

Equality Impact Assessment

For the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy 2022-2040

August 2022



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

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Executive Summary

The Natural Resources Policy Division within DAERA is leading the development of a Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy for the period 2022-2040. The Vision of the Strategy is that peatland habitats in Northern Ireland are protected, enhanced and managed sustainably, are recognised for their intrinsic value and for the benefits they provide – for wildlife, people and climate. Implementation of the Peatland Strategy will require collaboration with key partners across government, industry and the voluntary and community sectors. We will recognise the interdependencies involved and the shared ownership required.

The New Decade, New Approach agreement (NDNA), published by the Northern Ireland Executive, includes a commitment to tackle climate change using a coordinated and strategic approach through actions which will address both the immediate and longer term climate impacts in a fair and just way. The Climate Change Committee has stated that peatland restoration and land management practices will have a role to play in UK decarbonisation, (Land Use Policies for a Net Zero UK, Climate Change Committee, January 2020).

An agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, under the auspices of the UK Peatland Strategy, will provide a **framework** for both conserving intact peatlands in Northern Ireland and a peatland restoration programme. A Strategy Implementation Plan (with delivery phases, scale and sources of funding and reporting metrics identified) and Reporting Framework will be developed following publication of the agreed Strategy.

DAERA acknowledges that promoting equality of opportunity and good relations are cross-cutting themes across all Government strategies, policy development and actions and a number of the proposed actions in the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy may necessitate legislative or policy changes e.g. cessation of peat extraction. Each of these actions will thus be subject to their own policy process with accompanying Equality, Assessments, Rural Needs Assessments, Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRA) etc. as required.

An initial EQIA Screening Exercise was carried out in July 2020, at an early stage in the development of the draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy. A subsequent EQIA Screening Exercise was carried out in August 2021 (towards the end of the public consultation period) and the recommendation from the screening was that a full Equality Impact Assessment on the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy should be conducted and consulted on in line with the Equality Commission Northern Ireland guidance. An analysis of relevant evidence has been considered to help identify any potential needs and impacts of any of the Section 75 equality groups and examples of potential and actual impacts have been presented.

Peatland habitat in Northern Ireland has a largely (though not exclusively) northern and western distribution and peatland conservation and restoration activities may have a different impact in terms of religious belief and political opinion as this is correlated with farm size and location. The impact on sectors which are related to or rely on the extraction of peat may be over/underrepresented by a particular religious belief as again this may be a result of the geographical location of peatland in Northern Ireland.

There is a higher number of males than females employed in the peat extraction industry and the proposed transition away from peat extraction and the use of peat products may impact on some areas of employment.

At this stage, there is no evidence available to suggest that implementation of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy will have any foreseeable impact on equality of opportunity in terms of ethnicity, marital status, age and sexual orientation. Positive benefits were identified in terms of increased opportunities for recreation and education in terms of disability and people with dependants.

Further detail regarding impacts will be developed through the findings of this public consultation with those organisations who represent the interest of Section 75 groups.

A number of potential mitigating measures e.g. increased upskilling and educational opportunities and agricultural support to address our initial observations have been presented in Section 4. DAERA welcome a collaborative approach to develop fit for purpose mitigations which support the implementation of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy.

Introduction

Section 75 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between specific identified individuals and groups, namely between persons of different:

- Religious belief;
- Political opinion;
- Racial groups;
- Age;
- Marital status;
- Sexual orientation;

And between

- Men and women generally;
- Persons with a disability and persons without
- Persons with dependants and persons without.

The legislation requires public authorities to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) where proposed legislation or policy is likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity. An EQIA is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy to determine the extent of differential impact upon the relevant groups and in turn whether that impact is adverse.

Purpose

Two Equality & Disability Duties Screening exercises for the draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy were carried out, one prior to and one at the end of the public consultation exercise, indicating that the Strategy should be screened in and an EQIA produced.

The purpose of this EQIA is to indicate how the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy should be further developed to better address any inequalities experienced by section 75 groups. DAERA has developed this Equality Impact Assessment to provide an

opportunity for all to comment on the potential and actual impacts of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, and to obtain views on measures which might mitigate any adverse impacts.

DAERA welcome all interested parties to consider responding to this public consultation to our Strategy.

The responses to the EQIA consultation will inform the final Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy.

How to respond to the consultation

You can respond to this consultation online via Citizen Space: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/northern-ireland-peatland-strategy-equality-impact-assessment>

The survey is quick and simple to complete and seeks your views on:

- the potential impacts of the Strategy on Section 75 categories;
- mitigation measures to promote equality; and
- additional evidence we should use to support the development and implementation of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy.

