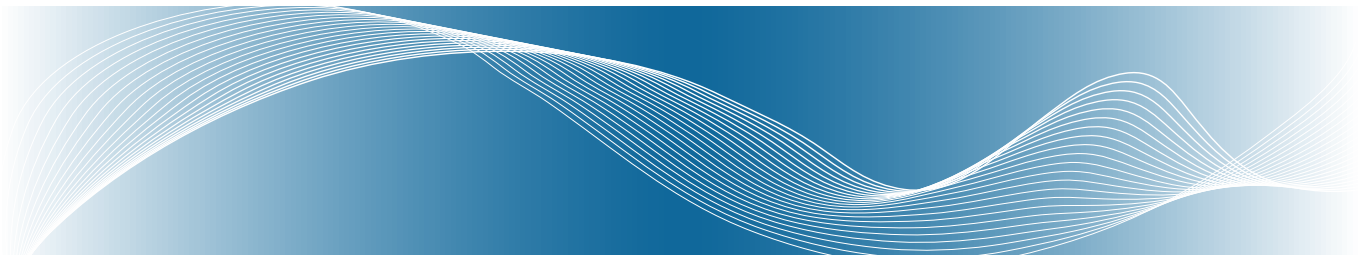




Driver & Vehicle
Licensing
Agency

Future of vehicle registration and licensing services in Northern Ireland



Summary of responses
March 2014

Introduction

The Department for Transport is responsible for vehicle registration and licensing throughout the UK.

In GB these services are delivered by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) in Swansea and currently through 39 local offices throughout GB. In Northern Ireland (NI), delivery of these services is outsourced to the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA), which has a centre of operations in Coleraine and eight local offices throughout NI.

The DVA provides a range of vehicle registration and licensing services to motorists in NI but due to differences in IT systems and business processes, a number of services that are available in GB are not currently available in NI. For example, NI motorists are currently unable to license their vehicles online and have only limited services available at Post Office® branches. In order to address this, the Department for Transport and the DVLA is proposing changes in the way these services are delivered to NI motorists.

The Department for Transport and the DVLA wants all NI motorists to have access to the full range of services that are already available to motorists across the rest of the UK. We believe the proposals outlined in the consultation will accomplish this while also achieving significant efficiency savings every year.

The plans

The proposal at the heart of the consultation is to modernise the way vehicle registration and licensing services are delivered in NI and put these on a par with services available to motorists in GB. If adopted, the proposals will ensure that the changing needs of both public and commercial customers in NI are met.

More services will be available at the Post Office® and there will also be a wider range of electronic services available to NI motorists. The proposals are consistent with the Government's drive to ensure that public services are 'Digital by Default' and will save the UK taxpayer £12m every year. The proposals may result in the closure of a network of dedicated offices in NI through which current services are provided.

If the proposals are adopted, the following service improvements would be offered to all NI motorists:

- a) Access to electronic vehicle licensing services, which will allow NI motorists to license their vehicle or declare it off the road either online or via an automated telephone service, 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- b) Increased range of transactions available over the counter at around 150 Post Office® branches throughout NI including:
 - i. Licensing a vehicle when changes need to be made to the vehicle registration certificate, e.g. change of address.
 - ii. Relicensing a vehicle when the reminder form is not available.
 - iii. Change of taxation class when a vehicle is being relicensed (for example from 'Disabled' to a duty paying tax class).
 - iv. Heavy Goods Vehicle relicensing and relicensing for reduced pollution vehicles.
 - v. Issue of duplicate tax discs.
- c) Introduction of a retention service for NI vehicle registration numbers. NI customers will be able to hold a 'personalised' registration number separate from a vehicle for the future assignment to another vehicle.

- d) A telephone service for applications for a duplicate vehicle registration document.
- e) The transfer of 'personalised' number plates between GB and NI vehicles will be simplified.
- f) NI customers will be able to purchase NI and GB personalised registration numbers through a harmonised sales scheme. This will be delivered online and via auctions.
- g) The administrative process when vehicles move between GB and NI will be streamlined.

The consultation

The consultation, called 'Future of Vehicle Registration and Licensing Services in Northern Ireland', was launched on 17 July and ran for eight weeks, ending on 11 September.

The objective of the consultation was to invite views from the public which can be used to develop the proposals if necessary and to identify any consequences of the potential changes.

The consultation document and an electronic reply form were available on the GOV.UK website. The DVLA also provided email and postal addresses as alternative response channels.

During the consultation period, DVLA officials held workshops with a number of businesses and stakeholders to answer questions and to encourage them to engage with the consultation process.

The consultation was based around the following questions, although responses via freeform emails, letters and from those that chose to channel their views via their MP or Ministers were also included:

- Question 1: Do you have any comments on the proposals outlined in this consultation document or its potential impact?
- Question 2: Do you have any other proposals or suggestions which could help improve the delivery of vehicle registration and licensing services for NI motorists, while at the same time reducing costs?

The consultation also sought the views from respondents on the associated documentation and asked the following question:

- Question 3: If you have comments on any of the associated documentation please use the box below.

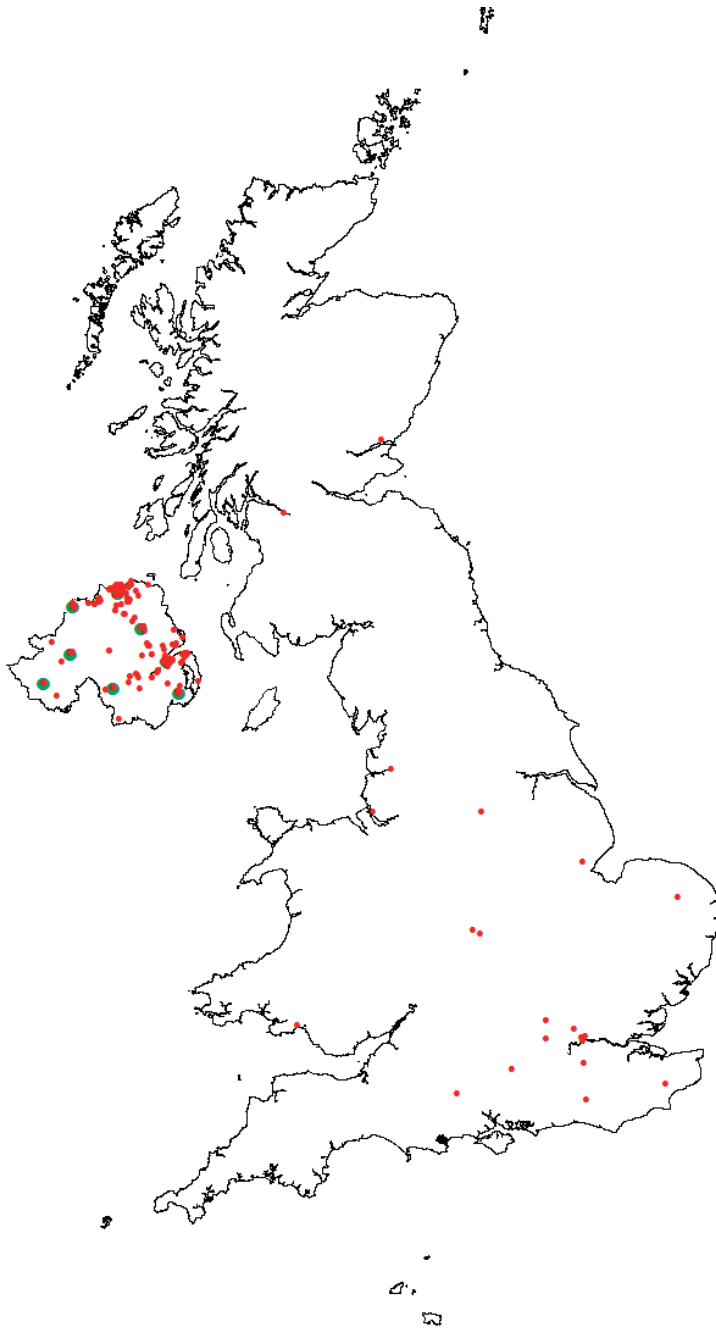
Ministers and the DVLA would like to thank everyone who contributed to this consultation.

Response distribution

The blue dots on the map below show the origin of the responses that had valid postcodes.

Of the 354 responses, 254 postcodes were provided and are included in the distribution map below.

The large green dots show the location of the eight DVA local offices and the DVA's headquarters in Coleraine.



