

DAERA 2016/17 Business Plan

Introduction

The Stormont House Agreement contained a commitment to reduce the number of Northern Ireland Civil Service Departments from 12 to 9 immediately following the 2016 Assembly Election. One of the Departments established is the new Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to encompass:

- DARD's existing functions with the exception of Rivers Agency;
- Inland Fisheries from DCAL;
- Environmental responsibilities from DOE/NIEA; and
- Responsibility for the Sustainability Strategy from OFMDFM.

This is the first Annual Business Plan for DAERA. In creating DAERA, no functions were done away with and no policies terminated.

A new Departmental Vision and Strategic Outcomes have been established as follows:

Vision: “A thriving and sustainable economy, environment and rural community”

Strategic Outcomes:

1. Sustainable agri-food, fisheries, forestry and industrial sectors.
2. A clean, healthy environment, benefiting people, nature and the economy.
3. A thriving rural economy, contributing to prosperity and wellbeing.

How we operate:

4. A well led, high performing organisation focused on outcomes.

In striving to be as efficient as possible, recommendations arising from DARD initiated reviews in respect of Corporate Services, how we do inspections and our advisory and customer contact services, will be implemented. There will also be continued development of the Department's on-line services. It is intended that this will allow us to make the best use of the reduced number of staff that we have in the aftermath of the Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES). Following the EU Referendum, however, it is imperative that the Department considers in some detail the structures and resources required going forward. During 2016/17 a detailed analysis will be carried out in regard to the policy and financial implications of Brexit. Consideration will be given to the need to carry out a capacity/capability assessment.

Having completed the relocation of Fisheries Division to Downpatrick and Forest Service to Enniskillen, we will this year complete the relocation of Rivers Agency to Loughry Campus and agree the final building design and start construction of the new Headquarters building.

The targets included in this DAERA 2016/17 Annual Business Plan are linked to Outcomes projected to 2020 included in the DAERA Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan has been drafted in parallel with work at NICS level to develop a new Programme for Government (PfG).

The Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements required an outcomes-focused PfG within two weeks of the Assembly meeting. The Outcomes Framework is intended to help translate this into improvements in quality of life, in both economic and social terms. PfG is to be developed as a Framework composed of Outcomes, Indicators, and Measures with SROs responsible for performance against indicators at Permanent Secretary level and Action Plans established for delivery against indicators, developed and implemented collaboratively across sectors.

The rationale for the new PfG was taken into account in establishing DAERA performance targets for 2016/17 linked to projected Outcomes to 2020. The targets identified are for the most part outward facing. However, the DAERA Business Plan is supported by a range of supporting Business Plans and Balanced Scorecards across all of the Department's business areas and these will incorporate both outward and inward facing targets to be monitored on a regular basis.

Annual Business Plan 2016/17

This section sets out the Department's business targets for the 2016/17 financial year, including timescales for delivery where appropriate. The targets link directly to projected outcomes to 2020 identified under each of the 4 Strategic Outcomes on page 5 of the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Outcome 1 - Sustainable agri-food, fisheries, forestry and industrial sectors

- By 31 March 2017, publish a formal "Going for Growth" Progress Report
- Deliver DAERA action within the NI Executive's China Strategy and Action Plan by March 2017
- By 31 March 2017, submit application for BSE Negligible Risk Status to the OIE
- By 31 March 2017:
 - have opened the first tranche of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS) - Capital with 500 investing; and
 - subject to resources, have opened the first tranche of the Agri-Food Processing Investment Scheme
- By 31 March 2017, (i) 3,000 farmers developing their business through benchmarking, peer learning and knowledge & technology transfer, within Business Development Groups; and (ii) 600 farmers receiving training in Farm Family Skills
- By 31 March 2017, 2,300 people achieving nationally validated qualifications at Level II and above and deliver a suite of education and industry training programmes to 8,000 people
- During 2016/17, AFBI to deliver DAERA-directed work programme to meet the Department's research, surveillance, diagnostic and analytical service needs effectively, within budget and on time

- By 31 March 2017, launch a new tranche of the Research Challenge Fund to commission industry-led research, to stimulate the collaboration of at least 5 SMEs and industry levy boards with the research community
- By 31 March 2017, advise the Executive on the Minister's proposals in relation to the TB Strategic Partnership Group's TB Eradication Strategy and Implementation Plan (subject to the Minister's clearance)
- Disallowance for area-based schemes to be limited to 3% for the 2016 scheme year
- By 31 March 2017:
 - open phase 1 of the European Maritime Fisheries Fund for applications;
 - appoint a Fisheries Local Action Group to deliver a community-led Local Development Strategy; and
 - commit £2million funding to eligible projects consistent with the UK's Operational Programme priorities.

