



# Rural White Paper Action Plan

## Annual Progress Report 2014



Department of  
**Agriculture and  
Rural Development**

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AN ROINN  
**Talmhaíochta agus  
Forbartha Tuaithe**

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MÁNNYSTRIE O  
**Fairms an  
Kintra Fordèrin**

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30 June 2014

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## Foreword by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development



As Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, I am pleased to present the second Annual Progress Report on the Rural White Paper Action Plan.

When I launched the Rural White Paper Action Plan back in 2012 it was the first Executive initiative to focus solely on rural areas and to include commitments by all Departments. It also provided a framework for the Executive to demonstrate its commitment to rural areas and to work together in identifying measures to improve the quality of life for rural dwellers.

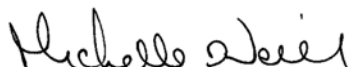
The first Annual Progress Report on the Rural White Paper Action Plan was published in January 2014 and it demonstrated that good progress had been made by Departments in implementing their commitments in the Action Plan during its first year of operation. I am pleased that this second Annual Progress Report demonstrates that good progress continues to be made and provides clear evidence of Departments working closely together on a range of rural issues. I know that the work my Department has been doing in partnership with other Departments has led to significant outcomes for rural dwellers in terms of helping to reduce poverty and social isolation in rural areas.

The Annual Progress Report 2014 highlights a range of initiatives taking place in rural areas within the framework of the Rural White Paper Action Plan including community safety, broadband, healthcare, tourism, transport, the arts and education. It also highlights many of the benefits which the commitments made in the Rural White Paper Action Plan have delivered for rural communities.

I believe that the Rural White Paper Action Plan has proved to be an important mechanism for helping to ensure that Departments continue to focus on the specific issues and challenges facing our rural communities and on improving the quality of life for those living and working in our rural areas. I see the Action Plan as a live initiative which continues to respond to the needs of rural dwellers and I am working with my Executive colleagues to identify new and challenging actions to be included in a refreshed Action Plan to be published during 2015.

The Rural White Paper Action Plan is one of two separate but complementary rural initiatives which I am intending to develop further. I have also made a commitment to strengthen rural proofing across government and my Department is currently developing proposals for legislation on rural proofing. I believe that legislating on rural proofing will help ensure effective implementation by Departments and lead to better outcomes for rural communities.

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have contributed to the success of the Rural White Paper Action Plan since its launch. It is important to remember that the key purpose of this initiative is to improve the quality of life for rural dwellers and I firmly believe that through the successful implementation of the commitments contained in the Action Plan we can deliver real and meaningful benefits for rural dwellers and ensure that our rural communities continue to thrive and prosper.



Michelle O'Neill MLA  
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

## Réamhrá Ón Aire Talmhaíochta Agus Forbartha Tuaithe



Mar Aire Talmhaíochta agus Forbartha Tuaithe, tá áthas orm an dara Tuarascáil Bhliantúil ar Dhul Chun Cinn Phlean Gnímh an Pháipéir Bháin Tuaithe a chur i láthair.

Nuair a sheol mé Plean Gnímh an Pháipéir Bháin Tuaithe in 2012 ba é an t-aon thionscnamh Feidhmeannais amháin é a dhírigh ar cheantair tuaithe amháin agus ina raibh gealltanais ó gach Roinn. Ba chreatlach don Fheidhmeannas é fosta a ghealltanais do cheantair tuaithe a léiriú agus comhoibriú a dhéanamh le chéile chun bearta a fheabhsóidh cáilíocht beatha chónaitheoirí tuaithe a aithint.

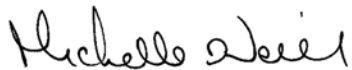
Foilsíodh an chéad Tuarascáil Bhliantúil ar Dhul Chun Cinn Phlean Gnímh an Pháipéir Bháin Tuaithe in Eanáir 2014 agus léirigh sí go ndearna Ranna dul chun cinn maith maidir le cur i bhfeidhm a gcoimhlintí sa Phlean Gnímh i rith chéad bhliain a fheidhmíochta. Tá áthas orm go léiríonn an dara Tuarascáil Bhliantúil seo ar Dhul Chun Cinn go bhfuil dul chun cinn á dhéanamh go fóill agus go léiríonn sí an fhianaise shoiléir go bhfuil na Ranna ag comhoibriú go dlúth lena chéile ar réimse ceisteanna tuaithe. Tá a fhios agam go raibh torthaí mórthábhachtacha ann as an obair a rinne mo Roinn i gcomhar le Ranna eile do chónaitheoirí tuaithe maidir le bheith ag cuidiú leo bochtaineacht agus aonrú sóisialta a íslíú i gceantair tuaithe.

Leagann Tuarascáil Bhliantúil ar Dhul Chun Cinn 2014 béim ar réimse tionscnamh atá ag dul ar aghaidh i gceantair tuaithe laistigh de chreatlach Phlean Gnímh an Pháipéir Bháin Tuaithe, ina measc, sábháilteacht pobail, banda leathan, cúram sláinte, turasóireacht, iompar, na healaíona agus oideachas. Leagann sí béim fosta ar a lán de na tairbhí a chomhlíon na gealltanais a tugadh i bPlean Gnímh an Pháipéir Bháin Tuaithe, do phobail tuaithe.

Creidim gur mheicníocht thábhachtach é Plean Gnímh an Pháipéir Bháin Tuaithe chun cinntiú go ndíríonn na Ranna go fóill ar na saincheisteanna agus na saindhúshláin atá ag ár bpobail tuaithe agus ar cháilíocht na beatha dóibh sin a bhfuil cónaí orthu agus a oibríonn inár gceantair tuaithe a fheabhsú. Amharcaim ar an Phlean Gnímh mar thionscnamh beo a riarann ar riachtanais chónaitheoirí tuaithe go fóill agus tá mé ag obair le mo chomhghleacaithe san Fheidhmeannas ar aithint gníomhartha nua agus dúshlánacha a chuirfear i bPlean Gnímh athnuaite a fhoilseofar i rith 2015.

Tá Plean Gnímh an Pháipéir Bháin Tuaithe mar cheann de dhá thionscnamh tuaithe ar leith a chomhlánann a chéile, tionscnaimh a bhfuil sé ar intinn agam a fhorbairt a thuilleadh. Thug mé gealltanais fosta go neartóinn profú tuaithe trasna an rialtais agus tá mo Roinn ag forbairt moltaí faoi láthair le haghaidh reachtaíochta ar phrofú tuaithe. Creidim go gcinnteoidh reachtú profú tuaithe go gcuirfidh na Ranna é i bhfeidhm go héifeachtach agus go mbeidh torthaí níos fearr as do phobail tuaithe.

Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leo sin go léir a bhí rannpháirteach i rath Phlean Gnímh an Pháipéir Bháin Tuaithe ó seoladh é. Tá sé tábhachtach cuimhniú gurb é príomhchuspóir an tionscnaimh seo ná cáilíocht beatha chónaitheoirí tuaithe a fheabhsú agus creidim go daingean má chuirfear na gealltanais sa Phlean Gnímh i bhfeidhm go rathúil, tig linn fíorthairbhí suntasacha a chur ar fáil agus cinntiú go mbeidh rath agus bláth leanúnach ar ár bpobail tuaithe.



Michelle O'Neill CTR  
Aire Talmhaíochta agus Forbartha Tuaithe



## Forethocht O Tha Männystèr O Fairms An Kintra Fordèrin



Wi bein tha Männystèr o Fairms an Kintra Fordèrin, A'm hert-gled tae pit forrits tha saicon Towmond Fordèrin Fynnin anent tha Lannwart White Paiper Jeein Rede.

Whanivver A blezzint tha Lannwart White Paiper Jeein Rede baak in 20an12 it wus tha furst ploy o tha Heich Cooncil tae yokk til lannwart airts alane an tae tak in thirlins frae aa tha Männystries. Forbye, it gien a set fur tha Heich Cooncil tae kythe its thirlin til lannwart airts an tae neibor in fynnin oot wyes o giein a heeze til tha stannèrts o leevin fur yins steyin in kintrie pairts.

Tha furst Towmond Fordèrin Fynnin anent tha Lannwart White Paiper Jeein Rede wus skailt in Jenyery 20an14, an it kythed 'at tha Männystries haed haed guid fordèrin wi implymentin thair thirlins in tha Jeein Rede throch its furst towmond o throchin. A'm hert-gled 'at this saicon Towmond Jeein Rede kythes 'at the'r haudin tae makkin guid fordèr an gies shire pruiif o tha Männystries neiborin pack oan a clattèr o lannwart maittèrs. A ken fine tha wark ma Männystrie haes bin daein pairtnerin wi ither Männystries haes weered til mairkit ootcums fur yins leevin in lannwart pairts adae wi makkin an inpit tae laighin puirtith an waant o gree in lannwart airts.

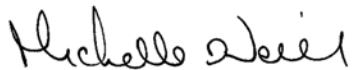
Tha Towmond Fordèrin Fynnin 20an14 gies wut o a clattèr o daeins gan oan in lannwart airts athin tha set o tha Lannwart White Paiper Jeein Rede, takkin in resydentèr safétie, braidbann, tha tent o poust, reengin, hurlin, tha airts an lear. Forbye, it kythes monie o tha brows 'at tha thirlins gaed intil in tha Lannwart White Paiper Jeein Rede haes oot-pit fur lannwart resydentèr curns.

A trow 'at tha Lannwart White Paiper Jeein Rede haes pruiived tae be a yoke o gye grist fur giein a heeze wi makkin siccar 'at Männystries hauds til mintin at tha sindèrie fashes an hobbles oor lannwart resydentèr curns rins agane an at fordèrin tha leevin stannèrts fur bodies leevin an warkin in oor lannwart airts. A wud alloo 'at tha Jeein Rede bes a bidin ingang 'at hauds til liffin whut lannwart resydentèrs bes in waant o, an A'm warkin wi ma Heich Cooncil billies furtæe fyn oot new an fykie daeins tae be lappit in wi a soartit Jeein Rede we'r fur skailin throch 20an15.



Tha Lannwart White Paiper Jeein Rede bes yin o twa sindèrie, tha mair marrowin, lannwart ingangs A'm mintin at graithin a wheen mair. Forbye, A hae taen oan han tae mak lannwart fennin mair stieve athort tha govermint an ma Männystrie bes graithin mintins fur laas anent lannwart fennin richt noo. A'm o a mine 'at makkin laas anent lannwart fennin wull gie a heeze wi makkin siccar o feckfu implymentin wi Männystries an weer til mair hertsome ootcums fur lannwart resydentèr curns.

A'm leukkin tae pit doon tha thankrife A am tae aabodie 'at haes haed an inpit til tha wunnins o tha Lannwart White Paiper Jeein Rede frae it wus blezzint. It recks gyely tae hae mine 'at tha heid etlin o this ingang is tae fordèr tha stannèrts o leevin fur lannwart resydentèrs an A wud threap 'at wi tha guid-gaun implymentin o tha thirlins athin tha Jeein Rede we'll can oot-pit rale an wechty braws fur lannwart resydentèrs an mak siccar 'at oor resydentèr curns hauds til bein weel-daein an able.



Michelle O'Neill MLS  
Männystèr o Fairms an Kintra Fordèrin

## Introduction

This is the second Annual Progress Report on the implementation of the Rural White Paper Action Plan which was launched in June 2012. This report covers the period up to 30th June 2014 and provides an update on progress by each Department in implementing the actions contained in the Action Plan. The first Annual Progress Report was published on the DARD website<sup>1</sup> in January 2014.

The Annual Progress Report is a key mechanism in the monitoring process for the Rural White Paper Action Plan and provides the formal record of progress made by each Department in implementing its commitments in the Action Plan. It also provides a short narrative by each Department outlining the benefits which the implementation of the Action Plan has brought to our rural communities and our rural areas.

This Annual Progress Report 2014 should be read in conjunction with the Rural White Paper Action Plan<sup>2</sup>.

## Background

The Rural White Paper Action Plan is the outcome of an Executive initiative launched by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development which aims to identify and seeks to address the key challenges facing rural communities. It was developed in close consultation with the Rural White Paper Stakeholder Advisory Group which comprised of a range of rural stakeholders, including representatives of the agricultural, environmental, local government, equality and rural community sectors. The Interdepartmental Committee on Rural Policy also played a key role in the development of the Action Plan.

The Rural White Paper Action Plan was formally approved by the Executive in May 2012 and launched by the Minister on 28th June 2012. The Rural White Paper Action Plan sets out the Executive's commitments in rural areas and is the first rural initiative here to include commitments by all government departments. These commitments cover a wide range of rural issues across five broad themes namely, urban-rural linkages, rural communities, rural economies, access to services and the countryside.