County	% of responses
Antrim	2.6%
Ards	2.1%
Armagh	1.3%
Ballymena	5.1%
Ballymoney	5.1%
Banbridge	0.4%
Belfast	9.8%
Carrickfergus	1.3%
Castlereagh	2.1%
Coleraine	31.6%
Cookstown	0.9%
Craigavon	2.6%
Derry	3.0%
Down	2.6%
Fermanagh	1.7%
Larne	0.9%
Limavady	6.4%
Lisburn	2.1%
Moyle	2.6%
Newry and Mourne	0.4%
Newtownabbey	0.9%
North Down	2.6%
Omagh	1.7%
Strabane	0.4%
GB	9.8%

Recognising segments

There were 354 responses to the consultation from a wide cross section of the public, motor trade, MPs, NI Assembly Members and other representative groups. The responses were grouped into ten segments to allow the responses to be analysed in context and to avoid ambiguity.

The ten segments and how they make up the sample are:

Private individuals	155	47.4%
Employees	46	14.1%
Motoring and other businesses	37	11.3%
Elected representatives	30	9.2%
Interest groups & representative organisations	23	7.0%
Local authorities	13	4.0%
Public sector & other government bodies	11	3.4%
Political institutions	6	1.8%
Police	6	1.8%
Staff representatives	2	0.6%

Private individuals are those who responded from a personal point of view and did not stipulate that they were representing or acting on behalf of any other body.

Employees are those who have identified themselves as employees of either the DVA or the DVLA but were replying as an individual and not representing others.

Motoring and other businesses responded on behalf of their company. These range from hauliers and motor dealers to sellers of personalised number plates and other businesses.

Elected representatives responded on behalf of their constituents and the constituency they represent. They could also be expressing their personal views on the proposals in the consultation

Interest groups & representative organisations include responses that are representative of a larger group of people. This includes car enthusiasts' clubs, owners clubs, disability representative groups and organisations representing commercial bodies.

Local authorities respondents are responding on behalf of local authorities of all types.

Public sector & other government bodies represent the views any other public sector and government organisations. These include Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the Home Office and the response received from the Chief Executive of the DVA.

Political institutions responded on behalf of their political party.

Police responded on behalf of the police force or the division they represent.

Staff representatives included a response from the trade union a response endorsed by 306 staff signatures.

Capturing the views

The consultation sought the public's views through three questions. However, respondents often wished to express their views outside of the framework that the questions provided. Some respondents left no comments, others used the questions as the basis for a fuller response while others wrote freeform responses that did not follow the questions at all. All responses were assigned a unique reference number and this number is retained through all of the analysis, and will be used when referencing quotes and sectors.

To be able to capture the views of the respondents across such a varied range of responses, each response had to be read individually and a matrix of points, issues, concerns, thoughts and feelings was derived. This was done by adding categories as and when they appeared through the responses. Where a response raised something that had been brought up in other responses, an 'X' was placed in that column. Where a response raised something that had not been raised previously, a new column was created to capture that point.

This method enabled issues to be quantified, the most common themes, thoughts and concerns to be highlighted and helped to show what was motivating people to take the time to respond to the consultation.

There was no limit as to how many Xs could be inserted from one response. Some responses only raised one point, and did this so concisely that it only had a single X. Some more comprehensive responses raising multiple points had over 40 Xs. The average was around seven.

No weighting was applied to any response. All responses and individual points made in those responses were given equal merit, whether it was from an organisation representing thousands of members, or from a private individual expressing a personal opinion.

This was because the consultation was designed to capture people's views and the DVLA wanted to ensure that any decisions taken would not be based on or influenced by a simple 'vote' of numbers. With this in mind, weighting a response offered no benefit to the decision making process but may have led to lesser noted points being diluted.

Each of the categories have been defined in Annex A (Summary Of Responses Category Definition). This has taken each of the category headings and provided three quoted examples from the consultation responses to demonstrate the element of the response that would have invoked an X in that column.

Executive summary

There were 354 individual responses to the consultation. When analysed, one of these was excluded as it was a response to a different consultation that had recently been conducted by the Driving Standards Agency.

Of the remaining 353 responses, there were a number of duplicate submissions. These duplicates were removed to give a final figure of 327 unique responses to the consultation.

The majority of respondents were against the proposals set out in the consultation document, with 73% suggesting they were against the proposals or stating that they wanted things to stay as they are. Of the rest, 13% of respondents agreed with the proposals, 3% agreed if certain conditions could be met while the remaining 11% outlined both pros and cons to the proposal without stating their preference.

An e-petition has also been created calling on the Prime Minister and the Government to revisit the proposals outlined in the consultation. This has currently attracted approximately 1,200 signatures.

The largest concern overall, which was expressed by 51% of respondents, was the detrimental effect the proposal would have on employment in NI. These responses cited concerns ranging from NI's historical reliance on public sector jobs to the disproportionate multiplier effect.

The concern regarding job losses can be further qualified, as just over 44% of respondents illustrate the detrimental effect job losses will have on the economy of both Coleraine locally and the on the wider NI economy. Approximately one in five respondents commented that they were either pro-online services or would like to be able to use the online relicensing service or the driving licence online service.

Further concerns were raised about a potential reduction in quality of service that NI motorists can expect from centralisation, with 36% stating that they were concerned about the loss of the service currently provided by the DVA and 27% saying they thought that service would be poorer as a result of centralisation.

Just under one-fifth of respondents wanted the DVA to be given additional work, or for enough work for the DVA staff to be transferred from the DVLA to NI.

Private individuals

Private individuals made up close to half of the responses to the consultation. Of this group, 62% said they were against the proposal or stated that they wanted the services to remain as they are. One in five of the respondents in this category did not provide any comments about the proposals in the consultation.

Just under half of the responses from private individuals raised concerns about job losses. Many of these cited Coleraine's dependence on public sector jobs. This concern was further qualified with over one-third of respondents stating that they felt that the loss of jobs would have a detrimental effect on Coleraine particularly but also for the rest of NI.

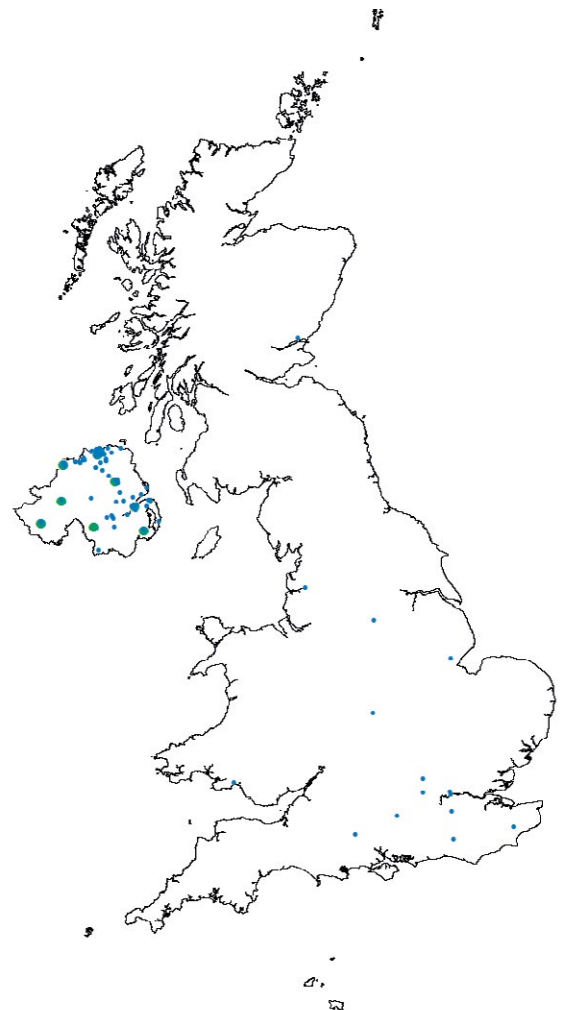
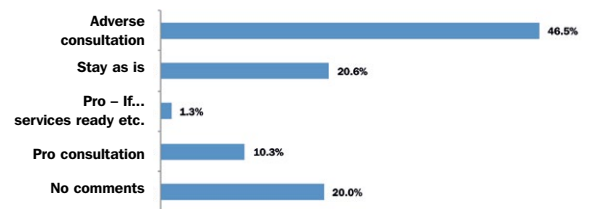
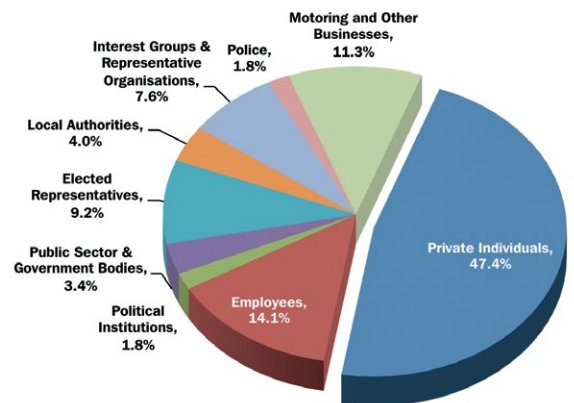
10 – “Coleraine will become a ‘ghost town’ it is badly affected at present, never mind if the jobs move to Swansea. With redeploying staff, it will mean the money will be taken out of the town affecting other businesses etc.”