The Department is keen to obtain views on this equality impact assessment from everyone, but in particular, from those identifying with specific Section 75 groups. The Department will consider all responses and proposed mitigations and publish an EQIA report on the DAERA website in due course.

Section 1. Defining the Aims of the Policy

1.1 Climate Change

The New Decade, New Approach agreement (NDNA), published by the NI Executive in January 2020, includes a commitment to tackle climate change using a co-ordinated and strategic approach through actions which will address both the immediate and longer term climate impacts in a fair and just way. Peatlands have the potential to be a natural solution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change mitigation. They hold a vast stock of carbon in their soils and can add more by sequestering carbon from the atmosphere. However, this natural carbon capture and storage ability can only happen if peatland habitats are healthy and functioning. The Climate Change Committee has stated that peatland restoration and land management practices will have a significant role to play in UK decarbonisation, (Land Use Policies for a Net Zero UK, Climate Change Committee, January 2020).

The legislation that commits us to contribute to meeting the UK's target of Net Zero emissions by 2050 is already in place through the UK Climate Change Act 2008. The Northern Ireland Assembly passed a Climate Change Act in June 2022 confirming the specific targets necessary to achieve the NI contribution to the UK targets. The Act sets targets for the years 2030, 2040 and 2050 for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It has agreed Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions but with a 46% required reduction in methane emissions by 2050. This compromise on methane reductions is in line with the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC) Balanced Pathway recommendations, considering Northern Ireland's agricultural economy.

1.2 Eco-system Services

Healthy, functioning peatlands provide a range of valuable eco-system services for society including:

- climate regulation and adaptation (carbon capture and storage)
- unique biodiversity & habitat for wildlife
- drinking water filtration

- flood attenuation and water storage
- a historical archive
- areas for recreation and understanding of our cultural heritage
- food production

A large body of evidence demonstrates the value that peatland restoration has in enhancing the delivery of these ecosystem services, providing significant return on investment.

1.3 Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy

An agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, under the auspices of the UK Peatland Strategy, will provide a **framework** for both conserving our intact peatlands in Northern Ireland and a peatland restoration programme.

An initial EQIA Screening exercise was carried out in July 2020, at an early stage in the development of the draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy. Following initial comments received during the public consultation exercise for the draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, a subsequent EQIA Screening was conducted which concluded that an Equality Impact Assessment on the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy was required.

Following publication of an agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, an Implementation Plan (with delivery phases, scale and sources of funding and reporting metrics identified) and Reporting Framework will be developed which will detail how each of the actions in the strategy will be taken forward.

The Implementation Plan will be screened as appropriate in line with our Equality Scheme [DAERA's Equality Scheme | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://daera-ni.gov.uk/equality-scheme), which sets out the actions we are taking to meet our equality duties and to ensure that equality is central to our policy and decision-making processes.

1.4 Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy - Strategic Objectives

In the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, there are 5 Strategic Objectives with associated actions, which taken together should ensure that peatlands in Northern Ireland are conserved or restored. The Objectives are outlined below:

- Strategic Objective 1 - Peatland Conservation, Restoration & Management;
- Strategic Objective 2 - Supporting Policies and Delivery Initiatives;
- Strategic Objective 3 - Capacity Building & Research;
- Strategic Objective 4 - Knowledge Sharing, Communication & Access
- Strategic Objective 5 - Governance, Implementation & Funding.

Addressing climate change and achieving a carbon neutral society will require an unprecedented level of transformation across Northern Ireland and peatland conservation and restoration will play a significant role. A number of the actions proposed in the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy will require changes which may affect particular economic and cultural norms. The Northern Ireland Executive has committed to an overarching policy of Green Growth, and as such DAERA will ensure that the transition away from the use of peat and peat products for example will be a “Just Transition” and fair for all our citizens.

DAERA acknowledges that promoting equality of opportunity and good relations are cross-cutting themes across all Government strategies, policy development and actions. As such the multi-decade Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy will be equality monitored at relevant stages of development and implementation by the appropriate body.

Section 2. Consideration of Available Data and Research

2.1 Sources used

The transition to Net Zero will be challenging for all sectors of society in Northern Ireland – however, the Climate Change Committee has advised that the restoration of peatland will be a significant tool in Climate Change mitigation. Once an agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy is published, an Implementation Plan will be developed, which will outline in detail a suite of metrics to monitor progress with strategy implementation.

DAERA acknowledges that equality of opportunity and good relations must be central to all public policy development and implementation. Evidence sources such as comments provided via the public consultation on the Draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, current census data, a range of DAERA statistics e.g. on agriculture and the agri-food industry, rural communities, environment and forestry and also by information forthcoming from the new NI Census (2021) will be used to update and inform the development of an agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, actions flowing from the strategy and any associated Equality Impact Assessments.

The draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy Equality Screening, which supported the development of this EQIA, considered the following sources of available data and research:

Religious belief

- 2011 Census of Northern Ireland. [Census 2011: Key Statistics at Northern Ireland and LGD level \(niassembly.gov.uk\)](https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/~/media/NIASSEMBLY/2011%20CENSUS%20KEY%20STATISTICS%20AT%20NORTHERN%20IRELAND%20AND%20LGD%20LEVEL)
- 2018 DAERA Equality Indicators Report. [Equality indicators Report | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/equality-indicators-report)
- Northern Ireland: In Profile. Key Statistics on Northern Ireland. NISRA, March 2021. [NI: IN PROFILE Key statistics on Northern Ireland \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/ni-in-profile)

- (NISRA Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2019 [Annual Report Tables 2019](#)
[| Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#))

The religious beliefs across the NI community are 48% Protestant and 45% Catholic. Catholics predominate in the West, North- West and South of Northern Ireland. Whereas in contrast, Protestants are heavily represented in the East, North-East and Greater Belfast areas.

Political Opinion

- The 2011 Census of Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland: In Profile. Key Statistics on Northern Ireland. NISRA, March 2021.
- 2018 DAERA Equality Indicators Report
- Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2020. ARK. [NI Life and Times Survey - 2019 \(ark.ac.uk\)](#)

Information on political opinion was not collected in the Census 2011. However, as a question on National Identity was included responses were analysed against farm size, type and land characteristics as a proxy metric for political opinion. Overall, 44% of farmers reported their identity as British only, 26% as Irish only and 23% as Northern Irish only, with 8% stating another identity or a combination of more than one identity.

The 2020 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey did ask some questions relating to political opinion. In this survey, 33 per cent of respondents consider themselves to be Unionist, 23 per cent consider themselves to be Nationalist, and 39 per cent considered themselves to be neither.

Racial Group

- The 2011 Census of Northern Ireland
- 2018 DAERA Equality Indicators Report
- Northern Ireland: In Profile. Key Statistics on Northern Ireland. NISRA, March 2021
- Northern Ireland Good Relations Indicators Annual Update November 2019. The Executive Office. [Northern Ireland Good Relations Indicators Annual Update 2019 – Report \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)
- Northern Ireland Racial Equality Indicators Baseline Report: 2014 - 2017 (November 2018). The Executive Office. [Racial Equality Indicator Baseline Report 2014 - 2017 \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)
- Poverty and Ethnicity in Northern Ireland. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. 2013. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/poverty-ethnicity-northern-ireland>
- The All Ireland Traveller Health Study 2010. Department of Health, Ireland. [gov.ie - All-Ireland Traveller Health Study \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)
- 2001/02 Social Survey of Farmers and Farm Families across Northern Ireland. [Farmers and farm families in NI - Social Survey | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)
- Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025. OFMDFM [Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025 \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

The 2001/02 Social Survey of Farmers and Farm Families across Northern Ireland outlined that the farming population was overwhelmingly white and that there was no difference in racial group by type or size of farm. This survey was conducted nearly

20 years ago and the racial group statistics in both the 2011 census and DAERA's Equality Indicators Report (2018) reflect the original findings of the 2001-02 survey.

The 2011 Census of Northern Ireland found that over 98% of the population, state their ethnic origin to be white. Non-white ethnic groups accounted for 1.7% of the total population. In addition, under 1.3% of non-white minority ethnic groups of Black, Asian and Other live in a rural area.

DAERA's Equality Indicators Report (2018) stated the proportion of farmers stating an ethnicity other than white was too small to examine differences by farm characteristics.

Age

- The 2011 Census of Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland: In Profile. Key Statistics on Northern Ireland. NISRA, March 2021
- 2018-based Population Projections for Northern Ireland. NISRA. [2018-based Population Projections for Northern Ireland | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)
- 2016 EU Farm Structure Survey Northern Ireland. DAERA. [European Union Farm Structure Survey 2016 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

The mean age of the NI population is 37.59. 57.61% of NI residents aged 16-72 were economically active.

Marital Status

- The 2011 Census of Northern Ireland
- Marriage Statistics, 2020. NISRA. [Marriage Statistics | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/marriage-statistics).
- 2016 EU Farm Structure Survey Northern Ireland. DAERA.

