



Department for the

Economy

An Roinn

Geilleagair

www.economy-ni.gov.uk

Equality Screening Template – Section 75 of Northern Ireland Act 1998

Policy title: Biomethane Policy

Decision: Policy currently screened out **without** mitigation or an alternative policy adopted *(to be reviewed and updated as necessary as policy develops)*

Contact: Irene McAllister, Green Gas Team
E-mail: biomethaneDFE@economy-ni.gov.uk

Date of completion: 8th March 2024 (initial screening)

Part 1. Policy scoping – asks public authorities to provide details about the policy, procedure, practice and/or decision being screened and what available evidence you have gathered to help make an assessment of the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

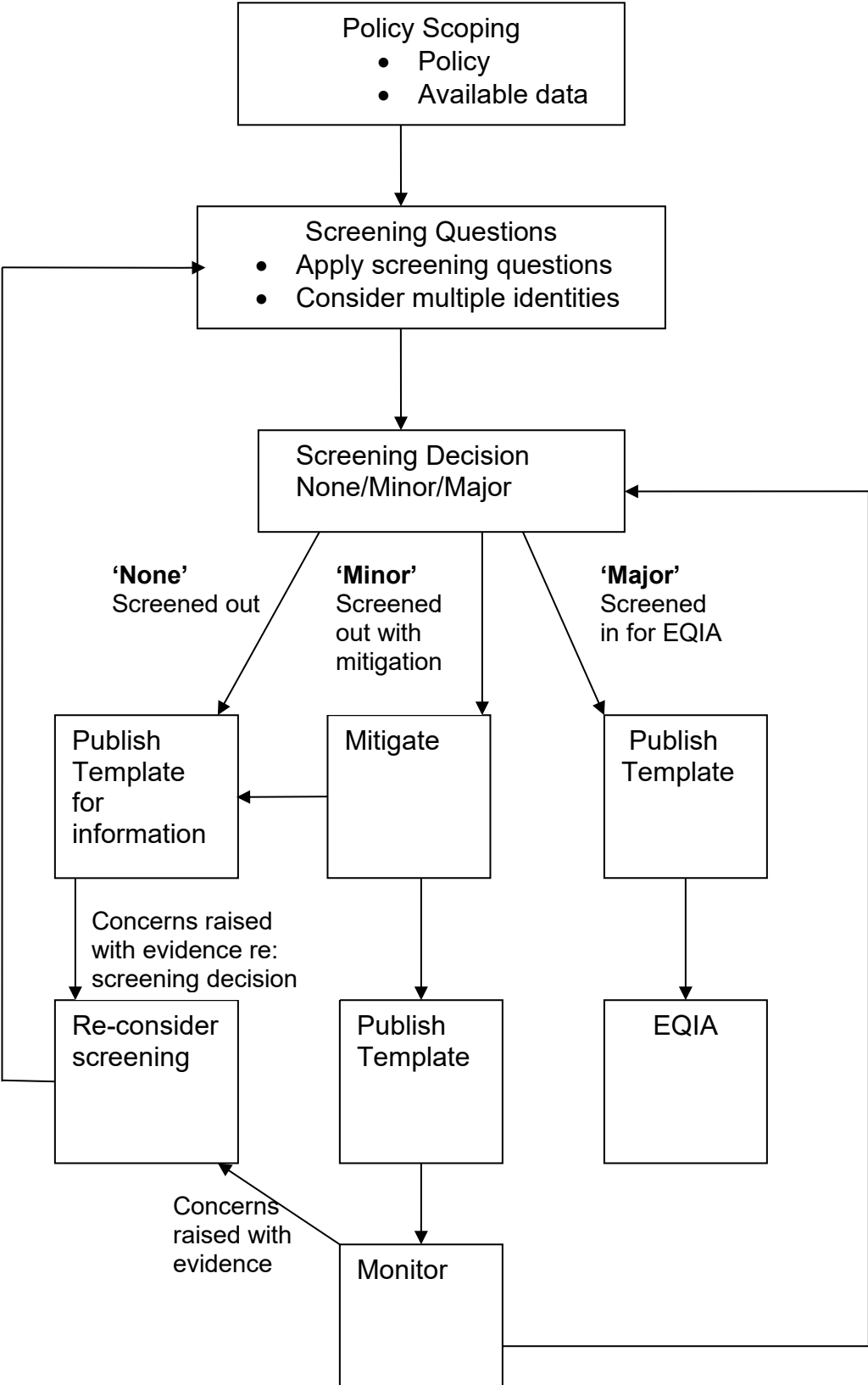
Part 2. Screening questions – asks about the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories. Details of the groups consulted and the level of assessment of the likely impact. This includes consideration of multiple identity and good relations issues.

Part 3. Screening decision – guides the public authority to reach a screening decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA), or to introduce measures to mitigate the likely impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Part 4. Monitoring – provides guidance to public authorities on monitoring for adverse impact and broader monitoring.

Part 5. Approval and authorisation – verifies the public authority's approval of a screening decision by a senior manager responsible for the policy.

Flowchart for the equality screening process and decision.



Part 1. Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

Information about the policy

Name of the policy

Biomethane Policy

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

This is a new policy.

What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes)

The aim of the policy is to provide a framework which will support the development of a sustainable biomethane sector in Northern Ireland (NI).

Background

Published in December 2021, the NI Executive's Energy Strategy, '*The Path to Net Zero Energy*', sets out the long-term vision for an **affordable**, **secure**, and **clean** energy system for current and future generations.

Transitioning away from fossil fuels is essential for mitigating climate change. The combustion of fossil fuels releases vast amounts of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that traps heat in the Earth's atmosphere, contributing to global warming. Shifting to renewable energy sources, such as biomethane, not only reduces carbon emissions but also promotes sustainable practices. By

embracing cleaner alternatives, we can reduce the adverse impacts of climate change and safeguard our environment.

The Energy Strategy recognises that biomethane, a renewable gas which can be produced locally, could play an important role in this journey. As part of the outworking of the Energy Strategy, the Department for the Economy ('DfE' or 'the Department') is developing a policy framework to support the growth of a sustainable biomethane sector in NI.

Biomethane Potential

Biomethane, also known as 'renewable natural gas' is a purified form of biogas produced by the anaerobic digestion (AD) of organic matter in an oxygen-free environment. Research commissioned from the Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy (CASE) at Queen's University of Belfast indicates that NI has excellent biomethane potential due to its large agricultural sector which can provide feedstocks from livestock slurry, grass/silage, and municipal (brown bin) waste.

Biomethane has a number of uses – it can, for example, be used as a vehicle fuel or injected into the gas network to replace natural gas with no changes required to infrastructure or gas appliances. Biomethane production also offers the opportunity to improve NI waste management practices, in particular, helping to address the environmental issues associated with excess nutrients from agricultural slurry. There is further potential to develop new revenue streams from by-products of the biomethane production process, such as digestate and biogenic CO₂.

At present there are 80+ AD plants operating in Northern Ireland, most of which receive a subsidy under the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) scheme to produce biogas for the generation of electricity which is often then exported back into the grid. There is, however, growing interest in establishing AD plants to produce biomethane. The Utility Regulator has been working with key stakeholders to develop the necessary regulatory and technical framework to allow biomethane to be injected into the gas network. A key milestone was reached with the first injection of locally produced biomethane into the gas network at Dungannon in November 2023.

Development of Biomethane Policy

In seeking to develop the biomethane sector, a key issue is that the cost of producing biomethane is higher than that of natural gas. This means it is unlikely that widespread, unsupported production of the renewable gas will be

achieved by the market alone in its current model. While biomethane production is an established process in a number of European countries, it tends to be heavily subsidised. The Department's challenge is to develop a policy framework, and additional added value streams, which could support the biomethane sector to become economically viable without long-term subsidies.

As a key early step in the formulation of biomethane policy, the Department is issuing a Call for Evidence (CfE) seeking information and views from key stakeholders on a range of issues as follows:

- the potential role for biomethane in the path to net zero, and the possibility of setting a local biomethane production target for Northern Ireland.
- ways of managing the feedstocks required to produce biomethane and the best way of ensuring a sustainable supply.
- the cost of producing biomethane and issues affecting the economic viability of local biomethane production.
- the treatment of costs related to connecting biomethane production sites to the gas network and the optimal treatment of such costs.
- any other key issues which government departments should consider in developing an effective policy framework for biomethane.

