



Department for  
**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

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Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services  
Belfast City Council  
City & Neighbourhood Services Division  
The Cecil Ward Building  
4-10 Linenhall Street  
Belfast BT2 8BP

Your reference:  
Our reference: COR-0436-2019

17 September 2019

Dear Ms Toland

**RE : Proposal for Belfast Car Free Days from 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2019**

Thank you for your letter of 3 September 2019 to Katrina Godfrey seeking the support of the Department for Infrastructure for the designation of Belfast City Centre car free days. I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department.

Reflecting the focus on *Improving Wellbeing for All* in the draft Programme for Government, the Department is committed to taking action to increase the proportion of journeys undertaken by sustainable modes. We are therefore very supportive of the Council's focus on reducing private car journeys to the city centre. A reduction in car traffic can make a substantial positive contribution to local air quality and greenhouse gases reductions, in addition to making our urban centres much more attractive places in which to work, visit invest and enjoy leisure time.

In the recent past, the Department has supported the Ciclovía event which has involved road closures along a route between Botanic Gardens and Belfast City Hall. The Department has also been at the heart of initiatives to encourage the use of Public Transport in place of private car in accessing the City Centre at Christmas time.

However, we would caution that, to be successful, a car-free day should involve a number of integrated elements including road closures, alternative traffic management measures, and supplementary public transport offers. Clearly these require significant planning and lead-in time.



The proposed restrictions for this purpose might be undertaken by Belfast City Council, as the relevant authority, under the Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2010 either as part of the Order prepared to facilitate "Culture Night" (or 'weekend') or as a separate 'special events' Order. However, initial consideration of the proposal for 'car free' days would suggest that more complex arrangements than closing roads to motor vehicles generally would be required.

This would particularly be the case if the part of its purpose is less to prevent motor cars accessing the city than to promote alternative means of achieving this purpose. Apart from the lengthy planning that is likely to be required any proposed Order would require consultation, advertising and a period for written representation to be made not being less than 21 days from the date of the notice. Unfortunately the Council has insufficient time to undertake this work before 20th – 22nd September.

Consequently, whilst the Department would be keen to support the City Council in designating Belfast City as car free in future as part of a co-ordinated package of measures and events, on this occasion there is insufficient time to plan and consult for a successful outcome. We would, however, be very keen to work with Council officers to make similar plans for a future weekend.

Yours sincerely



**Robert Crawford**

**Head of Departmental Coordination Unit**