47.5% of people over 16 in Northern Ireland are currently married (2011 Census) with a further 36.1% classed as single (never been married) and the remaining 16.4% separated, divorced or widowed. Within the rural communities of Northern Ireland, a higher proportion of people are married at 57% and within the farming context this is even higher with 68% of adults married.

Sexual Orientation

- Information on sexual orientation was not collected in the Population Census 2011 of Northern Ireland.
- Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2020. ARK
- Sexual Identity in the UK 2019 – ONS [Sexual orientation, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-and-population/sexual-orientation)

There are no official statistics in relation to the size of the LGBT+ community in Northern Ireland. The 2019 Life and Times Survey interviewed 1203 adults to establish their sexual orientation. 90 per cent of respondents identified themselves as Heterosexual/Straight, 2 per cent as Gay/Lesbian, 1 per cent identified themselves as bi-sexual and 7 per cent provided No answer/Refusal.

Men & Women generally

- The 2011 Census of Northern Ireland
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP 25 2019. Gender & Climate Change - Gender Action Plan [Microsoft Word - 1921501E.docx \(unfccc.int\)](#)
- The European Commission 'A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025' [EUR-Lex - 52020DC0152 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

The 2011 Census data showed that 49 per cent of all usual residents in Northern Ireland are male, with 51 per cent of the population female. In addition a small number identify as neither male or female or both. Currently, there are no official statistics relating to gender identity in the UK. In March 2011, female employees (333,000) outnumbered male employees (307,000), which is a reversal from the position in April 2001. In 2016, female workers accounted for 24% of the workforce.

At 30 June 2019, Northern Ireland's population was estimated to be 1.89 million people. Between mid-2018 and mid-2019, the population of Northern Ireland increased by 12,000 people (0.6 per cent). Just over half of the population (50.7 per cent) were female, with 961,000 females compared to 932,700 males (49.3 per cent).

Disability

- The 2011 Census of Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland: In Profile. Key Statistics on Northern Ireland. NISRA, March 2021
- 2018 DAERA Equality Indicators Report

- Continuous Household Survey DAERA 2018/19. [Continuous Household Survey | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

The 2011 Census of Northern Ireland showed that around 12% of the population found their day to day activities to be limited a lot due to a disability and around 9% found their activities limited a little.

In Northern Ireland, it is estimated that 22% of the population have some form of disability; amongst farmers this figure is slightly higher, with almost a third (30%) of farmers stated that they had a long-term illness or disability which limited their daily activities.

Dependants

- The 2011 Census of Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland: In Profile. Key Statistics on Northern Ireland. NISRA, March 2021
- Labour Force Survey – Women in Northern Ireland. NISRA, 2020. <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/labour-force-survey-women-northern-ireland-2020>

33.86% of NI households have dependent children (Those aged 0-15 and person aged 16-18 who is a full time student and in a family with parent(s)). For households with dependent children, there is around 9% with one or more persons with a long term health problem or disability. For households without dependent children, there is around 31% of those with one or more people with a long term health problem or disability.

The average age of first-time mothers has increased from 24 to 28 years since 1986, according to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in November 2017.

2.2. Additional Data, Needs or Issues

Additional data sources used to inform EQIA:

- DAERA Information Hub <https://gis.nigov.net/arcgis/home/index.html>
- The Sixth Carbon Budget. Climate Change Committee. 2020. [Sixth Carbon Budget - Climate Change Committee \(theccc.org.uk\)](https://www.theccc.org.uk/2020/06/23/sixth-carbon-budget-2020/). Key Recommendation 4 Land & Greenhouse Gas Removals - Peatlands are widely restored and managed sustainably.
- Net Zero – The UK’s contribution to stopping global warming. Climate Change Committee 2019. [Net Zero - The UK's contribution to stopping global warming - Climate Change Committee \(theccc.org.uk\)](https://www.theccc.org.uk/2019/07/23/net-zero-the-uk-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming/)
- Net Zero Review – Final Report. HM Treasury. 2021. [Net Zero Review Final Report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97221/net-zero-review-final-report.pdf)
- Clean Air Strategy – A Public Discussion Document. DAERA. 2020. [20.21.066 Draft Clean Air Strategy for NI - Public Discussion Doc Final V6.PDF \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/media/12012/clean-air-strategy-for-ni-public-discussion-document-final-v6.pdf)
- Energy Strategy – The Path to Net Zero Energy. Northern Ireland Executive. 2021. [The Path to Net Zero Energy. Safe. Affordable. Clean. \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/energy-strategy)
- Kerr, K. (2015) Report for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB): Connection to Nature questionnaire on the Northern Ireland Kids Life and Times Survey. Belfast: School of Education, Queen’s University Belfast.

