



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Department for Regional Development – Bi-lingual Traffic Signs Draft Policy &amp; Draft Equality Impact Assessment Consultation</b>
<b>Date:</b>	18 February 2011
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
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<b>1.0</b>	<b><u>Relevant Background Information</u></b>
1.1	<p>The Council, at it's meeting on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February, considered the undernoted Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Mac Giolla Mhin:</p> <p>"This Council welcomes the recent release of a consultation document by the Department for Regional Development on the introduction of bi-lingual traffic signage. The Council supports the introduction of such signage in Belfast, which would assist the Council in demonstrating the cultural diversity which the City enjoys and enhance the potential for the success of its various tourism initiatives."</p> <p>The Council referred consideration of the Motion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.</p> <p>It should be noted that the consultation runs from 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 to 11 March 2011. Following consideration of all responses a final Equality Impact Assessment will be published on the Department's website at <a href="http://www.drdni.gov.uk">www.drdni.gov.uk</a>. The consultation document is attached a Appendix One.</p>
1.2	<p>The draft policy is intended to facilitate the introduction of a limited number of certain bi-lingual traffic signs in English and either Irish or Ulster–Scots for the specific purpose of promoting minority languages. DRD states that this policy will help the department meet its commitments under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which came into force on 1 July 2001.</p> <p>The purpose of the consultation is to obtain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Views on the draft policy itself</li> <li>▪ Views on the draft assessment of the equality impact of the draft policy; and</li> <li>▪ Any further information which could be useful in assessing those equality impacts</li> </ul>
1.3	<p><b><i>Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)</i></b></p> <p>The draft EQIA examines the various factors influencing the policy development and how these factors impact on the section 75 groupings.</p> <p>In developing the draft policy three main options were considered which are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b><i>Do nothing</i></b> – was deemed not commensurate with the overall desire to include either Irish or Ulster Scots on traffic signs for the specific purpose of promoting both languages. It was therefore set aside</li> <li>▪ <b><i>Treat all traffic signs bi-lingually</i></b> – was deemed would place an enormous burden on Roads Service in terms of finance, to replace the signs, and staff resource. This option could not be justified for economic reasons.</li> <li>▪ <b><i>Consider a limited range of signs for treatment</i></b> – the final option was to consider a limited range of signs which, when treated bi-lingually, could be confined to discrete areas where a level of support could be confirmed. <b>This is the Department's preferred option.</b></li> </ul> <p>In light of the differential impacts highlighted in the EQIA it is recommended that the Draft Equality Impact Assessment is referred to the Party Groupings on the Council for individual consideration</p>

	and comment.
1.4	<p><b><i>Summary of the Draft Policy</i></b></p> <p>Documentation issued by the DRD states that the draft policy is intended to facilitate the introduction of a limited number of certain bi-lingual traffic signs in English and either Irish or Ulster-Scots for the specific purpose of promoting minority languages.</p> <p>The draft policy will permit the inclusion of either Irish or Ulster-Scots, as well as English on the following types of signs, examples for each and specifics are detailed in the consultation document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Town/village place name signs</li> <li>ii) Some worded supplementary plates to standard warning signs (e.g. School) and</li> <li>iii) Certain tourist signs</li> </ul> <p>The Policy highlights that the types of sign have been carefully chosen so that they can be employed in discrete localised areas to minimise their impact and to go some way to ensuring that they will get as much local support as possible. In order to ensure community support, applications will only be considered where there is an affirmative resolution of support from the local authority.</p> <p>The principal language to be used on traffic signs is English. It shall always take precedence where a legend is present on a traffic sign. Only one additional language may be added to a sign.</p> <p>There are a number of functions proposed within the policy relating specifically to District Councils namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Signs will have to be requested by a promoter through their local District Council. The promoter may be the Local Council in the case of town or village entry signs, a local tourist operator in the case of tourist signs, or the manager of the facility in the case of the warning supplementary signs, which could, for example, be a school Principal.</li> <li>▪ The EQIA states that the Local District Council will be responsible for reimbursing Roads Service of the total cost of the sign approval, design, manufacture and erection, although it is envisaged that the Local District Council will recover these costs from the promoter. No direct cost will be borne by the Department. However the Policy &amp; Procedure Guide states that "<i>The Local Council shall then supply and erect signs that comply in all respects with the agreement entered into</i>" – therefore clarification is required as to who would have responsibility for erecting and maintaining signs.</li> <li>▪ The consultation recognises that this could be a politically sensitive issue and may not be accepted in all areas. Consequentially, in order to ensure a degree of local support for any bilingual signing proposal, Roads Service will require, as a pre-requisite, confirmation that the proposal has the support of the relevant Local Council</li> </ul>
2.0	<b><u>Key Issues</u></b>
2.1	<p><b>Points for Consideration</b></p> <p>As mentioned above the draft policy outlines a number of potential functions for District Councils in terms of administering the policy. In relation to these functions Council Officers have highlighted that it would be helpful if clarification could be given as to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The definition of the terms 'Discrete areas' and 'Overall Support' used within the policy;</li> <li>▪ The definition of an "area" is important in terms of surveying areas for opinion before submitting signs for approval. Administering the legislation on street signs is more clearly defined in that a survey is conducted of those residents within a specified street;</li> <li>▪ As with any new policy the resource implications of its administration need to be explored</li> </ul>

	<p>including the costing of applications;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clarity is required on who is responsible for erecting and maintaining signs and any attendant liability issues.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0 Resource Implications</b>	
N/A	
<b>4.0 Equality Implications</b>	
It has been recommended that the consultation document in terms of the Draft Equality Impact Assessment be referred to the Party Groupings on the Council for individual consideration and comment	
<b>5.0 Recommendations</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is recommended that the consultation document in terms of the Draft Equality Impact Assessment be referred to the Party Groupings on the Council for individual consideration and comment.</li> <li>2. The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is asked to consider the draft consultation and to consider if it wishes to submit a Council response to the draft policy or to refer to Party Groupings on the Council for individual consideration and comment</li> </ol>	
<b>6.0 Documents Attached</b>	
<b>Appendix 1</b>	DRD – Bi-lingual Traffic Signs Draft Policy & Draft Equality Impact Assessment – Consultation document