The Rural White Paper Action Plan also sets out the Executive's vision for rural areas and a number of key policy priorities. These policy priorities include minimising disadvantage, poverty and social exclusion where they exist in rural areas, promoting fair and equitable access to key services for all rural dwellers, supporting the development of an efficient transport and infrastructure system that facilitates effective urban rural linkages and providing rural businesses with appropriate support to ensure the development of dynamic and innovative rural businesses.

Each department is committed to implementing its respective actions within the timeframes specified in the Action Plan and within existing budgets. The monitoring arrangements agreed by the Executive provide for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to undertake routine monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan and to report back to the Executive by means of an Annual Progress Report. The first Annual Progress Report was published on the DARD website<sup>1</sup> in January 2014.

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1 <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/rural-white-paper-action-plan-annual-progress-report-2013.pdf>

2 <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/rural-white-paper-action-plan.pdf>

# Review of Progress by Departments

## Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

DARD's vision is *a thriving and sustainable rural economy, community and environment to promote social and economic equality*. To meet this Vision the Department aims to work with stakeholders, build partnerships, tackle disadvantage and value its staff; strive to work efficiently, respond quickly to change and focus on achieving sustainable outcomes. This involves helping the agri-food industry prepare for future market opportunities and economic challenges; improving the lives of farmers and other rural dwellers targeting resources where they are most needed; enhancing animal, fish and plant health and animal welfare on an all Ireland basis; helping to deliver improved sustainable environmental outcomes; and managing our business and delivering services to our customers in a cost effective way.

Key policy issues for DARD in 2013-14 included:

- Contributing to the negotiations on reform of the Common Agricultural Policy in Europe and, when agreement was reached, carrying out a public consultation that informed the final package of reforms which best meets local needs in supporting sustainable growth within our farming sector.
- Working closely with DETI and other relevant Government partners to consider the findings and recommendations within the Going for Growth report published in May 2013; developing a draft Executive Response to the report and submitting it to the Executive for agreement.
- Continuing to work with the Agri-Food Strategy Board and other partners to progress actions to support the development of a sustainable, profitable and integrated supply chain and inform the shape of the next Rural Development Programme and other support Programmes.
- Continuing roll-out of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) 2007-2013, including significant investment in economic, environmental, social and industry competitiveness measures.
- Continuing development of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 in line with the Europe 2020 strategic objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
- Continuing to advocate our position in pursuance of EU Animal Health law that can help deliver on the objectives in the All-Island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy with a view to safeguarding animal health and welfare and thus supporting our agri-food industry.



- Completing the design phase of the Test and Vaccinate or Remove (TVR) Wildlife Intervention Research Project, which aims to provide valuable information and data on badgers in the Banbridge, Co Down, area and on the practicalities of TVR approach.
- Assisting the fishing and aquaculture industries prepare for future market opportunities and economic, environmental and social challenges presented by the reformed Common Fisheries Policy.

## **Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation**

A key priority for DARD in the Rural White Paper Action Plan is to tackle poverty and social isolation in rural areas, particularly amongst vulnerable groups. DARD's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework supports a package of measures worth up to £16 million to support vulnerable people in rural communities and to target the root causes of social isolation. A total of £11.5 million has been spent in the period up to June 2014 under a diverse range of measures. These measures are delivered in partnership with other organisations and aim to complement other poverty and isolation initiatives and actions undertaken by government. The following initiatives are supported under the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework.

### **Maximising Access Rural Areas (MARA) Project**

DARD supports the delivery of the Maximising Access Rural Areas (MARA) Project in conjunction with the Public Health Agency (PHA). The MARA Project aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in rural areas by increasing access to services, grants and benefits by facilitating a co-ordinated service to support rural dwellers living in or at risk of poverty and social isolation. The initiative provides for trained MARA enablers to visit vulnerable households to assist them in obtaining a range of benefits, grants and services of which they may be eligible for but not otherwise be aware. More details on the operation of this project are provided in the Review of Progress by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

### **Farm Family Health Checks Programme**

DARD operates a Farm Family Health Checks Programme in conjunction with the PHA. This innovative project offers a means for farmers and their families to access health checks through a mobile unit which is available at local markets and community events. It offers on-the-spot health checks consisting of blood pressure monitoring, BMI, cholesterol check and diabetic screening. The project has been instrumental in improving the health and social wellbeing of rural farmers and farm families by increasing local access to health screening services, by providing health related advice and information and through signposting to existing services for further advice and support. More details on the operation of this project are provided in the Review of Progress by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

### **Assisted Rural Travel Scheme**

The Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS) is a joint initiative between DARD and the Department for Regional Development (DRD) which aims to address the issue of access to transport services in rural areas. The Scheme is delivered by the Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTPs) which cover all rural areas. Under the ARTS initiative, 'SmartPass holders' (over 60s and disabled people) in rural areas can avail of free and concessionary (half fare) transport via the Rural Community Transport Partnership services. The popularity in this Scheme has been huge and has enabled any passengers with a valid SmartPass to travel free or half fare on the Dial-a-Lift services provided by the

Rural Community Transport Partnerships. To date 631,388 trips have been funded under the ARTS Scheme.

### **Rural Support**

DARD provides funding for 'Rural Support', a charitable organisation that provides a listening and signposting service for farmers and rural dwellers. Rural Support has over 30 trained volunteers who provide support through a confidential helpline. This service helps farmers and rural dwellers access information and advice on a wide range of issues including personal and business finance, farm finance and debt, inheritance and succession issues, family relationships, isolation and healthcare matters.

### **Rural Community Development**

DARD funds the Rural Support Networks for the purpose of helping to build capacity of community and voluntary groups in rural areas and to assist such groups in benefitting from various funding opportunities such as the Rural Development Programme and Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation initiatives. The membership of the Networks is predominately rural and includes a wide range of community and voluntary sector organisations including community groups, the social economy sector, play groups, farmers, women, young people, people with disabilities and older people etc. Over 850 community and voluntary groups are affiliated to the various Rural Support Networks.

### **Connecting Elderly Rural Isolated (CERI)**

Connecting Elderly Rural Isolated (CERI) is a programme developed by DARD to address social isolation for elderly rural dwellers piloted in the Western Trust area with best practice and learning shared with the other rural trusts. The programme is operated in conjunction with the WHSCT/PHA and has a focus on health promotion, healthy lifestyles and supporting independent living. CERI has facilitated a range of activities including attendance at health awareness and improvement events, ICT classes, luncheon clubs and various other group activities which help to reduce social isolation for vulnerable older people in rural areas. Over 60,000 contacts have been made under the pilot to date.

### **Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship Programmes**

DARD operates the Youth Employability (BOOST) and Rural Youth Entrepreneurship (RYE) Programmes in conjunction with DEL and the Rural Development Council. Both Programmes are supported by DARD to help reduce economic inactivity among vulnerable young people in rural areas by addressing barriers to employment and business creation.

The BOOST youth employability programme works to reduce economic inactivity among unemployed rural young people by helping them to gain the core skills needed for employment and by addressing barriers to employment. To date almost 900 participants have been supported by BOOST and have received their FSB certificates.

The initial RYE pilot programme has been designed to contribute to local, regional and national rural economic growth by developing business creation potential among vulnerable young people across the north. Through upskilling, networking, mentoring and sharing ideas, RYE creates the foundations for the development of future rural businesses. To date over 500 young people have been engaged in the initial RYE pilot phase.

### **Fuel Poverty**

DARD aims to help alleviate rural fuel poverty through partnership working with government and energy stakeholders. To achieve this DARD has provided supplementary funding support to the DSD Warm Homes Schemes (including Affordable Warmth) enabling the provision of whole house energy efficiency solutions for additional low income rural households. DARD also provides supplementary ring-fenced rural funding to the Power NI Free Cavity and Loft Insulation Schemes which are managed by Power NI targeting low income households. These schemes have been approved and are also being supported under the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) which the Utility Regulator co-ordinates. To date over 1,400 additional vulnerable rural households have been supported overall to access energy efficiency measures thus creating warmer more comfortable homes.

### **Rural Borewells Scheme**

The Rural Borewells scheme was developed in partnership between DARD and DRD. The Scheme provides financial assistance towards the cost of borewell installation and water treatment to enable owner occupiers or landlords of domestic rural properties who are not currently served by a public water mains supply to obtain a wholesome water supply. Drilling has been completed at 63 borewell sites to date.

### **The Rural Challenge Programme**

DARD operates the Rural Challenge Programme which is designed to encourage rural community and voluntary groups to identify poverty or social isolation issues within their community and to propose initiatives to address these issues through the provision of a small grant (up to £10,000). 4,344 individuals have to date benefited from projects funded under the Rural Challenge Programme.

### **Rural Libraries**

A joint working group has been established with DCAL and Libraries NI with the view to raising the profile of libraries in rural areas. A range of projects have been developed including the 'Library in a Box' initiative which aims to improve access to books and reading in rural areas. A Memorandum of Understanding between DARD and Libraries NI is being developed for the purposes of developing new projects which will help to sustain rural libraries, help ensure that libraries contribute to the sustainability of rural communities and help rural dwellers to access and benefit from library services.



## **Health in Mind**

DARD is working in partnership with a range of organisations including Libraries NI to extend the 'Health in Mind' initiative in rural areas. Health in Mind is a library programme which aims to raise awareness of positive mental health and to increase understanding of mental health issues through reading, learning and information activities provided in non-stigmatising and neutral venues, mostly libraries.

## **Rural Proofing**

DARD promotes and supports the implementation of rural proofing across all NICS Departments to ensure that all major policies and strategies are assessed to determine whether they have a differential impact on rural areas and, where appropriate, make adjustments to take account of particular rural circumstances. Rural proofing has been promoted by DARD through the Interdepartmental Committee on Rural Policy while support is provided through the provision of advice, guidance and training. DARD has developed a rural proofing training course which is delivered by the Centre for Applied Learning in conjunction with the Rural Development Council. This training is available to all policy officials across the NICS.

DARD has commenced the process of developing new proposals to strengthen rural proofing across government to help ensure that rural needs and circumstances are routinely considered by government in policy making. This will include bringing forward proposals for primary legislation on rural proofing together with a study on rural proofing which will aim to inform the implementation of the new legislation.

## **North South Co-Operation**

DARD meets with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) in Dublin regularly on a range of rural issues including the Rural Development Programme, the Rural Enablers Project, the INTERREG IVA Programme, LEADER and rural proofing. During the reporting period, DARD has continued to support the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and the organisations funded through the Rural Development theme of the EU INTERREG IVA Programme. Officials from both Departments have also been working together to explore the potential for future opportunities for north-south co-operation through their respective new Rural Development Programme (2014-2020) and in particular through the LEADER element of the Programme.

## **Research and Evidence**

DARD has commissioned AFBI to undertake a number of rural research projects to help inform the future development of rural policy. This research includes projects relating to rural households' experience of access to public services, the impact of the recession in rural labour markets, identifying the contribution that key basic services make to rural dwellers' quality of life and quantifying the contribution that rural areas make to the wider economy.

DARD has also commissioned research on the issues faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) people living in rural areas. The research project commenced in March 2014 and will provide quantitative data on the experiences of LGB&T people across a range of thematic areas such as mental health, sexual health, education, employment and crime.

DARD has appointed a rural statistician who has been working on a range of rural policy issues including the collation of statistics from across government in order to enhance the evidence base used to support rural development policy. It is expected that the first set of rural/urban comparative statistics will be available in late autumn 2014 and will form the basis for a series of key indicators.

The rural statistician has also been contributing to preparatory work at interdepartmental group level on the review of the classification of settlements which is currently being planned by NISRA.

It is expected that the commissioning of rural research and the work undertaken by the rural statistician will lead to better policy outcomes for rural dwellers through increased knowledge and understanding of rural issues and through a greater focus on evidence informed rural policy making.

## Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

### Arts

Arts and Older People Programme aim is to increase participation of older people in arts activities and tackle social justice issues facing them on a day-to-day basis, including isolation and loneliness, health and wellbeing and poverty.

£53k of funding for three of the four rural local authorities was provided - Strabane, Fermanagh and Newtownards.

Arts organisations operating in the Community/Voluntary/Third Sector based in rural areas were funded.

Building Peace through the Arts: Re-Imaging Communities work has continued with a range of stakeholders across the North and the Border Counties to promote the programme, assist groups to develop their projects through to the point of application and to ensure they have equal access. Information sessions and meetings have been held.

The Intercultural Arts Programme funded projects in rural areas including Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group and Westville Family Resource Centre (Enniskillen).

The aim of the Start-UP programme is to enable a broad and diverse range of the population to participate in culture, arts and leisure activities and those in rural areas that received funding include: Cuan Mhuire Rehabilitation Centre (Newry); North West Women's Collective (Derry/Londonderry, rural); Syzdalimit (performance arts programme for those with disabilities, Omagh); Council for the Homeless (youth film group, Portadown).

The Small Grants programme funded 15 projects in rural areas including: Greencastle Youth Club, Newcastle Arts Festival Committee, Carleton Over 50's Association and Drumaroad & Clanvaraghan Community Association.

The NI Screen funded Creative Learning Centres (CLC) have a specific remit to work with people from rural and hard to reach areas.

The expansion of After School Film Clubs to 300 extended service schools also includes those in rural areas.

NI Screen's Digital Film Archive (DFA) can be accessed at a range of locations including rural sites. Customised outreach presentations from the DFA are offered to reach further into these rural communities.

NI Screen's work with the CLCs, After School Film Clubs and the DFA outreach programme is being carried out as planned and they have advised they are achieving their targets as set out in their KPI report.

## Museums & Libraries

**Branch Libraries** - Libraries NI provides services to 28 libraries in rural areas. The roll out of a replacement IT programme (E2) will provide rural users with faster internet access, better equipment and free WI-Fi. This is scheduled for completion in September 2014.

**Mobile Libraries** - Libraries NI procured four new mobile libraries to be used in rural areas. From January 2014 a revised timetable improved children's access to services in these rural areas. A pilot project also began in April 2014 designed to incorporate E2 in to the mobile library fleet.

**Partnership with DARD** - A DCAL, DARD and Libraries NI Joint Working Group resulted in a number of initiatives to raise the profile of libraries in rural areas. Further initiatives arising from a Memorandum of Understanding between Libraries NI and DARD are also being developed.

## Líofa

A Líofa website ([www.liofa.eu](http://www.liofa.eu)) was launched on 24th February 2014. The website includes a free online learning resource to facilitate learning in rural areas where local Irish Language classes might not be available.

DCAL is funding a series of intense Irish Language courses in every county on 13th September 2014. The funding provided by DCAL may be used by course providers to provide rural transport.

In September 2014, a Líofa launch is planned in Keady, Co. Armagh.

## Sports

In March 2014, the outdoor recreation action plan for NI 'Our Great Outdoors' was published. The plan highlights the importance of making the outdoors accessible to everyone and the opportunities in rural areas and in the urban fringes.

Active Communities programme is currently in its 5th year of delivery. Through this programme, Sport NI has invested in projects such as National Trails Day, and new Mountain Bike Trails; and has provided Active Community coaches in communities throughout all 26 district council areas in NI.

There is ongoing work with district councils, through the Chief Leisure Officers Association, to deliver sporting and leisure opportunities across NI, including in rural communities e.g. through the Active Communities programme, Nordic walking, over 50's clubs.

Work with sports governing bodies such as GAA, IRFU and IFA to deliver opportunities to all communities, including rural areas e.g. expansion of IFA 'First Kicks' programme to include new venues in Dungannon and Coalisland; IRFU summer camps for girls held across east and west of NI; and, GAA Recreational Games for adults.



SportNI's awareness programme carrying the "Minding Your Head" message has added a second phase with an additional 15 clubs.

New initiatives launched through Libraries NI 'Health in Mind' programme include Hi Five which aims to extend the current provision of 'Health in Mind' in 28 libraries serving areas of social need including rural areas.

DCAL funded a pilot programme to increase awareness of issues around suicide prevention within sports clubs at community level in rural and urban areas.

## Department of Education

### Curriculum

#### Key Achievements

The current statutory curriculum has been taught to all pupils of compulsory school age in grant-aided schools since 2009/10 hence all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

ICT is an important tool for assisting in delivery of the curriculum and the Department of Education is investing just under £170m over five years for delivery of the current C2k contract. C2k provides a managed ICT service for all grant-aided schools and the first stage of the contract, transformation of all schools on to the new cloud based services, including improved broadband, has now been completed.

#### Benefits

All schools, whether rural or urban, now receive a comparable ICT service irrespective of the school's physical location.

### Entitlement Framework

#### Key achievements

The phased implementation of the Entitlement Framework is now statutory. Young people are able to access a minimum number and range of courses at Key Stage 4 and post-16, regardless of the school they attend or where they live.

#### Benefits

The Entitlement Framework is broadening access to courses for all pupils in Key Stage 4 and post-16. Courses that are relevant to young people, engaging and motivating for them, and with clear, relevant progression pathways to continue in education or move into training or employment.

In 2003 some of our young people could only choose from 6 GCSEs and in the worst cases 1 'A' Level course. This did not meet their needs or the needs of the economy in preparing young people to be the entrepreneurs, employees and employers that would drive economical success.

Young people who see their time in education as relevant are more likely to stay motivated and engaged with their learning.

Collaborative working within Area Learning Communities is central to the delivery of the Entitlement Framework, and this collaborative model of delivering education is particularly important in ensuring that pupils in rural areas have access to a broad and relevant range of courses.

## **Extended Schools Programme**

### **Key achievements**

The Extended Schools programme continues to make an important contribution to the Department's wider school improvement agenda by helping our most disadvantaged schools address the barriers associated with educational underachievement.

### **Benefits**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) published an evaluation of the Extended Schools programme in 2010 based on evidence of effective practice including rural schools. The evaluation highlighted the following benefits.

- In almost all cases where Extended Schools are serving disadvantaged communities effectively, significant improvements are evident in the educational outcomes and the personal well-being of pupils.
- Extended School activities are frequently improving the lives of parents and helping them to re-engage with education following their own, often poor, experiences and perceptions of schools.
- The additional resources from the Extended Schools programme have allowed schools to be more flexible, creative and effective in enhancing their provision and in raising achievement.
- In the examples of outstanding practice observed the Extended Schools programme is most successful in transforming the life chances of individual thus providing good value for money.

The Western Education and Library Board has also reported that in rural areas the opportunity to work collaboratively has been most advantageous for school leaders and pupils. At primary level it has allowed for inter-school programmes and the sharing of expertise. Some rural schools have engaged the services of the community sector to deliver programmes in more remote areas to allow pupils access in their own locality.

## **Community Use of Schools**

### **Key achievements**

The Department is committed to identifying and disseminating good practice with a particular focus on community use of schools to help schools build stronger links with parents and local communities. A Working Group was established to develop a Guidance document to help develop and disseminate good practice and offer schools advice on how to open school facilities for wider community use. The Guidance issued to all schools in January 2014.

## Benefits

The benefits achieved for those schools, including rural schools, which already open their facilities to their communities, as highlighted in the Case Studies within the Guidance document, include:

- improved learning and achievement;
- improved access to specialist support services;
- partnership working across statutory and voluntary bodies;
- opportunities for adult education and family learning;
- improved access to sports, arts and other agreed facilities; and
- healthier and fitter communities.

## Area Planning and Shared Education Campuses

### Key achievements

The Executive's *'Together: Building a United Community'* strategy includes a target to commence ten new Shared Education Campuses in the next five years. This work is being taken forward by the Department of Education.

Three groups of rural schools, already engaged in sharing teachers, resources and curriculum, were successful in the first call for applications and aim to build on existing sharing arrangements and access funding to help improve or provide shared facilities. These projects have been approved to proceed to economic appraisal and the second call for applications will open in October 2014 with the announcement of the second tranche of Shared Education Campuses expected in June 2015.

### Benefits

The Department's vision of ensuring that every learner achieves his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development is supported through the Sustainable Schools Policy and the area planning process. Both promote the need for a viable and sustainable education system and put pupils at the centre of considerations.

- Children attending rural schools deserve access to the full range of the curriculum in the same way as those who attend urban schools. The Area Planning process requires the School managing authorities to actively consider how best to provide access to a broad and balanced curriculum for all children and should ensure those in rural areas are not disadvantaged.
- Provision in rural communities is being retained through the area planning and development proposal process as well as shared campuses initiatives for the benefit of the whole community.
- Strategically important small schools will not be closed simply because they are small.



## Department for Employment and Learning

### FE Regional Colleges

The Department for Employment and Learning has reviewed and, where necessary, reallocated full-time higher education places across the FE Regional Colleges in each of the last five years. These reviews of the maximum student number (MaSN) allocations have been carried out in order to ensure an equitable distribution of full-time higher education places in the FE Colleges across NI and particularly to ensure a redistribution of HE opportunities to more rural locations. The reallocation in 2014 included an additional 146 higher education places, the majority of which were allocated to colleges in rural areas.

### Access to Success

The reallocation of MaSN is just one of the Department's policy initiatives to widen participation in higher education by students from disadvantaged backgrounds. DEL has been implementing **Access to Success** its regional strategy to widen participation in higher education which was launched in September 2012. The strategy has a strong focus on the creation of a more accessible sector in which the people who are most able but **least likely** to participate are given every encouragement and support to apply to, and to benefit from, higher education regardless of their social background or location.

During the year significant progress has been made on a range of measures in the strategy. These include:

- the launch in March 2014 of "Reach Higher", a single, centralised and co-ordinated higher education awareness and aspiration raising campaign, to communicate better the benefits of higher education to under-represented sections of the community;
- work on the introduction the "Reach" programme which aims to expand the range of aspiration and educational attainment raising programmes in schools, colleges, under-represented communities and workplaces throughout NI.

### Lantra

In addition, in order to meet the needs of those in rural areas, DEL has supported Lantra (the Sector Skills Council for land based and environmental industries) in the development and expansion of qualifications and training courses. This has enabled Lantra-approved training providers to be able to offer training throughout NI - including in rural settings. In conjunction with Lantra, DEL has provided funding for training courses which support the retention of skilled workers in rural communities through up-skilling and re-skilling, this in turn has contributed to the development and sustaining of rural communities and businesses.

## **Connected Programme**

Working within the wider context of facilitating increased interaction between academia and business, DEL's Connected programme has been further able to ensure closer working between the Higher and Further Education sectors and both the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) and the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), specifically focused on meeting the knowledge transfer needs of our agri-food and biotechnology industry. To that end, AFBI and CAFRE are now partnering with Queen's University, the University of Ulster, North West Regional College and South Eastern Regional College to deliver a number of significant projects addressing agri-food and renewable energy issues of relevance to local companies.

The Department also recognises the vital role which further education provision can play, particularly in enabling older learners to gain new skills and increase their knowledge which contributes to the sustainability of rural communities.

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

### Natural Gas

Work to bring natural gas to further towns in the West and North West took a significant step forward in 2014 with the launch in February of the Utility Regulator's competition for new gas conveyance licences to extend gas infrastructure to Dungannon, Coalisland, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Omagh, Enniskillen/Derrylin and Strabane. The competition closed in May with eight applications and on 12 August 2014, the Utility Regulator announced the preferred bidders. New licences are expected to be formally awarded by the end of the year. This will allow the developers to begin work towards obtaining the necessary planning and other consents. It is hoped to see the start of works on the ground to provide the new gas networks as soon as possible. The European Commission has confirmed State Aid approval for grant assistance up to £32.5 million towards the construction of the major (high pressure) gas pipelines within the project.

In total, the project will cost in the region of £200 million and will offer natural gas to up to 40,000 business and domestic consumers in the above towns in the West. As the cleanest burning fossil fuel, natural gas offers a greener, more efficient and convenient alternative to oil and coal. It will help to lower manufacturing and production costs for companies and improve business competitiveness. In addition, it will provide domestic consumers with greater choice and benefits such as easier budgeting of energy costs by opting for a gas pre-payment meter.

### Social Economy

In October 2012 DETI awarded a contract to Social Enterprise NI (a consortium which included the Rural Development Council) to design, manage and deliver a Social Economy Work Programme (SEWP). The SEWP is a three year programme which commenced on 1 October 2012 and as part of delivery plans the programme includes a series of events (masterclasses, seminars, training etc) across NI to promote, develop and sustain the sector. Due to the wide geographical spread of its members Social Enterprise NI has taken a regional approach to implementing its programme and as a result many events have been held in rural areas promoting the availability of support to rural social enterprises and raising awareness of the economic, environmental and social impact made by the sector in those areas.

### Agri-Food Sector

The AFSB's Strategic Action Plan, "Going for Growth" was launched on 16 May 2013. The Report has 4 key targets to 2020: To grow sales by 60% to £7bn; Grow employment by 15% to 115,000; Grow sales outside NI by 75% to £4.5bn; and Grow value added by 60% to £1bn. To deliver these, the Plan makes 118 recommendations addressed to Government and industry, which requires estimated public sector funding of £400m to lever in £1.3bn overall investment to the sector.

The Executive Response to the Strategy was approved in June 2014. Work is in progress to update the Action Plan underpinning the Strategy. In the meantime, progress has

already been made by Government and industry on a number of agreed actions. Some capital funding has also been secured to support delivery.

Prior to Executive approval, DETI and Invest NI were already taking forward action on recommendations within Going for Growth which fall within their remits including; the development of an Agri Food Loan Scheme, progress on solutions for Sustainable Use of Poultry Litter, a review of Agri-Food Marketing and Promotion, work to extend Gas to the West and a major review of business red tape.

