

JOHN McGRILLEN
Clerk of the Council and Chief Executive



Ref: MS/4173

3 April, 2007

Ms. Julie Gillespie,
Legislation Progress Unit,
Room A4.01.
Castle Buildings,
Stormont Estate,
BELFAST. BT4 3SR.

Dear Ms. Gillespie,

**PROPOSAL FOR A DRAFT ORDER IN COUNCIL : THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES REFORM
[NORTHERN IRELAND] ORDER 2007**

Thank you for inviting Down District to comment on the above Draft Order in Council.

Members at a meeting of Council held on 2nd April 2007 considered the content of the consultation document and are opposed to significant parts of the proposed legislation.

1.0 Abolition of the Northern Ireland Housing Council

Down District Council is totally opposed to the abolition of the Northern Ireland Housing Council. The Housing Council performs a vital function within an administrative structure where Local Government is not responsible for the development of local housing policy or the delivery of social housing. The Housing Council ensure that Local Government's views are taken into account when housing policy is being formulated and has made an important contribution in recent times to a number of strategic Government policies including the Regional Development Strategy, Fuel Poverty Strategy, Neighbourhood Renewal, The Simple Housing Affordability Review and the NIHE's Rural Housing Policy.

Down District Council would also be of the view that the Housing Council appointees to the NIHE have been able to make an informed and important contribution to the operation of that organisation. The abolition of the Housing Council and the proposal to remove statutory representation obligations will dilute Local Government's influence in the development of housing policy and creates a risk that policy will be developed in isolation of other community based issues.

2.0 Transfer of Functions from the Fisheries Conservancy Board to DeCAL

Down District Council is totally opposed to the transfer of functions from the Fisheries Conservancy Board to DeCAL. It is the Council's view, based on recent experience of major fish kills within the District due to failure by Government Agencies, that the functions of the Fisheries Conservancy Board must remain independent from Government. The transfer of its functions to DeCAL would create an unacceptable circumstance where one Government Department will effectively be charged with the oversight of the actions of other Departments. It is the Council's view that this



will lead to a lack of objectivity and independence and the ineffective protection of our river habitat and wildlife. This should not be allowed to happen.

3.0 Removal of Statutory Obligations

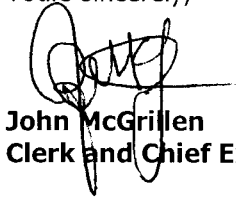
Down District Council would wish to express its opposition to the removal of statutory representation obligations to a number of the bodies set out in Schedule 3 of the proposed legislation, those being:

- The Arts Council for Northern Ireland;
- The Sports Council for Northern Ireland; and
- The Board of Trustees of MAGNI.

The Council is opposed to these amendments as it believes the extensive role played by Councils in the delivery of the Arts, Sport, Museums and Visitor Attractions, should result in Local Authorities being represented on the Boards of these bodies. Only through representation on the Boards of these bodies can Local Government have a direct and meaningful input into their policy development.

Down District Council would therefore ask that Government reconsiders its position on the appointment of Board Members to the above bodies.

Yours sincerely,



John McGrillen
Clerk and Chief Executive

JMcG/CK