



DAERA Business Plan | 2020-21



Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

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Minister's Foreword

I am pleased to present DAERA's 2020-21 Business Plan which frames our work for the year ahead. It reflects the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) which continues to profoundly affect the health of our people and drive economic, social and environmental change. It recognises the need to address the problems of today but also look to the future to prepare to renew ourselves, our economy and our environment. As the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, I am committed to ensuring that we make every possible effort to protect the health and well-being of our staff, our customers and the general public and to ensure that we continue to carry out our essential services safely.



I have made it the priority for my Department to work together across the system and in response to this we have been able to provide 30 powered respirator units for use in intensive care settings, provided veterinary resources to assist with COVID-19 contact tracing and our College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) has made over 20,000 coveralls and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) available to the Health and Social Care Trusts. DAERA's Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) has also assisted the health service in testing up to 1,000 samples a day from suspect COVID-19 cases via a newly established consortium with Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University.

I have been successful in securing additional £30.3m of funding for my Department to address some of the issues COVID-19 is presenting. £25.0m has been allocated to market interventions in the agri food sector. This cash injection reflects the deep and complex challenges the industry faces. This will enable farm and horticulture businesses to deal with short term issues that substantially threaten otherwise viable businesses. I have vowed to do all I can to support the agriculture industry during these very difficult times, and to support their efforts to secure new market access in the future. Therefore I have also asked my officials to identify any further potential additional funding from within my own Department to enhance this current allocation and provide support for these struggling businesses.

£3.8m has been allocated to help cover higher waste collection, treatment and disposal costs in councils. This funding will also help support the additional costs of implementing social distancing measures and ensure that staff across councils are able to fulfil critical roles in a safe environment.

Our fishing industry has also been impacted by COVID-19, in response to this I have secured a £1.5m support package to help weather the storm. The scheme I've announced is the most far-reaching in the UK and will help the fishing fleet to cover their fixed costs for three months. I recognise that this is not an answer to everyone's problems, but it will go some way to help our fleet survive what has been one of its most difficult periods.



I recognise that more funding is needed and I will do everything in my power to secure vital and targeted funding that my Department requires to help the needs of our 1.8m citizens.

Moving forward, we must continue to do what we can to help everyone through the crisis. As well as impacting the health of our people, this pandemic is driving economic, social and environmental change, so, while we need to address the problems of today, we also need to keep our eye to the future. I and my Department remain fully committed to helping our industry, our stakeholders and the people of Northern Ireland get through COVID-19. The work we do touches everyone across our region – food, waste, fisheries, rural support and the environment.

Our sector has responded to the challenge in a remarkable way. Innovative thinking, collaboration and responsive action as well as grit and hard work, have ensured we continue to have food on our tables, a functioning waste sector, a biodiverse and bio secure landscape for our plants and animals, and a healthy environment. Much of the work done in response to COVID-19 has shone a light on new ways of working, on how we can do things better and find opportunities amid the challenges, as we look to a more positive future and one in which we will continue in our transition from EU Exit into a global, more connected marketplace.

My Department is uniquely placed to promote prosperity across Northern Ireland by supporting a competitive, regionally balanced economy and sustainable environment. The sectors that fall under DAERA's areas of responsibility are very significant in relation to





the Northern Ireland economy. We must work to ensure continued access to existing and new global markets for our agri-food products. These sectors are currently heavily supported by funding from the EU. It is essential that DAERA remains equipped to support the agri-food sector which is vital to the local economy. This is a sector that has an annual turnover of £5 billion and supports well in excess of 100,000 jobs either directly or indirectly. Therefore we are faced with the immediate challenge of managing our transition as we exit the EU and ensuring that we secure the best deal possible for Northern Ireland. We must share our skills and learn best practice from other nations. Through my Department's International Action Plan we will build our connections across the pillars of the environment, trade, education, science and rural.

When planning for recovery and our implementation of our exit from the EU, we need to do so holistically. We must work across government and with the private and voluntary/community sectors, to co-design and deliver our new future with social and economic renewal. DAERA's purpose is:

'Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.'

Sustainability will be at the heart of what we do, our economic renewal requires the recognition on the importance of our environment as a pathway towards a shared sustainable future. This will require collective commitment and action to get us through the current crisis and develop a recovery and renewal plan for Northern Ireland.

