



DAERA Interim Business Plan 2023-24

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.



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

www.daera-ni.gov.uk



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**

Contents

Introduction	3
1. Who We Are	5
1.1 Our responsibilities	5
1.2 Organisation Structure	5
1.3 DAERA Senior Staff Structure	6
2. What We Will Deliver	7
2.1 DAERA Interim Priorities 2023-24	7
2.2 Interim Business Plan Commitments	8
3 Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements	17

Introduction

DAERA's interim business plan for 2023-24 aims to guide the work of DAERA until ministers return and can set their priorities for the Department.

It sets out the key strategic priorities that will shape our work in the months ahead and also highlights some of the key services and work we will deliver in support of each of those priorities.

It is underpinned by more detailed business plans for our two agencies, the NI Environment Agency and Forest Service, and by directorate and team business plans which, in turn, are reflected in the performance agreement targets which are agreed between individual staff members and their line managers.

In normal circumstances, this plan would reflect how, within the budgets allocated to the department, the ambitions, priorities and direction set by ministers would be taken forward. For this plan, we have not had the benefit of fresh ministerial direction so we have built our priorities reflecting where possible the direction set by our previous minister but also taking account of recent developments including the requirements of the Climate Change Act, the responsibilities placed on us as a result of the Windsor Framework and the need to comply in some areas with changes to UK law (for example the Retained EU Law (REUL) Act) and in others, for example animal health, with EU law.

In all of these areas, and many more, we are having to devote new resources to ensuring that we deliver our new statutory responsibilities while also facing a very significant funding gap in our resource budget.

We have taken every step we can to protect funding to partner organisations wherever possible and, of course, the funding we receive for agriculture, agri-environment, the wider rural economy and fisheries and to deliver the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) requirements in the Windsor Framework is earmarked and cannot be used for other purposes and will be spent for the purposes for which it was allocated.

In order to live within the remainder of the resource budget allocated to us, we cannot afford to fill the many vacant posts that exist across the Department. Nor can we ask our staff to carry unacceptable workloads.

We have therefore prioritised for delivery those functions and services that the law requires us to deliver, followed by work that can further advance our six key strategic priorities. We have also recognised that advancing those priorities will be reliant to a very large extent on three enabling priorities which are also set out in this plan and in our agency and directorate/team business plans.

We have taken this approach to the limits of affordability, but the reality is there are many other functions and services that we know would make a positive difference to the wellbeing of people and our environment, that we are not resourced to deliver and, that therefore cannot be progressed during the period covered by this plan. There are very real risks associated with not progressing much of this work, but our judgement is that, although significant, they are lower than the risks associated with not progressing the work we are prioritising.

Any business plan should be a living document, capable of being adjusted and amended to respond to its context. Given the uniquely challenging context in which it has been developed, this interim plan will be kept under close review and will be changed if necessary to respond to new challenges.

Despite those challenges, we are very conscious of the sizeable amount of taxpayers' funding provided to us (£579.8m Resource DEL and £115.7m Capital DEL) and at every level and across every part of the Department we are committed to using that funding to good effect to deliver our vision of **'sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone'**.



