

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 Northern Ireland Football Fund (TNIFF) is intended to modernise the physical infrastructure used by local clubs to play the game of football at performance and grassroots level in Northern Ireland. It is also expected to include investment in creation of a National Training Centre for football.

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)

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

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.

In related research '*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.

The overarching TNIFF policy has the potential to develop and/or improve facilities within rural areas with the aim of increasing participation in soccer which will in turn help address social isolation.

The TNIFF super programme consists of three separate strands:

- Performance,
- Grassroots and
- the National Training Centre.

The impact on people in rural areas may vary in each of these three strands. An explanation on the impact on people in rural needs for each strand will be detailed in their respective RNIA report.

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.

Proximity to facilities compounded by transport difficulties within rural areas may be a significant factor in the participation of football. Facilities are further from home and not all may cater for the wider society (female participants, disabilities etc). As distances to travel are longer, this also impacts on the cost of participation.

The TNIFF policy has the potential to improve or increase access to facilities within rural areas. The aim of making the facilities more accessible is expected to result in increased participation and attendance and/ or increased quality of experience when attending or participating in football.

It will be important to consider 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.

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 \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

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

TNIFF is a super programme consisting of three different strands: Performance, Grassroots, and the National Training Centre. The programme has been designated as an Executive Flagship Programme and is expected to be one of the largest and highest profile capital-grant investment programmes in NI. 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 Programme for Government themes, including health and wellbeing, safety, financial/economic/ jobs, disability and inclusive access, heritage, climate actions, regeneration, communities, civic pride.

In 2016 a report on the 'Consultation on the Proposals for a Sub Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer (2015)' highlighted the necessity to consider the needs of rural clubs and rural communities within the programme.

'Active Living - The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland', While developing the strategy DfC colleagues held focus group meetings with Rural Networks. 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 research continues to show that many significant issues continue to face rural communities. Economic pressures 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 mean 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.

The social and economic needs of people in rural areas will vary for each strand. Further investigation and analysis will be necessary at to ensure the social and economic needs of people in rural areas are correctly captured for each strand within the TNIFF programme.

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

Further steps will be taken to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas when completing the Rural Needs Impact Analysis on each of the three individual strands.

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.

In comparison with other countries, NI has a relatively young population with approximately one-third of persons aged between 0-24 years old. Whilst disparities can exist when comparing data at sub-regional or local level, NI remains one of the most deprived regions of the UK. This is as a result of a number of factors including a young population (hence higher dependency rates), low labour market participation rates, a high rate of economic inactivity, a larger share of employment sectors of low productivity and below average wages.

Using DAERA's preferred definition of rural areas more than 670,000 people, (around 35%) of the total population reside in rural areas,

Employment rates in the rural population are slightly higher than for those living in towns and cities but rural workplace earnings are lower.

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 and the dispersed nature of many rural settlements. Living in a rural area can also exacerbate the effects of poverty and social isolation for certain groups. For example additional costs of living in a rural area such as higher fuel or transport costs can have a greater impact on people on low incomes while some groups such as young people or disabled people may experience greater difficulties accessing transport services in rural areas than in urban settings.

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.

Football clubs already exist across Northern Ireland in urban and rural areas. The TNIFF Programme 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. The TNIFF programme will help address existing deficiencies in provision of facilities in urban and rural areas based on locations of facilities which have been dictated by the development of football grounds at local level.

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.

N/A

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.

The TNIFF policy is intended to modernise the physical infrastructure used by teams at all levels, national, professional and grassroots within Northern Ireland.

TNIFF has three strands:

- Performance,
- Grassroots and
- the National Training Centre

The impact of rural needs on each of the individual three strands needs further investigation and analysis. This may include consultation with Rural Networks and DAERA officials.

Findings will be explained in detail in each strand's respective RNIA.

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: 22.7.24

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: 8 August 2024