[queens-university-report-for-the-rspb-on-the-nature-questionnaire-on-the-northern-ireland-kids-life-and-times-survey.pdf](#)

- A New Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland. Department of Communities 2011. [Warmer Healthier Homes: A New Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#)
- Estimates of Fuel Poverty in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland Housing Executive. 2018. [Estimates of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland in 2017 and 2018 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Fuel Poverty Action Guide 2019. National Energy Action. 2019. [Fuel-Poverty-Action-Guide-Edition-2-February-2019.pdf \(nea.org.uk\)](#)

We invite all interested parties to provide further detail regarding available data and research via this consultation and to engage with us directly to help us support the interests of section 75 groups.

Your consultation response will help us:

- **Identify any gaps in the information we have used in this equality impact assessment.**
- **Provide additional sources of information, statistics and evidence that we should consider.**
- **Determine areas where further research is required or would be beneficial.**

Section 3. Assessment of potential and actual impacts

Assessing Equality impacts is complex given the range of actions outlined in the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, which provides a framework for both conserving our intact peatlands and our peatland restoration programme. The impacts of actions from any policy initiative can often be experienced differently across Section 75 groups and across society in general. This section considers the potential and actual impacts of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy by examining its strategic context, commitments and intended outcomes.

3.1 Impact of Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy Objectives

The Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy supports the delivery of the following key intended outcomes - peatland conservation & restoration, sustainable peatland management, increasing knowledge of peatland habitats and the contribution healthy peatlands can make to mitigating Climate Change, increased engagement with individuals, landowners and society in general and the sourcing of funding to enable the implementation of the strategy.

It is expected that the overall impact the people of Northern Ireland (including Section 75 categories) will be positive and the implementation of an agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy will be beneficial. It is important to note that the implementation of an agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy will help achieve Outcome 2 of the PFG and has relevance for all citizens of Northern Ireland - "*We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment*". In addition, implementation of an agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy will help support delivery of the UK Government's "Net Zero" target which commits to a 100% reduction in the 1990 levels of Greenhouse Gas emissions by 2050 – the conservation and management of intact peatland habitats and the restoration of degraded peatland habitats are acknowledged as having significant potential for Climate Change mitigation.

However, the implementation of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy may have a disproportionate negative impact on particular sections of society. DAERA intends to draw up an Implementation Plan for the strategy, and this will allow further clarification

on potential and actual impacts. Proposed policy initiatives contained within the strategy will be subject to their own policy process with associated Equality and other relevant assessments.

3.2 Examples of Impacts of Implementation of Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy on Section 75 Categories

Religious Belief

In Northern Ireland, potential equality impacts regarding religious belief can be complex and the impact of the implementation of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy may differ with regard to religious beliefs across the Northern Ireland community. Data from the 2011 Census indicate that the population of Northern Ireland is 48% Protestant and 45% Catholic. Catholics predominate in the West, North- West and South of Northern Ireland. Whereas in contrast, Protestants are heavily represented in the East, North-East and Greater Belfast areas.

The 2018 DAERA Equality Indicators reported that 85% of Catholics have smaller farms compared to 68% of Protestants and were also more likely to be engaged in cattle and sheep farming in Less Favoured Areas, with 77% engaged in this type of farming activity compared to 45% of Protestant farmers. Semi-natural peatland habitat in Northern Ireland has a largely (though not exclusively) northern and western distribution so in very broad terms there is the potential for peatland conservation and restoration activities to have a more significant impact on upland farmers. The impact on sectors which are related to or rely on the extraction of peat may be over/underrepresented by a particular religious belief as again this may be a result of the geographical location of peatland in Northern Ireland.

However, it is important to note that peatland conservation and restoration activities may underpin high-quality, sustainable and accessible jobs in rural areas which is a positive development.

The complex relationships between farm, size, intensity, enterprise type, location and the farmers religious will need to be taken into account when developing future

agricultural policies and financial support measures to address climate change as these measures also differ depending on farm, size, intensity, enterprise type and location.

Political Opinion

An agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy aims to make a contribution to reaching Net Zero and local and international biodiversity targets. Implementation of the strategy may have an impact on sectors such as upland agriculture or those sectors involved in peat extraction or use of peat products. In Northern Ireland, some industries/employment sectors may be situated in particular geographical areas and this may be associated with a particular political opinion of the workforce.

Information on political opinion was not collected in the 2011 Census. However, as a question on National Identity was included responses were analysed against farm size, type and land characteristics as a proxy metric for political opinion. Overall, 44% of farmers reported their identity as British only, 26% as Irish only and 23% as Northern Irish only, with 8% stating another identity or a combination of more than one identity. The religious profile varied across farm characteristics, with the proportions stating a British only identity increasing with farm size, from 40% of those in very small farms to 65% of those in large farms.

