

Public Consultation Responses: 2024 Review of the List of Bodies and Persons set out in the Schedule to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Depairtment o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

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Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the responses to the public consultation undertaken to inform the review of the list of bodies and persons set out in the Schedule to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the Act). The current list of bodies or persons set out in the Schedule is provided at **Annex A**.

Background

2. The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 places a statutory duty on listed public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.
3. The Schedule to the Act sets out the bodies and persons to which this statutory duty applies. Section 1(3) of the Act requires the Department to review the list of bodies and persons set out in the Schedule to the Act (the Schedule) at least every three years and, if it thinks it appropriate, the Department has the power to amend the Schedule by order to add a body or person to the Schedule, to remove a body or person from the Schedule or to modify any entry in the Schedule.
4. Section 1(5) of the Act provides that DAERA must not exercise the power conferred by Section 1(3) so that a body or person becomes a public authority for the purposes of the Act unless the body or person is a body or person appearing to the Department to exercise functions of a public nature.

Public Consultation

5. To inform the review, DAERA undertook a public consultation to seek stakeholders' views on potential amendments to the Schedule. Respondents could submit views and feedback online via a Citizen Space survey or provide written responses by post or email. Citizen Space is the Northern Ireland Civil Service's recommended online consultation and survey tool. Digital tools were used to support drafting and quality assurance. All content has been reviewed, verified and approved by officials.

6. Consultees were asked to provide general information, including their name, email address, organisation name, where appropriate, and the category of the person or organisation responding. They were also asked whether they wished to propose adding any body or person to the Schedule, removing any body or person from the Schedule, or modifying any entry in the Schedule; to provide the name of the relevant body or person and the reasons for their proposal; and, where proposing an addition, to explain how rural communities would benefit. The consultation questions are provided at **Annex B**.
7. The public consultation commenced on 22 July 2024 and ran for a period of eight weeks ending on 13 September 2024.
8. The Department is grateful to respondents for the time taken to reflect on the questions and welcomes the contributions made.

Responses to the Public Consultation

9. A total of 15 responses were received. Of these, 13 (87%)¹ were submitted via Citizen Space, one (7%) via the written response template and one (7%) by email.
10. Respondents represented a range of stakeholder types: seven respondents identified as 'public authorities' (47%), one respondent identified as a 'voluntary and community organisation' (7%), five respondents identified as 'private individuals' (33%) and two respondents identified as 'others' (13%).
11. Of the responses received:
 - Six respondents (40%) indicated that changes to the Schedule should be considered;
 - Eight respondents (53%) indicated that no changes were required; and
 - One respondent (7%) did not provide a response to the online survey questions but provided additional comments for consideration.

¹ Figures and percentages have been rounded and therefore may not total 100%.

Adding a Body or Person to the Schedule

12. A list of proposed additions, as submitted through the consultation process, is provided at **Annex C Table 1²**.

Removing a Body or Person to the Schedule

13. One body was proposed for removal from the Schedule; however, it does not appear in the existing Schedule. This is recorded in **Annex C Table 2**.

Modifying an Entry in the Schedule

14. One respondent submitted comments under the 'modify' question in relation to bodies already listed in the Schedule. However, these comments concerned the bodies' functions or regulatory remit, rather than proposing a change to the Schedule itself. These comments were therefore outside the scope of this aspect of the review and have been recorded in **Annex C: Table 3**.

Other Comments from Public Consultation

15. Four respondents provided additional comments, which have been documented in **Annex C Table 4**.

Next Steps

16. Responses from the consultation will be used to help inform amendments to the Schedule of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. While the public consultation concluded in September 2024, publication of the responses has been aligned with the development of the Statutory Rule to amend the Schedule, ensuring that findings are presented alongside the Department's final policy position.

² Bodies are listed using the names provided by respondents as part of the public consultation process and do not necessarily reflect current organisational titles.

Annex A: Current list of bodies or persons set out in the Schedule to the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

- A Northern Ireland department
- A district council
- The Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland
- The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
- The Education Authority
- A Health and Social Care Trust
- Invest Northern Ireland
- The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board
- The Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- The Northern Ireland Library Authority
- The Northern Ireland Tourist Board
- The Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well-Being
- The Sports Council for Northern Ireland

Annex B: List of questions contained in online survey on Citizen Space

General Information

- What is your name?
- What is your email address?
- What is the name of your organisation? (if appropriate)
- Please indicate the category of the person or organisation responding.

Suggestions to Add, Remove or Modify any Body or Person

- Do you wish to propose adding any body or person to the Schedule, removing any body or person from the Schedule or modifying any entry in the Schedule? (Please note that only bodies or persons which exercise functions of a public nature can be added to the Schedule.)
- Do you think any body or person should be added to the Schedule? (Please note that only bodies or persons which exercise functions of a public nature can be added to the Schedule.)
- Please provide the name of body or person which you think should be added to the Schedule.
- Please provide the reasons why you think they should be added to the Schedule.
- How do you think rural communities would benefit from adding this body or person to the Schedule?
- Do you think any additional body or person should be added to the Schedule?
- Do you think any body or person should be removed from the Schedule?
- Please provide the name of body or person which you think should be removed from the Schedule.
- Please provide the reasons why you think they should be removed from the Schedule.
- Do you think any other body or person should be removed from the Schedule?
- Do you think any entry in the Schedule should be modified?
- Please provide the name of the body or person listed in the Schedule whose entry you think should be modified and the reasons why you think it should be modified.
- Please detail the modification to that entry that you think should be made.
- Do you think any other body or person should be modified in the Schedule?