By stimulating our economy we can also stimulate our environment. My Department is developing a Green Growth strategy and delivery framework which will involve all areas of government, country and private sectors. With regard to DAERA's functions it will focus on our food production, forestry, fishery and farming sectors by aligning economic growth and development with the protection of natural assets on which our wellbeing depends. In doing this we will better meet the expectations of customers and consumers around sustainability, both locally and globally. We will capitalise on opportunities to work collaboratively with others in progressing this strategy and I will be actively seeking this cooperation to the benefit of our 1.8 m citizens.

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, one thing that has remained steadfast throughout, is the resilience of our people, our resolve and our ability to come together as a people. With this in mind we should look to the future with optimism, capitalising on what we have learnt to help inform our plan for recovery, renewal and our transition from the EU Exit. We must work together to achieve this, using our resources to their best effect, whilst valuing our local environment and economy.

Edwin Poots MLA

Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

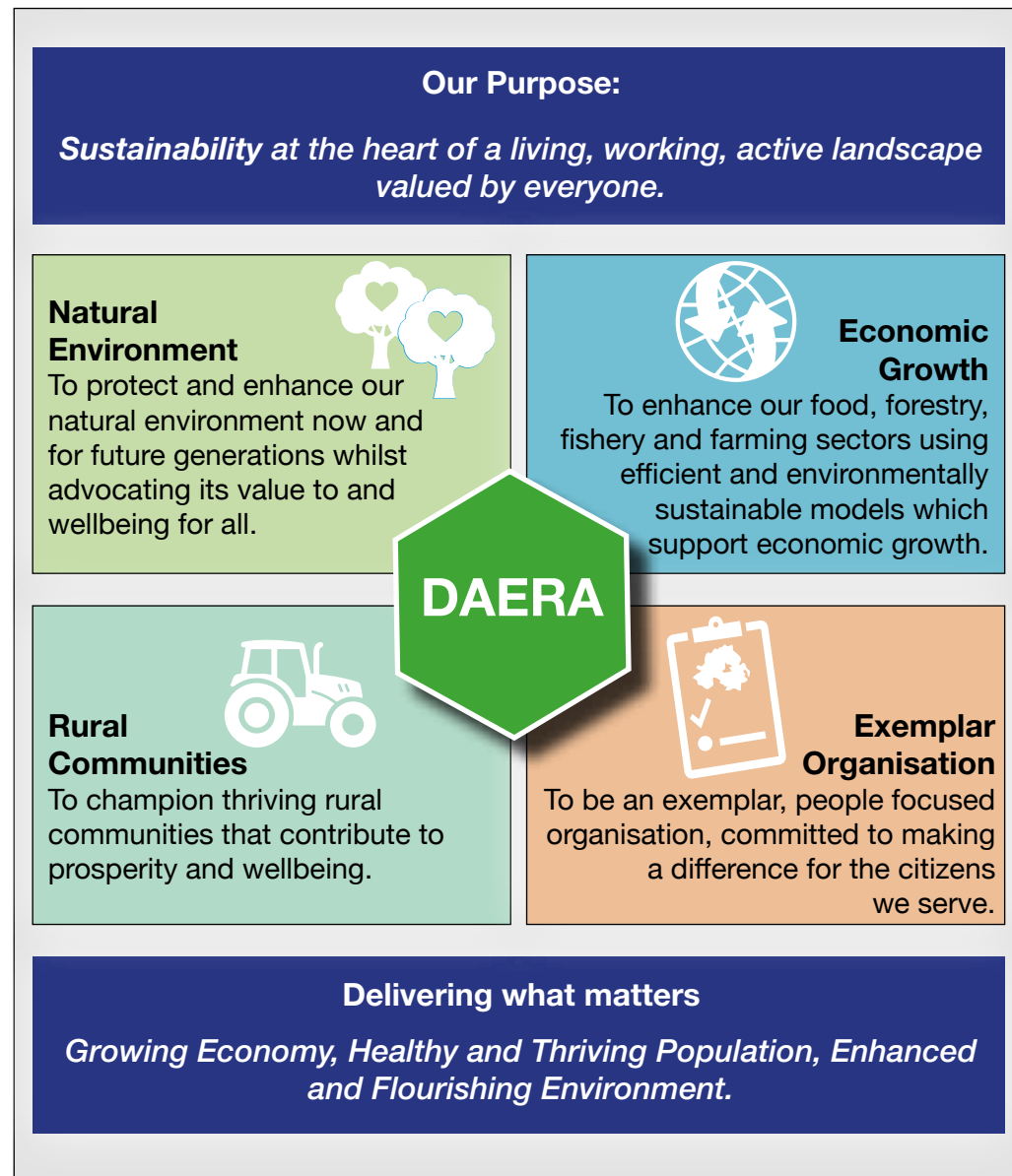


Our Purpose

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) operates under the direction and control of the Minister. This is a leadership role of central importance to the environment, the agri-food industry and wider society (including rural society).

