

## 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.

Sport 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.

This is an investment into Disability Sport NI for the Period 2026-2027 for the purpose of providing sporting and physical activity opportunities for disabled people.

#### 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Revising a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input 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.

The exchequer core funding of the delivery of services by Disability Sport NI for the period 2026-2027.

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

The investment will deliver sporting and physical activities to disabled people across Northern Ireland with a main aim to address persistent underrepresentation of disabled people. There will be a particular focus on participation in sport, thereby improving physical and mental health, educational attainment, while supporting volunteers and helping to address social exclusion.

**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).  X

Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

*Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.*

N/A

*Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural.'*

N/A

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

N/A

## 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 investment provided to Disability Sport NI will benefit disabled people all over Northern Ireland, including those who live in rural areas. Disability Sport NI will schedule events and projects in rural areas including the successful 'All Out Trekking project' in Gosford Forest Park. Events and opportunities in rural areas are also advertised in the active living no limits website managed by Disability Sport NI.

Over 2026-2027 Disability Sport NI will continue to lobby and advocate for local councils and governing bodies of sport to increase the provision for disabled people all over sport and in particular in areas west of the province where there is a greater number of rural dwellers. Disability Sport NI will also support over 100 member clubs all over Northern Ireland providing a range of participation programmes, events, training courses and education projects all designed to improve the health and wellbeing of disabled people. Rural member clubs include Richhill Disability Services and Maghera Adult Centre. Other members groups in regional areas will also serve people living in rural areas especially those in regional towns such as Omagh, Enniskillen, Magherafelt and Cookstown.

The investment will also provide volunteering opportunities for those in rural areas through training courses and support will be given to sporting venues on how to make their facilities more inclusive ensuring disabled people have equal opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

### 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 investment into Disability Sport NI covers all Northern Ireland, therefore the investment will benefit both rural areas and urban areas. There are 100 Disability Sport NI member clubs/groups in Northern Ireland offering a range of sports and physical activities. The majority of these may be in urban areas where there is more demand but there are clubs/groups in rural areas and disabled people living in those rural areas also can avail of services in rural or neighboring urban settings. Disability Sport NI will also support and provide opportunities for non-member groups through working with partners including local councils and governing bodies of sport.

Disability Sport NI is cognisant of the needs of all disabled people particularly around barriers to participation e.g. travel and cost, as a result they will ensure there are opportunities, events and competitions in areas of high social need including 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 type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education or Training in Rural Areas	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Poverty in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deprivation in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Crime or Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agri-Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state)	Social Inclusion and Sports Development in rural areas.

**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.**

N/A

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			<input 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.

In the development of the Sport NI Corporate Plan 2020-25, an extensive consultation exercise was carried out, which captured feedback from all stakeholders and partners, including the general public.

The methodology for the engagement and public consultation phase of the development of the Sport NI Draft Corporate Plan 2020-2025 was to engage extensively, particularly with S75 and under-represented groups, new partners, non-sporting partners, as well as with traditional stakeholders. Sport NI took a collaborative, co-design, and problem-solving approach; to progress Sport NI's strategic approach to investment. Sport NI specifically consulted with DAERA, rural Councils, governing bodies, rural community, and sporting group and S75 groups.

Sport NI also considered the Equality Impact Assessment conducted on the Corporate Plan, in particular evidence around rural isolation and barriers to participation in sport. [Equality-Impact-Assessment-Sport-NI-Corporate-Plan.pdf](#)

DAERA's Key Rural Issues Northern Ireland 2023 document, which focuses on nine domains of including connectivity and access to services which provide an insight of the issues facing people living in rural areas was considered. [Key Rural Issues | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

The Rural Policy Framework for NI Summary of Consultation findings has been considered, particularly the responses from challenges and opportunities facing people in rural areas over the next 5 years (2021-26)

[Rural Policy Framework for Northern Ireland Consultation | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

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

A summary of the social and economic needs are as follows, with more; more detail in appendix 1.

- A need to address social isolation.
- Diversity of opportunities in rural areas
- Limited reach in the West of the province
- More strategic engagement between organisations
- Utilisation on the natural environment and coastal areas
- Volunteer capacity in rural areas needs improved.
- Lack of public transport and regularity in rural areas.
- Requirement to have opportunities in rural areas advertised better.
- Need for the availability of health and wellbeing services in rural areas

The information provided highlights the issues facing people living in rural areas. Obviously, better access in relation to public transport would help this project, but creating more sporting opportunities in rural areas will be provided. Disability Sport NI will contribute to this by providing opportunities all over Northern Ireland including rural areas. They will also work with partners to maximise potential for opportunities to address the issues that have been identified in the consultations and research highlighted.