Concerns were also expressed about the detrimental effect respondents felt that centralisation will have on the customer service provided to motorists. Just under one-third of respondents said that the DVA currently provides a very high standard of service and approximately a quarter suggested that centralisation will result in poorer customer service.

47– “I believe that we will no longer get the great service or customer care which we are currently used to at present. I do not have any confidence in sending important documents away to Swansea as I know for a fact that many things have been lost when sent there.”

Respondents clarify their concern about the impact on customer service, drawing on issues around digital exclusion. Respondents expressed concern that those who do not have access to an online channel, those with learning difficulties and the older generation will be disadvantaged by centralisation and will lose a service channel that they prefer. Approximately one-fifth of respondents state that face to face is their preferred channel for conducting their business with the DVA.

However, approximately the same percentage (19%), said they would welcome online services. Comments regarding access to online vehicle licensing and the ability to change driving licence details online were seen as benefits from the introduction of new channels.



Top ten points raised:

1. Impact on local jobs
2. Impact on local economy
3. Loss of good local customer service
4. Poorer customer service from centralisation
5. Prefer/pro face to face
6. Digital exclusion
7. Transfer work/jobs from DVLA to DVA
8. Offended by reference to religious bias
9. Loss of knowledgeable staff
10. Pro Online

12– “This is long overdue and is to be welcomed. The ability to re-license online will be very beneficial.”

The consultation also asked an additional question seeking respondents’ views on the supporting documentation that was provided. Just over one in ten responses highlighted their concern over the inclusion of a paragraph in the Equality Analysis which had been interpreted as saying that centralisation would remove the potential for religious bias in the delivery of vehicle services in NI.

In addition to respondents’ concerns about the loss of good customer service, concerns were also raised about the loss of knowledgeable, expert staff with 12% mentioning this. In addition, approximately one in 10 responses mentioned that an intermediary would not have the same level of skills and expertise to adequately satisfy NI motorists.

41– “...we fear that the Post Office® network here is simply not equipped to deal with this work and the waiting times for relicensing will be severely compromised.”

Of the respondents in this category, 15% mentioned that they would like to see additional work brought to NI in the event of centralisation to replace the work lost. Suggestions include transferring enforcement or cherished transfer work to staff in NI.

Employee

This category of respondents includes all those who specifically identified themselves as an employee of either the DVA or DVLA but were replying as an individual and not representing others.

There were 46 responses in this category. Of these, 23 were opposed to the proposals in the consultation, eight wanted services to stay as they are, one respondent was supportive of the proposals and 11 did not comment.

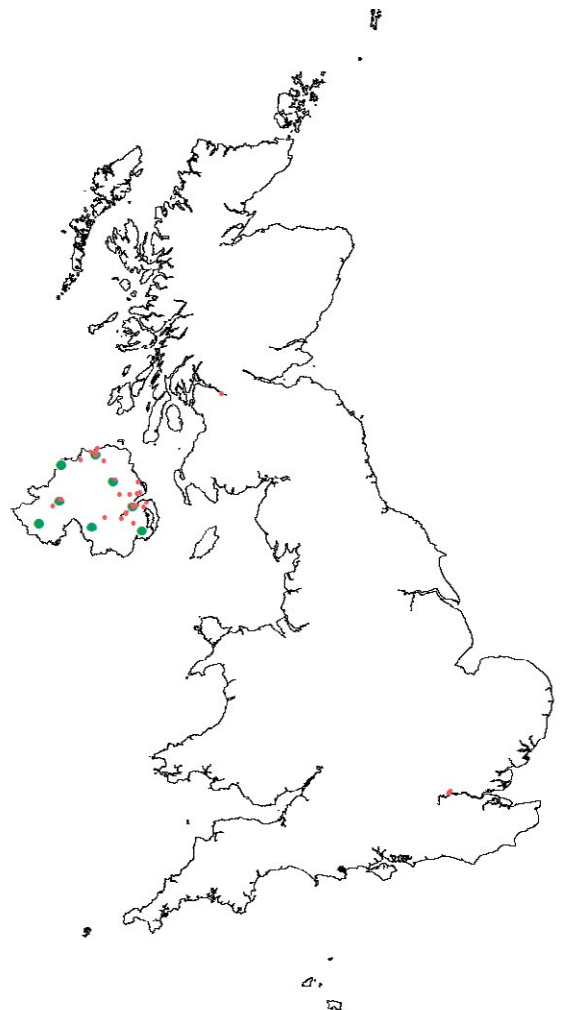
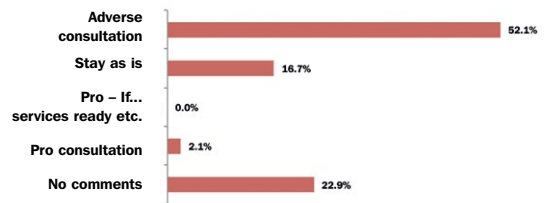
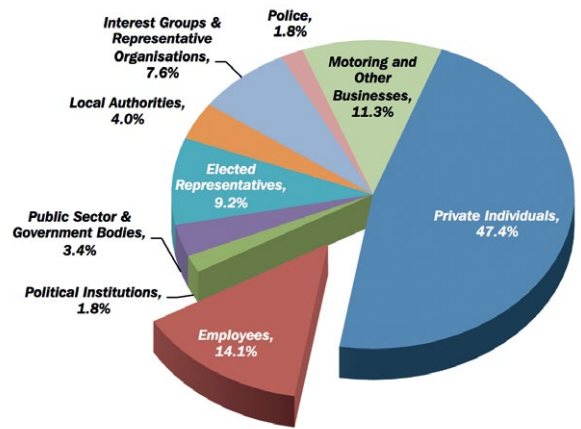
The reasons for this group not agreeing to the proposal in the consultation are very much focused on the impact on the local economy, society and jobs. Customer needs followed closely in the concerns expressed. The top concerns expressed by this group are split evenly between customer services and local economy, society and jobs.

The greatest concern to this group, with 26 of the 46 respondents mentioning it, was the impact on the local economy. This concern focused greatly on the impact on Coleraine and the businesses that may benefit from trade from DVA staff and other passing trade that the DVA office attracts. This was mentioned by 17% of employees who stated their concern for the knock on effect on the private sector.

The second greatest concern expressed, with exactly half of the responding employees mentioning it, was unease around the impact on local jobs.

18 – “I feel that this will have a definite impact on the work force in DVLNI – Where are we going to be placed? – it will also have a detrimental effect on the Coleraine area – local shops and businesses will be greatly effected with the loss of so many jobs in the area.”

34 – “I think the whole process to Swansea is going to have a severe impact on the people of Northern Ireland, and will be devastating economic blow to the country as a whole, especially the north west of the country which has already been badly hit by job losses.”



Top ten points raised:

1. Impact on local economy
2. Impact on local jobs
3. Loss of good local customer service
4. Transfer work/jobs from DVLA to DVA
5. Poorer customer service from centralisation
6. Digital exclusion
7. Prefer/pro face to face
8. Concern impact on local society
9. Knock on effect for private sector
10. Loss of knowledgeable staff

While the local economy and jobs were clearly high amongst the concerns of respondents in this group, employees also indicated concerns around customer service. Just under quarter of the responses from employees focused concern on the potential loss of good customer service. These concerns were expressed from concerns for customers and uncertainty that alternative options would deliver the same standards. The responses demonstrate a detailed knowledge of their customers and the services they require.

