

Appendix I - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template

SECTION 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Name of Public Authority.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

1B. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

The development of a Framework for Rural Policy

1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Developing a | Policy <input type="checkbox"/> | Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> | Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Adopting a | Policy <input type="checkbox"/> | Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> | Plan <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Implementing a | Policy <input type="checkbox"/> | Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> | Plan <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Revising a | Policy <input type="checkbox"/> | Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> | Plan <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Designing a Public Service | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Delivering a Public Service | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Rural Policy Framework for Northern Ireland

1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

The overarching aim for the Draft Rural Policy Framework for NI is: **To create a sustainable rural community where people can work and live.**

1F. What definition of 'rural' is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition).

Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.

Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.

Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

SECTION 2 - Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **2E**.

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The framework has the potential to impact on people who live in rural areas people who work in rural areas, people who operate businesses in rural areas and people who travel to rural areas for the purposes of tourism or leisure through the implementation of policies and programmes implemented under the framework.

2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

The Framework is a rural initiative and will mainly impact on people in rural areas.

2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

Rural Businesses

Rural Tourism

Rural Housing

Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas

Education or Training in Rural Areas

Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas

Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas

Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas

Poverty in Rural Areas

Deprivation in Rural Areas

Rural Crime or Community Safety

Rural Development

Agri-Environment

Other (Please state)

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.

2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.

SECTION 3 - Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**.

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Consultation with Rural Stakeholders | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Published Statistics | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Consultation with Other Organisations | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Research Papers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Surveys or Questionnaires | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Other Publications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below). | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

The development of rural policy objectives for the project were informed by a range of rural research and evidence including ‘Recharging Rural Creating sustainable communities to 2030 and beyond, The Princes Countryside Fund, 2018’, socio-economic research undertaken by the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute, the Northern Ireland Programme for Government Outcomes Delivery Plan 2018-19 and DAERA’s Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework. In November 2018 a stakeholder event was held to identify rural need with the Rural Development Council and over 80 rural stakeholders attendees. In 2018/19 a Rural Stakeholder Forum and Rural Society Project Board were initiated. In June 2019, 5 thematic pillars emanating from the original project objectives were agreed, with the Department establishing a Working Group (WG) for each thematic pillar. WGs included representatives from government, local councils and rural stakeholder organisations. A second stakeholder event was held in January 2020 facilitated by Rural Action with over 125 rural stakeholder attendees. Feedback was obtained with general agreement about the approach including the 5 thematic pillars; 19 priority areas for intervention and next steps.

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?

Informed by a range of rural research and evidence, the original project objectives included: a need to address poor broadband and mobile phone coverage; a need to address poor road and transport networks; a need to improve access to quality job opportunities; a need to find innovative ways to deliver public services; a need to develop rural tourism in sustainable manner; a need to tackle social exclusion and loneliness; and a need to reduce the impact of geographical isolation.

Following further extensive stakeholder engagement, the above objectives were further refined into five key Thematic Pillars as follows:

- To create a rural society where innovation and entrepreneurship flourish
- To maximise the contribution that sustainable rural tourism makes to rural society and to the wider economy and environment
- To reduce loneliness and social exclusion in rural areas, to minimise the impacts of rural isolation and to promote the health and wellbeing of rural dwellers
- To increase employment opportunities available to people living in rural areas
- To improve connectivity between rural and urban areas

If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A.

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

SECTION 4 - Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Details of some of the socioeconomic needs considered of people in rural areas are outlined below for each thematic pillar:

- **Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** the 2019 inter-departmental Business Register shows the total number of businesses in NI to be 74,060 with 58% located in rural areas, however turnover in rural areas only accounts for 25% of the NI turnover. Opportunities exist to design bespoke programmes, towards businesses to address rural specific needs relating to groups, sectors or gaps. This pillar recognises the future success of the rural economy is inextricably linked to the capacity of rural businesses to innovate, to identify new opportunities that develop, strengthen and grow our rural economy through championing innovation; and building the capacity and capability of rural communities to engage in innovation/entrepreneurship.
- **Sustainable Tourism:** Over the past decade, NI's tourism industry has experienced healthy growth. However, the DAERA NI Urban Rural Statistics shows total tourism expenditure in 2018 in rural areas was 14%. This thematic pillar recognises that to be successful and sustainable there has to be a synergy between welcoming, involving and satisfying visitors; achieving a profitable and prosperous industry; engaging and benefiting host communities; and protecting and enhancing the local environment.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** This pillar recognises the wider social determinants to health and wellbeing and a need to respond to the specific needs of people living in many different types of rural settlements. The geographic remoteness and associated challenge in accessing services (including lack of access to childcare, broadband, digital skills and transport) is experienced by many rural communities. Difficulty in accessing services may be a source of disadvantage for people in rural communities, with some slipping below the poverty line. There is a clear need to promote rural focussed interventions which target those most at risk of isolation and loneliness.
- **Employment:** Compared to those living in urban areas, people living in rural areas are more likely to be in employment (75% rural/ 67% urban). Access to well-paid employment and a skilled labour force is a key factor in creating thriving rural communities and supporting rural business growth. This pillar recognises that the future sustainability of our rural communities will be dependent upon the development of new ways to increase business starts, generate jobs, increase innovation and encourage export potential.
- **Connectivity:** Rural and urban areas are increasingly linked together and connectivity allows the two to complement each other. The key factor is not to eliminate differences in access times between urban and rural areas, but to ensure that quality services are available within a reasonable travel time and invest in infrastructure to support this. Many parts of rural NI do not have sufficient access to broadband. Only 67% of the rural population has access to superfast broadband, compared to 98% in urban areas. This pillar considers infrastructure (roads and transport links) and connectivity (broadband and mobile coverage) between rural and urban areas and the importance of good connectivity to all aspects of rural life.

SECTION 5 - Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes No If the response is **NO GO TO Section 5C.**

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.

As outlined in previous sections the development of the Framework has been underpinned by engagement, partnership and flexibility throughout with extensive engagement incorporating a wide range of rural stakeholders. The initial rural policy objectives for the project were influenced by the rural needs identified and informed by a range of rural research and evidence. Subsequently, following further stakeholder engagement, these objectives were refined into five key thematic pillars which were agreed in consultation with the Rural Stakeholder Forum and Rural Society Project Board.

Formed on the basis of the thematic pillars, each WG gathered a wide range of evidence which they used to inform their key findings and priority areas for intervention. These findings were presented at a large stakeholder event in January 2020 and any feedback received on the day taken into account. Subsequently each WG produced a report with key findings which incorporated the identified need in the form of priority areas for intervention. These reports included a wide range of evidence such as stakeholder feedback; use of published statistics; surveys/questionnaires; research papers and other publications. All this information subsequently fed into the development of the overarching Framework document.

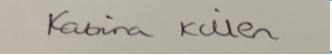

If the response to Section **5A** was **YES GO TO Section 6A.**

5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.

SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.

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|---|---|
| Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by: | Katrina Killen |
| Position/Grade: | Deputy Principal |
| Division/Branch | Rural Policy and Delivery Branch |
| Signature: |  |
| Date: | 16/07/2020 |
| Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by: | Gareth Evans |
| Position/Grade: | G6 Deputy Director of Rural Affairs |
| Division/Branch: | Rural Policy and Delivery Branch |
| Signature: |  |
| Date: | 21/7/2020 |