

EIR Request (received 12 June 2025) - Reference: DFI/2025-0261

I would like to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

1. Any documentation (including design plans, internal reports, or traffic modelling) explaining the rationale for the length and termination point of the bus lane on Great Victoria Street, Belfast—particularly the section running from Hope Street to Glengall Street.
2. Any relevant guidelines or internal policies used by DfI when determining how far before a junction a bus lane should terminate to allow general traffic to turn left safely.
3. Any risk assessments, safety reviews, or traffic flow evaluations relating to turning movements from general traffic lanes into junctions where a bus lane is present.
4. A copy of any internal policy, enforcement guidance, or training materials issued by the Department for Infrastructure or its contractors that refer to a 6-metre rule for entering a bus lane to turn left.
5. Any documentation that describes how this 6-metre threshold is measured, applied, or enforced in practice.
6. Details of whether this guideline is communicated to the public, and if so, where.

Response (issued 09 July 2025)

Thank you for your emails dated 12 June 24, 2025, requesting information held by the Department for Infrastructure, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI). You requested the following:

1. *Any documentation (including design plans, internal reports, or traffic modelling) explaining the rationale for the length and termination point of the bus lane on Great Victoria Street, Belfast -particularly the section running from Hope Street to Glengall Street.*
2. *Any relevant guidelines or internal policies used by DfI when determining how far before a junction a bus lane should terminate to allow general traffic to turn left safely.*
3. *Any risk assessments, safety reviews, or traffic flow evaluations relating to turning movements from general traffic lanes into junctions where a bus lane is present.*

4. *A copy of any internal policy, enforcement guidance, or training materials issued by the Department for Infrastructure or its contractors that refer to a 6-metre rule for entering a bus lane to turn left.*
5. *Any documentation that describes how this 6-metre threshold is measured, applied, or enforced in practice.*
6. *Details of whether this guideline is communicated to the public, and if so, where.*

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, as opposed to the FOI Act 2000. Section 39 of the Freedom of Information Act specifically excludes from consideration under that Act requests for what is deemed to be environmental information. EIR gives rights of public access environmental information held by public authorities.

A guide explaining the Environmental Information Regulations can be found at: [Guide to the Environmental Information Regulations](#).

In response to your request, I can confirm that the Department for Infrastructure does hold information related to your request. As EIR relates to public rights of access to information, I must consider whether information is suitable for release to the world at large, and not solely to the applicant. I have examined the information you requested and carried out a public interest test to determine whether this information is suitable for release to the public.

In response to your requests above, I have addressed each point below and included hyperlinks to relevant guidance and documentation for your convenience.

1. As with other city centre bus lanes the north-bound bus lane on Great Victoria Street between Hope Street and Glengall Street was initially provided by the Belfast On The Move traffic masterplan, infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/belfast-move.

Since its introduction the termination of this bus lane has changed on a number of occasions as evidenced in legislation, and most recently, to facilitate mitigating measures linked to Belfast Grand Central Station, including the temporary closure of Durham Street, as well as the relocation and upgrade of the signalised pedestrian crossing at the Europa Hotel, and the reconfiguration of the adjacent footway: legislation.gov.uk/all?title=bus%20lanes%20belfast.

2. The Traffic Signs Manual, Chapter 3, 2019, provides guidance that a bus lane road marking should be terminated approximately 10M before a junction (or at the junction if the minor road is one way towards the major road):

assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c78f895e5274a0ebfec719b/traffic-signs-manual-chapter-03.pdf.

3. No risk assessments, safety reviews, or traffic flow evaluations relating to turning movements from general traffic lanes into junctions are held by the Department for this length of bus lane on Great Victoria Street as there is no opportunity for vehicles to turn left.
4. We are not aware of any “6 metre rule” for entering a bus lane to turn left. However, it is acknowledged any turn left must be made as close as possible and certainly within one vehicle length on approach to any junction. The Enforcement page on NIDirect provides guidance on accessing a bus lane to turn left. [Enforcement of bus lanes and bus-only streets | nidirect](#)
5. As in 4 above.
6. As in 4 above.

Following consideration of the public interest in this case, I attach all information held that is suitable for disclosure to the public. However, I have determined that some of the requested information is not suitable for release and the attached records have been redacted for the following reason, under the exception provided by Reg. 12(5)(d): confidentiality of proceedings.

Whilst there is always a public interest in disclosure of environmental information, to ensure that the public is better informed and to increase transparency in decision-making, the legislation recognises that there will be times where it is necessary to allow public authorities a protection for formal proceedings. In this case proceedings refer to formal meetings and/or negotiations involving the Department and third parties for which there is a reasonable expectation of confidentiality.

Under the legislation, the information subject to the exception must meet a strict definition of confidentiality. The confidentiality must be provided by law, either by statute or through meeting the Common Law standard. For information to be considered confidential under the Common Law it must be neither trivial nor in the public domain, while it must also have the necessary quality of confidence. Information that has been marked as confidential will not automatically be withheld under this exception.

The attached document, from Hastings Hotels, has been redacted to remove personal details and points of contact.

The information provided has therefore been redacted under the exception provided under EIR by Regulation 12(5)(d): confidentiality of proceedings. I am satisfied that the public interest is best served by withholding this information at this time.

I hope that you will understand the reasons behind the Department's decision.

I've also included a link below to a response given in January 2016 by the then Minister, Michelle McIlveen MLA, to Mr Fearghal McKinney, regarding concerns about vehicles being fined for entering the bus lane on Great Victoria Street:

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/printquestionsummary.aspx?docid=254125>

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