A much higher proportion of those stating an Irish only or Northern Irish only identity farmed on very small farms (85% and 81% respectively) than those stating a British only identity (69%). In contrast, the proportion of those stating a British only identity farming on large farms (9%) was more than double that of those who stated Irish only (2%) or Northern Irish only (4%) identities.

High proportions of dairy farmers (62%) and those engaged in mixed farming (63%) stated a British only identity. 77% of those describing their identity as Irish only and 68% of those with a Northern Irish only identity were engaged in cattle and sheep farming in Less Favoured Areas, compared to 48% of farmers of British only identity.

Farmers with an Irish only identity were almost twice as likely to farm in Severely Disadvantaged Areas (55%) than farmers with a British only identity (28%). The

proportion of those with a Northern Irish identity farming in Severely Disadvantaged Areas was also very high at 48%. The proportion of those describing themselves as British only who farmed in lowland areas (39%) was more than twice that of those with an Irish only identity (15%) and much higher than those with a Northern Irish only identity (24%).

Semi-natural peatland habitat in Northern Ireland has a largely (though not exclusively) northern and western distribution and there is the potential for peatland conservation and restoration activities to have a more significant impact on upland farmers in LFA.

Racial Group

Minority ethnic groups comprised 1.8% of the population, according to Northern Ireland's last census in 2011. The 2021 figures are expected to show a more racially diverse population. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2013) indicated that poverty in Northern Ireland has been found to correlate with racial group (<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/poverty-ethnicity-northern-ireland>).

At this stage, there is no evidence available to suggest that implementation of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy will have any foreseeable impact on equality of opportunity on minority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland and their input to habitat conservation. Consequently, information on this topic would be particularly welcome during the public consultation exercise.

The implementation of an agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy may provide an opportunity for good quality “green” jobs in peatland conservation and restoration for citizens from minority ethnic groups. Educational programmes emanating from the implementation of the strategy will need to take into account the barriers e.g. language which citizens from ethnic minorities may encounter and make provision for this.

Age

The 2011 Census showed that around 25% of the population was 55 years or older and around 47% were under 35 years old. The average age of the Northern Ireland population is 37.59. By 2028, it is projected that there will be more people aged 65 and over than children in Northern Ireland. The average age of farmers in Northern Ireland is 59 with only 8% of farmers identified as head of business under 40.

The publication of an agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy is of relevance and benefit to all ages, and it will be open to all ages to become involved in aspects of its implementation, particularly in communication, education, and knowledge transfer activities.

The involvement of young people in the development and implementation of an agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, is due to the link to climate change mitigation. Given that the strategy is proposed to cover the time period up to 2040, it is essential that young people are involved in Strategy development and in its subsequent implementation.

According to the ECO-SCHOOLS programme (an international environmental education and sustainable development programme which is managed by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful), Northern Ireland is now ranked sixth out of the sixty-seven participating countries for number of Green Flag Status Schools and all schools in Northern Ireland are now registered on the Eco-Schools Programme. There is clearly an appetite among young people in Northern Ireland to engage in environmental education.

A report commissioned by the RSPB on the connection of children in Northern Ireland to nature, concluded a moderately high level of connection to nature among a large sample of 10 and 11 year olds in Northern Ireland. This score (1.05) fell below a realistic and achievable target of 1.5 for every child (RSPB, 2013). Participation in Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy implementation activities (particularly educational activities) can make a contribution to increasing the level of connection, particularly for urban children.

DAERA are committed to inclusive engagement and acknowledge the wealth of knowledge older people can bring to enhance strategy development. Cultural associations, which have developed between communities and peatland areas over generations, will be an important aspect to consider in developing the peatland strategy and any associated communication activity. Consideration will be given on how best to engage with older people and organisations in order to capture and utilize their views.

Marital status

The 2011 census showed that around 48% of the population were married or in a civil partnership, and 36% were single.

At this stage in the development of Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, there is no evidence available to suggest that implementation of the Strategy will have any foreseeable impact on equality of opportunity on stakeholders as a result of their marital status.

Consequently, information on this topic would be particularly welcome during the public consultation exercise.

Sexual orientation

There are no data on the number of LGBT+ persons in NI as no national census has ever asked people to define their sexuality.

At this stage in the development of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, there is no evidence available to suggest that implementation of the Strategy will have any foreseeable impact on equality of opportunity on stakeholders as a result of their sexual orientation.

Consequently, information on this topic would be particularly welcome during the public consultation exercise.