Following consideration of all information and views provided in response to the Call for Evidence, the Department proposes to draw up a draft policy paper for public consultation, with a final biomethane policy paper to follow.

This equality screening template will be updated in line with these key steps in the policy development process and further consideration given to equality impacts as policy direction is established.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?

Biomethane policy has significant potential to benefit NI generally. Biomethane could support our pathway to net zero by helping to decarbonise gas networks, providing transportation fuel, and/or replacing carbon intensive fuels in hard to electrify industries. It has the potential not only to provide a locally produced,

sustainable source of energy but also enhance our energy security of supply and help to provide a solution to some of the waste management issues which are currently damaging our local environment.

Biomethane policy will be developed in line with the Energy Strategy's long-term vision of an affordable, secure, and clean energy system. Any potential impacts on the cost of energy to consumers, e.g. from introducing biomethane into the gas network, will be carefully considered as a key part of the decision-making process. The Department is very aware, in particular, of the need to consider any potential impacts on the cost of energy to the most vulnerable gas customers, including those in fuel poverty, older people, people with disabilities and children.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

Department for the Economy (Green Gas Team, Energy Group)

Who owns and who implements the policy?

Department for the Economy (Green Gas Team, Energy Group)

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

Financial – The economics of biomethane production is a key consideration within the policy development process which will include assessment of the need for, and affordability of, effective support mechanisms.

Legislative – None identified at present but the need for any changes to regulatory framework to support biomethane production will be considered as part of the policy development process.

Main stakeholders affected

- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) – responsible for agricultural policies in respect of management of the feedstocks required for biomethane production.

- Utility Regulator – responsible for regulating the gas industry.
- Biomethane producers
- Agricultural sector – supply of feedstocks
- NI gas network companies
- Gas consumers (businesses and households)

Other policies with a bearing on this policy?

- The NI Executive’s Energy Strategy ‘*Path to Net Zero Energy*’ (published December 2021)
- The Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 – provides that government departments must ensure that the net NI emissions account for the year 2030 is at least 48% lower than the baseline.
- DfE Minister’s Economic Vision Statement (February 2024)
- DESNZ developing policy on biomethane (for any elements which may have UK-wide impacts)
- The UK Climate Change Committee’s Advice Report, ‘*The Path to a Net Zero Northern Ireland*’ (published in March 2023) - recommends that actions taken to increase both land-based and engineered greenhouse gas removals should include the anaerobic digestion of wastes to produce biomethane.
- DAERA agricultural policies

Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data. The Commission has produced this guide to [signpost to S75 data](#).

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

While developing the Energy Strategy, DfE collaborated across government and undertook substantial stakeholder engagement with industry, consumer groups and members of the public. Information and views from stakeholders helped to inform the Strategy which acknowledged the potential for biomethane to be used to decarbonise the gas network.

The Department subsequently commissioned research on the biomethane resource and the cost of biomethane production from the Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy (CASE) at Queen's University of Belfast to inform the development of a policy framework for biomethane. The next step in the policy development process is a Call for Evidence on developing biomethane production which will remain open for three months. Workshops with key stakeholders will be held during the Call for Evidence to give people the chance to raise and discuss relevant issues. We are keen to receive comments on all issues relevant to developing an effective policy framework for the development of a sustainable biomethane sector, including information or comments on any equality-related issues which individuals or groups would wish DfE to consider as part of the policy development process. All responses will be analysed and this equality screening template updated as appropriate. Public consultation on draft biomethane policy will then follow.

It is expected that biomethane policy will benefit all the local population generally, including all Section 75 categories. However, as noted above, the potential impact of the production and injection of biomethane into the local gas network on energy costs for gas consumers will have to be given very careful consideration as part of the policy development process. DfE will engage with stakeholders throughout the policy development process to help inform policy direction and ensure that affordability issues and consumer protection are fully reflected in the final policy.

