
DETERMINATION MADE IN RELATION TO THE AONTACHT PARADE NOTIFIED TO TAKE PLACE IN BELFAST ON SUNDAY 23 APRIL 2017

INTRODUCTION

1. Section 8(1) of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998, provides that:

"The Commission may issue a determination in respect of a proposed public procession imposing on the persons organising or taking part in it such conditions as the Commission considers necessary."
2. The Commission has noted the details provided on the Form 11/1 submitted on 7 February 2017 concerning the Aontacht parade in Belfast on Sunday 23 April 2017. The Commission has considered the need to issue a determination as outlined above, against the factors described in its Guidelines document.
3. The Commission has had special regard to the nature of this parade in the light of the above Act, the Commission's stated principles (as set out in its annual reports), the Statutory Guidelines and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. It has also considered and evaluated all representations received and all information assembled. The Commission has subsequently concluded, considering all relevant factors, that the determination which it now makes is the most appropriate for this particular parade at this particular time.

BACKGROUND

4. The notified purpose is "*Commemoration and unveiling a plaque at Divis Street.*"
5. The notified route is "*New Lodge Road, North Queen Street, Donegall Street, Royal Avenue, Castle Street and Divis Street.*"
6. The number of participants notified is 400, including 2 bands. There are no notified supporters. In 2016 a similar parade along this route notified 1000-2000 participants: the actual scale of the parade was much smaller than this.
7. The parade is notified to commence from the New Lodge Road at 11.00am and to disperse from Divis Street at 12.30pm. A plaque is to be unveiled in Divis Street at 12.00noon.

8. The Commission understands that the organiser is aware that, around the time of the parade, services are scheduled for the two Churches on Donegall Street and has indicated his intention that bands will play a single drumbeat on Donegall Street between the North Queen Street and Royal Avenue junctions.
9. The parade organiser has informed the Commission that some participants will wear "*period costume coats*" and that "*theatrical replica weapons*" carried in the parade will be checked by the PSNI. The organiser has provided assurances that no paramilitary flags or emblems will be displayed in any part of the parade.
10. The organiser has confirmed his intention for bands to play a single drumbeat from Belfast Central Library until Lower Garfield Street.
11. Assurances from the organiser include that the parade will begin and disperse promptly, will be well marshalled and will move quickly through the city centre with no undue stoppages. The Commission has also received assurances from the organiser that he has addressed concerns about a marshal's conduct at last year's event.
12. A loyalist grouping has notified a protest of 500 participants. Its stated purpose is "*to protect the site in Royal Avenue where two UDR soldiers were murdered in 1988 by Republicans*".
13. The Commission has considered the conduct of last year's event where there were hostile verbal exchanges between some parade participants and some protestors along Royal Avenue. The Commission has considered the conducts last year within the context of assurances received about this year's parade.
14. The Commission has considered the impacts of the parade on city centre users, including on shoppers, traders and others, and the potential disruption to traffic on a Sunday morning. It has noted the longstanding campaign by trading bodies representing retailers for a restriction on parades and protests during the busiest trading hours between 12.00noon and 6.00pm, particularly on Saturday afternoons. It has weighed up these potential impacts on wider community life within the context of the city centre as a neutral public space which should be accessible to all. It has reflected on its own body of decisions regarding access to the city centre, and noted that parades and rallies are frequent in this area, and involve a wide range of organisations, views and causes, many of which are in some way controversial.
15. The Commission has had regard to its statutory Guidelines in its considerations of the parade's potential for public disorder and the potential impacts upon community relations and community life. The Commission has fully considered all relevant human rights aspects.

16. The Commission has considered that, in compliance with its statutory Code of Conduct, it is critical that the conduct of the parade at the UDR memorial should be respectful. The Commission has upheld in its determination the organiser's intention to play a single drumbeat along Royal Avenue and Donegall Street. The parade is required to begin and disperse promptly in accordance with the organiser's notified timings.
17. The Commission has determined that these conditions are necessary, proportionate and fair in respect of this parade.

