

## 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.

Marine and Fisheries Division, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (NI)

#### 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.

Development of fisheries management measures for Northern Ireland offshore Marine Protected Areas

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

Developing a	Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input 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.

Consultation on the development of fisheries management measures for Northern Ireland offshore Marine Protected Areas.

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

- To introduce fisheries management measures to protect designated features within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Northern Ireland offshore region.

**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 main group affected is commercial fishers who fish within the NI offshore region. The main fishing ports are Kilkeel, Ardglass and Portavogie and of these, only Kilkeel is classified as an urban settlement.

The Northern Ireland offshore region supports diverse fishing opportunities that make an important contribution to the economies of coastal communities and the introduction of changes to fisheries management regimes outlined in this consultation document are intended to support fishing at sustainable levels while protecting the marine environment.

The Regulatory Impact Assessment indicates that the total fleet value of lost fishing opportunity, for option 1 (full site closure) is £120,000 per annum, and £90,000 for option 2 (partial closure). This is considered to be a short-term impact because research suggests there will be long term benefits that should outweigh the losses.

**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 policy is an area based scheme intended to have the same impact in urban areas and 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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education or Training in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deprivation in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Crime or Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agri-Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state)	<input type="text" value="Commercial fishers"/>

**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.**

N/A

## 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 type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input 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.**

Public participation has been central to the development of the Marine Protected Areas. During the designation process for each Special Area of Conservation and Marine Conservation Zones, stakeholder engagement with coastal communities was carried out and stakeholder views were considered when the boundaries for these sites were set.

In relation to the development of fisheries management measures in Marine Protected Areas, DAERA has engaged with Co-Fish, whose membership includes commercial fisheries representatives as well as environmental Non-Governmental Organisations. The Department also met with fishers in person at Kilkeel and Portavogie harbors during 2023 and 2024 to listen to their feedback. Concern has been raised by industry representatives on the impact of spatial squeeze from closures, and potential loss of earnings.

This policy will continue to be monitored and reviewed and we welcome any comments from all stakeholders during the public consultation period.

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

Rural coastal communities are vulnerable to economic change, but the introduction of fisheries management measures is not expected to impact the economic needs of people in rural areas. The proposed management measures will support fishing at sustainable levels while protecting the marine environment.

Evidence suggests the protections afforded to habitats and species within managed MPAs and closed areas, provide significant biological benefits. One of the spillover benefits to areas located beside MPAs is the sustainable supply of larger fish. Increased biodiversity also fosters resilience and can offer a buffer to climate change.

DAERA will be accepting proposals from the fishing industry through the Marine Environment Fisheries Fund (MEFF) which can provide an alternative income for fishers in the offshore region until the long term benefits are realised. Fishers can be paid to take scientists on their vessels to undertake marine ecosystem monitoring and to deploy scientific equipment. They would also be paid to participate in a self-sampling scheme through AFBI.

This co-management approach will be used to monitor the effectiveness of the measures being proposed and provides benefits to both DAERA and the fishing industry.

**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?**

N/A

## **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.**

The value of the loss of fishing opportunity to commercial fishers has been considered, as has been assessed as low. The estimated value of fish landings into NI in 2023 was approximately £33.1 million, and the estimated fleet value of the loss of fishing opportunity from the proposed fisheries management is £120,000 per annum under the preferred option of a full closure. There are no expected social impacts from the introduction of fisheries management measures.

## 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.**

Public participation has been central to the development of the Marine Protected Areas. During the designation process for each Special Area of Conservation and Marine Conservation Zone, stakeholder engagement was carried out and views were taken into consideration when the site boundaries were set.

This policy is required to provide environmental protection to habitats and species within Marine Protected Areas, from damage from fishing activities. It is based on scientific evidence of risk of damage and is intended to have the same impact in urban areas and rural areas.

To date, no issues have been raised regarding impacts on rural needs. This policy will continue to be monitored and reviewed and we welcome comments from all stakeholders during the public consultation period.

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

## SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording

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



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