Other Comments

- Do you have any other comments in relation to the Review of the list of bodies and persons set out in the Schedule to the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016?
- Please provide any further comments in relation to the Review of the list of bodies and persons set out in the Schedule to the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016?

Annex C: Bodies and persons proposed to be added, removed or modified to the Schedule 2024 and other comments.

Table 1: List of bodies and persons proposed to be added to the Schedule 2024

Reference	Body or Person Proposed
1	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
2	Armagh Observatory
3	Armagh Planetarium
4	Arts Council of Northern Ireland
5	Attorney General for Northern Ireland
6	Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
7	Belfast Metropolitan College
8	Business Services Organisation
9	Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
10	CITB – Construction Skills NI (formerly Construction Industry Training Board)
11	Citybus, Ulsterbus and Northern Ireland Railways
12	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
13	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
14	Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland
15	Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland
16	Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland
17	Commissioner for Victims and Survivors
18	Community Relations Council
19	Compensation Agency
20	Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
21	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
22	Criminal Justice Inspectorate
23	Driver and Vehicle Agency
24	Education Authority for Northern Ireland
25	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
26	Exceptional Circumstances Body
27	Forensic Science Northern Ireland
28	Forest Service
29	General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

30	Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland
31	Health and Social Care Board
32	ILEX Urban Regeneration Company Limited
33	Invest Northern Ireland
34	Labour Relations Agency
35	Land and Property Services
36	Local Government Staff Commission
37	Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland
38	Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation
39	Members of the Legislative Assembly
40	Middletown Centre for Autism
41	Northern Health and Social Care Trust
42	Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
43	Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service
44	Northern Ireland Building Regulations Advisory Committee
45	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
46	Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service
47	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
48	Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service
49	Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority
50	Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency
51	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
52	Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission
53	Northern Ireland Law Commission
54	Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission
55	Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee
56	Northern Ireland Library Authority
57	Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency
58	Northern Ireland Memorial Fund
59	Northern Ireland Museums Council
60	Northern Ireland Policing Board
61	Northern Ireland Policing Fund
62	Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council

63	Northern Ireland Prisoner Ombudsman
64	Northern Ireland Prison Service
65	Northern Ireland Screen
66	Northern Ireland Social Care Council
67	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
68	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
69	Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company / Translink incorporating
70	Northern Ireland Water
71	National Museums Northern Ireland
72	Northern Regional College
73	North West Regional College
74	Patient and Client Council
75	Planning and Water Appeals Commission
76	Police Ombudsman Northern Ireland
77	Police Retraining and Rehabilitation Trust
78	Police Service of Northern Ireland
79	Probation Board Northern Ireland
80	Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well Being
81	Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
82	Rivers Agency
83	RUC George Cross Foundation
84	Social Security Agency
85	South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
86	South Eastern Regional College
87	Southern Health and Social Care Trust
88	Southern Regional College
89	South West College
90	Sport NI
91	Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards
92	Strategic Investment Board
93	Statistics Advisory Committee
94	Stranmillis University College
95	Ulster Supported Employment Limited

96	Victims and Survivors Service Ltd
97	Western Health and Social Care Trust
98	Youth Council for Northern Ireland
99	Youth Justice Agency
100	2013 World Police and Fire Games

Table 2: List of bodies and persons proposed to be removed from the Schedule

Reference	Body or Person Proposed
1	Agricultural Wages Board

Table 3: List of bodies and persons proposed to be modified in the Schedule

Reference	Body or Person Proposed
1	Education Authority A respondent suggested that the Education Authority's entry should more clearly reflect its responsibilities across early years, controlled, integrated, Irish-medium and youth provision in rural areas. The respondent also proposed that consideration be given to the rural impact of public transport providers and regulatory bodies responsible for telephone, broadband, mobile and digital services.

Table 4: Other Comments

Reference	Summary of respondents' comments
1	A respondent raised concerns about the accessibility of rural bin collection services, noting that current arrangements required them to move bins a significant distance despite having a disability. They indicated that this aggravated their condition and that alternative assistance had not been provided by the council.
2	A respondent emphasised DAERA's wider role in supporting rural communities, beyond overseeing and reporting on the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. They suggested that DAERA should continue to act as the lead department and advocate for rural communities, helping them to remain vibrant, sustainable and able to reach their full potential.
3	The Consumer Council provided information on its role for DAERA to consider whether it should have responsibilities and reporting functions under the Act.
4	The office of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland requested that DAERA consider the future impact of population ageing in its rural needs assessment and engage relevant age-friendly and older people teams when reviewing the existing Schedule.

For further information:

Rural Legislation Advisory Branch
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Jubilee House
111 Ballykelly Road
Ballykelly
Limavady
BT49 9HP

Email: rural.needs@daera-ni.gov.uk
www.daera-ni.gov.uk



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