CONSIDERATION

18. The Commission is obliged by statute to have regard to the Guidelines issued under Section 5 of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 and has done so. The Commission has also been alert to its duties as a public authority under Section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998. The Commission believes that, from the perspective of the parade organisers, the Convention rights engaged are those protected by Articles 9, and 10 and, in particular, Article 11. None of those rights is absolute.
19. Further, the human rights of other persons, to whom the Commission also owes a legal duty, must be equally considered. Those who live, work, shop, trade and carry on business in the affected locality enjoy rights under Article 8 of the Convention and Article 1 of the First Protocol thereto. In common with Articles 9, 10 and 11, none of these rights is absolute. The Commission has also been mindful to take into account its positive obligations under Article 2 of the Convention. Similarly it has been mindful of the provisions of Article 17 of the Convention.
20. It is not possible for all of those who would claim the benefit of the Human Rights Act 1998 to exercise and enjoy their Convention rights to the fullest extent, where rights are in competition with each other. The Commission, therefore, has had to undertake a balancing exercise, bearing in mind the statutory Guidelines, in an attempt to reach a determination, which is fair and proportionate in all the circumstances. In addition to having regard to the Guidelines the Commission has had regard to the criteria specified in Section 8(6) of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998.
21. The Commission has also had regard to the issue of engagement. One of the seven fundamental principles identified by the North Report is that all those involved should work towards resolution of difficulties through local accommodation. As required by the statutory Guidelines, the Commission has had regard to the seven North principles.

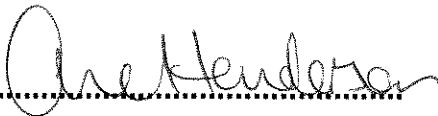
22. As indicated at page 15 of its second Annual Report, the Commission (while avoiding an excessively prescriptive approach) considers the essence of engagement to be attempts at genuine communication between protagonists to a particular parading dispute. A series of 'pointers' to what constitutes genuine engagement is listed on page 16 of that report.
23. As stated in paragraph 4.4 of the Guidelines, the Commission takes into account any communications between parade organisers and the local community or the absence thereof. Further, the Commission will assess the measures, if any, offered or taken by parade organisers to address genuinely held relevant concerns of members of the local community.
24. In making its determination, the Commission has accepted that there is a right of lawful and peaceful protest vested in those who legitimately object to the notified parade. However, there is neither right nor justification for unlawful or violent protest. The Commission further considers that, in all the circumstances, there is an obligation on representatives and local community and political leaders to use their good offices and/or take reasonable steps as appropriate to prevent violent and/or unlawful protest. This will be to the positive advantage of the local population, as it will reduce the risk of any possible impairment of their rights and freedoms stemming from such protests.
25. The Commission has had regard to the nature of this parade, the purpose of which is described earlier in the determination.
26. Having considered all the evidence and information available to it, the Commission finds that it necessary to place conditions on the parade. This decision is set against the background of continuing local community tension. Whilst recognising the fundamental importance of the right to freedom of assembly, the Commission finds it necessary to exercise its powers under section 8 of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 to place restrictions on the parade.
27. In pursuing these conditions, the Commission pursues the legitimate aims laid down in Article 10(2) and 11(2) of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, of seeking to prevent disorder and to protect the rights and freedoms of others.
28. In determining whether the conditions are necessary in a democratic society and proportionate, the Commission has regard inter alia to the criteria set down in section 8(6) of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 and to its own Guidelines made under section 5 of the Act and to which under section 8 (5) it shall have regard when making a determination.

DETERMINATION

The Parades Commission's determination is that the following conditions are placed on the organisers and participants in the parade by the Aontacht in Belfast on Sunday 23 April 2017.