Men and women generally

The Northern Ireland economy is highly dependent on the agri-food sector (including horticulture, which utilises peat and peat products) and NISRA statistics indicate that there is a substantially higher number of males employed in this sector than females (NISRA Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2019 [Annual Report Tables 2019 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)). NISRA statistics (2019) also indicate that 221 males and 72 females are employed in jobs involving peat extraction (total 293).

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/BRES2019-Publication-Tables.xlsx>

The proposed transition away from peat extraction and the use of peat products may impact on some areas of employment. Some will cease to exist, others will evolve and there will be new opportunities. However, Green Job creation is a key intended outcome of the Green Growth Strategy which is being developed by DAERA, contributing to economic growth and positive climate action.

NISRA has reported that there are more economically inactive women than men in NI <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/labour-force-survey-women-northern-ireland-2020>.

The implementation of an agreed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy may result in an increasing number of employment opportunities in “green jobs”, particularly in rural areas.

Disability

The 2011 Census showed that around 12% of the population found their day to day activities to be limited a lot due to a disability and around 9% found their activities limited a little. NISRA reports that one in five people have a disability or limiting long-term illness.

A submission received to the public consultation on the Draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy highlighted that as suggested in the strategy, improved access to

peatland sites would be a positive benefit for people with both physical disabilities and mental health issues, older people and people with children.

Dependants

The 2011 Census showed that 34% of NI households have dependent children (those aged 0-15 and person aged 16-18 who is a full time student and in a family with parent(s)).

NISRA reports that over the past 10 years there have been consistently more economically inactive women than men. The most common reason for inactivity among women was family and home commitments. 76% of women with dependent children were economically active, compared with 92% of men with dependent children. <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/labour-force-survey-women-northern-ireland-2020>

A submission received to the public consultation on the Draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy highlighted that as suggested in the strategy, improved access to peatland sites would be a positive benefit for people with both physical disabilities and mental health issues, older people and people with children.

Your consultation response will help us:

Identify the potential impacts for Section 75 groups that may arise from the implementation of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy.

Section 4. Consideration of measures which might mitigate any adverse impact and alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

Section 3 highlighted the range of potential impacts of the implementation of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy. This section considers the need for mitigation and provides examples of mitigation actions.

This section outlines some examples of the measures which will help mitigate potential impacts experienced by Section 75 groups.

4.1 Employment

The transition to net zero, which implementation of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy will support, may have an economic impact in terms of employment opportunities which relate to peat extraction and the use of peat products. Targeted economic protections such as a reskilling programme to support particularly impacted groups, will be a valuable mitigation measure.

In terms of equality, reskilling programmes will need to be designed and delivered to be inclusive and accessible, meeting the needs of Section 75 categories. This may include:

- Providing accessible green skills and green job employment services, as well as ensuring that green contracts and green jobs promote disability inclusion.
- Introducing measures to allow people from minority ethnic groups currently in low grade, low paid employment, to gain employment where their qualifications and skills are recognised and utilised.

4.2 Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland

The draft Green Growth Strategy is an over-arching, multi-decade strategy which sets out the long-term vision for tackling the climate crisis by balancing climate action a clean, resilient environment and the economy. The strategy recognises the need for adaptation and mitigation measures to work together to address both the causes and potential impacts of climate change. The Green Growth strategy will help deliver a cleaner environment rich in biodiversity, a more efficient use of resources within a circular economy and green jobs. It will promote the creation of more green jobs, and protect and repurpose existing jobs where possible.

The draft Green Growth Strategy is reflective of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, which received Royal Assent in June 2022. The Act commits to a Net Zero GHG emissions target by 2050, which includes reaching 48% by 2030. Other requirements of the Act include a Climate Action Plan, NI Climate Commissioner and a Just Transition Commission. The Act also puts responsibility on all Departments to contribute to meeting the targets contained within it.

The Green Growth Strategy and the Climate Action Plans will be the main delivery vehicle to set out the pathway to achieving the targets and all Northern Ireland departments need to work collaboratively and with the private sector to deliver progress in this regard.

4.2 Agricultural Support

The environmental challenges that need to be tackled in Northern Ireland are substantial. They range from deteriorating water and air quality, habitat and biodiversity loss and fragmentation, to the wide ranging impacts of climate change. The agricultural sector is vital to our food security and underpins our rural communities, but some agricultural practices have detrimental impacts on our environment. There is, however, significant potential for farmers and land managers

to make vital positive contributions to tackling these environmental impacts head on and to be properly recognised by society for doing so.