Katrina Godfrey,
Permanent Secretary, DAERA

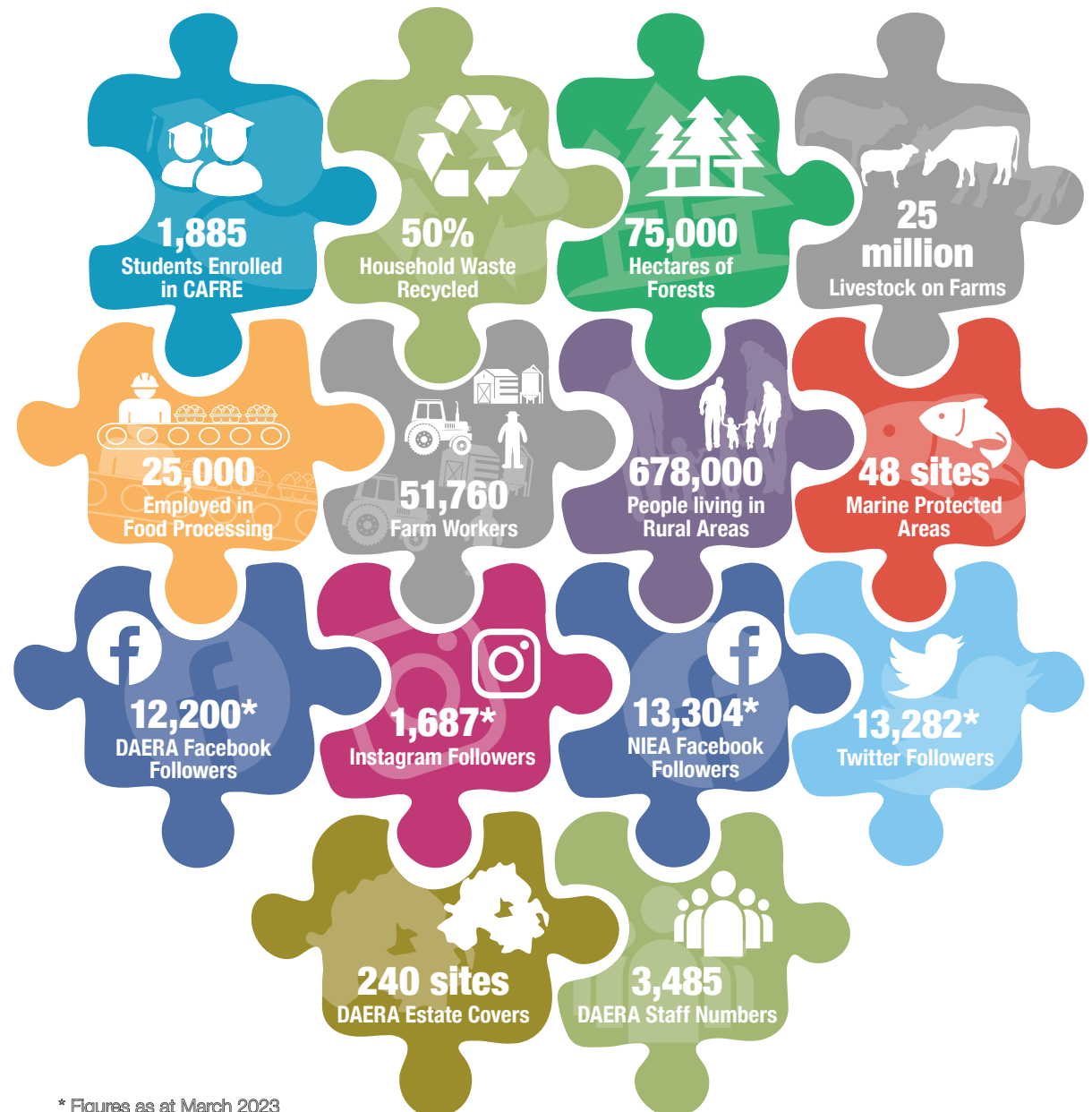
1. Who We Are

1.1 Our responsibilities

DAERA and its agencies carry responsibility for environment, climate change and sustainability, food, farming, fisheries, forestry, and the development of the rural sector in NI.

1.2 Organisation Structure







The core Department is structured into five groups. The Department also has two executive agencies: the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Forest Service.



* Figures as at March 2023

1.3 DAERA Senior Staff Structure*

DAERA Permanent Secretary - Katrina Godfrey

 Central Services and Contingency Planning Group (CSCPG)	 Food and Farming Group (FFG)	 Rural Affairs, Forest Service, Estate Transformation	 Veterinary Service Animal Health Group (VSAHG)	 Environment Marine and Fisheries Group (EMFG)	 Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
Brian Doherty & Fiona McCandless Deputy Secretary	Norman Fulton Deputy Secretary	David Reid Deputy Secretary (A)	Robert Huey Deputy Secretary	Tracey Teague Deputy Secretary	Paul Donnelly Chief Executive (A)
Digital Services Paul McGurnaghan (G5)	CAFRE Martin McKendry (G5)	Forest Service John Joe O'Boyle (G5)	Enzootic Control, Animal Welfare & Field Delivery Gemma Daly (G5)	Environmental Resources Policy Shane Doris (G5)	Natural Environment Liz Loughran (G5)
Corporate Services David Simpson (G5) (A)	Policy, Economics and Statistics Seamus McErlean (G5)	Rural Affairs Teresa O'Neill (G5) (A)	Traceability, Corporate Management & Trade Delivery Brian Dooher (G5)	Marine and Fisheries Owen Lyttle (G5)	Resource Efficiency Richard Crowe (G5)
Finance Roger Downey (G5) (A)	Sustainable Agri-Food Development Chris McLean (G5)	Estate Transformation Alison Caldwell (G5)	Epizootic Control, Compliance & Public Health Delivery David Kyle (G5)	Natural Environment Policy Dave Foster (G5)	
Communications & Engagement Sharon McFlynn (G5)	Science, Evidence and Innovation Policy Alistair Carson (G5)		Sanitary & Phyto Sanitary Policy & Logistics Catherine Fisher (G5)	Green Growth & Climate Action Delivery Claire Cockerill (G5)	
NIFAIS Programme Nigel Trimble (G5)	Innovation & Science Transformation Pauline Rooney (G5)		Animal Health and Welfare Policy Neal Gartland (G5)	Climate Change and Green Growth Policy Jane Corderoy (G5)	
Retained EU Law Pauline Keegan (G5)	Area-based Schemes Jason Foy (G5)				
	Agricultural Policy Rosemary Agnew (G5)				

*Structure as of July 2023.