- A. No music other than a single drumbeat, on a single side drum, shall be played on that part of the notified route between the North Street and Lower Garfield Street junctions with Royal Avenue.
- B. No music other than a single drumbeat, on a single side drum, shall be played on that part of the notified route on Donegall Street between the junctions of North Queen Street and Royal Avenue.
- C. As notified by the organiser, no supporters shall accompany the parade.
- D. The parade organiser shall ensure that the parade begins and disperses promptly.
- E. Only the bands notified on the Form 11/1 shall participate in the parade.
- F. The parade organisers shall ensure that all participants including any marshals, band leaders and band members are given written details of the restrictions.
- G. The organisers and all participants in the parade shall comply with the conditions set out in the Commission's Code of Conduct. For ease of reference, these are reproduced below.
- H. As shown at Appendix B of the Code of Conduct, the Commission re-affirms that all participants in this parade must behave with due regard for the rights, traditions and feelings of others in the vicinity; refrain from using words or behaviour which could reasonably be perceived as intentionally sectarian, provocative, threatening, abusive, insulting or lewd; obey the lawful directions of parade organisers and stewards at all times, from assembly to dispersal and comply with police directions and in accordance with legislation.
- I. The Commission further re-affirms the importance of respectful behaviour in the vicinity of interface areas, namely that there shall be no singing, chanting, or loud drumming and that marching should be dignified. More generally, no paramilitary-style clothing is to be worn at any time during the parade and flags, bannerettes and symbols relating to a proscribed organisation shall in no circumstances be displayed.

- J. The parade organisers shall arrange for the presence of an adequate number of stewards to ensure that all parade participants act in an orderly manner.
- K. The parade organisers shall ensure that all stewards and participants obey any direction given by the police in relation to this parade.
- L. The parade organisers shall ensure that these conditions are drawn to the attention of all participants.

Signed: 
(On behalf of the Commission)

Date: 14/4/17
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APPENDIX A

Guidance for Anyone Participating in Parades

A. Behaviour

All participants in parades should:

- behave with due regard for the rights, traditions and feeling of others in the vicinity,
- refrain from using words or behaviour which could reasonably be perceived as being intentionally sectarian, provocative, threatening, abusive, insulting or lewd,
- obey the lawful directions of parade organizers and stewards at all times, from assembly to dispersal,
- abide by the conditions of this Code of Conduct,
- comply with police directions and in accordance with legislation.

B Dress

No paramilitary-style clothing is to be worn at any time during a parade.

C Parade

Whenever possible, the parade should be positioned on one side of the carriageway so as to allow for the free flow of traffic, or as otherwise stipulated by police.

D Route

Participants should keep to the designated route as directed by the police.

E Alcohol

Alcohol should not be consumed immediately prior to, or during a parade. An organizer or steward, who believes a participant to be under the influence of alcohol, should take the necessary measures to remove that person from the parade.

F Bands and Music

Each band must clearly display its name. Restrictions on the playing of music will be in accordance with the conditions as set out in Appendix B of this Code. No musical instrument will bear any inscription or mark of a proscribed organization.

G Flags etc.

Flags and other displays often have a legitimate historical significance, but in no circumstances should such items relating to a proscribed organization be displayed.

H Stewards

The names of stewards will have been notified to the police and the Parades Commission at the time of notifying the proposed parade.

Stewards should:

- be properly trained
- be briefed by the organizers prior to the parade
- carry proof of their status at all times during the event, and provide this information to police on request
- be fully aware of their responsibilities and role
- be highly visible by means of jackets, singlets, armbands, etc.
- not consume alcohol before or during the parade
- co-operate with the police
- be prepared to identify to the police any persons in the parade who may be committing any offence against criminal law.

I Policing

Organisers of parades must co-operate with the police from the time of submission of the notice of intention to parade until the parade disperses.

J Dispersal

When a parade has concluded, all those taking part must disperse immediately. It will be the responsibility of the organizers to ensure compliance with instructions in this regard.

K Abiding by Conditions

Organisers must ensure that all participants in any parade have been informed of any conditions imposed. As a general principle, the organiser is responsible for the behaviour of all participants and for ensuring compliance with the Code of Conduct.

APPENDIX B

Guidance for Anyone Participating in Parades in the Vicinity of Sensitive Locations

A Places of Worship

Only hymn tunes should be played.

When church services are taking place, no music should be played.

There should be no irreverent behaviour.

Marching should be dignified.

B War Memorials and Cemeteries

Only hymn tunes should be played.

Behaviour should be respectful.

Marching should be dignified.

C Where the Majority Population of the Vicinity are of a Different Tradition, and in Interface Areas.

Behaviour should be respectful.

There should be no excessively loud drumming.

Participants should refrain from conduct, words, music or behaviour which could reasonably be perceived as intentionally sectarian, provocative, threatening, abusive, insulting or lewd.

Marching should be dignified.

