

# THE RURAL NEEDS ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2016

## Completing the Template for Information to be Compiled

### Introduction

1. The purpose of this guide is to assist public authorities in completing the [Template for Information to be Compiled](#) provided in Appendix 2 of 'A Guide to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 for Public Authorities (Revised)' ('the official guidance').
2. The [Template for Information to be Compiled](#) ('the template') is the document used to record information on how public authorities have had due regard to rural needs in the development, adoption, implementation or revision of policies, strategies and plans and in the design and delivery of public services during the reporting period.
3. Information provided in the template is published in DAERA's Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report and is designed to inform stakeholders and other interested parties of how public authorities have had due regard to rural needs in the exercise of their functions.
4. It is recommended that public authorities begin completing the template at the start of the period to be reported on (i.e. April) and to continue to add information throughout the year. It is recommended that information is added to the template **as soon as possible after** a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) has been carried out by the public authority in respect of a policy, strategy, plan or public service and the RNIA Template (Appendix 1 of the official guidance) has been completed.
5. Only one template should be completed by each public authority and completed templates should be submitted to DAERA at [rural.needs@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:rural.needs@daera-ni.gov.uk) by **Tuesday 20th June 2023**. Online copies of the template are available at the link below:

[Templates | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

### Name of Public Authority

6. The official name of the public authority should be entered in the box provided. It is important that this information is accurate as this information will be published in DAERA's Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report.

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## Reporting Period

7. The reporting period runs in an annual financial cycle from April to March each year. Enter the start and end years in respect of the period in the boxes provided.

## Description of the Activity undertaken by the Public Authority (Column 1)

8. The purpose of Column 1 is to provide stakeholders and other interested parties with a clear indication of those activities which public authorities have been involved in which are subject to the due regard duty set out in Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.
9. Column 1 should therefore contain details of **each** activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 during the reporting period. The activities which fall under Section 1(1) are:
  - Developing a policy, strategy or plan;
  - Adopting a policy, strategy or plan;
  - Implementing a policy, strategy or plan;
  - Revising a policy, strategy or plan;
  - Designing a public service; and
  - Delivering a public service.
10. An entry should be made in Column 1 irrespective of whether a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template (Appendix 1 of the official guidance) has been completed in respect of the activity or not. Where a RNIA Template has been completed the information to be included in Column 1 should normally be contained in Section 1B of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
11. One entry should be made in Column 1 in respect of each activity which is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016. If there are multiple programmes or schemes these should be listed as separate activities. It should be noted that the development of a policy and the implementation of a policy or strategy are two separate activities and each is subject to the due regard duty.
12. Column 1 is not intended to include the description of a project or the objectives of a project. It should only contain a description of the Section 1(1) activity undertaken i.e. it should relate directly to the development, implementation, adoption or revision of a specific strategy, policy or plan or the design or delivery of a public service. It should therefore contain only a single line or sentence and **not** a narrative.
13. It is recommended that, where possible, public authorities refer to the official title of any policies, strategies, plans or public services including any relevant legislation, budget plans or grants programmes.

14. It is also recommended that public authorities pay particular attention to how each policy, strategy plan and public service is described as it will appear in DAERA's Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report. Public authorities should therefore ensure that the description used accurately reflects the activity in question.

15. It should be noted that 'consultations' are not activities which fall within the scope of Section 1(1). The activity which falls under Section 1(1) is, for example, the **development of the policy/design of the public service** which is being consulted on.

### Rural Policy Area (Column 2)

16. This information should normally be contained in Section 2D of the RNIA Template (Appendix 1 of the official guidance) completed in respect of the activity and should reflect the policy area which the activity relates to. The options listed on the RNIA Template are set out in the table below.

Rural Businesses	Broadband or Mobile Communications	Rural Crime or Community Safety
Rural Tourism	Transport Services or Infrastructure	Rural Development
Rural Housing	Health or Social Care	Agri-Environment
Jobs or Employment	Poverty	Other*
Education or Training	Deprivation	<i>*please state</i>

17. Where an activity cuts across more than one policy area then the main policy area should be indicated. If however the activity cuts across two policy areas equally or cuts across multiple policy areas then '**Cross Cutting**' may be used. If a policy relates only to a public authority's internal business then '**Internal**' may be used.

### Details of how the Public Authority has had Due Regard to Rural Needs (Column 3)

18. The purpose of Column 3 is to provide information on **how** a public authority has had due regard to rural needs in relation to the activity in question. It should provide an overview of how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs and should normally be no more than 500 words. Only in exceptional circumstances e.g. in respect of a major policy, strategy, plan or public service, should it exceed this. The information provided should relate to the particular activity in question and should not simply be a repeat of information provided in relation to other activities.

19. An entry should be made in Column 3 irrespective of whether a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template (Appendix 1 of the official guidance) has been completed in respect of the activity or not. Where a RNIA Template has been completed the information contained in the **following sections of the RNIA Template** should be considered when compiling this information.

- **Section 3D** - Details of the economic and social needs of people in rural areas which have been identified
- **Section 4A** - Details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas
- **Section 5B** - How the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service has been influenced by the rural needs identified

20. No other information other than that referred to in paragraph 19 above is required to be included in Column 3. The purpose of Column 3 is **not** to provide information:

- On the consultation process or on engagement undertaken with stakeholders
- On Section 75 Equality Screening
- On when or how the Rural Needs Impact Assessment was carried out
- Which has already been provided in Column 1
- On the aims and objectives of the policy, strategy, plan or public service
- On issues not relating to **Sections 3D, 4A & 5B** of the RNIA Template

21. If no rural needs were identified in respect of a particular activity, if no rural needs have been considered or if the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service has not been influenced by rural needs, then this should be referred to in Column 3. If no Rural Needs Impact Assessment has been carried out this should also be recorded. (Note that the official guidance recommends that a Rural Needs Impact Assessment **is** carried out and an RNIA Template completed.)

22. Examples of appropriate and inappropriate entries to Column 3 in respect of the particular scenarios referred to in paragraph 21 above are shown in the table below.

No rural needs were identified	✓
No consideration was given to rural needs	✓
The policy/strategy/plan/public service was not influenced by rural needs	✓
No rural needs impact assessment was carried out	✓
Not Applicable	✗
N/A	✗

23. For further advice on completing the template please contact, Rural Affairs Division - Strategic Policy and Legislation Branch, DAERA, at [rural.needs@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:rural.needs@daera-ni.gov.uk).