DAERA's purpose is *'Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.'*

The purpose and strategic objectives developed for the Department are set out in this diagram. The strategic objectives have been designed to align with the purpose of the Department and relevant PfG Outcomes whilst also covering the Department's regulatory, governance and resource management responsibilities. We are central to protecting our natural environment, supporting sustainable economic growth in our agri-industries and championing our rural communities. We are also an exemplar organisation committed to making a difference to the citizens we serve.





The Department has a wide range of responsibility, including the agri-food industry, waste, fisheries, the environment and rural sector. The work of the Department touches the lives of all of the citizens in Northern Ireland on a daily basis and our 3,000 staff play a key role in supporting the agri-food sector, our environment and the economy. The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020 and during the current Transition period the Department will continue to focus resources on ensuring that necessary plans are in place to prepare for the changes that this will bring from 1 January 2021 and take advantage of opportunities presented by exiting the EU to grow our presence globally. The COVID-19 outbreak has however created exceptional challenges for all of society and the economy and we are all working hard to lessen the negative impacts this has on our society as a whole. DAERA will continue to work safely and diligently to ensure that we can deliver our essential services to the people of Northern Ireland.

DAERA is also looking to the future and how to holistically renew our people, our economy and our environment in collaboration with others. What we do as a Department and as Government will never be the same again. This reflects far reaching social and economic changes arising from a renewed perspective on what society values, acceptance of new ways of working and a recognition of the need for locally resilient economic models in the context of an interconnected world. Our recovery from this current crisis gives us an opportunity to create an environment in which people, businesses and the environment work in better harmony. In conjunction with

our transition on Exiting the EU we now have opportunity to further the existing collaboration between agriculture and environment on a greater scale and to realise the vision of securing our agri-food sector while safeguarding our natural capital.



Northern Ireland is committed to the sustainable production of high quality, safe and wholesome food. This is underpinned by our high standards of animal, fish and plant health, animal welfare, robust traceability, our strong environmental standards protecting our natural capital, our skilled workforce, internationally recognised science and a vibrant rural community. It is crucial that our supply chains do not falter and we ensure security of supply for the citizens of Northern Ireland and continue to service our markets. Our key aim will be to implement measures that secure supply lines for the food we bring into NI from the UK, EU and the rest of the world. Over the coming year, DAERA will further develop the work on food security outlining the role the public, private and community



sectors need to play. We will also develop a Food Observatory to continuously assess the robustness of the food system, with a view to encouraging and supporting measures to maintain its flexibility and resilience.

The NI food sector accounts for 32% of total NI manufacturing sales and has demonstrated strong and consistent growth by doubling turnover over the last 15 years. This growth is built on assurance provided by robust systems of audit and controls exercised from primary producer through to processor and by proactive support to the industry in the opening of new markets. The agri-food sector has further sustainable growth potential and can play a significant part in the recovery of our economy and our future post EU Exit. It is also vital however, not to overlook the importance of this opportunity to help address many of the long term environment and climate change challenges we face which have previously been prioritised by the Executive. This can be done by ensuring we put ourselves on a trajectory for Green Growth, where sustainability is at the heart of our economic recovery and the optimum outcome achieved for our future. To achieve this, we must learn lessons from other countries who are also on this pathway to recovery.

The way our staff are working has also changed rapidly with the vast majority of staff working at home and will change again as COVID-19 restrictions are reduced and removed. While this change will be gradual, the behavioural changes, the expectations of society and the expectations of our staff will have changed permanently.

We need to embrace these new ways of working. Analysis within the Department has highlighted that by working at home this is saving approximately 55,000 commuter miles a day within the Department, with major benefits to our environment. This equates to approximately 2 million miles over the first 35 days of lockdown or 445 tonnes of CO₂. It would take 500 trees 40 years to absorb this level of CO₂. This is just one of the short term benefits to the environment of new ways of working and must be capitalised upon to deliver longer term benefits. Accordingly, we need to stay ahead of the curve and the first step will involve looking at agile ways of working for DAERA staff, while maintaining our high level of service to our 1.8m citizens.

