

Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)

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

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.

The Performance Club strand of Northern Ireland Football Fund (TNIFF) is intended to modernise the physical infrastructure used by local performance clubs to play the game of football. It is intended to not only benefit the individuals associated with the club but also the local communities.

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.

The Northern Ireland Football Fund (TNIFF) – Performance Programme

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

- TNIFF aims to:
- Drive participation in physical activity through football which contributes to positive health and mental health outcomes.

- Elevate pride in Northern Ireland and capture the public imagination.
- Develop new and refurbished football facilities which will contribute to positive outcomes for inclusion of underrepresented groups.
- Enable football clubs to become sustainable in the future and contribute to a thriving and balanced economy.
- Drive high standards including for climate action and effective delivery of capital programmes and sporting infrastructure
- Drive high standards including for climate action and effective delivery of capital programmes and sporting infrastructure

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?

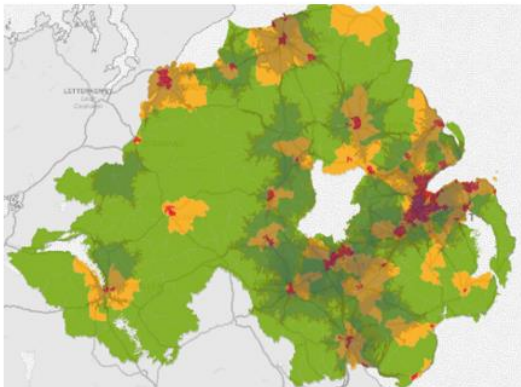
Yes No If the response is NO GO TO Section 2E.

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The Performance Programme will either directly impact or be of interest to most citizens living in Northern Ireland due to the popularity of football and widespread locations of performance club grounds.

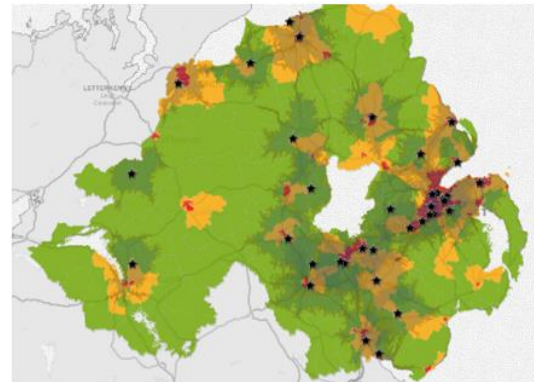
In the 2023/2024 football season there are 42 Clubs that meet the definition of a Performance Club and therefore eligible to apply to the Fund. The 42 clubs are located across Northern Ireland in urban, rural or a mix of urban/rural settings. (see diagram below)

Fig 1 Illustration of Urban/Rural/Mixed areas in Northern Ireland



Urban ■ Rural ■ Mixed ■

Fig 2 Performance Club locations in Urban/Rural/Mixed areas



Performance Club ★

In research carried out for '*Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation – A New Framework, DfC*' and a '*Cultural Deprivation index (CDI) DCAL*' rural dwellers cited location and accessibility as the main barriers to participation in cultural and leisure pursuits including sport.

Performance Club funding has the potential to develop and/or improve facilities in both urban and rural areas and make them more accessible to local communities including underrepresented groups.

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.

It is not intended to disburse funding in such a way as to secure a regional spread but rather all applications will be subject to the same scoring matrix with no advantage or disadvantage given to rural clubs.

The outcome of the distribution of this funding is not expected to impact on people in rural areas differently from those 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)

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.

The urban/rural analysis from the latest “Experience of sport by adults in Northern Ireland 22/23 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/engagement-culture-arts-heritage-and-sport-by-adults-northern-ireland-202223>

Profile of respondent	Sport participation %	Base
Urban or rural		
Living in urban area	55	3,612
Living in rural area	58	2,305

The Continuous Household survey reports 7% of the NI population participated in football during 2022/2023.

Profile of respondent	Sports Participation 2022/23*	
	Football Participation %	Base
Urban or rural		
Living in urban area	8	2,993
Living in rural area	7	1,947

Other information sources include:

- <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/new-sport-and-physical-activity-strategy-ni-consultation-2021>
- Cultural Deprivation index 2014
- research-to-examine-the-barriers-to-engaging-in-arts-sports-libraries-and-museums-for-people-living-in-poverty-2015

- [Consultation Report - Sub Regional Stadia \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)
- Rural/Urban classification: The Central Postcode Directory lists all Data Zones and Super Data Zones and whether they are Urban/Rural or both <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/support/geography/central-postcode-directory>

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

TNIFF has been designated as an Executive Flagship Programme and is expected to be one of the largest and highest profile capital-grant investment vehicles. The size and scope of the initiative means that it will either directly impact or be of interest to most citizens living in Northern Ireland.

TNIFF's benefits are expected to span a wide range of existing Programme for Government themes, including health and wellbeing, safety, financial/ economic/ jobs, disability and inclusive access, heritage, climate actions, regeneration, communities, civic pride.

While developing the Active Living - The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland, DfC colleagues held focus group meetings with Rural Networks where the main issues identified were lack of and cost of transportation, lack of facilities, distance to facilities, lack of diversity of physical activity facilities and standard of the facilities.

DAERA has confirmed that research continues to show that many significant issues continue to face rural communities. Pressures as a result of the economic climate are often exacerbated in rural areas resulting in increasing numbers of rural people finding themselves in positions of poverty and exclusion. These challenges are compounded with many needs and issues hidden as a result of isolation in the rural setting (i.e. multiple barriers / deprivation). Ageing infrastructure, poor facilities, older equipment and constrained financial resources often means that rural community and voluntary organizations are not in a position to provide rural dwellers with the standard of service provided by better equipped urban centres.

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.

Northern Ireland covers an area of some 1.35m hectares and its population stands at just over 1.8 million which represents just 3% of the UK total population. At least 80% of the NI land mass is rural. Using DAERA's preferred definition of rural areas more than 670,000 people, (around 35%) of the total population reside in rural areas,

While poverty and social isolation exist in both urban areas and rural areas it is recognised that those living in rural areas often experience poverty and social isolation differently due to issues relating to geographical isolation, lower population density, the dispersed nature of many rural settlements and transport issues.

A number of aspects of rural living may contribute to social isolation for the elderly, the disabled, those in poor health or surviving on low income, those who are most geographically remote, and those without access to private means of transport. With reduced opportunity for face-to-face contact, some rural dwellers may feel little incentive to leave their homes, and this may have implications for both health and physical fitness.

Performance Club funding has the potential to develop and/or improve club facilities and make them more accessible to their local communities through either involvement in the sport and/or through the use of facilities for community led events.

Note: Improving transport links to and from club locations are not within the remit of the TNIFF Performance Strand Policy.

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 TNIFF Performance Strand policy is intended to modernise the physical infrastructure of Performance clubs within Northern Ireland and increase the social value they bring to their local communities.

The TNIFF Performance strand will help address existing deficiencies in provision of facilities in both urban and rural areas based on the locations of facilities which have been dictated by the development of football grounds at local level.

All clubs will be required to prepare and submit Five Case Model business cases in line with Better Business Cases NI requirements, and this will include a full options analysis and evidenced demand and potential impact on needs of communities in the vicinity of the proposed project location.

The TNIFF Performance strand will not seek to create new facilities, except where a need is demonstrated by applicants and the proposed location is justified by a clear rationale which takes account of local needs.

Careful consideration has been given to what factors should NOT be included in the scoring matrix to avoid adversely affecting applications from clubs located in rural areas. A decision was taken not to include attendance figures nor transport links to the grounds after remoteness of location along with poor transport links were identified as rural need factors.

Consideration will also be given on how new or refurbished facilities can serve the whole population, while remaining financially sustainable. For instance, the opportunity of investing in facilities in more rural areas to reach local communities will have to be balanced with the risk of the facility having less total demand and therefore being subject to financial and operational challenges.

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: Siobhan Toner

Position/Grade: Staff Officer

Division/Branch: The Northern Ireland Football Fund Division

Signature: 

Date: 16.9.24

Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by: Joanna Gray

Position/Grade: G7, Head of Branch

Division/Branch: The Northern Ireland Football Fund, Active Communities Division

Signature: 

Date: 23 September 2024