- 4.12 Other than charities (as defined at paragraph 4.11) Primary Sponsors and event organisers are not permitted to display pop-ups/stands/backboards/displays to advertise a product or service. Pop-up stands may be used for directional purposes only, and with the approval of the Visitor Experience Team. This will be discussed at the pre-planning stage. All proofs of pop-up stands and information stalls must be forwarded to the Visitor Experience Team in advance of the event for approval.
- 4.13 The use of political or party-political pop-ups/ stands/ backboards/ displays is not permitted in any of the public or shared areas of Parliament Buildings.
- 4.14 Charities (as defined at paragraph 4.11) may fundraise during sponsored events within Parliament Buildings in aid of their charity. Charities must make the Visitor Experience Team aware of their planned activities during the sponsored event planning stage. Charities must remain responsible for any monetary donations received during the sponsored event.

Elections

- 4.15 Without exception, candidates standing for election may not hold sponsored events during a defined election period. Candidates may however, in anticipation of being re-elected, make sponsored event bookings for dates beyond the defined period. Candidates failing to be returned as an MLA must inform the event organiser so that they can seek sponsorship from an alternative MLA.
- 4.16 Events with Primary Sponsors other than MLAs may take place during the defined election period.

Flags, Emblems, Music, and Uniforms at Events and on Tours

- 4.17 The proposed use of flags, emblems, uniforms, regalia, images, or items including music deemed politically sensitive during events at Parliament Buildings requires careful consideration.
- 4.18 The Primary Sponsor will be responsible for ensuring that their additional sponsors and the Visitor Experience Team receive adequate notice if the sponsored event involves **any** item that could be perceived as potentially sensitive or controversial.
- 4.19 In addressing issues concerning the wearing of uniforms at events the Assembly Commission has established the guidance provided at **Annex B**.

5. Access and Accessibility

Access to Parliament Buildings

- 5.1 Between 8am and 6pm, guests attending sponsored events can access the Stormont Estate via Prince of Wales Avenue, Massey Avenue or Stoney Road entrances. After 6pm, at weekends and on public holidays, all guests must use the Massey Avenue entrance.
- 5.2 Car parking for guests is only available in the Visitors Car Park.
- 5.3 Guests should proceed from the Visitors Car Park to Parliament Buildings via the East Glen Search Unit. Guests will then enter Parliament Buildings via the front entrance and register at reception.
- 5.4 Primary Sponsors or event organisers of sponsored events which include guests with disabilities are asked to contact the Visitor Experience Team in advance so that arrangements can be made for parking, evacuation procedures, and access to/within Parliament Buildings. The Visitor Experience Team is available to answer any additional questions or to provide advice.
- 5.5 By prior arrangement with the Visitor Experience Team, disabled guests may park, be set down or collected at the Upper East or Upper West car parks. [Read our full accessibility details.](#)
- 5.6 Vehicles of guests attending sponsored events are not permitted to remain overnight in the Upper East or Upper West car parks under any circumstances. Drivers are responsible for ensuring that their vehicles are removed accordingly. Those vehicles not removed at the conclusion of a sponsored event will be relocated to the Visitors Car Park. Vehicle relocation costs and all related costs will be invoiced to the Primary Sponsor or event organiser.

Accessibility

- 5.7 Guests participating on tours who require assistance due to sight or hearing impairments may request a braille tour script, 'Hearing Helpers' or the attendance of a sign language interpreter. It is important that the Visitor Experience Team is notified well in advance as the provision of this service is based on availability.
- 5.8 If a language translator is required, it is the responsibility of the Primary Sponsor, the event organiser or the group that is being hosted to provide this service.
- 5.9 The tour route is all on one level, wheelchair accessible, and appropriate for guests with limited mobility.
- 5.10 Access to the balcony of Parliament Buildings is not permitted unless prior approval has been sought in advance, and confirmed by the Visitor Experience Team.
- 5.11 The Assembly Commission complies with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. [Read the full accessibility details for Parliament Buildings.](#)

Health & Safety

- 5.12 The Assembly Commission complies with the Health & Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000, The Health & Safety at Work Policy Statement produced by the Assembly Commission and all other relevant legislation and codes of practice.
- 5.13 Sponsored event and tour guests and other visitors to Parliament Buildings must comply with any instruction or direction given by Assembly Commission Ushers and the Visitor Experience Team.

6. Complaints and Feedback

- 6.1 Complaints arising is a result of a sponsored event, including the behaviour of guests, should be reported to the Public Engagement Manager, whose contact details can be provided by the Visitor Experience Team.
- 6.2 Primary Sponsors or event organisers will be asked to complete a standard feedback form to allow for monitoring and continuous improvement of services. Any additional feedback can be provided to the Public Engagement Manager, whose contact details can be provided by the Visitor Experience Team.

7. Charging and Cancellations

- 7.1 Costs for hospitality, additional seat hire, additional AV requirements or any other additional requirements for sponsored events must be met, in advance, by the Primary Sponsor or event organiser.
- 7.2 As noted at paragraphs 4.4 and 4.8, sponsored events on Sunday and those which extend beyond midnight, will be charged on a full cost recovery basis.
- 7.3 Sponsored event bookings may be cancelled at any time by the Visitor Experience Team due to Assembly business. Cancellations will be confirmed in writing.
- 7.4 Bookings for sponsored events cancelled by the Primary Sponsor or event organiser must be notified as soon as possible to the Visitor Experience Team, giving at least three days' notice, and confirmed in writing.
- 7.5 The cancellation of sponsored events where catering has been requested will result in penalties detailed in the Assembly Commission's catering provider's Terms and Conditions document. Where hospitality has been arranged, written confirmation of the cancellation is required.

Annex A – Suggested text for ticket / invitation to events in Parliament Buildings

[Primary Sponsor's Name] *

requests the pleasure of the company of

[guest's name(s)]

at a **[reception / dinner / etc]** in the

[Function Room], Parliament Buildings, Belfast

on behalf of

[name of organisation / group]

on **[date]** at **[time]**

NB: Present invite on entry to Parliament Buildings

(this personal invitation is **not transferable**)

* It is essential that the primary sponsor is named on your invitation / ticket.

Annex B – Uniforms

Uniform Type	Category
Schools	Permissible at all events
Recognised Youth Organisations e.g. BBs, Scouts, Girl Guides, Brownies, etc.	Permissible at all events
Clerical e.g. collars, gowns, robes	Permissible at all events
Sashes & Regalia e.g. Loyal Orders, Hiber Commission, etc.	Not permissible
Military I. ARMY, RAF, NAVY	Permissible with cross designation support; and where those wearing the uniforms are representing their service in an official capacity.
Military II. Of other jurisdictions	Permissible with cross designation support; and where those wearing the uniforms are representing their country in an official capacity.
Military III. Replicas of former forces	Requires approval by Director and/or Commission

Uniform Type	Category
Sporting Attire including blazers, tops, tracksuits.	Permissible with triple sponsorship and where those wearing are representing their sport in an official capacity.
Emergency Services PSNI, Fire, Medical, etc.	Permissible at all events when representing their Service in an official capacity or providing their service as part of the event