Note: (A) after a name indicates the post holder is acting up.

2. What We Will Deliver

DAERA has given careful consideration to its budget allocation for 2023-24 and what the reduced budget will mean for the work of the Department. These considerations have resulted in core departmental priorities for 2023-24:

2.1 DAERA Interim Priorities 2023-24

	Delivering our statutory obligations effectively.
	Addressing the Climate Emergency and reducing carbon emissions.
	Enhancing and protecting our natural environment through committed actions that can deliver real improvements.
	Improving the productivity, resilience, and environmental sustainability of our agri-food sector.
	Protecting animal, plant and public health and food safety through delivery of an effective Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) regime.
	Addressing rural need and helping our rural communities to be sustainable.

We have also considered what enabling priorities we need to support us in delivering our core departmental priorities and have identified the following:

	Matching our capacity to our priorities and work programmes and building our capability to deliver those programmes.
	Championing and investing in science, innovation and knowledge transfer as the means of addressing the climate challenge and unlocking new economic opportunities.
	Ensuring our statute book provides the framework within which the Department can deliver its functions and priorities.

2.2 Interim Business Plan Commitments

This section sets out the key actions the Department will work to deliver during the period without ministers.



Delivering our statutory obligations effectively

Measure Number	How we will achieve it	Target Date
1	Bring forward regulations to place climate change reporting duties on specified public bodies and regulations to set Northern Ireland's (NI) first three carbon budgets.	31 Dec 2023
2	Support the work of the Covid-19 Public Inquiry by providing any necessary information or evidence in a timely manner.	31 Mar 2024
3	Undertake DAERA's statutory duties under the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 and enhance the profile of Rural Needs across public bodies.	31 Mar 2024



Addressing the Climate Emergency and reducing carbon emissions

Measure Number	How we will achieve it	Target Date
4	Develop Northern Ireland’s first draft Climate Action Plan (CAP) for consideration by a returning Executive and subsequent public consultation.	31 Dec 2023
5	Progress Just Transition Commission policy development and consultation so that proposals can be ready for consideration by a returning Executive.	31 Mar 2024
6	Progress our commitment to the 2020-2030 Forests for the Future Programme by planting 600 hectares of new woodland.	31 Mar 2024



Enhancing and protecting our natural environment through committed actions that can deliver real improvements

Measure Number	How we will achieve it	Target Date
7	Finalise the Environment Strategy for consideration by an incoming Minister and Executive for approval as NI’s first Environmental Improvement Plan.	30 Sept 2023
8	Develop a draft outcome indicator framework to assess environmental improvement and establish a cross departmental governance system to monitor, measure progress and report against the Environment Improvement Plan.	31 Mar 2024
9	Consult on the revised Marine Protected Area Strategy and Blue Carbon Action Plan to identify key actions for the protection and restoration of marine habitats, sustainable fishing and to help address climate change.	31 Mar 2024
10	Continue development of the Future Farm Support and Development of Programme policies that focus on Farming with Nature, commencing with the launch of a pilot initiative focused on habitat improvement on lowland intensive areas.	31 Mar 2024



Improving the productivity, resilience, and environmental sustainability of our agri-food sector

Measure Number	How we will achieve it	Target Date
11	Initiate phasing in of new measures under the Future Farm Support and Development Programme, including the Livestock Dietary Emissions Challenge Fund, the Carbon Benchmarking Programme, the Ruminant Genetics Programme, a Farming for the Generations Pilot, the Horticulture Growth Support Scheme and the Beef Carbon Reduction Scheme, with supporting knowledge transfer measures.	31 Mar 2024
12	Pursue on-going policy and scheme design through a co-design approach with stakeholders, to prepare for the phased implementation of the remaining elements of the Farm Support and Development Programme as published.	31 Mar 2024
13	Support the sustainable use of fish stocks, by producing a draft Fisheries Management Plan for Irish Sea Pelagic as required by the Fisheries Act 2020 and Joint Fisheries Statement.	31 Mar 2024
14	Support trade of agri-food foods and overall supply chain continuity by establishing necessary export procedures including any new certification requirements as a result of Animal Health Law processes and surveillance programmes.	31 Mar 2024