Evidence available thus far which will be utilised in the policy development process includes information drawn from the NISRA Census 2021 and other sources on the makeup of the NI population and on types of heating system used by Section 75 equality groups.

Religious belief evidence/information:

The 2021 Census found that 43.5% of the population in NI came from a Protestant background and 45.7% from a Catholic background.

The Census further found the following numbers of individuals by religious belief lived in households with mains gas central heating:

- 244,562 Catholic background
- 255,902 Protestant or other Christian religion background
- 13,381 Other religion
- 76,949 No religion

No responses to the public consultation on the Executive's Energy Strategy identified religious belief as a factor in differing effects of the Strategy or specific energy policies such as the proposed biomethane policy.

Political Opinion evidence/information:

In 2020, 35% of respondents to a NI Life & Times Survey considered themselves to be unionist, 19% nationalist and 42% neither.

No responses to the public consultation on the Executive's Energy Strategy identified political opinion as a factor in differing effects of the Strategy or specific energy policies such as the proposed biomethane policy.

Racial Group evidence/information:

The 2021 Census reported that 96.55% of the total NI population was white.

The Census further found the following numbers of individuals by ethnic status lived in households with mains gas central heating:

- 561,307 White
- 15,820 Asian
- 4,810 Black
- 6,270 Mixed
- 2,587 Other

No responses to the public consultation on the Executive's Energy Strategy identified racial group as a factor in differing effects of the Strategy or specific energy policies such as the proposed biomethane policy.

Age evidence/information:

The 2021 Census reported that the NI population was made up as follows:

- 0-14 years: 19.20%
- 15-39 years: 31.2%
- 40-64 years: 32.40%
- 65+ years 17.2%

Data collected for the 2021 Census further revealed that:

- 33.3% of households containing children aged up to 15 years old used gas-fired central heating.
- 32.6% of households containing individuals aged 16-64 years used gas-fired central heating.
- 24.8% of households containing adults aged 65+ years used gas-fired central heating.

No responses to the public consultation on the Executive's Energy Strategy identified age as a factor in differing effects of the Strategy or specific energy policies such as the proposed biomethane policy. However, given the numbers of potentially more vulnerable people in this category, i.e. children and older people, who live in households with gas-fired central heating, it is important to note that affordability issues will be central to considerations on future biomethane policy.

Marital Status evidence/information:

The 2021 Census reported that there were 693,000 adults in NI who were married or in a civil partnership. This covered 46% of our population aged 16 and over. In contrast, 577,000 adults (38%) were single (never married/civil partnered).

The Census further found the following numbers of individuals by marital status lived in households with mains gas central heating:

- 203,271 Single

- 177,245 Married/Civil Partnership
- 81,164 Other Status

Consultation on the Executive's Energy Strategy did not collect information on a respondent's marital status and no responses identified it as a factor in differing effects of the Strategy or specific energy policies such as biomethane policy.

Sexual Orientation evidence/information:

The 2021 Census found the following numbers of individuals by sexual orientation lived in households with mains gas central heating:

- 413,203 Straight or Heterosexual
- 15,068 Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Other Sexual Orientation
- 33,409 Did Not Say

Consultation on the Executive's Energy Strategy did not collect information on a respondent's sexual orientation and no responses identified it as a factor in differing effects of the Strategy or specific energy policies such as biomethane policy.

Men & Women generally evidence/information:

NISRA population statistics for 2020 showed that 50.7% of the NI population was female and 49.3% male. By 2031, projections are that the male/female balance will be 50/50 with that balance persisting to 2051.

The 2021 Census found the following numbers of men and women lived in households with mains gas central heating:

- 287,071 Men
- 303,723 Women

Consultation on the Executive's Energy Strategy did not collect information on a respondent's gender and no responses identified it as a factor in differing effects of the Strategy or specific energy policies such as biomethane policy.

Disability evidence/information:

A 2018 report by NISRA found that 21.7% of the adult NI population were disabled. One of eight consumer focus groups conducted during the Energy Strategy consultation comprised people with disabilities. There were no discernible differences reported between the views on energy policy expressed by people with disabilities or long-term illness and other focus group participants.