184 – “DVANI are doing a tremendous job in providing fact-to-face facilities in all six counties in Northern Ireland. Please don’t let us become another ‘faceless’ government body.”

The concern for customer service was again apparent with just over a fifth of respondents registering their concern around the potential diminishing of customer service if services were centralised at Swansea. A further one-fifth of employees mentioned concerns for certain customer groups becoming digitally excluded and recognising the value of face to face communication.

222 – “DVA has an outstanding reputation for the delivery of an excellent service to its customers and as a result of the integration I feel the public will be receiving a lower standard of service from DVLA as it will take much longer to respond to any applications or problems the public may have.”

It is important to note that almost a quarter of employees expressed that they felt additional work and/or jobs should be transferred to NI from the DVLA.

Motoring & other businesses

This category accounted for just over one in ten of the total number of responses. The businesses represented in this category range from fleet operators to motor dealers, sellers of personalised number plates to local businesses. Of the respondents in this category, 57% were not in favour of the proposal or wanted the services to remain as they are.

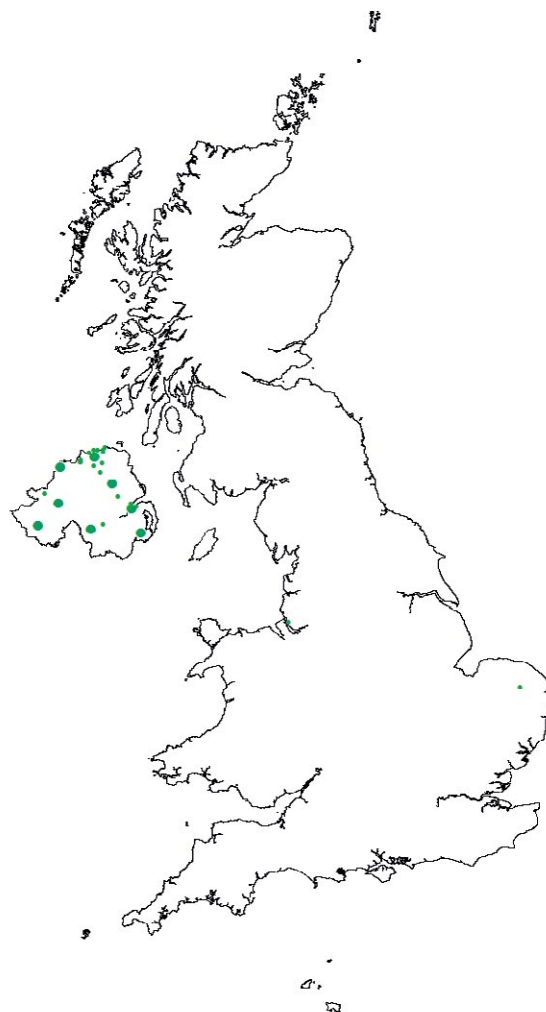
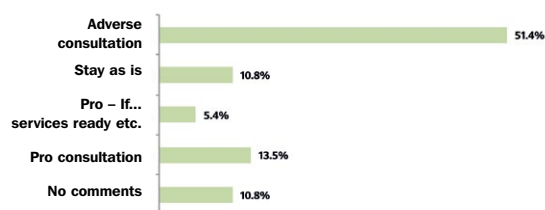
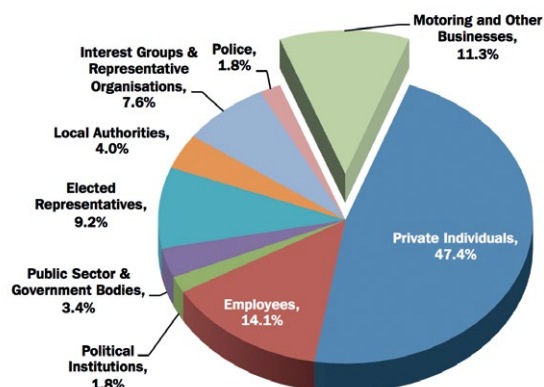
The biggest reasons for the objections of this group follow the trend seen throughout the responses to the consultation – that the loss of jobs will have a detrimental effect on NI. Nearly half of the respondents in this category mentioned this concern. Just under one quarter also mentioned the adverse effect the job losses will have on the local economy, citing particular concern over the knock on effect that will be seen by small local businesses in Coleraine specifically.

16 – “Coleraine are not in a position to rebalance towards the private sector but rather, as I fear will be proved true if this proposal goes ahead, this will inevitably send the private sector here into further decline and set the town back many years by removing one of only a couple of employers with more than 50 staff.”

Over one-third of this category expressed concerns that they will lose the good customer service they currently receive from the DVA. They also believe that centralisation will result in poorer customer service.

The reasons this group believes they will receive poorer customer service include the prospect of longer turnaround times, with nearly a quarter of respondents mentioning this. Approximately one in five of these businesses stated that the transaction they are most concerned about is cherished transfers. This is a particular issue as over one-third of the businesses in this category said they were concerned that any delays from centralisation may inhibit their ability to trade efficiently and cost effectively.

164 – “The inevitable delays that are going to be caused will without doubt lead to vehicles not being able to be used until long distance, or incorrectly processed, paperwork issues are resolved resulting in loss of business, loss of profits, and possible loss of jobs.”



Top ten points raised:

1. Impact on local jobs
2. Loss of good local customer service
3. Impact on business due to delays from centralisation
4. Impact on local economy
5. Longer turnaround times from centralisation
6. Poorer customer service from centralisation
7. Knock on effect for private sector
8. Cherished transfer delays from centralisation
9. Prefer/pro face to face
10. Pro online

Approximately 14% of the respondents mentioned that they preferred face to face channels to deal with their requests, specifically mentioning they felt they received poor customer service from the DVLA's call centre. One in ten also mentioned the length of time it takes to get through to someone to speak to. This is further qualified by the fact that one in ten respondents in the category believe that the DVLA will be overburdened by the centralisation proposals.

126 – “The few times in the past that I have dealt through Swansea, it took an eternity to resolve the issues raised. Having a local motor tax office makes life so much easier for all concerned, and cuts out an age of waiting time. Even trying to get to speak to someone in Swansea is near on impossible.”

However, one-fifth of the respondents also mentioned they felt they would benefit from online services and that they would like online services in NI. Specifically they felt that the online relicensing service and the ability to change driver and keeper details online was a positive step.

337 – “This on-line system should have been available for all to be able to tax/sorn vehicles, view information relating to cost of tax disc/CO₂ emission as it does today in the UK this would improve efficiency for leasing companies to manage this process today as this information is not provided accurately in order to manage the taxation process and causes vehicles to not have tax discs ready for when they have expired.”

Elected representatives

This group accounted for 9% of the responses to the consultation. Elected representatives are defined as those respondents that are replying in their capacity as a Member of Parliament, Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly or a local authority councillor.

This group had the largest proportion of negative responses to the proposals with every respondent stating that they were either against the proposals or stating that they wanted the services to remain as they are.