Protecting animal, plant and public health and food safety through delivery of an effective Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) regime

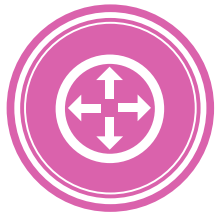
Measure Number	How we will achieve it	Target Date
15	Deliver an exercise to test developed contingency plans in respect of the threat of disease incursion and to participate in exercises of joint interest with Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).	31 July 2023
16	Deliver an effective SPS regime at Northern Ireland Points of Entry (POE) in accordance with the timescales and objectives required under the Windsor Framework; in order to protect public health, animal health and welfare, ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities and retain single market access for NI agri-food produce.	31 Dec 2023
17	Ensure Illegal, Unreported & Unregulated (IUU), Fish Export System, and animal health regimes are in place for fisheries.	31 Mar 2024
18	Deliver the NI bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) Eradication Programme by ensuring agreement of a new bTB testing contract with private veterinarians. Continue to implement the bTB Eradication Strategy in partnership with industry and other stakeholders. Ensure the Programme is delivered within budget, implements our statutory requirements and ensures continued access of industry to local and international trading markets.	31 Mar 2024



Addressing rural need and helping our rural communities to be sustainable

Measure Number	How we will achieve it	Target Date
19	Support the delivery of projects in rural areas through PEACE+, City and Growth Deals and the Complementary Fund.	31 Mar 2024
20	Deliver Basic Payments to 95% of eligible applicants.	30 Nov 2023
21	Support rural communities by delivering committed schemes through the Rural Development Programme and the Targeting Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme.	31 Mar 2024

DAERA Enabling Priorities for 2023-24



Matching our capacity to our priorities and work programmes and building our capability to deliver those programmes

Measure Number	How we will achieve it	Target Date
22	Spend our budget in line with the principles of regularity, propriety and value for money whilst optimising expenditure at Provisional Outturn to between 99% and 100% of Final Budget for the year.	31 Mar 2024
23	Ensure our resources are aligned to meeting our priorities and deliver our commitments in the Capacity and Capability Plan.	31 Mar 2024
24	Ensure that DAERA is a well led, high performing and genuinely diverse organisation, which values its people, through maintaining Investors in People Accreditation.	31 Mar 2024



Championing and investing in science, innovation and knowledge transfer as the means of addressing the climate challenge and unlocking new economic opportunities

Measure Number	How we will achieve it	Target Date
25	Deliver a suite of education programmes to 1,900 students and knowledge transfer and innovation programmes aligned with policy priorities to 13,000 people working within the agri-food industry.	31 Mar 2024
26	Develop and secure internal and external climate change modelling/analysis/specialist advice to support DAERA as the lead department for collating the Climate Action Plan and manage the interface with other departments.	31 Dec 2023
27	Develop the Information Management System for Laboratories in AFBI, NIEA and DAERA (ISLAND) to support investment in science, innovation and knowledge transfer.	31 Mar 2024



Ensuring our statute book provides the framework within which the Department can deliver its functions and priorities

Measure Number	How we will achieve it	Target Date
28	Deliver a co-ordinated Departmental response to the Retained EU Law (REUL) Act, ensuring all DAERA related in scope legislation is captured, an approach is agreed and where possible that any legislation required is made within the timescales dictated by the REUL Act.	31 Mar 2024
29	Ensure delivery of a new statutory framework to effectively implement and enforce the Animal Health Law (AHL) in NI.	31 Mar 2024

3 Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

The Department has established monitoring and reporting arrangements in place in relation to its Business Plan measures. In the first instance, each measure is assigned to a Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) who will have responsibility for monitoring progress on a day to day basis. During the course of the financial year, detailed progress against each Business Plan measure will be reported to the Departmental Board for the periods ending 30 September, 31 December and 31 March.

This on a Red / Amber / Green (RAG) basis as follows:



Following the end of the 2023-24 financial year the DAERA 2023-24 Annual Reports and Accounts will be published and placed on the DAERA website. The Annual report will include a Performance section showing the extent to which the measures in this Plan were achieved.

The Chief Executives of the Forest Service and NIEA are the Agency Accounting Officers, appointed by the Principal Accounting Officer, and are responsible for the Agency performance and operations. Their business plans can be found at the enclosed links, the [NI Environment Agency](#) and [Forest Service](#).

DAERA Interim Business Plan 2023-24



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

www.daera-ni.gov.uk



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**