The Agricultural Policy Programme is the overarching strategic programme in DAERA for the development of future agricultural policy to achieve the Department's vision for a future agricultural regime that promotes productive, efficient practices through greater innovation and capacity, whilst protecting the environment, animal health and welfare and public health. The Programme seeks to oversee the transition from the existing schemes to new approaches and support systems which better address the needs of Northern Ireland agriculture, the environment and rural communities.

Future Agricultural Policy Proposals for Northern Ireland have four key outcomes one of which is environmental sustainability, in terms of its impact on, and guardianship of, air and water quality, soil health and biodiversity. This outcome is an integral part of the new Green Growth Strategy and associated Climate Action Plan which will be the Department's initial route map to climate action, green jobs and a clean environment.

As part of the Farming for Nature Package of support, it is envisaged that there will be a number of bespoke support schemes to protect both non-protected high nature value land and protected high nature value land. Farming for Carbon Measures will also assist and incentivise farmers to adopt carbon reduction actions into their farm management. The restoration of peatland is a key environmental objective to mitigating climate challenges. It is anticipated that farmers and land managers would have a significant role in ongoing management of peatland, and this on-going maintenance will be considered for integration into the Farming for Nature Package.

4.3 Horticultural Research

There is an anticipated transition away from the use of peat products in the Agri-food industry in Northern Ireland and research is ongoing at CAFRE into potential peat replacement products to support adaptation by the industry to the use of peat free growing media. In the past few years, there has been significant improvement on the

development of reliable peat alternative substrates both for the amateur and the professional market.

4.4 Addressing fuel poverty

The pattern of increasing levels of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland from 2006 onwards has been a trend throughout all regions of the UK, with the predominant reason for the increase being rising domestic energy prices. However, historically, Northern Ireland has always had a higher level of fuel poverty than the rest of the UK, due to relatively low incomes and higher fuel costs in the region. Data from the 2016 Northern Ireland House Condition Survey indicating that 22% of households in Northern Ireland experience fuel poverty.

Higher fuel prices impact most on for vulnerable households which often consist of low-income households, especially those who require greater than average warmth, such as those with older people, the long-term sick and disabled and young children.

Anecdotal information has highlighted that many Lowland Raised bogs are cut for turf, via the exercise of Turbary Rights, which is subsequently used for domestic heating. Any initiatives to end this practice will need to take into account the impact of households in fuel poverty.

Steps to a successful transition, such as retrofitting to improve insulation and heating and building new net zero houses, can help reduce or eradicate fuel poverty. A wide range of climate change actions will be taken via the Green Growth strategy and other related strategies, to phase out high carbon activities such as moving away from natural gas and oil boilers and lowering use of fossil fuels for heat and power.

Your consultation response will help us:

- **Understand how impacts relevant to you or your organisation can be mitigated.**
- **Identify opportunities to reduce inequalities for your Section 75 group(s).**

Section 5. Consultation.

The Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy will provide a framework for both conserving intact peatlands in Northern Ireland and a peatland restoration programme.

The pathway to success for the future in terms of protecting and restoring our peatlands will rely on partnership and shared goals that can only come about through effective public consultation and stakeholder engagement. DAERA has a strong history of partnership working and acknowledges continued engagement and collaborative approaches are key to successfully implementing the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy. DAERA intends to establish formal structures to advise on the implementation of the strategy and ensure effective delivery and monitoring

We will welcome engagement at all stages in the implementation of this strategy and will use this consultation as a positive step to enhance the effectiveness of policy development by gathering your views on impacts and mitigation measures.

As outlined in the preceding sections, the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy is expected to have an overall positive impact for the citizens of Northern Ireland. Examples of both positive and negative impacts have been identified and recognition given to the importance of consulting and engaging with individual and representatives of all section 75 groups.

Section 6. Decision by Public Authority and Publication of Report on Results of EQIA.

DAERA will consider the public consultation responses and proposed mitigations and publish a Summary of Consultation Responses document on the DAERA website within 2 months from the end of the consultation period.

The Department will consider, and as appropriate incorporate, evidence provided and findings from the EQIA to produce the Final Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy.

Section 7. Monitoring for Adverse Impact in the Future and Publication of the Results of Such Monitoring.

In taking forward a Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, DAERA aims to make positive progress in addressing both climate and biodiversity facing our society. Progress with implementing the Strategy and any impact on Section 75 Categories, whether positive or negative, will be monitored and reported on. An Implementation Plan (with delivery phases, scale and sources of funding and reporting metrics identified) and Reporting Framework will be developed following publication of the Strategy.

Monitoring results will be;

- Reviewed on an annual basis.
- Included in DAERA's annual review on progress to the Equality Commission.
- Widely and openly published
- Used to inform the next cycle of policy review.