Our transition from EU and recovery from COVID-19 has presented us with the opportunity to renew our thinking, stimulate and support new approaches including alternative sustainable business models; new emphasis on sustainably grown food, use of sustainable energy; decentralised and agile working so that Northern Ireland can increase its capacity and reputation as a strategic location for knowledge based industries. This will support a renewed emphasis on sustainability, promotion of our local agri-industry and developing policies which will feed into the wider transformation of global economies as we move to net zero carbon.

To achieve this officials are working on the DAERA Renewal Plan, which will be based around the Green Growth approach.



We have an opportunity in partnership with other Public Bodies to help stimulate new businesses, support social enterprises, innovate research and development as well as facilitate wider social action. This in turn can help to mitigate the impact of social and economic crisis caused by the pandemic. The DAERA Renewal plan aims to develop Northern Ireland as a Strategic Food Zone, a Strategic Environment Zone, a Strategic Energy Zone and an Agile Working Zone. Our ability to deliver as effectively as possible in these areas will be dependent on the availability of future funding to the Department.

The pathway to success with our purpose and vision for the future relies on partnership, mutual understanding and shared goals that can only come about through effective stakeholder engagement. DAERA has a strong history of partnership working with people from other Departments, Arms-Length Bodies, Local Councils, organisations and sectors. We will continue with our engaging, collaborative approach to successfully address the issues we currently face and turn these into opportunities to make us all stronger and robust for generations to come. We must also build our global networks and engagement platforms across key policy areas such as the environment, trade, education, science and rural affairs. We must look outwards and learn from good practice across the world, building on their successes and learning from their experiences.

To support the achievement in these areas a number of key targets have been identified to ensure that the Department is working towards achieving its goals.

DAERA is central to protecting our natural environment, supporting sustainable economic growth in our agri-industries, championing our rural communities and enhancing the quality of life for all of our 1.8m citizens. We are also an exemplar organisation committed to making a difference to the citizens we serve.

A summary of our opening 2020-21 budget to implement this work is set out at **Annex A**. This does not include the specific allocations as a result of the Department's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the overall figures, but sets out the recent successful bids in relation to the issue. DAERA will continue to liaise closely with the Department of Finance on additional funding that may be required as a result of COVID-19.

The tables that follow set out the Department's Business Plan targets for the 2020-21 financial year, including timescales for delivery where appropriate. Targets are focused on the top priorities for the Department, namely the transition following our exit from the EU and our recovery and renewal in the wake of COVID-19. Work will continue on a range of other areas across the Department, in-year, so long as it does not conflict with the Department's top priorities. Work in these areas will be reviewed by the Departmental Board on a regular basis and reported on in the 2020-21 Annual Report.



Key 2020-2021 Targets

Target Number	What we will do	When we will do it by	Owner
1	Collaboratively work across the Department to co-ordinate and deliver the essential legislative and policy frameworks required by the end of the EU Exit Transition Period, supported as necessary by effective contingency plans.	31 March 2021	Deputy Secretary Food and Farming Group
2	During and post the Transition Period maintain international market access through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of Sanitary and Phytosanitary policy / legislation; • provision of assurances to importing Competent Authorities; and • demonstration that Northern Ireland's agri-food products' conform with the importing country's animal and public health requirements supported by delivery of Official Controls and high standards of certification. 	31 March 2021	Deputy Secretary for Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group
3	Collaboratively work to address environment and fisheries issues facing the Department in respect of Transition and implementing the NI Protocol and communicating/supporting industry to ensure continuity for businesses and protection of the environment.	31 December 2020	Deputy Secretary Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group
4	Deliver, as appropriate, the operational changes that will result from the transition from the EU, supporting customers and stakeholders throughout the process and informing Brexit related legislative and policy issues to protect and enhance the environment.	31 December 2020	Chief Executive Northern Ireland Environment Agency
5	Deliver an agreed Rural Policy Framework for Northern Ireland that supports sustainable rural businesses and communities following EU Exit and the implementation of pilot actions to support COVID-19 recovery.	31 March 2021	Deputy Secretary for Rural Affairs, Forest Service and Estate Transformation



