



SOUTH BELFAST PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Eastern Traffic Division
DRD Roads Service

15 March 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Proposals to introduce experimental changes to the urban clearway restrictions in South Belfast.

I write to you in response to the current public consultation on proposals to introduce experimental changes to the urban clearway restrictions on three main roads in South Belfast. This response has been prepared by the South Belfast Partnership Board in consultation with a number of local community groups, business association and private sector partners in South Belfast. The South Belfast Partnership Board brings together all sectors – community, statutory, political and private – to strengthen and better target the efforts being made by the community, the private sector and the Government to tackle in partnership the economic, social and environmental problems which affect people in the most disadvantaged areas of South Belfast.

In summary, we are broadly supportive of the proposals and welcome the move to pilot a tidal clearway system on a number of arterial routes in South Belfast. We recognise that a broader consultation was undertaken last year on the proposals to relax clearway restrictions across Belfast, and accept that a blanket policy on all major routes could have undesirable consequences in some locations. However, it is clear that there are instances where the relaxing of restrictions will not lead to any adverse consequences on traffic movement during peak times and we have long advocated the need to consider each road/section of road on its own merits. We recognise that these minor alterations to existing clearway arrangements have the potential to provide a significant boost to businesses during a particularly difficult economic climate. We congratulate the Department and Roads Service for responding to the voices of the business community in developing this innovative approach to address this long-standing issue.

In addition to this general welcoming, we have collated a number of more specific comments from our partners in relation to the proposals.

- **Lisburn Road/Finaghy:** We fully support the proposal that the pilot should cover the Upper Lisburn Road/Lisburn Road from Black's Road to Malone Avenue. The Lisburn Road Business Association and other local business representatives in the area have been the main proponents of this initiative and are already looking forward to the

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full trial. They believe it will make a significant difference to the shopping experience along the Road and give a much needed boost to local traders.

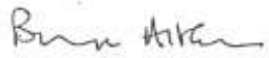
- **Stranmillis Road:** Likewise, Stranmillis Road is a heavily trafficked route which could benefit from the relaxation of restrictions in the same way as the Lisburn Road. We have already had the issue of parking in the area highlighted to us by a number of local businesses and a new Stranmillis Business Association has been launched in the area following collective lobbying in relation to this matter. We would hope that Roads Service is able to pro-actively involve this new body in discussing the implementation and results of the trial as the initiative is progressed.
- **Ormeau Road:** We understand the benefits of piloting the initiative in a small number of locations and that expanding the coverage could run the risk of diluting the issue. However, as a key arterial route in South Belfast that suffers from the same issues as the Lisburn Road and Stranmillis, we would welcome the expansion of the pilot to the Ormeau Road also. In fact as a key arterial route with a large business population, it would perhaps seem more appropriate to cover the Ormeau Road than the Malone Road, which has comparatively fewer businesses negatively affected by the clearway restrictions. It has even been suggested that there is a strategic benefit to local businesses of aligning the pilot to the areas being targeted by Belfast City Council's Renewing the Routes investment, which includes the lower Lisburn Road and Ormeau Road, as well as Sandy Row.

Local traders on the Ormeau Road fully support a review of clearway restrictions in South Belfast and would welcome the opportunity to trial it on the Ormeau Road also. It is painfully obvious to them that these restrictions have had a detrimental effect on evening retail business along our arterial routes, nowhere more so than on the Ormeau Road, where 98% of traffic is country-bound after 4pm. If these restrictions were lifted on city-bound routes, local traders would be more inclined to stay open and this in turn would inject more evening life and as a consequence, some normality, into the area. The Ormeau Business Association would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with Roads Service.

- **Other Parking Restrictions:** Whilst we recognise that the relaxation of the clearway restrictions will help to improve the availability of parking in affected areas, there are also a number of other changes that could be looked at in order to improve accessibility to local shops and services on these arterial routes. For example, the one hour parking restrictions are a bit restrictive at times, preventing longer stays for visiting services such as hair dressers and beauty treatments or having lunch, or reducing visits to multiple retailers. Perhaps extending parking to a maximum of two hours would help address these problems and encourage multiple visits such as shopping plus coffee, whilst minimising the danger of people parking on arterial routes to get public transport into town and back within the allocated time-frame. We would encourage Road Service to explore opportunities to vary some of these restrictions also for the benefit of local businesses.

We trust that you find these comments useful and look forward to seeing how they help shape the final proposals in due course. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the matters raised within this response with Roads Service, so please don't hesitate to contact my colleague Martyn Smithson on 02890 244 070 or martyn.smithson@southbelfast.org if you would like any further information or clarity in relation to any of our comments.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brieghe Arthurs". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Brieghe Arthurs
Chief Executive
South Belfast Partnership Board