



Your Ref:  
Our Ref: MISC/1  
26 February 2007  
Date:  
Being dealt with by: Ms Sonya McAnulla  
Email: [sonya.mcanulla@omagh.gov.uk](mailto:sonya.mcanulla@omagh.gov.uk)

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

Dear Ms Gillespie

**RE: Consultation on Proposal for a Draft Order in Council: The Public Authorities Reform (NI) Order 2007**

I am writing on behalf of Omagh District Council, in response to the above consultation. The following comments outline the formal response to the consultation:

- The Council is strongly opposed to the removal of the obligation for statutory representation on certain boards as well as the removal for the need to consult in relation to appointments to certain bodies. This move is in total contradiction to the original principles of the Review of Public Administration which emphasises the need for strong accountable local government at the heart of the community providing civic leadership now and into the future. The proposed change will result in the absence of democratic accountability in major public services with an un-elected and unaccountable Board being responsible for the governance of major public service functions in Northern Ireland particularly in Health & Education.
- The Council advocates strongly that elected representation on Boards is essential and should be the majority representation to ensure that decisions made are in the best interests of the people. It is also accepted that there is a need to bring appropriate expertise and professional input to the decision making process and that such representatives are appointed through a rigorous and transparent process. Equally public consultation is essential to ensuring transparency and accountability.
- The Council notes the legislation which will determine by law the repeal and abolition of the Pig Production Development Committee, Enterprise Ulster and the Northern Ireland Housing Council.

- The Council notes the legislation which affects the transfer of the Fisheries Conservancy Board to the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure. The Council is concerned however that Regulations 26 (11) of the Public Authorities Reform (NI) Order 2007 would appear to be used to implement significant change to aspects of the legislation that are outside the transfer of responsibilities aspect of the legislation without proper consideration or adequate consultation on such changes.
- The Council notes the legislation which affects the dissolution of the Laganside Corporation, having achieved its statutory remit to secure the regeneration of Belfast's riverside and waterfront areas. This Council would request that provision in legislation is made to transfer such statutory provision to District Councils to empower them to take forward the regeneration function.
- The Council opposes the abolition of the Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board for Northern Ireland and the subsequent handover of its responsibilities to the Great Britain board. Local matters such as this should be dealt with at a local level to ensure that such decisions are taken by people who understand local issues.
- The Council is also concerned that the statutory obligation for consultation in relation to appointments to the Industrial Court has been removed. Since the Industrial Courts deal with adjudications on applications relating to recognition/de-recognition of trade unions Government must be fair and transparent in all its actions and this is particularly relevant in the context of the Review of Public Administration where the Trade Unions will be required to play an important part in maintaining effective industrial relations. Therefore to implement the suggested changes would be a retrograde step. This consultation requirement should be maintained within the legislation.
- The Council acknowledges the selected option which recommends the reduction of public bodies. With a fully functioning local assembly and strong local government through the full implementation of the Review of Public Administration, more customer focused and transparent and accountable decision making needs to be supported. The Council is disappointed that the public bodies being developed are even less accountable than their predecessor bodies within Health and Education.

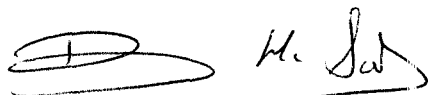
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Consultation on Proposal for a Draft Order In Council: The Public Authorities Reform (NI) Order 2007

- The Council would recommend that any savings made, as predicted through the transfer of the Fisheries Conservancy Board to DCAL and the abolition of the Housing Council should be channelled into front line services. The savings made need to be clearly qualified and identified and formal monitoring arrangements put in place.

On behalf of Omagh District Council, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation and the Council request that you seriously consider the above recommendations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D McSorley', written over a horizontal line.

**D McSORLEY**  
Chief Executive