Key 2020-2021 Targets

Target Number	What we will do	When we will do it by	Owner
6	Collaboratively develop and launch the Department's multi-decade Green Growth Strategy and Delivery Framework for consultation.	31 March 2021	Chief Executive Northern Ireland Environment Agency
7	Develop and, as necessary implement, sectoral support measures in response to market or other COVID-19 related disturbances, ensuring appropriate targeting, State Aid compliance and governance and avoiding unacceptable delivery risks to existing support measures.	31 March 2021	Deputy Secretary Food and Farming Group
8	Utilise DAERA's existing estate to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by supporting staff to work in an agile and sustainable way.	31 March 2021	Deputy Secretary for Rural Affairs, Forest Service and Estate Transformation / Deputy Secretary Central Services and Contingency Planning
9	Develop a resilient recovery through a low carbon, natural capital, and circular economy for Green Growth.	31 March 2021	Deputy Secretary Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group
10	Develop and implement mitigations and contingency plans for securing food supply in Northern Ireland in both the immediate and long terms.	31 March 2021	Deputy Secretary Central Services and Contingency Planning



Key 2020-2021 Targets

Target Number	What we will do	When we will do it by	Owner
11	<p>Manage the DAERA Forest estate sustainably and progress the 2020-30 Afforestation Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250 hectares of new woodland on privately owned and DAERA land; and • prepare the plans for an additional 250 hectares on other public land, supported by a new grant scheme for small woodlands. 	31 March 2021	Deputy Secretary for Rural Affairs, Forest Services and Estate Transformation
12	Improve the natural environment (and deliver Programme for Government (PfG) outcomes) for the security of a sustainable future.	31 March 2021	Deputy Secretary Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group
13	Progress legislation providing for the greater protection of service animals.	31 March 2021	Deputy Secretary for Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group
14	Secure the Executive's approval of the long term proposals for the eradication of Bovine bTB.	31 March 2021	Deputy Secretary for Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group
15	Carry out appropriate environmental regulatory checks and monitoring and enforcement that will ensure the protection and enhancement of the environment and inform future evidence led policy, strategies and decisions to deliver improved environmental outcomes.	31 March 2021	Chief Executive Northern Ireland Environment Agency
16	Ensure the delivery of 2020 Direct Support to farmers, issuing full payments to 95% of eligible applicants.	30 November 2020	Deputy Secretary Food and Farming Group

Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

Our plans will be reviewed at a later stage in the year as the position with COVID-19 becomes clearer and we move through the recovery phase.

The Department has established monitoring and reporting arrangements 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 Departmental Board for the periods ending 30 September, 31 December and 31 March.

Reporting Period	Indicative Timing for Progress Report
Quarters 1 and 2 (April to September 2020)	October/November Board meeting
Quarter 3 (October to December 2020)	January/February Board meeting
Year-End Performance Report (April 2020 – March 2021)	April/May Board meeting

Progress will be reported in accordance with the methodology previously adopted for PfG Commitment reports to the Executive.

This on a Red / Amber / Green (RAG) basis as follows:



Green

- achieved or on track for delivery



Amber

- rate of progress is less than planned



Green/Amber

- level of progress is broadly on track with easily redeemable deviations from plans



Red

- not achieved or not expected to be achieved.

Following the end of the financial year the DAERA 2020-21 Annual Reports and Accounts will be published and placed on the DAERA website. The Annual report will include a Performance section showing the extent to which the targets in this Plan were achieved.

Annex A – Budget



The Department has an opening Resource DEL allocation of £504.7 million for 2020-21. The main increase from last year is £278.6 million for Farm Support Direct Payments for the 2020 scheme year. This represents 95% of the £293.0 million that has been confirmed by HM Treasury and the balance will be allocated at in-year Monitoring Rounds. This funding will provide the same level of support that was previously provided by the EU in 2019.

DAERA's opening 2020-21 Ring-fenced Depreciation DEL budget is £25.3m.

The Department's opening net Capital DEL budget is £98.5 million. This will allow the Department not only to progress the ongoing Digital Transformation Programme but also support a range of key Rural Development Programmes to be progressed including the Environmental Farming Scheme, the Farm Business Improvement Scheme, Leader, Rural Tourism and Forestry. These will continue to provide much needed support for rural areas as well as help protect our environment.

The 2020-21 Opening Baselines above do not include any specific allocation as a result of the Department's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, DAERA has since been successful in securing £30.3m COVID-19 funding of which £25.0m is in relation to Agri Food Sector Market Interventions, £3.8m is for Waste Management and £1.5m is to support the Fisheries Sector. The Department will continue to liaise closely with the Department of Finance throughout 2020-21 on additional funding that may be required as a result of COVID-19.

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Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

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IN PEOPLE**