
STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2005 No. 857

**The Public Processions (Amendment)
(Northern Ireland) Order 2005**

Protest meetings

Powers to impose conditions on protest meetings

4.—(1) After section 9 of the principal Act insert—

“The Commission’s powers to impose conditions on protest meetings

9A The Commission’s powers to impose conditions on public protests

(1) The Commission may issue a determination in respect of a proposed protest meeting imposing on the persons organising or taking part in it such conditions as the Commission considers necessary.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), the conditions imposed under that subsection may include conditions as to the place at which the meeting may be held, its maximum duration, or the maximum number of persons who may constitute it.

(3) Conditions imposed under subsection (1) may incorporate or be framed by reference to—

- (a) the Code of Conduct; or
- (b) any other document—
 - (i) prepared by the person or body organising the protest meeting in question; and
 - (ii) approved by the Commission for the purposes of this section.

(4) The Commission may, in accordance with the procedural rules, amend or revoke any determination issued under this section.

(5) In considering in any particular case—

- (a) whether to issue a determination under this section;
- (b) whether to amend or revoke a determination issued under this section; or
- (c) what conditions should be imposed by a determination (or amended determination) issued under this section,

the Commission shall have regard to the guidelines.

(6) The guidelines shall in particular (but without prejudice to the generality of section 5(1)) provide for the Commission to have regard to—

- (a) any public disorder or damage to property which may result from the protest meeting;
- (b) any disruption to the life of the community which the meeting may cause;
- (c) any impact which the meeting may have on relationships within the community; and

(d) any failure of a person of a description specified in the guidelines to comply with the Code of Conduct (whether in relation to the meeting in question or the procession to which it relates or in relation to any previous protest meeting or procession).

(7) A person who knowingly fails to comply with a condition imposed under this section shall be guilty of an offence, but it is a defence for him to prove that the failure arose—

(a) from circumstances beyond his control; or

(b) from something done by direction of a member of the Police Service of Northern Ireland not below the rank of inspector.

(8) A person who incites another to commit an offence under subsection (7) shall be guilty of an offence.

(9) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (7) or (8) shall be liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or to both.

9B Review by Secretary of State of determination of Commission under section 9A

(1) The Secretary of State shall, on an application made by the Chief Constable, review a determination issued by the Commission under section 9A.

(2) Subsections (2) to (4) and (7) of section 9 apply in relation to a review under this section as they apply in relation to a review under section 9.

(3) A determination of the Commission which is amended by the Secretary of State under this section shall be treated for the purposes of this Act (except section 9A(4)) as if it had been issued by the Commission as so amended.

(4) Where a determination of the Commission in relation to a protest meeting has been revoked by the Secretary of State under this section, the Commission shall not issue any further determination under section 9A in relation to that meeting.”.

(2) In section 2(2)(b) of that Act (general function of Commission to issue determinations in respect of proposed public processions) after “processions” add “ and protest meetings ”.

(3) In section 5(1) of that Act (guidelines as to exercise by Commission of functions under section 8) for “section 8” substitute “ sections 8 and 9A ”.

(4) In section 7(8)(b) of that Act (defence of acting in compliance with conditions imposed under Article 4(2) of Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987) for “Article 4(2) of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987” substitute “ section 9A ”.

(5) In section 10 of that Act (saving for powers of constable) for “section 8 or 9” substitute “ sections 8 to 9B ”.

(6) In Article 4 of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 (NI 7) (power of senior police officer to impose conditions on open-air public meetings) at the end add—

“(7) This Article does not apply in relation to a protest meeting within the meaning of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998.”.

Powers to prohibit protest meetings

5.—(1) After section 11 of the principal Act insert—

“Secretary of State’s powers to prohibit protest meetings

11A Secretary of State’s powers to prohibit protest meetings

(1) If, in the case of any proposed protest meeting, the Secretary of State is of the opinion that, having regard to—

- (a) any serious public disorder or serious damage to property which may result from the meeting;
- (b) any serious disruption to the life of the community which the meeting may cause;
- (c) any serious impact which the meeting may have on relationships within the community; and
- (d) any undue demands which the meeting may cause to be made on the police or military forces,

it is necessary in the public interest to do so, he may by order prohibit the holding of that meeting.

(2) If, in relation to any area and any period of time not exceeding 28 days, the Secretary of State is of the opinion that, having regard to—

- (a) any serious public disorder or serious damage to property which may result from protest meetings in that area in that period;
- (b) any serious disruption to the life of the community which such meetings may cause;
- (c) any serious impact which such meetings may have on relationships within the community;
- (d) any undue demands which such meetings may cause to be made on the police or military forces; and
- (e) the extent of the power exercisable under subsection (1),

it is necessary in the public interest to do so, he may by order prohibit the holding of all protest meetings in that area in that period.

(3) An order under subsection (2) may exempt any meeting, or any meeting of any class or description, specified in the order.

(4) Wherever practicable the Secretary of State shall before making an order under this section consult—

- (a) the Commission; and
- (b) the Chief Constable,

but nothing in this subsection shall affect the validity of any such order.

(5) The power to make an order under this section includes power to revoke or amend any such order.

(6) An order made under subsection (1) in relation to a protest meeting has effect to revoke any previous determination made by the Commission under section 9A in relation to that meeting, and an order made under subsection (2) has effect to revoke any previous determination made by the Commission under that section in relation to any protest meeting the holding of which is prohibited by the order.

(7) A person who organises or takes part in a protest meeting the holding of which he knows is prohibited by an order under this section shall be guilty of an offence.

(8) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (7) shall be liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or to both.”.

(2) In section 16(1) of that Act (orders under section 11 not to be made by statutory instrument) after “section 11” insert “ or 11A ”.

(3) In Article 5 of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 (NI 7) (power of Secretary of State to prohibit open-air public meetings) at the end add—

“(7) This Article does not apply in relation to a protest meeting within the meaning of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998.”.

Breaking up protest meeting

6.—(1) In section 14(1) of the principal Act (offences against persons taking part in public procession) after “procession” (in both places) insert “ or protest meeting ”.

(2) In Article 7 of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 (NI 7) (breaking up public meeting) after paragraph (2) insert—

“(2A) Paragraph (2) does not apply in relation to a protest meeting within the meaning of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998.”.

Changes to legislation:

There are currently no known outstanding effects for the The Public Processions (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 2005, Protest meetings.