



Historic Environment Division

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Your reference:

Our reference:

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Dear *Mr. De Nae*

Re- Publication of Synopsis to Ecclesiastical Exemption Consultation

I wish to record my thanks to you for responding to the consultation on Ecclesiastical Exemption and to let you know that a synopsis of the views expressed, and a Ministerial written statement, has now been published on the Department's website. You can access this information at: www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/ecclesiastical-exemption-synopsis-responses-consultation.

122 responses were received and, while there was widespread support for removal of the exemption among groups concerned with the protection of the historic environment and among the majority of district councils (seven of which responded) almost all of the responses from churches (the majority of respondents) were opposed.

Following consideration of the responses, the Minister has decided that the exemption will remain in place. His written statement explains that, moving forward, the Department will work closely with those responsible for listed places of worship, and with district councils, to support effective decision making. This will take two forms:

- For larger organisations, the Department for Communities (DfC) will put in place partnering arrangements, governed by a Memorandum of Understanding or similar, which will enable structured engagement with governing bodies at a Northern Ireland level. This engagement will review developing best practice and agree appropriate changes to relevant guidance and processes.
- For smaller organisations and individual self-governing places of worship, the Department will provide appropriate guidance on changes to places of worship which enhances the advice already available.

This approach will allow the issues raised to be addressed and allow worshipping communities to adapt their buildings in response to their mission whilst taking account of architectural considerations. Thank you again for your contribution to this process.

Yours sincerely



Iain Greenway
Director Historic Environment Division