## **Tourism**

DETI, supported by NITB, undertook a wide ranging consultation on the strategic development of tourism. Out of this work a strategic target was developed to increase the income earned from tourism by 2020 to £1 billion and this has informed the tourism targets set within the Programme for Government and the Economic Strategy. The consultation also led to the identification of 9 key tourism areas within NI. Work is well underway on the development of these 9 key tourism areas/destinations, many of which cover rural areas. NITB is supporting Local Authorities and other stakeholders in these areas to develop Tourism Area Plans which link to the overall tourism priorities.

An independent review of NITB and wider tourism structures was completed at the end of June 2014 with the review report going out for public consultation until the end of September 2014. Part of the review was tasked with making recommendations designed to prepare for the impact of the Review of Public Administration on tourism development in NI. Once the consultation responses have been analysed, the DETI Minister will take stock of the action needed to take tourism forward.

Invest NI and NITB continue to work with DARD and others on an ongoing basis to support and develop rural businesses. NITB works with sectoral bodies in rural tourism to encourage the development of 'clustered' products and services that will deliver a complete rural experience for visitors. 'Coasts and lakes' and 'unique outdoors' are two key propositions that offer opportunities to spread the benefits of tourism to rural areas and to encourage farm diversification.

NITB continues to work with DARD in co-funding rural tourism projects. In the financial year 2013/2014 NITB administered £2.2m through the Selective Financial Assistance scheme for capital projects (excluding Belfast Waterfront Convention Centre) many of which will benefit rural areas including, Blessingbourne mountain bike trails, Navan Centre and Fort, St Patrick's Pilgrim Walk and Down Walking Routes.

NITB is liaising with DARD through its Stakeholder Forum on the development of the next Rural Development Programme (2013-2020). Pending sign off by the EU, funding has been allocated to rural economic development that will offer the opportunity for funding streams to be targeted at tourism infrastructure, small business development and with additional potential scope for tourism related projects through village renewal schemes.

Through its Tourism Team Invest NI provides support for development of the tourism accommodation sector. While there has been no increase in applications for support for



capital projects, primarily due to both market confidence and to lack availability of bank funding, Invest NI continues to work with rural tourism accommodation businesses in other areas of business development. Invest NI continues to liaise with other funders on a case by case basis to ensure no duplication of public funding

### **Telecommunications**

Over the period of this report, DETI working with the telecommunications industry and other stakeholders, has committed additional investment to further upgrade Northern Ireland's communications networks, ensuring that they remain fit for purpose and accessible by all.

This includes the circa £23.5m Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project, the contract for which was signed with BT in February 2014. The aim of the project is to ensure that virtually all premises across NI have access to a fixed-line broadband service of at least 2 Mbps and that 90% of premises can access a fixed-line broadband service, offering a speed of 24 Mbps or better by 31 December 2015. Further details on the roll-out of the project can be found at <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/broadband-improvement-project>.

In addition, the Department has recently commenced a public consultation on the proposed intervention area, for a further project, the aim of which is to bring superfast broadband services to at least 95% of premises across NI by 2017. DETI has been awarded £7.24m by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), which DETI intends to match, providing a potential total funding pot of £14.48m, to take forward this project. If value for money is demonstrated, a mini-competition will be taken forward, using the existing BDUK framework, to find a suitable supplier and it is anticipated that a contract award may take place in early 2015.

### **Social Entrepreneurship Programme**

Invest NI continues to offer its Social Entrepreneurship Programme (SEP) with a focus on groups located in disadvantaged areas or which provide a service to a disadvantaged group including those in rural areas. The contract for the SEP will run to 4th July 2015. The responsibility for social entrepreneurship will be transferred to Councils from 1 April 2015.

In 13/14 SEP supported 18 new social economy business start ups in rural areas, promoting 33 jobs. Delivery in rural areas represented 34% of activity across all programme strands.

### **Innovation Vouchers Programme**

The Innovation Vouchers programme provides a £4000 voucher to enable SMEs to work with public sector Knowledge Providers such as Universities and Colleges to solve business issues. There are four open calls per year for innovation voucher applications and demand continues to be high.

The following examples demonstrate how an innovation voucher has benefitted two rural businesses and had a positive impact on rural communities.

Kircubbin-based Glastry Farm Ice-Cream used an innovation voucher to develop an innovative product that will also bring business benefits to Clandeboy Estate Yoghurt in Bangor.

Glastry Farm, an award-winning producer of luxury ice-cream, used their voucher to develop a new frozen yoghurt dessert ice-cream. Clandeboy Estate provided the yoghurt for the new Glastry Farm product being developed to boost sales particularly outside NI.

Glastry Farm Ice-Cream used the innovation voucher to draw on the expertise in food technology at Loughry Campus of the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) in Cookstown.

Brighter Gold used an innovation voucher to work with the Agri-Food & Bio-Sciences Institute to develop a cold-pressed rapeseed oil for cooking and has realised the benefits of innovation by winning several awards.

Established in 2011, Brighter Gold is an artisan business based at Broglasco, the Kane family farm, in Myroe, near Limavady, on the edge of Lough Foyle just above sea level on reclaimed land. The arable farm covers 360 acres of which 120 are used to grow rapeseed. The fertile ground grows high yielding crops of wheat, barley, oilseed and potatoes. Formed as a farm diversification project by husband and wife team Richard and Leona Kane, Leona said: 'The Innovation Voucher was immensely important in that it enabled us to access expert advice and guidance from AFBI.'

Chefs now using the oil in meal preparation include the team at the six-strong chain of Hastings Hotels, Northern Ireland's top hotel chain. The company is also supplying the oil to high-end restaurants in the Republic of Ireland.

Through provision of the Business Support Team and the 0800 helpline number, Invest NI has had in excess of 20,000 calls over its period of operation, and an estimated 88% of these were from businesses not considered part of Invest NI's 'client' bank. We do not hold information on how many of calls were from rural businesses. However it is undoubtedly the case that this initiative has provided much greater access to business advice and signposting, including for those from rural communities.

## **Department of the Environment**

### **The Planning Bill / Planning Reform**

The Minister of the Environment made a statement to the Assembly on the 22 October 2013 detailing that for legal, procedural and evidential reasons he would not be moving the Planning Bill to Further Consideration stage.

The Department undertook a public consultation exercise from 28 May to 20 August 2014 on a range of proposals for subordinate legislation on planning reform and the transfer of planning powers to local government. This included proposals relating to both statements of community involvement and requirements for pre-application community consultation on major development proposals.

A new Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) is also under development. Published in February this year the consultation draft SPPS introduces new overarching core planning principles, explains the new Local Development Plan and Development Management system requirements, and brings forward new strategic retail and town centres planning policy. In addition, it consolidates existing subject planning policies into a single document.