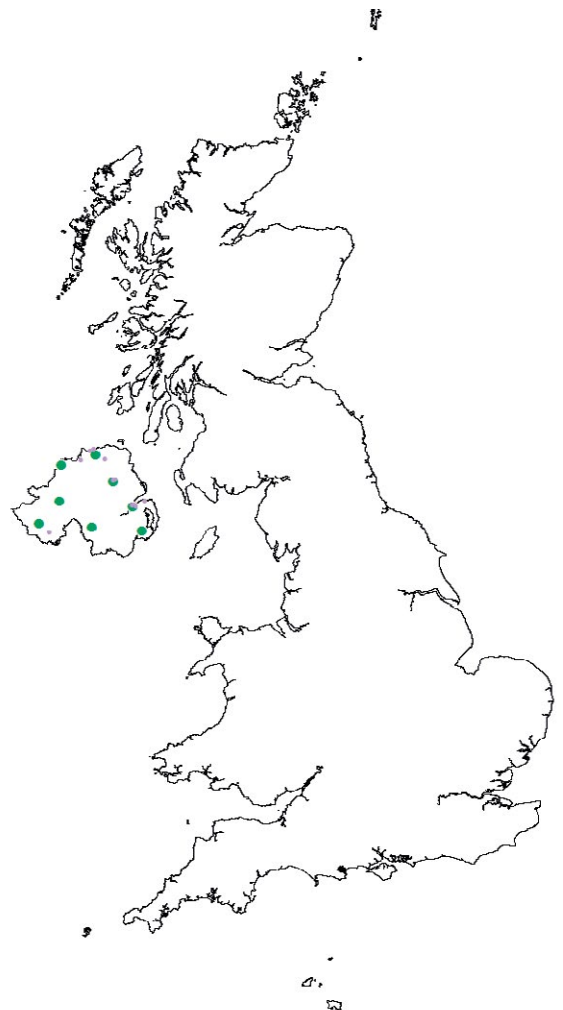
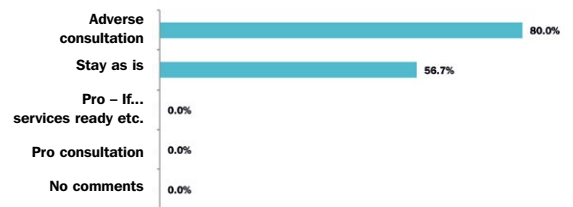
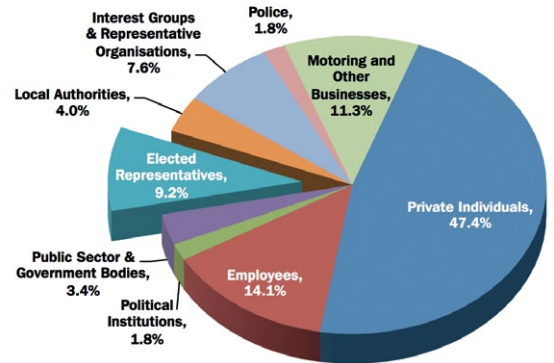
Every respondent also said that they were concerned about the detrimental effect the loss of jobs would have on the area, drawing specific attention to the disparity due to the multiplier effect. They also furthered these sentiments by illustrating the direct impact this would have on the local economy, citing evidence gathered from a report published by Oxford Economics.

269 – “An analysis of Oxford Economics suggest that the cost of these job losses could amount to between £1.1m and £2.3m in job-seekers allowance payments over a year, as well as £3.4m in lost tax revenue: a total cost of £5.5m fiscally to HM Treasury. This offsets the gross saving of £12.2m of centralisation of vehicle registration and licensing to the UK government.”

Nearly half of the respondents in this category also mentioned their concern that the removal of these jobs and the work from NI was contrary to the investment deal as agreed by the UK Government to increase the economic prosperity of NI.

Nearly half of respondents in this category were concerned that historically there had been a significant amount of under investment in the infrastructure in NI.

278 – “Due to the lack of investment into this IT system by DVLA, customers have not seen an increase in service. The IT system in Britain which has received the necessary investment is able to support online and telephone delivery channels for customers and has been linked to the post office. Such services are absent in Northern Ireland due to inadequate funding by DVLA.”



Top ten points raised:

1. Impact on local jobs
2. Impact on local economy
3. Loss of good local customer service
4. Poorer customer service from centralisation
5. Transfer work/jobs from DVLA to DVA
6. Reduced channel choice
7. Loss of knowledgeable staff
8. Improve NI IT/DVLA lack of investment in NI IT
9. Alternative proposals not fully explored
10. Prefer/pro face to face

In response to these issues, nearly three quarters of the respondents said that they would like additional work for DVA staff. One in ten further qualified this stating that they wished for DVA staff to have access to the DVLA's records in order to conduct additional work.

The vast majority also felt that the service provided to NI motorists would suffer, citing the DVA's customer service record and the knowledge and expertise DVA staff have of NI's vehicle registration and licensing procedures. It was also suggested by 60% of the respondents that there would be a reduction in channel choice as a result of the proposals outlined in the consultation.

279 – “Centralisation of services in Swansea would mean lower standards of service and the removal of choice for the customers.

The benefits of DVA's exemplary record of delivering very high standards of service would be lost to customers.”

This group also felt that many of Northern Ireland's motorists believe that the face to face channel offered by the DVA's regional offices is their preferred option. Approximately a quarter of respondents mentioned concerns about those people who would not be ready for an online channel. Around half of the respondents in this category were concerned that the alternative proposals were not fully explored with some suggesting that other options should be considered.

281 – “It is the view... that alternative proposals that have not been considered fully by DVLA include the option for DVA in Northern Ireland continuing to deliver vehicle licensing to local motorists or, if centralisation takes place, having work for 300 staff transferred to Northern Ireland from Swansea.”

Interest groups & representative organisations

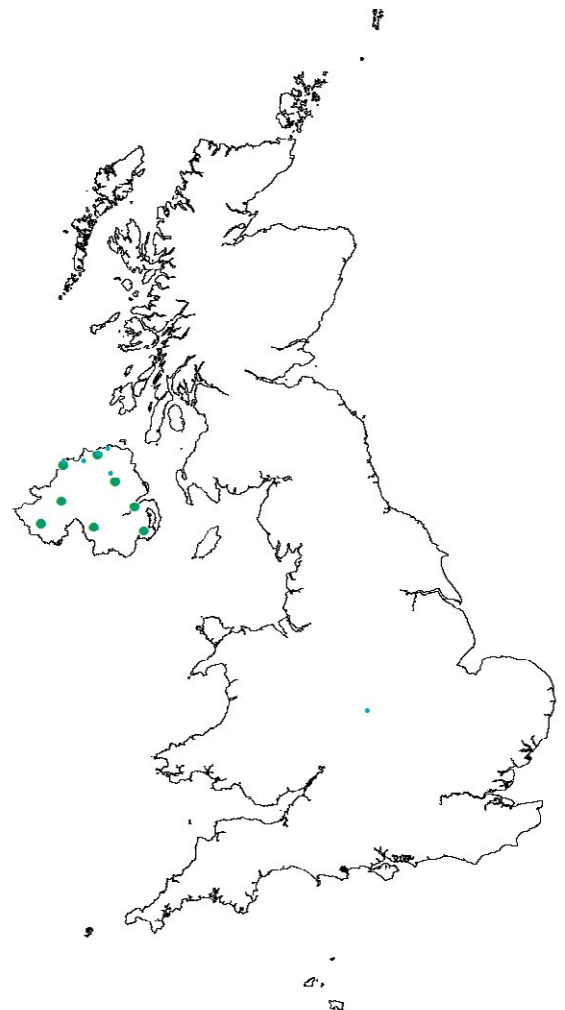
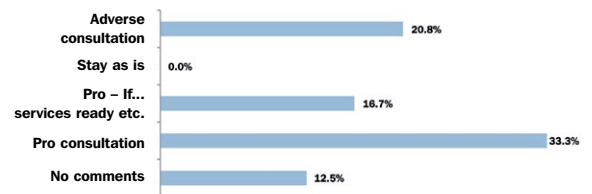
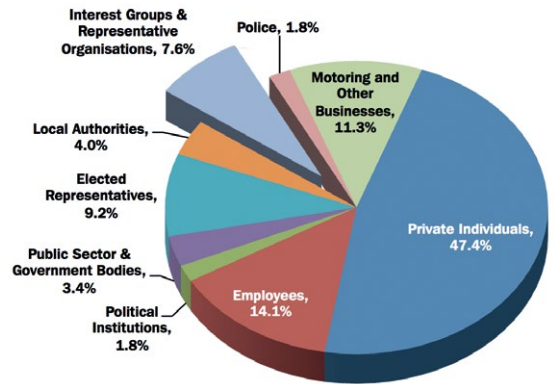
This group is made up of the most diverse range of customers and includes car clubs, owners clubs, disability and carers’ action groups and representatives of commercial organisations. The majority of this group were supportive of the proposals, with over half of respondents either fully or partly supporting the proposed changes.

Respondents in this group were in favour due to their support for online access to transactions and they suggested that access to this service in Northern Ireland brings equality between them and the rest of Great Britain with approximately one third of respondents mentioning it.

290 – “The association recognise the disparity between those services which are available in Northern Ireland compared with the rest of Great Britain and supports the need to provide a single system which will provide parity across the United Kingdom.”

Over one-fifth of the respondents in this category also felt that there would be a positive impact for businesses and they felt that the integration of the NI and GB vehicle and licensing systems was a positive step forward.

267 – “...supports the proposal to modernise the way vehicle registration and licensing services are delivered in Northern Ireland to put these on a par with services available to motorists and industry in Great Britain. Increasing the availability of online services can assist in reducing administrative burdens on business and the motorist, whilst reducing costs and increasing customer experience. In addition, the benefits of a single process for registration and licensing existing across the UK are numerous, providing businesses operating throughout the region with clarity and consistency of service.”



