

Rural Issues Statement

January 2015



Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

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DARD Rural Proofing Template

Section A

Details about the policy / decision to be rural proofed

Title of policy / decision to be rural proofed:-

A Rural Proofing Bill for Northern Ireland.

Brief description of policy / decision to be rural proofed:-

The purpose of rural proofing is to ensure fair and equitable treatment of rural communities and that a policy does not indirectly have a detrimental impact on rural dwellers and rural communities. Rural proofing is currently part of the policy making process across government in Northern Ireland but does not currently have a statutory footing.

Aims and objectives of the policy / decision to be rural proofed:-

The Rural Proofing Bill is being brought forward in order to strengthen the existing policy requirements around rural proofing. The Northern Ireland Executive has been committed to undertaking rural proofing since 2002, and reaffirmed this commitment in 2009. The approach to rural proofing to date has been a non-legislative one and evidence suggests that this method has not been as effective as first envisaged. Therefore in order to better meet the commitments set by the Executive in 2002 and again in 2009, it is considered that legislating for the process will strengthen and underpin this commitment. Legislating for rural proofing will also serve to improve the effectiveness of this process and to ensure that the needs of rural communities are taken into account in the policy making process, across all departments, on an ongoing basis.

Section B

Policy Impact on Rural Communities

1. Are there any rural specific impacts of this policy?

The Rural Proofing Bill is being brought forward in order to ensure fair and equitable treatment for rural communities and so that policies do not indirectly have a detrimental impact on rural dwellers and rural communities. By its very nature the policy intent of this Bill is exclusively rural specific.

2. Are there any potential indirect impacts?

See above.

3. Are there potential local impacts that will differ from the regional impact?

See above.

4. Is there a need for pre-consultation with rural stakeholders to get better insight into potential rural impacts?

In advance of public consultation a series of one-one engagements were carried out across a wide and comprehensive range of rural stakeholders. In addition, representatives from these stakeholder groups (along with a number of others who were not available to engage in the one-one process) were invited to participate in the Rural Proofing Bill Stakeholder Forum.

5. Is there a need for actions to mitigate the impacts of the policy in rural areas?

Answer to question 1 refers.

Section C

Evidential Requirements

(Questions for consideration to assess the evidence used in assessing the impact of the policy on the rural community)

1. Are the predicted impacts supported by evidence?

Yes, see question 2 below.

2. What types of evidence have you considered in your policy development? (statistics/research/stakeholder advice)

We have examined the current process of rural proofing within Northern Ireland, along with a broad range of research on this subject. We have also considered how the rural proofing process is implemented across the rest of the United Kingdom, Ireland and a number of other countries.

We have considered available rural statistical data in formulating both an equality and partial regulatory impact assessment of the Bill.

We have met with a wide range of rural stakeholders for advice on the inadequacies of the current system and ideas on how the proposed policy proposals could improve this.

3. Are there any other areas of uncertainty, where further evidence would be useful?

None

4. Have any design features already been implemented as a result of the evidence obtained?

The formulation and content of the Rural Proofing Bill has all been based on the results of the evidence we have obtained by examination of the current process, research into how the process works in other countries and by engaging with rural stakeholders.

Section D

Formal Record of Rural Proofing Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being rural proofed

A Rural Proofing Bill for Northern Ireland

I can confirm that the proposed policy / decision has been rural proofed in full and that all issues raised have been considered prior to the implementation of the policy/decision.

Rural proofing completed by (Staff Officer level or above) -

Name: Astrid Stuart

Grade: G7

Date: 28 January 2015

Branch: Rural Proofing Branch

Signature:



Rural proofing approved by (must be Grade 3 or above) -

Name: Louise Warde Hunter

Grade: G3

Date: 28 January 2015

Branch: Central Policy Group

Signature:

