

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 (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 sporting infrastructure in Northern Ireland (Olympic Legacy Fund).

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.

Olympic Legacy Fund

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

The Olympic Legacy Fund is a £2million pound investment programme, delivered by Sport NI in partnership with Crowdfunder UK. The fund aims to improve the quality of equipment and/or modernise facilities at community sports organisations, encouraging people to engage in sport and physical activity. Supported projects will leave a lasting community legacy from the success of Northern Ireland athletes at the Paris 2024 Olympic/Paralympic Games.

In 2025/26 The Olympic Legacy Fund supported 81 projects, of which, 49 were based in rural areas. This equates to 60% of all projects being in rural areas.

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.

The OLF is delivered in partnership with Crowdfunder. The programme is open to any club/organization who deliver a sport recognized by Sport NI, the crowdfunder aspect of the programme will appeal to those clubs and organisations in rural areas as it encourages engagement by inviting local businesses to contribute rewards for supporters who donate to projects, helping to create a strong and inclusive community-focused initiative. This format will benefit close knit communities often seen in rural areas.

The OLF will have a positive impact on clubs/organisations in rural areas supporting them by investing in infrastructure and equipment that will provide a more welcoming environment with increased participation opportunities in many cases.

The investment will address the challenges facing rural areas for example

- Inclusion - Improve the existing infrastructure including inclusive facilities for females and for those with a disability e.g. female changing facilities and accessible toilets
- Safe Spaces – improvements in spectator areas and provision of safe walking trails
- Additional Participation Opportunities – investment in walking trails and gym equipment providing opportunities for people who may not be already participating in the primary sport provided by the club/organization.

See Appendix 1 for examples of how the OLF impacted on Rural organisations in 25/26.

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 Olympic Legacy Fund is designed and promoted to benefit both those who live in rural and urban areas. There are no additional barriers that apply to clubs/groups in rural areas to those in Urban areas.

People living in Rural areas face many more challenges to those who live in Urban areas when it comes to opportunities to participate in sport, these include limited access to facilities e.g. fewer facilities which leads to less opportunity for wider participation. There are also transport challenges particularly for younger people and disabled people. Smaller populations also contribute to difficulties in providing opportunities due to numbers of coaches and volunteers and adequate numbers to create teams.

The Olympic Legacy Fund will have a **greater impact in rural areas** because it will help overcome barriers that are less severe in urban areas. This will be done by creating additional participation opportunities through enhanced facilities at sports clubs and community groups. For example, a walking trail in a Rural club will provide participation opportunities to people who normally would not be involved in the main sport of the club/group. Walking in rural areas may not have been possible before investment.

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)	Sporting infrastructure and participation opportunities

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

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 have 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 improvement.
- 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

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.

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 Olympic Legacy Fund aims to improve sporting infrastructure and sporting equipment at community sports organisations in Northern Ireland, encouraging people to engage in sport and physical activity. With issues around social exclusion and lack of services in rural areas the Olympic Legacy fund will provide clubs and groups the opportunity to improve their sporting infrastructure and provide a more attractive environment for people to participate in sport.

The Olympic Legacy Fund investment will contribute to addressing the needs and issues identified in this assessment report. Sport NI's investment into sporting infrastructure and equipment will improve the level of opportunities and experience for existing and potential new people to sports and physical activity, including those in rural areas. This will be achieved by

Facility Modernisation

- 1) Renovating clubhouses and changing facilities making them more attractive especially for females and those with a disability.
- 2) Repurposing existing and creating existing new indoor or outdoor spaces providing additional opportunities
- 3) Floodlight upgrades and other energy saving initiatives meaning better use of the facilities and catering for additional opportunities.

Facility Enhancement

- 4) Upgrade facility fences or facility boundaries creating a safe environment.
- 5) Upgrade spectator accommodation to attract the rural community to the club.
- 6) Sports surface enhancement works which will allow for more usage of the facility.

Equipment

- 7) Large items of sports equipment. (boats, trailers, gym equipment, bikes etc.) providing more opportunities,
- 8) Items of non-sporting equipment. (scoreboards, video equipment, storage racks etc. providing a better experience and attracting more to the club.

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.

☒

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Patrick O Toole
Position/Grade:	Sport Developer
Division/Branch	Sport NI
Signature:	P O Toole
Date:	08/08/2026
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Rebecca Hope
Position/Grade:	Interim Director of Sport
Division/Branch:	Sport NI
Signature:	<i>R Hope</i>
Date:	14.09.2026