The 2021 Census found that 148,416 individuals with long term health disabilities (day to day activities limited) lived in households with mains gas central heating.

Given the number of people with disabilities, i.e. potentially more vulnerable people, living in households with gas-fired central heating, it is important to note that affordability issues will be central to considerations on future biomethane policy.

Dependants evidence/information:

The 2021 Census found that households with mains gas central heating were made up as follows:

- 415,721 Households contained more than one person and included dependents (children, adults aged 65+ or people with a long-term health problem or disability)
- 86,590 Households contained more than one person and had no dependents
- 88,485 Households contained one person

Consultation on the Executive's Energy Strategy did not collect information on whether or not a respondent had dependents and no responses identified it as a factor in differing effects of the Strategy or specific energy policies such as biomethane policy.

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision?

Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below:

The aim of DfE's developing biomethane policy is to provide a framework for the development of a sustainable biomethane sector in NI. The economics of biomethane production and potential impacts on energy costs for gas consumers will be considered as part of policy development.

Religious belief

The Department does not anticipate any difference in needs, experience, or priorities in respect of biomethane policy based on an individual's religious belief.

Political Opinion

The Department does not anticipate any difference in needs, experience, or priorities in respect of biomethane policy based on an individual's political opinion.

Racial Group

The Department does not anticipate any difference in needs, experience, or priorities in respect of biomethane policy based on an individual's racial group.

Age

This Section 75 equality group includes people who may be considered more vulnerable, i.e. children and older people, and who may be particularly impacted by energy costs. Affordability will be a key consideration for the Department as this policy develops.

Marital status

The Department does not anticipate any difference in needs, experience, or priorities in respect of biomethane policy based on an individual's marital status.

Sexual orientation

The Department does not anticipate any difference in needs, experience, or priorities in respect of biomethane policy based on an individual's sexual orientation.

Men and Women Generally

The Department does not anticipate any difference in needs, experience, or priorities in respect of biomethane policy based on an individual's gender.

Disability

This Section 75 group includes people who may be considered more vulnerable, i.e. people with long-term health issues or disabilities, who may be particularly impacted by energy costs. Affordability will be a key consideration for the Department as this policy develops.

Dependants

Households with dependents, i.e. children, older people, and people with disabilities may be considered more vulnerable in relation to energy costs. Affordability will be a key consideration for the Department as this policy develops.

Part 2. Screening questions

Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the Screening Questions 1-4, which follow.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as

having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of a 'major' impact

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

In favour of 'minor' impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;

- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of none

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

Screening questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Please provide details of the likely policy impacts and determine the level of impact for each S75 categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

The Department has engaged with stakeholders and industry to inform this policy via workshops, stakeholder engagement and through a published Call for Evidence (CfE). At this stage the Department is not aware of any issues within the proposed policy that would have a negative effect on Section 75 categories but will give full consideration to any responses it receives in response to the consultation that may do so.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:
What is the level of impact?

The Department considers that biomethane policy is not likely to have any specific or differential impact on this category. However, we will monitor responses to the Call for Evidence and subsequent policy consultation for any suggested differential impact.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:
What is the level of impact?

The Department considers that biomethane policy is not likely to have any specific or differential impact on this category. However, we will monitor responses to the Call for Evidence and subsequent policy consultation for any suggested differential impact.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:
What is the level of impact?

The Department considers that biomethane policy is not likely to have any specific or differential impact on this category. However, we will monitor responses to the Call for Evidence and subsequent policy consultation for any suggested differential impact.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**:
What is the level of impact?

The Department considers that biomethane policy is not likely to have any specific or differential impact on this category. However, as energy costs and affordability may be key concerns for the more vulnerable people in this category, including children and older people, we will monitor closely monitor responses to the Call for Evidence and subsequent policy consultation for any issues raised which may require further consideration as part of policy development.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**:
What is the level of impact?

The Department considers that biomethane policy is not likely to have any specific or differential impact on this category. However, we will monitor responses to the Call for Evidence and subsequent policy consultation for any suggested differential impact.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**:
What is the level of impact?

