

## 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.

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland (DAERA-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.

Consultation on and publication of the draft River Basin Management Plan for Northern Ireland for the 3rd cycle of implementation of The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017. Note that the final Plan once published in Dec 2021, will constitute a review of the 2nd cycle River Basin Management Plans published in December 2015 and the 1st cycle plan published in 2009.

#### 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 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 checked="" 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.

Draft River Basin Management Plan for the North Western, Neagh Bann and North Eastern River Basin Districts (2021- 2027)

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

The objective in preparing a River Basin Management Plan is to fulfil the requirements of The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017. This requires the undertaking of a staged process on a 6 yearly cycle to prepare and review the river basin management plan. The regulations take an integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment.

**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 River Basin Management Plan (the Plan) for NI is an overarching 6 year plan that sets out objectives and measures/ actions to improve the water environment in the period 2022-2027. The Plan contains a suite of measures and each of those will be subject to its own RNIA. Examples of types of measures are:

- ensuring obligations from existing legislation are being met: e.g. the Nutrient Action Programme for Northern Ireland for period 2019-2022, which aims to improve water quality by protecting water against pollution caused by nutrients from agricultural sources. A separate RNIA was carried out (AE1/19/257243).
- individual policies and strategies in a number of Northern Ireland government departments: e.g. Integrated Plan for Drainage and Wastewater Management in Greater Belfast (Living with Water) published by DfI
- capital investment: e.g. proposed investment in water and sewage infrastructure by Northern Ireland Water under the Price Control 2021 (PC21) process
- projects carried out by stakeholders/ delivery partners: e.g. projects funded through PeacePlus funding for cross-border catchment or DAERA Environment Fund

Due to the complex and overarching nature of the Plan it is not possible to assess the impact on rural needs of these individual measures at this stage. The measures are subject to the availability of funding over the 6 year period and not all measures will be deployed or impact on each catchment area, however each of the key measures will be subject to their own RNIA. The implementation of the RBMP will lead to improved water quality which will have an overall positive impact for all the people living in Northern Ireland including people in rural

### 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.

As outlined at 2B above, the Plan is of a complex and overarching nature and hence it is not possible to assess the impact of each individual plan element at this stage. Depending on their nature and where and how they are deployed / implemented there will be some plan elements which are more likely to impact on people in rural areas than others, for example elements designed to address pollution of water caused by nutrients from agricultural sources.

This individual measure requires the implementation of the Nutrient Action Programme (NAP) 2019-2022. The RNIA for the NAP identified the following social and economic needs to people in rural areas:

- Improved water quality: Measures will contribute towards improved water quality, as a result of revised measures, in particular rivers and lakes. This will lead to enhanced biodiversity, fish habitats, reduced cost for water treatment and improvement in the aesthetic standard of water bodies.
- Support for Tourism: Encourages use of the countryside, for example by visitors to bathing waters, angling/ canoeing/ walking along waterways; sustains the viability of rural businesses and encourages diversification as a result benefiting rural communities as a whole.
- Changes to Farming Practices: Revised measures will place restrictions on some farming practices and may result in some additional costs for the farmer initially.

Overall the measures will result in an improvement in water quality proving a positive impact for all people living in Northern Ireland including 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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state)	<input type="text"/>

**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 type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input 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 checked="" 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.**

As mentioned previously, the River Basin Management Plan (the Plan) for Northern Ireland is an overarching plan that sets out objectives and a suite of measures/ actions to improve the water environment in Northern Ireland. The successful implementation and delivery of the measures includes regulation of activities by DAERA, but also depends on a variety of delivery partners (e.g. Northern Ireland Water, NGOs, Interreg/ PeacePlus projects, Environment Fund partners) as well as behavioural changes of every person living in Northern Ireland. As such it was only possible to consider the social and economic needs of people in rural areas at a high level.

This Plan was developed following a 6-month consultation of the Significant Water Management Issues document which was published in December 2019 and the responses have been incorporated into the Plan.

Workshops on the draft plan and the measures to improve the water environment as well as a meeting of the WFD Strategic Planning and Resources Group on 17 December 2020 have been developed with the relevant Government Departments, Environmental Non-Government Organisations (eNGOs), ABFI, NIW and the Ulster Farmers Union.