**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?**

N/A

## 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.

The issues raised for people residing in rural areas included the following.

- Distance to travel to avail of sporting opportunities.
- Access to public transport (including regularity)
- Availability of physical activity opportunities in rural areas.

Feedback from Sport NI draft corporate plan 2020-25 consultation and in particular in relation to the Cornerstone to target sport in rural communities, in disadvantaged areas and with under-represented groups included the following:

- Rural isolation was a common issue.
- Reach of clubs to potential members in the west of the province
- Governing Bodies reach to councils in the West of the province.
- Limitations on the variety of opportunities available
- Volunteering capacity in rural areas is an issue.
- Utilisation of natural environment and coastal areas is important.
- Lack of knowledge of when and where opportunities are available.

Sport NI's investment into Disability Sport NI will focus on providing opportunities to participate in sport for all areas in Northern Ireland, including those in rural areas. The programmes, services and actions within the plan will focus on providing opportunities to participate in sport for disabled people and pay particular regards to those in rural areas. Examples will include:

1. Delivery of outdoor opportunities in the natural environment.
2. Working with partners in rural areas to deliver a range of physical recreation programmes and sessions across the rural areas, including Inclusive cycling, wheelie active, disability sports clubs, inclusive gym, autism & sport, disability water sports & table tennis programmes plus summer schemes.
3. Supporting member clubs, groups and schools annually to effectively deliver participation and competition programmes to the disabled community through the provision of training, education and advice and through the organisation and support of rural community events.
4. Lobbying and encouraging owners and operators to develop and manage sports facilities, stadia and outdoor places across rural areas, which are inclusive of disabled people. This includes advice and guidance on making their facilities more accessible and delivering training on providing sporting opportunities for people with a disability.
5. Advertising and promoting opportunities that are available in rural areas through the Active Living No Limits website.

## 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.**

This investment into Disability Sport NI is for the benefit of all disabled people in Northern Ireland. Sport Northern Ireland and Disability Sport NI recognise that there is a particular issue around social exclusion not only with disabled people but also with people who reside in rural areas. This investment will aim to tackle social exclusion by providing sport and physical activity opportunities including in rural areas. Disability Sport NI aim to ensure that there is equality in opportunity and acknowledge that the recent downturns in participation of disabled people will include those from rural areas and therefore will aim to provide opportunities that cater for both those people who reside in urban and rural areas.

The investment into Disability Sport NI will contribute to addressing the needs and issues identified in this assessment report.

The plan will benefit disabled people all over Northern Ireland, and in particular those living in rural areas. The Rural Impact Assessment of each subsidiary programme, project or service will also consider this specifically and monitor impact.

Specific examples include:

- Events and projects in rural areas including the successful 'All Out Trekking project' in Gosford Forest Park.
- Events and opportunities in rural areas are also advertised in the Active Living No Limits website.
- Lobby and advocacy for local councils and governing bodies of sport to increase the provision over sport and in particularly in areas west of the province where there us a greater number of rural dwellers.
- Support member clubs all over Northern Ireland providing a range of participation programmes, events, training courses and education projects all designed to improve the health and wellbeing of disabled people. Rural member clubs include Richhill Disability Services and Maghera Adult Centre.
- Other members groups in regional areas will also serve people living in rural areas especially those in regional towns such as Omagh, Enniskillen, Magherafelt and Cookstown.
- Volunteering opportunities for those in rural areas through training courses and support will be given to sporting venues on how to make their facilities more inclusive ensuring disabled people have equal opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

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.**

N/A

## **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.

<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:</b>	Ian Weir & Niall O'Neill
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Sports Culture & Integrity Manager & Sport Developer
<b>Division/Branch:</b>	Sport NI
<b>Signature:</b>	N.O'Neill / Ian Weir
<b>Date:</b>	08.01.26
<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:</b>	Rebecca Hope
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Interim Director of Sport (G6)
<b>Division/Branch:</b>	Sport NI
<b>Signature:</b>	R. Hope
<b>Date:</b>	04.02.26