Top ten points raised:

1. Pro online
2. Equality between NI and GB customer services improved
3. Pro-integration of vehicle and driver systems between NI and GB
4. Positive Impact for businesses
5. Impact on local jobs
6. Longer turnaround times from centralisation
7. Not enough Information on specific issues
8. Impact on local economy
9. Digital exclusion
10. Impact on staff if relocated

There were a number of suggestions that followed that were related to centralisation and that there might be longer turnaround times for their transactions. These respondents also mentioned that they required any centralised offering to be suitable for businesses particularly with regard to their ability to conduct bulk transactions. This was qualified with the same percentage of respondents suggesting that the DVLA could not cope with the additional work that centralisation of these services would bring.

There was also the feeling expressed that the consultation document did not include enough information on specific issues that may have a direct impact on the organisations they represent. Specifically additional clarity was asked for in terms of the 1st registration and licensing process particularly concerning the allocation of age related number plates, how businesses would be impacted by the difference in the MoT testing rules and how inspections would be conducted for cherished transfers.

There was a similar level of concern for the detrimental effect the proposals would have on jobs.

Respondents from this category were keen to establish that although they were largely in favour of the proposals they wanted assurance that the replacement services would offer at least the same level of service as they currently receive from the DVA.

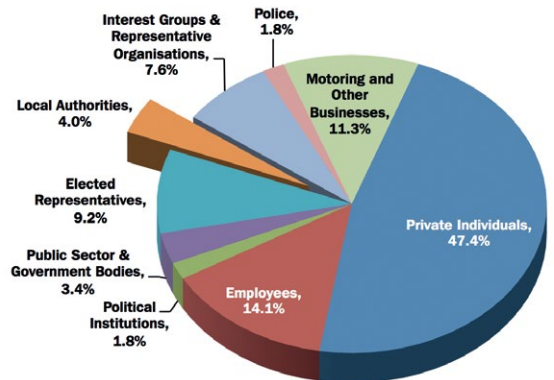
288 – “We only support closure of the local offices in Northern Ireland if alternative facilities are introduced which caters for the number of services currently administered by these offices. The DVLA must ensure that our members in Northern Ireland are not impacted by the proposals where change results in additional burden and extra cost.”

Local authorities

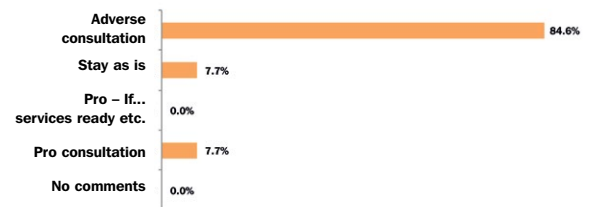
This category showed the highest degree of disapproval for the proposals contained in the consultation. Of the 13 respondents in this category, 11 said that they were against the proposed changes.

The greatest concern expressed by respondents in this category, with 12 of the 13 mentioning it, was the impact on local jobs. This also focused on the multiplier effect and reliance on the public sector employment.

Over half of local authority respondents expressed concerns about the relocation of NI staff, specifically around the travel and transportation of staff and how it will impact on families, with a high percentage of NI staff being female.

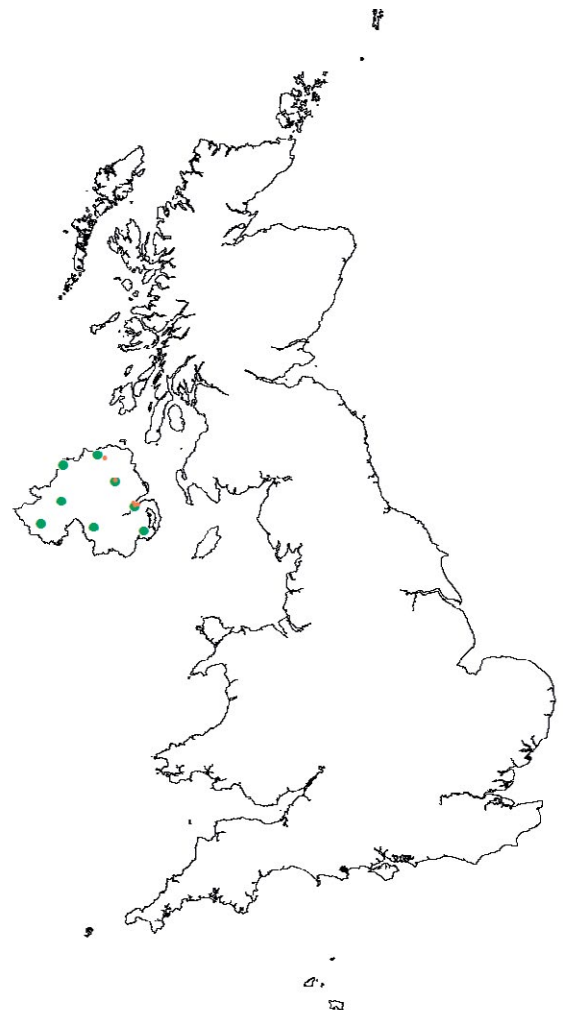


256 – “The proposal as it currently stands will result in the loss of 300 posts in Northern Ireland. As over 70% of the staff are female and choose to work flexible hours the proposal will impact directly on 350 people who work, to some extent, on DVA vehicles licensing. Most of the posts funded by DVLA are located in Coleraine (235) with 7 local offices across Northern Ireland and 11 staff working in the office in Armagh.”



248 – “the DVLA proposals, if implemented, would result in the loss of over 300 jobs in Northern Ireland. Allowing for the multiplier effect resulting from the loss of spending, it is estimated that the aggregate effect would be to remove over 500 jobs and £22m per annum from the local economy.”

Out of the 13 respondents, 11 expressed concerns about the impact on the local economy, feeling that in the current economic climate the loss of 300+ jobs would be detrimental to the NI economy.



Top ten points raised:

1. Impact on local jobs
2. Impact on local economy
3. Loss of good local customer service
4. Poorer customer service from centralisation
5. Loss of knowledgeable staff
6. Age concern/slow adopters of technology/disabled/rural
7. Prefer/pro face-to-face
8. Impact on staff if relocated
9. Different rules for NI – unique issues
10. Digital exclusion

247 – “Analysis by Oxford Economics suggests that the cost could amount to between £1.1m and £2.3m in job-seekers allowance payments over a year, and a further £3.4m in lost tax revenue: a total cost of £5.5m fiscally to HM Treasury. This offsets the gross saving of £12.2m (provided as the full cost of the vehicle licensing budget) of the centralization of vehicle registration and licensing to the UK Government.”

Almost three quarters of this group mention the possible loss of good customer service, with over two thirds stating they felt centralisation would result in poorer customer service. These two very similar statements are directly related indicating that they feel customer service to NI motorists would suffer and that poorer customer service would be the result of centralisation.

84 – “Centralisation of these services to Swansea would result in lower standards of service and the removal of choice for customers. Having to post applications to Swansea, for example, will result in significant inconvenience and delay for customers given the service delivery targets envisaged.”

The DVA has an exemplary record in delivering very high standards of service and they have a sustained record of meeting their key performance and service delivery targets. Indeed they achieve 98% satisfaction rate in a recent customer satisfaction survey.”

Eight of 13 local authority representatives also identified a concern for the loss of knowledgeable staff. This focused on the unique skill set of NI staff. Seven respondents highlighted the staff’s understandings of NI’s unique issues and legal requirements for road use.

Over half of respondents in this category said that they value the face to face contact provided by NI staff. They further qualified this by drawing attention to the possible exclusion of those who are slow to adapt to technology. Just under half of the respondents in this category mentioned digital exclusion as a concern and eight of the 13 mentioned issues around the elderly, disabled and those residing in rural establishments being slow to adapt to technology.

Public sector & government bodies

Public sector & government bodies made up just over 3% of the total number of respondents to the consultation. Nearly half of the respondents in this category were against the proposals outlined in the consultation. However approximately one quarter of this group did not leave any comments.