Strategic Outcome 2 - A clean, healthy environment, benefiting people, nature and the economy

- By 31 March 2017, open the Environmental Farming Scheme for applications
- Implement the relevant Departmental 2016/17 actions in the NI Biodiversity Strategy by 31 March 2017
- Initiate management plans for 5 terrestrial and 2 Marine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) by 31 March 2017
- Issue the 2017/18 Environment Fund offers by 30 November 2016
- By 31 March 2017, have formally designated 3 Marine Conservation Zones and North Channel SAC
- By 31 March 2017, implement the EU Discard Reduction 2016 Plans for Irish Sea Haddock and Nephrops fisheries and report to the Commission on compliance

- Review and undertake all agreed DAERA measures set out in cross-Departmental Climate Change Mitigation Action Plan by 31 March 2017
- By 31 March 2017, support ensuring that no more than 262,856 tonnes of Local Authority Collected Biodegradable Municipal Waste is sent to landfill
- By March 2017 support increased household waste recycling in pursuit of the 2020 target of 50%
- Complete the Agri GHG component of the Agriculture Sectoral Roadmap by 31 December 2016
- Provide effective and efficient regulation and enforcement to Regulated industry by aiming for 90% compliance with all Authorisations using Compliance Assessment Model by 31 March 2017
- Complete a biannual strategic assessment of waste crime in Northern Ireland by 30 November 2016 – assessments in May and November each year
- By 31 March 2017 have 200ha of new woodland and supply 400,000m³ of timber to industry

Strategic Outcome 3 - A thriving rural economy, contributing to prosperity and wellbeing

- Develop guidance, training and reporting arrangements to support Public Authorities in fulfilling their duties under the Rural Needs Act by 31 March 2017
- Participate in the development of 8 EU funding proposals for submission under LIFE, Horizon 2020 or INTERREG V by 31 March 2017

Strategic Outcome 4 – A well led, high performing organisation focused on outcomes

- During 2016/17:
 - 65% of annual Single Application Forms to be received on-line (including assisted digital);
 - 65% of animal births, deaths and movements notifications to be received on-line (including assisted digital); and
 - 50% of active farm businesses transacting online
- Commence advance payments mid October 2016 with 95% of eligible Direct Payment applicants to receive full payment in December 2016
- By 31 July 2016, have agreed the final building design and have started construction of the new Headquarters building
- Provisional Resource and Capital outturn to be between 98.5% and 100% of Final Budget for 2016/17
- Successfully complete the scoping stage of the Brexit Programme by 31 December 2016

Business Plan Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

The Department has established monitoring and reporting arrangements in place in relation to its Business Plan targets. In the first instance, each target is assigned to a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) who will have responsibility for monitoring progress on a day to day basis.

During the course of the financial year, detailed progress against each Business Plan target will be reported to the Board for the periods ending 30 September, 31 December and 31 March and the reports to 30 September and 31 March will also be submitted to the Minister and AERA Committee.

Progress will be reported in accordance with the methodology adopted for the Programme for Government (PfG) Commitment reports to the Executive. This on a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) basis as follows:

Green - achieved or on track for delivery;

Green/Amber - level of progress is broadly on track with easily redeemable deviations from plans;

Amber - rate of progress is less than planned; and

Red - not achieved or not expected to be achieved.

The Department's Senior Management Team will also oversee the level of progress being made towards the milestones and targets set and will approve corrective actions required, as appropriate, during the course of the year.

The Department's Annual Report, published in the summer, will provide a summary of achievements under each of the four Strategic Outcomes.