



To: DfI Roads Eastern Division - Divisional Manager

**RE: Coach Congestion at Glengall Street, Belfast City Centre**

In response to concerns raised by our members, Linen Quarter BID have been collating information on road infrastructure issues impacting hotels and large entertainment venues within the District. Several preliminary discussions have already been held with the Department. More recently, the heavily congested state of Glengall Street has been raised as an issue of significant concern – in particular, coach/bus drop-offs and parking – and we would like to bring this to your attention.

At present, there are twenty-nine daily coach departures scheduled to arrive/depart at Glengall Street, but only one designated bus stop to manage the traffic. Due to conflicting departure times, some coaches inevitably end up in designated loading bays. Although these spaces are not assigned to specific businesses, they are of critical importance to the operations of the Grand Opera House and the Europa Hotel. These organisations are two major landmark businesses whose smooth functioning are not only important to Belfast, but to the wider region.

With a recent increase in scheduled departures of Dublin bound coaches (including the recently added Dublin Express services), the level of congestion on Glengall Street has now reached an unsustainable level. The increased amount of daily coach departures also has a knock-on effect on operations of businesses located on the street, with entrances to businesses often blocked, and a noticeable increase in litter and public urination. Complaints have been lodged with the coach operators directly, but no action has been taken.

The congestion, and resulting conflict between road users, will become even more problematic when the new Belfast Grand Central station opens in 2025. This will significantly increase the number of people who use Glengall Street as a pedestrian route to and from the City Centre. An increase in pedestrian movements heightens public concern around safety, as there is a greater risk of collisions between coaches and people taking place. This concern is particularly poignant around the Glengall Exchange and Belfast Central Mission premises, which are frequented by vulnerable children and adults due to the presence of a nursery (up to 60 children daily) and counselling services (100+ users a week).

Glengall Street features a variety of long-established businesses, with historical ties to their locations, which contribute significantly to the Belfast economy. For example, the Grand Opera House attracts 300,000 visitors a year, while the collective economic benefit of business in the street is more than £30m. As these businesses cannot be moved, it would be more prudent to relocate

current Dublin bound coach operators to an alternative pick-up location. This will reduce congestion and improve the overall appeal of Glengall Street as a pedestrian route.

LQ BID appreciate the importance of the services that intercity coach operators such as AirCoach and Dublin Express provide and do not contest that such services need to be appropriately accommodated within the City Centre. However, we believe that alternative locations (e.g. the Hope Street slip-off road next to the Lincoln building) might be more suitable.

We would hereby request that the Department conducts a traffic survey to appraise the level of congestion on Glengall Street and considers alternative pick-up locations for the Dublin-bound coach operators. We would also be grateful if the Department can provide information about the process of granting intercity coach licenses and assigning associated pick-up locations.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher McCracken

Manging Director, Linen Quarter BID