A public webinar including a presentation and discussion on the Significant Water Management Issue took place on 15 December 2021: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/2020-niea-water-framework-directive-catchment-stakeholder-webinar> .

Please note that a Public Consultation will take place with a wide range of stakeholders, organisations and the general public which will inform the production of the final River Basin Management Plan. This Consultation will take place from 31 March 2021.

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

The RNIA for the **Nutrients Action Programme**, which is one of the measures of the draft plan, identified the following needs:

- Access to the countryside and increased tourism
- Improved water quality – the action programme is an ongoing policy and the proposed measures will help to improve water quality, which could allow for diversification within rural businesses. The measures will also lead to sustainable farming practices and improve viability of these businesses.

The RNIA for the **Living with Water in Belfast (LwW)** concluded that it is unlikely to impact on people in rural areas and no details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas were identified.

LwW is largely focussed on the Greater Belfast area with most of the major capital projects being carried out within the urban environment. Some of the rural land on the edge of the city may be used for natural flood management measures but these should have minimal impact on rural communities.

DfI carried out an RNIA for the guidance provided to Northern Ireland Water to develop **PC 21**. The assessment found, that it will benefit customers in both rural and urban areas. The aim of the Guidance is to maintain current high levels of drinking water, improve wastewater compliance levels and deliver affordable service improvements in key customer areas to NI Water's customers. Improvements could include upgrading or building new water or wastewater treatment works in either rural or urban areas.

The RNIA for the **Environment Fund** states, that there is no evidence to suggest there are barriers to delivery in rural areas, or if projects would cost more to deliver in rural areas. Many of the applicants who receive funding from the Environment Fund, are based in rural areas across the province.

A separate RNIA will be carried out for the planned **PeacePlus** programme.

**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.**

As mentioned previously, the River Basin Management Plan (the Plan) for Northern Ireland is an overarching plan that sets out objectives and a suite of measures/ actions to improve the water environment in Northern Ireland. The successful implementation and delivery of the measures includes regulation of activities by DAERA, but also depends on a variety of delivery partners (e.g. Northern Ireland Water, NGOs, Interreg/ PeacePlus projects, Environment Fund partners) as well as behavioural changes of every person living in Northern Ireland.

As such it was only possible to consider the social and economic needs of people in rural areas at a high level.

Some plan elements are more likely to impact on people in rural areas than others, for example elements designed to address pollution of water caused by nutrients from agricultural sources.

This individual measure requires the implementation of the Nutrient Action Programme (NAP) 2019-2022, which included additional measures (following on from the existing Nitrates Action Programme 2015 – 2018):

- mandatory use of low emission slurry spreading in certain circumstances,
- restrictions on some buffers at the beginning and end of the spreading periods,
- prohibited use of urea based fertilisers,
- controls relating to use of anaerobic digestate and
- covering of new and existing slurry storage tanks and lagoons.

- **Improved water quality**

Measures will contribute towards improved water quality. As a result of revised measures, in particular rivers and lakes. This will lead to enhanced biodiversity, fish habitats, reduced cost for water treatment and improvement in the aesthetic standard of water bodies.

- **Support for Tourism**

Encourages use of the countryside, sustains the viability of rural businesses and encourages diversification as a result benefiting rural communities as a whole.

- **Changes to Farming Practices**

Revised measures will place restrictions on some farming practices and may result in some additional costs for the farmer initially.

Overall the suite of measures will result in an improvement in water quality proving a positive impact for all people living in Northern Ireland including people in rural areas.

## 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.**

As mentioned previously, the River Basin Management Plan (the Plan) for Northern Ireland is an overarching plan that sets out objectives and a suite of measures/ actions to improve the water environment in Northern Ireland – both in rural and urban areas. The successful implementation and delivery of the measures includes regulation of activities by DAERA, but also depends on a variety of delivery partners (e.g. Northern Ireland Water, NGOs, Interreg/ PeacePlus projects, Environment Fund partners) as well as behavioural changes of every person living in Northern Ireland.

Measures have been identified for both rural and urban areas to improve and protect the water environment. Due to the overarching nature of the Plan it is not possible to revise the individual measures at this stage that together form the plan. This will be considered for each individual measure separately.

**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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