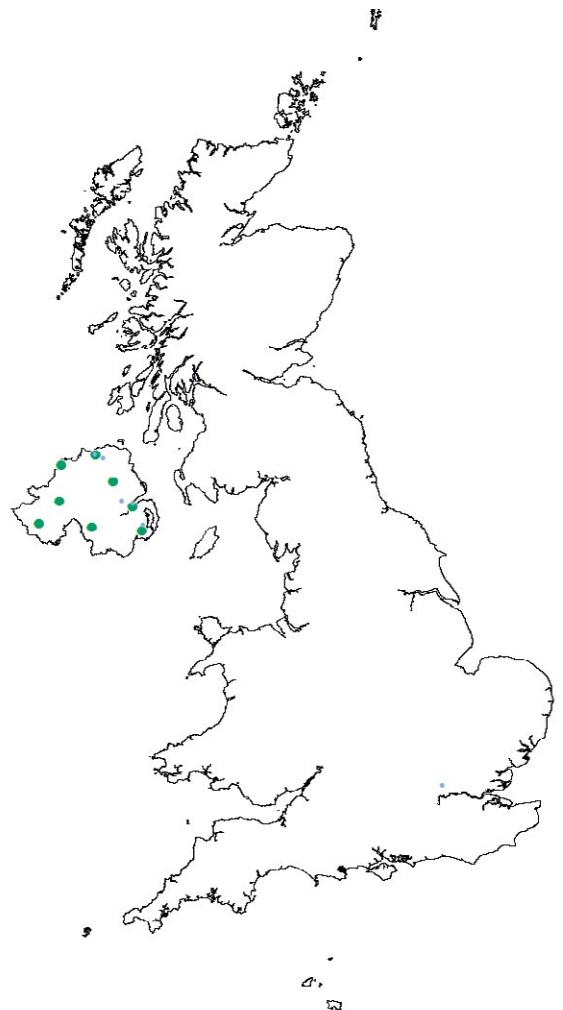
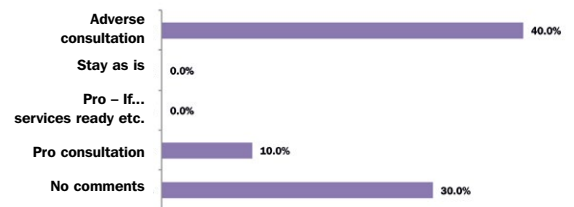
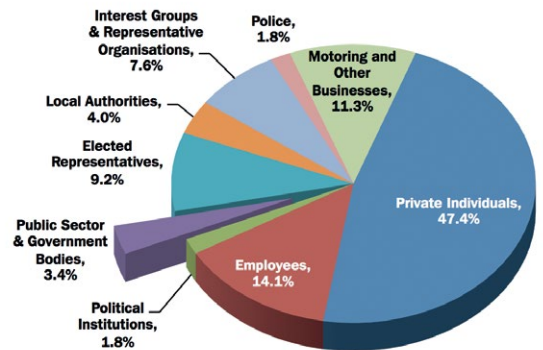
The two biggest concerns identified by this category were the potential loss of jobs and the impact this will have on the local economy. This was mentioned by more than one third and more than one-quarter of respondents respectively.

This category also drew attention to NI's historical reliance on public sector jobs, citing instances of the removal of these jobs from other agencies and departments within NI. Approximately one-fifth also mentioned that the proposed changes would have an adverse effect on society.

139 – “The NI economy is not balanced in terms of the private and public sectors. It is important to recognise that the latter represents c67% of the economy in NI and public sector staff in the North West of NI is absolutely vital to the local economy of the towns that will be significantly and adversely affected by this proposal.”

This group also raised concerns that those people who do not have access to the internet due to their rural location would be disadvantaged by the proposals. These concerns also applied to older motorists in NI.

219 – “The elderly (who may or may not use PCs), workers who find it difficult to tax their vehicles at any other time during a working day prefer to get it achieved at lunch time where it does not impact on their working hours.”



Top ten points raised:

- 1 Impact on jobs
- 2 Impact on economy
- 3 Loss of good local customer service
- 4 Impact on local society
- 5 Future offerings need to maintain current levels of service
- 6 Poorer customer service from centralisation
- 7 Age concern/slow adopters of technology/disabled/rural
- 8 Increased crime – tax evasion/theft
- 9 Alternatives not fully explored
- 10 Consultation not complete – information omitted/misleading

There was also a feeling expressed that NI's motoring public would receive a poorer standard of service from centralisation, particularly as a result of the loss of the good customer service that is currently provided by DVA staff. Just over a quarter of respondents mentioned this.

One-fifth of respondents stated that centralisation would have to offer the at least the same level of customer service to NI motorists.

219 – “In view of DVA’s exemplary track record of providing the highest standards of customer service, it is not at all surprising that customers choose to deal with DVA staff.”

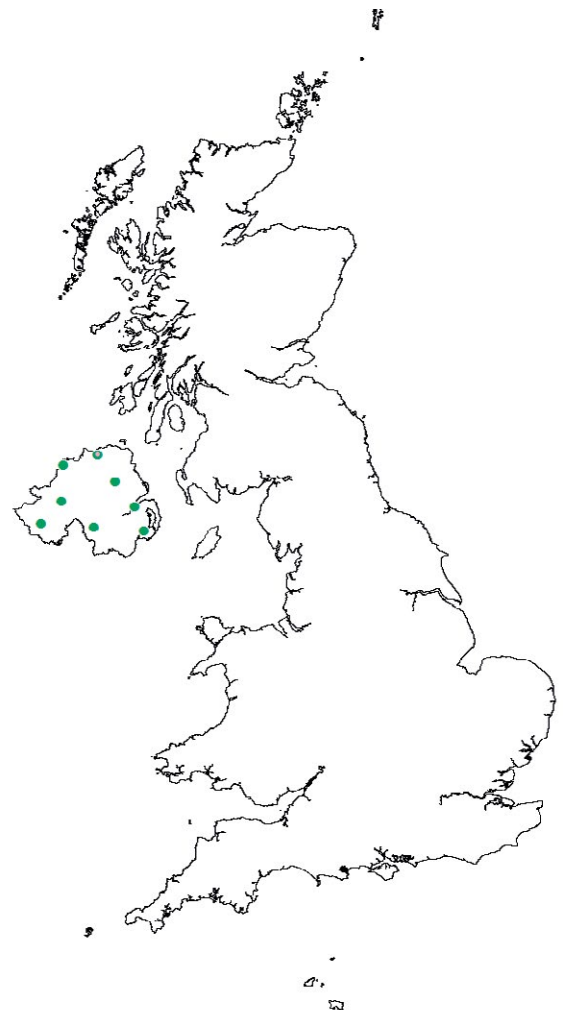
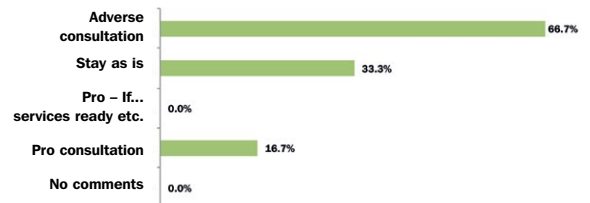
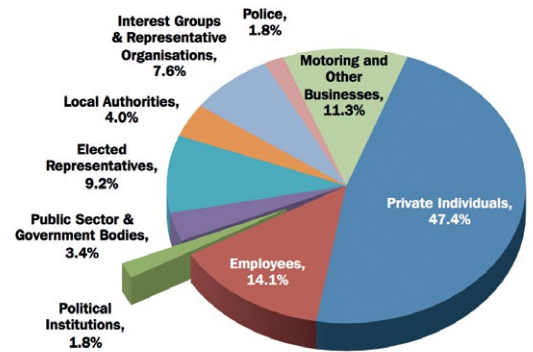
Political institutions

Political Institutions were one of the smallest groups to respond to the consultation. All but one respondent in this category stated they were either opposed to the proposed changes or wanted the services to remain as they were. One respondent in this category stated that they were in favour of the proposed changes.

Five of the six respondents in this category raised concerns about the loss of jobs and many of these cited Coleraine’s dependence on the public sector. This concern was further qualified with an equal amount of respondents stating they were concerned about the impact on the local economy and the detrimental effect it could have on Coleraine. A third of respondents also noted their concern about the relocation of jobs from Coleraine to other areas of NI. Increased travel costs that would be incurred and the impact additional travel time would have for those staff with families or carer’s responsibilities were highlighted as issues.

273 – “The fully funded vehicle licensing work of the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) supports some 300 jobs in Northern Ireland, 235 of which are located on Coleraine. Any proposals to terminate these jobs at this site would have a major economic impact for this area of the North West; an area that has historically low levels of investment. The proposed reduction in staff in various locations across the North will reduce local services and lead to increase economic hardship for those affected and wider community.”

