

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 Northern Ireland

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.

Disability in Sport Engagement & Delivery Plan 2024–2026

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.

Sport, Culture and Integrity Manager

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

A strategic plan to influence Northern Ireland's sporting sector to enhance the experience of people with a disability in sport —across leadership, visibility, culture, participation, and data. Actions delivered via programmes and staff across Sport NI.

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.

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.

- Greater inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream sport settings.
- Increased representation of people with disabilities in sports governance and delivery roles.
- Reduction in barriers to access, particularly in rural areas.
- Improved collection and use of diversity data.
- Enhanced public perception of sport as inclusive and representative.

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.

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 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 type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state)	<input type="text" value="Social Inclusion 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 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 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.

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, and to take 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.

An EQIA on the corporate plan was completed: [Equality-Impact-Assessment-Sport-NI-Corporate-Plan.pdf](#) which considered rural needs. DAERA's Key Rural Issues Northern Ireland 2023 was also considered and <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/poverty-and-income-inequality-report-urban-rural-statistics>.

Specifically regarding disabled people in rural areas needs identified were:

[Rural Disability and Community Participation | Frontiers Research Topic](#)

[Disability in rural areas: A matter of perception](#)

[On making disability in rural places more visible: Challenges and opportunities \[Introduction to a special issue\] - ScienceDirect](#)

[Intersectionality, childhood disability and rurality: What does rural life mean for disabled children and their families? - Flynn - 2025 - Sociologia Ruralis - Wiley Online Library](#)

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:

- 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.

From the Key Rural issues Northern Ireland 2023

- Population growth in rural areas from 2001-20 has outstripped that in urban areas by a factor of almost 3 to 1 (20% to 7%)
- People in rural areas have to travel on average an extra 2.7 miles more than those in urban areas to participate in sport
- People in rural areas have to travel an additional average of 45 miles per year more than those in urban areas to participate in sport
- Data from the Travel Survey NI 2021 revealed that just 17% of rural dwellers live within a 3 minute walk of the nearest bus stop, compared with 38% of those living in urban areas – with 8% of rural dwellers living a 44 minute or longer walk to their nearest stop
- The frequency of public transport services also differs greatly between urban and rural areas. More than two thirds (69%) of urban dwellers reported a bus service frequency of at least once an hour, compared with 19% of those who live in rural locations

(2019) Sport NI, Active Fit and Sporty Participation Survey.

- Those from rural areas described the challenges they faced such as lack of choice of sports, transport issues and social isolation
- Increased promotion of the sport and physical activity options available in local communities, particularly in rural areas - many participants explained they believed there are opportunities out there but they were unsure where to look.

Sport NI's programmes and investment within the plan will focus on providing opportunities to participate in sport for all areas in Northern Ireland, including those in rural areas. Relative work includes.

- 1) Delivery of the all out trekking project in Gosford Forest Park, providing outdoor opportunities in the natural environment for up to 150 people annually.
- 2) Working with ABC Council, an Inclusive Sport & Leisure Officer will organise and deliver a range of physical recreation programmes and sessions across the Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon District Council area, including Inclusive cycling, wheelie active, disability sports clubs, inclusive gym, autism & sport, disability water sports & table tennis programmes plus summer schemes.
- 3) Supporting 25 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 community events.
- 4) Lobbying and encouraging owners and operators to develop and manage sports facilities, stadia and outdoor places across Northern Ireland 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 all over Northern Ireland and in particular 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.

The plan will benefit people with a disability all over Northern Ireland, including those who live in rural areas. The programmes contained within the plan will include events and projects in rural areas. Events and opportunities in rural areas are also advertised in the active living no limits website. Over the next 4 years, we have funded providers to lobby and advocate for local councils and governing bodies of sport to increase the provision of disability all over sport and in particularly in areas west of the province where there is a greater number of rural dwellers.

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.

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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Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Ian Weir
Position/Grade:	Deputy Principal
Division/Branch	Sport NI
Signature:	Ian Weir
Date:	19.09.25
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Rebecca Hope
Position/Grade:	Interim Director of Sport (G6)
Division/Branch:	Sport NI
Signature:	<i>R Hope</i>
Date:	22.09.25