The Department considers that biomethane policy is not likely to have any specific or differential impact on this category. However, we will monitor responses to the Call for Evidence and subsequent policy consultation for any suggested differential impact.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**:
What is the level of impact?

The Department considers that biomethane policy is not likely to have any specific or differential impact on this category. However, we will monitor responses to the Call for Evidence and subsequent policy consultation for any suggested differential impact.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**:
What is the level of impact?

The Department considers that biomethane policy is not likely to have any specific or differential impact on this category. However, as energy costs and affordability may be key concerns for people in this category, we will monitor closely monitor responses to the Call for Evidence and subsequent policy consultation for any issues raised which may require further consideration as part of policy development.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**:
What is the level of impact?

The Department considers that biomethane policy is not likely to have any specific or differential impact on this category. However, as energy costs and affordability may be key concerns for the more vulnerable people in this category, i.e. people with dependents including children, older people and people with disabilities, we will monitor closely monitor responses to the Call for Evidence and subsequent policy consultation for any issues raised which may require further consideration as part of policy development.

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?

Detail opportunities of how this policy could promote equality of opportunity for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

The aim of biomethane policy is provide a framework for the development of the biomethane sector which will not only provide a locally produced, sustainable source of energy, but also enhance our energy security of supply and help to provide a solution to some of the waste management issues which are currently damaging our local environment. It is not currently envisaged that the policy will provide opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity within the Section 75 equality categories.

Religious Belief –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will provide opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for people of different religious beliefs.

Political Opinion –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will provide opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for people of different political opinions.

Racial Group –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will provide opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for people of different racial groups.

Age –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will provide opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for people of different ages.

Marital Status –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will provide opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for people of different marital status.

Sexual Orientation –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will provide opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for people of different sexual orientation.

Men and Women generally –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will provide opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for men or women.

Disability –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will provide opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

Dependants –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will provide opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for people with or without dependants.

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Please provide details of the likely policy impact and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:
What is the level of impact?

None identified

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:
What is the level of impact?

None identified

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:
What is the level of impact?

None identified

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Detail opportunities of how this policy could better promote good relations for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

Religious Belief –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will offer any opportunities to better promote good relations people of different religious belief.

Political Opinion –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will offer any opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different political opinions.

Racial Group –

No, it is not envisaged that biomethane policy will offer any opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

(For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

No impacts identified at present.

Responses to the Department's Call for Evidence, and to the subsequent public consultation on draft biomethane policy, will be monitored and, if any issues relating to multiple identity impacts are raised, these will be considered as part of the policy development process.

Part 3. Screening decision

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

At this stage, biomethane policy has been screened out without mitigation or an alternative policy adopted.

This policy is currently in the early stages of development with a Call for Evidence issued to gather information and views from stakeholders. Following analysis of responses to the Call for Evidence, the Department will draw up a draft policy paper for public consultation. This screening template will be further updated and a final screening decision made based on any issues raised and proposed policy direction.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced - please provide details.

Policy screened out without mitigation or an alternative policy adopted.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

N/A

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

Mitigation

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

If so, **give the reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

N/A

Timetabling and prioritising

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been '**screened in**' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion – Rating (1-3)

Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations -

Social need -

Effect on people's daily lives -

Relevance to a public authority's functions –

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

If yes, please provide details.

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

The Department will issue a consultation for the policy paper to relevant individuals/organisations and will ensure that any responses that may have a negative effect on Section 75 categories are highlighted and given full consideration. If any negative impacts are highlighted as a result of the consultation the Department will seek to provide mitigation for these and will re-screen the policy.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Irene McAllister, Green Gas Team, DfE

Position/Job Title: Deputy Principal

Business Area/ Branch: Green Gas Team, Business, Gas, Minerals and Renewable Electricity Directorate.

Date: 8th March 2024

Approved by: Edward Kerr

Position/Job Title: Grade 7, Head of the Green Gas Team

Business Area/Branch: Green Gas Team, Gas, Minerals and Renewable Electricity Directorate.

Date: 11th March 2024

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each policy screened should be 'signed off' and approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy, made easily accessible on the public authority's website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.