EIR Request (received 05 November 2023) - Reference: DFI/2023-0416

In the late 1990s Saintfield became a conservation area.

Under a Freedom of Information Request can I ask what measures have been taken to enforce the display of appropriate advertising and shop signage within the conservation area over the last 10 years please?

Response (issued 30 November 2023)

Thank you for your email dated 5 November 2023 requesting under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI), information held by the Department. You requested the following:

> *What measures have been taken to enforce the display of appropriate advertising and shop signage within the conservation area over the last 10 years please?*

In considering your request on behalf of the Department, I have determined that the information requested falls under the aegis of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR), as opposed to Freedom of Information Act 2000. Your request is for information that relates to activities, policies or plans that affect the environment. Section 39 of the Freedom of Information Act specifically excludes from consideration under that Act requests for what is deemed to be environmental information.

A guide explaining the Environmental Information Regulations can be found at: https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi-eir-and-access-to-information/guide-to-the-environmental-information-regulations/.

The Environmental Information Regulations established general public rights of access to environmental information held by public authorities, similar to the general rights established under FOI. There is no provision for privileged access to information, it may either be released to the World at large, or it must be withheld. Any information provided in response to an information request (either FOI or EIR) is considered to have been placed in the public domain.

In response to your request, I can confirm that the Department for Infrastructure does not hold information related to your request.

DfI Roads has no record of taking enforcement action relating to the shop signage within Saintfield within the last 10 years.

I would explain that recent budget cuts have led to a reduction of road maintenance activities including the removal of advertising from the public road unless there are immediate road safety concerns.

In addition to the budget shortfall for maintenance, the Department is also currently facing significant staffing pressures which is impacting on our ability to deliver key services. Regrettably, in reality, what this has meant is that fewer repairs and less discretionary works such as dealing with advertising signs have been carried out across the entire road network than we would have liked resulting in the need for us to address only the worst defects and focus primarily on higher trafficked routes. This has not been a decision the Department has taken by choice or because it represents good practice, it is solely a consequence of us not having sufficient funding to do more.

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