To counteract the impact of job losses, exactly half of respondents in this category mentioned transferring jobs or work to NI from the DVLA. Concerns were also expressed by respondents in this category about the detrimental impact on customer service that they felt the proposed changes would have if implemented. Two thirds of respondents stated that they felt there would be a loss of good customer services to NI motorists. The majority of this category stated that they felt the DVA currently provide a very high standard of service and approximately one-third suggest that centralisation will result in poorer customer service. This may be largely due to the strong feeling of trust in the knowledge and ability of NI staff. Around one-third of responses mentioned this.



Top ten points raised:

1. Impact on local jobs
2. Impact on local economy
3. Loss of good local customer service
4. Transfer work/jobs from DVLA to DVA
5. Alternative proposals not fully explored
6. Equality between NI and GB customer services improved
7. Poorer customer service from centralisation
8. Loss of knowledgeable staff
9. Digital exclusion
10. Impact on staff if relocated

260 – “Service users of the network of DVA offices in Northern Ireland are clearly satisfied with the level of service currently being offered. The DVA offices in Northern Ireland consistently meet and exceed their set targets. Indeed, when compared with turnaround times in Swansea, the DVA in Northern Ireland process applications significantly more swiftly than their GB counterparts. On average, turnaround times are 6 days quicker in Northern Ireland than the equivalent in Swansea.”

Respondents in this category clarified their concerns about the impact on customer service by drawing on issues around digital exclusion. Respondents expressed concerns that those who are not able to access online channels or those with learning difficulties and the older generation will be disadvantaged by centralisation and will lose a service channel that they prefer.

Half of the respondents were concerned that the alternative proposals had not been fully explored and felt that other options with less impact on jobs and the local economy could be given more consideration.

347 – “.... has fears about the future of the local offices, including the 260 DVA posts which are currently located in Coleraine. We believe that is a matter of huge regret that no alternative options have been proposed for this centre.”

Police

Police were one of the smallest groups to respond to the consultation with a total of six responses. Three out of the six agreed with the proposed changes.

One respondent stated they would agree with the proposed changes if they were sure the concerns they had expressed would be addressed. The remaining two responses did not state whether they were for or against the proposed changes.

Aiding vehicle recognition was flagged up as a key issue for the police with half of the responding police force representatives stating a specific concern around this.

253 – “Given the proposed changes, there would appear to be potential for greater provision of information in relation to NI registered vehicles and drivers via the Police National Computer (PNC) system.”

The joint second leading issue raised by respondents in this category, which was mentioned by two of the six respondents, were also relating to aiding vehicle recognition but specifically for driving penalty notices and civil offences.

33 – “Quite often they are not pursued due to the VRM being ‘no trace’ on the PNC and thus avoid prosecution for what are sometimes serious offences.”

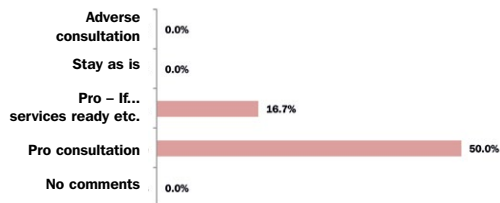
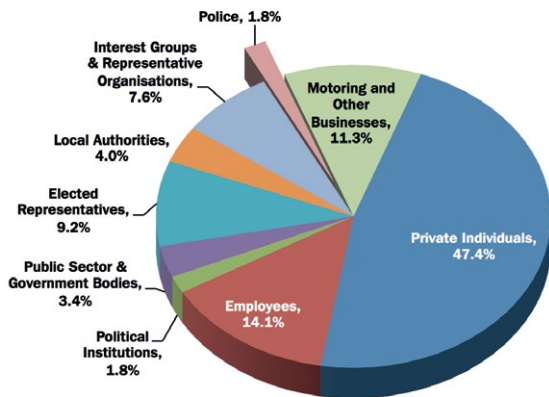
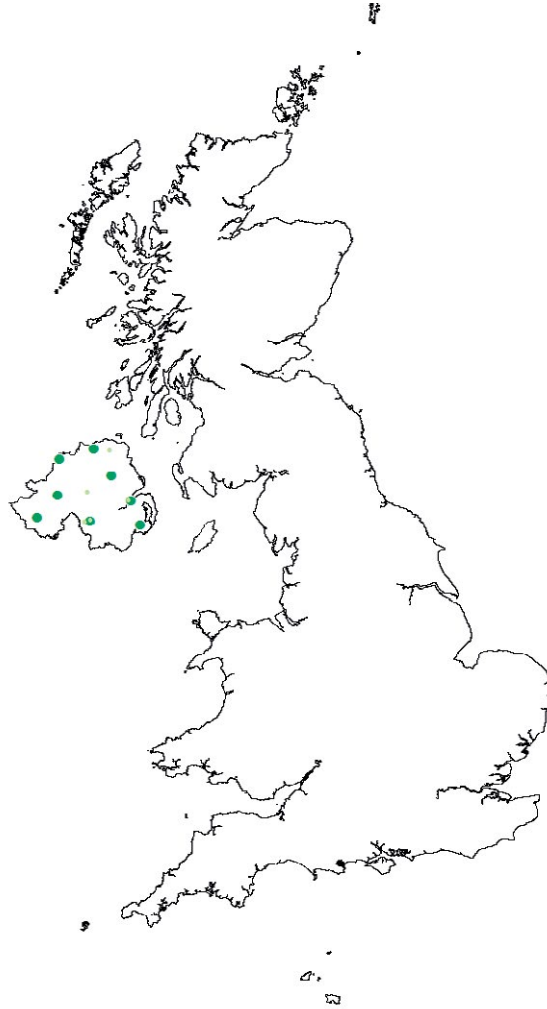
Two of the six respondents also expressed concerns about the loss of the good service they currently receive from DVA staff.

76 – “I believe that they provide a much better service than Swansea who have not provided the same service to me as an investigator.”

346 – “Loss of the personal and dedicated liaison function we currently enjoy with DVA.”

Top points raised:

1. Aiding vehicle recognition for vehicle offences
2. Aiding vehicle recognition for driving penalty notices
3. Aiding vehicle recognition for civil offences
4. Loss of good local customer service



Staff representatives

There were two respondents in this category, both of which provided very comprehensive reviews of the proposals. Both responses were not in favour of the changes and cite the impact on the local jobs and economy of Northern Ireland as major issues for consideration during the decision making process.

274 – “A high proportion of the staff on vehicle licensing, especially in Coleraine, are female (73%) and many are the primary carers for children and other dependents. This is reflected in the high number of part-time workers (20%). Local jobs and the nature of vehicle licensing work have enabled staff in Coleraine to achieve appropriate work/life balances. These opportunities will not be available if staff are re-deployed to Belfast (the most likely outcome of the vehicle licensing work is lost), resulting in a wholly disproportionate impact on families.”

They also raise concerns from a customer perspective stating that centralisation will result in poorer customer service and that the Northern Ireland motorist will lose an excellent, localised, face to face channel to assist them with their transactions. They further qualify this concern drawing attention to their concern that any 3rd party offering would not have the extensive knowledge that the current DVA staff have and that this would ultimately result in poorer customer service and increased burden on DVLA to rectify the errors created.

354 – “DVA continually out performs all other government departments in terms of customer satisfaction of any public service in the UK, indeed DVA are one of only 25 holders of Customer Service Excellence awards in Northern Ireland. DVLA’s proposal for impersonal online lead services supported by Post Office® counter services or via the postal service to Swansea, will equate for NI customers, to a lower standard of service.”

This group question the proposals outlined in the consultation and make note of the Government’s agreement to increase investment in Northern Ireland and that the consultation was contrary to this. They expressed an issue that the consultation was not complete and that further work could have been conducted to explore other options.

274 – “NIPSA believe that further consideration could and should be given to options which would harvest the excellent knowledge and skills of DVA staff.”

Although most of the concerns raised were of a social nature from a staff and customer perspective there were a number of specific issues highlighted, such as, the potential for increased vehicle tax evasion and also some of the Northern Ireland specific rules and regulations that it was felt may not integrate accurately.

354 – “If the current level of proactive detection and prosecution is not protected then there is likely to be a significant increase from the current 0.7% evasion rate toward something of the order of the rates a decade ago.”

