

Partial Regulatory Impact Assessment

January 2015



Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk

Partial Regulatory Impact Assessment

Section A

Details about the policy / decision to be assessed

Title of policy / decision to be assessed:-

A Rural Proofing Bill for Northern Ireland.

Brief description of policy / decision to be assessed:-

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 assessed:-

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.

On whom will the policy / decision impact?

Consider the internal and external impacts (both actual or potential)

- Staff – no impact perceived.
- Service users – no impact perceived.
- Rural community

Statistics show that around 37% of the Northern Ireland population lives in rural areas. Giving the rural proofing process a statutory footing will further protect the needs of the rural community when all government departments across Northern Ireland are considering introducing new or revised policies.

- Other public sector organisations

It is proposed that the Rural Proofing Bill will carry provisions to extend the rural proofing process to Local Government Authorities and other Non-Departmental Governmental Bodies.

- Voluntary / community groups / trade unions

The voluntary and community organisations that are based primarily in rural areas and who primarily represent the views of the 37% of the rural population in Northern Ireland, should benefit from the policies and statutory provisions that the Rural Proofing Bill will introduce.

- others, please specify – no impact perceived.

Are there linkages to other NI Departments / NDPBs?

The Rural Proofing Bill will extend to all government departments, Local Government Authorities and other Non-Departmental Governmental Bodies upon enactment.

Section B

Problem Under Consideration

Rural proofing is a tool used to assess the impact of proposed policies on rural needs and circumstances. Under the current arrangements agreed by the Executive, DARD is the lead Department for rural proofing policy within government and supports the work of Departments by providing guidance and training for officials involved in policy making. The requirement to carry out rural proofing has been an ongoing one for all Departments since 2002 and responsibility for implementing rural proofing in all Departments lies with individual Departments. A key issue is that DARD does not currently have access to information on how widely or how effectively rural proofing has been undertaken by Departments.

The DARD Minister has recognised that there is further scope to improve the effectiveness of rural proofing and has considered three options for strengthening rural proofing within government to ensure that rural needs and circumstances are routinely considered in policy making.

Options Considered

Option 1: A non-legislative approach.

Option 2: Primary Legislation introducing a statutory duty requiring all Departments and Local Councils to take account the needs of people living in rural areas.

Option 3: Primary legislation aimed at strengthening DARD's role in the rural proofing process.

Option Chosen

The Agriculture and Rural Development Minister considered that legislating to impose a statutory duty to consider the needs of people living in rural areas was the best method to strengthen and underpin the rural proofing process and indicated her preferred option was Option 2. It is considered that there would be minimal or no costs, savings or additional burden on business, charities or the voluntary sector as a result of this option.

Section C

Formal Record of Regulatory Impact Assessment Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being assessed

A Rural Proofing Bill for Northern Ireland

I can confirm that the proposed policy / decision imposes no costs, savings or additional burden on business, charities or the voluntary sector and as a consequence a full regulatory impact assessment was not considered necessary.

Regulatory Impact Assessment completed by (Staff Officer level or above) -

Name: Astrid Stuart

Grade: G7

Date: 28 January 2015

Branch: Rural Proofing Branch

Signature:



Regulatory Impact Assessment approved by (must be Grade 3 or above) -

Name: Louise Warde Hunter

Grade: G3

Date: 28 January 2015

Branch: Central Policy Group

Signature:

