

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.

DAERA – Marine and Fisheries Division

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.

Environmental Assessment Reform – Offshore Wind

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

Developing a	Policy ☒	Strategy ☐	Plan ☐
Adopting a	Policy ☐	Strategy ☐	Plan ☐
Implementing a	Policy ☐	Strategy ☐	Plan ☐
Revising a	Policy ☐	Strategy ☐	Plan ☐
Designing a Public Service	☐		
Delivering a Public Service	☐		

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.

OFFSHORE WIND

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPENSATORY MEASURES REFORMS AND THE USE OF A MARINE RECOVERY FUND

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

To bring forward secondary legislation to reform the existing environmental assessment process for offshore wind developments. Amendments will be required to the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). To reduce the risk of delays by allowing for the use of wider environmental measures to compensate for adverse impacts to marine protected features.

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 policy is expected to impact people in rural and non-rural areas. If the policy is successful and the offshore wind sector grows, there is potential for increased jobs in coastal areas particularly, as this is where landfall and connection to the grid will be located.

There is potential for growth in jobs and employment opportunities in building, operating and maintenance.

There may be a number of jobs in sectors such as construction, and a number of jobs in operations. It should be noted that connections would run 24/7.

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.

It is likely that the policy will have a more positive impact on people in rural areas by virtue of those benefits detailed above. However, if successful, the policy is likely to have positive economic impact across rural and urban areas by reducing emissions, contributing to NetZero

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	☐	Published Statistics	☐
Consultation with Other Organisations	☐	Research Papers	☐
Surveys or Questionnaires	☐	Other Publications	☐
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			☐

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.

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

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?

The policy is expected to have a positive impact on all communities, not just those in rural areas.

Further detailed steps to identify Rural Needs will be completed as the policy matures and the policy outcomes become clearer.

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 policy is expected to have a positive impact on all communities, not just those in rural areas.

Further detailed steps to identify Rural Needs will be completed as the policy matures and the policy outcomes become clearer.

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.

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.

The policy is expected to have a positive impact on all communities, not just those in rural areas.

Further detailed steps to identify Rural Needs will be completed as the policy matures and the policy outcomes become clearer.

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.

☒

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	John McGuigan
Position/Grade:	Deputy Principal
Division/Branch	Marine and Fisheries Division
Signature:	
Date:	10/06/26
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Dr Stephanie Bennett
Position/Grade:	Head of Marine Environmental Policy – Grade 7
Division/Branch:	Marine and Fisheries Division
Signature:	
Date:	15/06/2026