

Appendix 1 - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template – Accessible Version

SECTION 1 – Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Name of Public Authority.

Department for Communities (DfC)

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.

Development for Communities (DfC)

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.

Museums Policy

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

The new policy for museums will replace the current 'Northern Ireland Museums Policy', published by the then Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) in 2011. The new policy will set out broad policy aims for two of DfC's Arm's Length Bodies, NI Museums Council (NIMC) and National Museums NI, and local

museums that hold NIMC accreditation or are on the path to achieving accreditation.

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.

Not Applicable

Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.

Not Applicable

Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

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 Continuous Household Survey 2024/25 showed that people living in rural areas were less likely (38%) to have visited a museum than those in urban areas (44%).

While the museums policy is not anticipated to have a specific focus on impacting people in rural communities it will:

- Seek to promote and support public engagement with museums through attendance and participation, including people who live in rural communities.
- Recognise the importance of local museums that preserve collections and tell stories belonging to local communities, including rural communities.
- Underscore the importance of preserving local heritage, including heritage skills and intangible culture, all of which are important to rural communities across the province.

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.

The new policy will apply to NIMC and accredited museums across Northern Ireland, the majority of which are independent or run by local councils. The policy will seek to support improving opportunities for school and community groups to access our museums but it is anticipated that any schemes derived from the policy will not impact people in rural areas differently from people in urban 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

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)

Health & Wellbeing. Social inclusion.

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.

Not applicable

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
- Consultation with Other Organisations
- Surveys or Questionnaires
- Published Statistics
- Research Papers
- 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.

Consideration has been given to:

- NISRA - The Continuous Household Survey 2024/25
- Relevant guidance provided by DAERA, including the Guide to the Rural Needs Act (NI) for Public Authorities. (A Guide to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 for Public Authorities (Revised) (daera-ni.gov.uk)).
- DAERA's Key Rural Issues 1993: Key Rural Issues 2023
- The Department has engaged with representatives of the Rural Community Network to learn about needs and issues facing rural communities.
- The Department has also engaged with museums across the province to understand their key purpose and issues / challenges, including barriers to

participation.

- NI Multi-Deprivation Measure 2017 which indicates that in relation to accessing key public services, physical and online, 95 of the 100 most deprived Super Output Areas are classified as rural.
- Rural Heritage Survey conducted by Rural Community Network (May 2024).

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

Museums contribute to meeting several social and economic needs of people in rural areas, including:

- Preserving local heritage and heritage skills.
- Contributing to the local economy.
- Social inclusion.
- Supporting health and mental wellbeing.
- Supporting educational needs, creativity, and life-long learning.
- Supporting social cohesion and inclusivity through using spaces and collections to reflect and celebrate cultural diversity within local communities.

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?

Not applicable

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.

Museums contribute to meeting several social and economic needs of people in rural areas, including:

- Preserving local heritage and heritage skills.
- Contributing to the local economy.
- Social inclusion.
- Supporting health and mental wellbeing.
- Supporting educational needs, creativity, and life-long learning.
- Supporting social cohesion and inclusivity through using spaces and collections to reflect and celebrate cultural diversity within local communities.

In connection with the above needs:

- Accessibility to places and services remains a key issue for people living in rural communities due to limitations connected to transport infrastructure, levels of private vehicle ownership, and digital connectivity.
- Local heritage is important to many rural dwellers as it encompasses a strong connection to local landscape, important sites and buildings, local stories, and intangible local culture that takes many forms from heritage skills to music and dance, to storytelling etc. There is a sense of fragility around local heritage in that it is often reliant on older generations to maintain and drive interest. This sense is accompanied by a need to support local heritage at ground level in order that it can remain vibrant and relevant for younger and future generations.
- Museums offer opportunities to bring people and local communities together to learn about shared history, be creative, and learn new skills. Bringing people together promotes social cohesion and contributes to tackling issues in connection with loneliness and exclusion. Museums can also contribute to positive health and wellbeing, for example, using museum collections to tell stories can help people suffering age degenerative disorders to reminisce and remember.

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.

The museums policy will be influenced by the rural needs identified. The policy will aim amongst other things to drive participation and engagement with accredited national and local museums, including for people living in or near rural settlements. The policy will recognise the accessibility issues that rural dwellers face and will encourage and promote the importance of outreach work, focusing on those who may be suffering some form of exclusion. The museums policy will also underscore the opportunities and benefits associated with museums working with local communities to drive local interest, participation and a sense of ownership of local heritage.

DfC's Heritage, Culture, and Creativity policy programme will see separate but connected policies for public libraries, heritage, the arts, and museums. These policies will all explore rural needs and opportunities. By way of example, our network of 96 public libraries offers many opportunities for local heritage groups to use their local library for space, information, and other resources.

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.

Not applicable

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:

Simon Morton

Position/Grade:

Deputy Principal

Division/Branch:

Culture Policy Branch

Signature:

Simon Morton

Date:

13/01/26

Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:

John Ball

Position/Grade:

Grade 7 Head of Branch

Division/Branch:

Culture Policy Branch

Signature:

John Ball

Date:

13/01/26