The SPPS will ensure that the Department's planning policies are more proportionate and appropriate for the introduction of the new two-tier planning system in 2015 when the majority of planning functions will transfer to local Councils. Its policies are therefore pitched at a more strategic level than existing Planning Policy Statements.

Consultation on the draft SPPS closed on 29 April 2015. Officials are currently analysing all of the responses received. It is envisaged that the SPPS will be finalised by the end of 2014, subject to Executive agreement.

### **Planning and Rural Development Policy**

Local Planning Division continues to implement the guidance issued in relation to planning applications that are subject to grant funding. The processing of such applications will be prioritised when the applicant advises the Department at the initial stages of the planning process of the tight time frame to seek grant funding.

In relation to the policy development process Planning Policy Division will continue to carry out Rural Proofing Screening and liaise with DARD at the earliest opportunity to take advice on whether any further actions or mitigation measures are required.

### **Road Safety**

The Department of the Environment is responsible for co-ordinating a strategic approach to improving road safety in NI, primarily through delivery of the Road Safety Strategy to 2020. A number of the measures contained in the Strategy specifically target road safety in rural areas. These reflect the partnership approach to delivering improved road safety through education, engineering and enforcement measures.

As well as measures focusing specifically on improving rural road safety, many general measures in the Strategy will help address the behaviours that contribute to the high level of death and serious injury in rural areas.

Through the Strategy the Department monitors progress towards a number of casualty reduction targets and our key performance indicators include tracking the number of people killed in collisions on rural roads. In 2013 there were 36 deaths on rural roads, a reduction of 61% compared with the 2004/2008 baseline. There were two child deaths in 2013 on rural roads, a reduction of three compared with the 2004-2008 baseline of five child deaths.

To 30 June 2014 there were 29 fatalities in the PSNI's rural region (excludes motorway/dual carriageway casualties) which is more than double that of last year when there were 13 fatalities in the same period.

The Department has established a road safety research programme, involving road safety partners, to help identify emerging trends and provide a sound knowledge base for developing future policies. From looking at road casualty data we know that collisions on rural roads tend to be severe and randomly distributed, making specific measures difficult. Much of the road safety research carried out will, therefore, have a rural element. Research specifically on rural road collisions involving children and young people up to 24 years old has been completed in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the report can be viewed at:

<http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/information/foi/recent-releases/publications-details.htm?docid=8277>

As a result of this research an additional two action measures were added to the Road Safety Strategy in May 2012. The first of these was for providers of school bus services to conduct regular audits to ensure that the services provided meet the appropriate levels of safety, including overcrowding. This measure has been reported as now embedded as business as usual by both Translink and the Department of Education. The second measure, planned for delivery by 2017, was to consider a targeted publicity and education campaign to tackle the reluctance of 12-15 year olds to wear a seatbelt and generally adhere to good road safety practice. In October 2013, DOE launched a seatbelt wearing campaign which helps to address this issue. Although aimed at all drivers and passengers, the campaign message was specifically targeted at young people. While the vast majority of people wear seatbelts in NI, DOE research indicates that there are lapses, particularly among young people, who unbuckle for a short while to engage with their friends or on short trips or often at night. This message depicts both urban and rural scenarios but with a hard-hitting end scene in a rural setting. The core message is: "One trip can kill."

Other campaigns launched by the Department which contribute to improving rural road safety include the following:

The campaign 'Just Because' addresses pedestrian vulnerability and highlights both pedestrian and driver fault. It includes aspects to help address rural pedestrian safety. Launched in May 2012, this campaign has been on air regularly since.



A cyclist safety campaign launched in April 2014. Entitled “Don’t Forget”, the campaign focuses on the vulnerability of cyclists and the responsibility both drivers and cyclists have towards each other on their respective journeys. It is aimed at a range of ages, both male and female and in urban and rural scenarios. This campaign carries the message “Respect Everyone’s Journey.”

DOE has also developed a new anti speeding campaign which launched in June 2014. Entitled “Classroom”, this campaign depicts the fact that the equivalent of a classroom of children have lost their lives as a result of speeding since 2000. Those most at risk of causing speed-related deaths and serious injuries are 17-24 year old males, followed by males 25-34 years old. Research also revealed that the thought of hurting a child is a major influential factor on driving behaviour. Hence the campaign dramatises, in a rural setting, the devastating consequences of child deaths due to speeding since 2000 and carries the strapline “You can never control the consequences if you speed.”

The television campaigns mentioned above are supported by a mix of online, press, outdoor and radio activities.

## **Rural Tourism**

The Department of the Environment, through its Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), has continued to work in partnership with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) to promote NIEA’s sites and properties online, with a permanent section on NITB’s website, which syndicates content to 16 other tourism websites including Tourism Ireland. The partnership also covers inclusion of the content in NITB’s other marketing activities both online and offline. A £75k advertising campaign (‘Wonderful Days Out’) promoting NIEA events, sites and properties was delivered in 2013 and in the current year this campaign is running at a value of £44k, together with an additional £15k media sponsorship.

NIEA also co-ordinates the annual European Heritage Open Days (EHOD) weekend event in NI. Last year (September 2013), this involved over 62,288 visitors to over 400 listed buildings, 300 of which were outside greater Belfast. In 2013/14, the NIEA listed building Grant-aid scheme issued 150 payments for eligible repairs to listed buildings, amounting to a total spend of over £4.6M. An ‘Owners’ Forum’ is held annually, and listed building owners can receive advice on a wide range of subjects, including energy efficiency strategies for their homes; new, sustainable usages for vacant listed buildings; and funding - through the NIEA Listed Buildings Grant-aid scheme - to assist with the costs of eligible repairs. The 2014 event will be held in the Strule Arts Centre and include topics such as how to look after larger structures including churches, experience with housing maintenance and sustainable repairs.

In partnership with Cookstown District Council, NIEA have significantly advanced our plans to redevelop visitor facilities at Tullaghoge Fort, Co Tyrone, which will soon provide new access, car parking and interpretation at this important mid-Ulster rural site. A feasibility study for a similar project has been completed to progress our work to improve access and visitor facilities at Dundrum Castle, Co Down. A project team is developing a strategic development plan for Dunluce Castle, Co Antrim. This team is working in

partnership with a number of key local stakeholders as an integral part of the Project Steering Group, and has also held a number of information days to ensure that the proposed development delivers benefits not only for the Dunluce site itself, but also for the surrounding rural communities.

Conservation work continues at a range of historic monuments in rural areas to ensure that these sites survive in good condition and are safe for visitors to access. NIEA have also liaised closely with local authorities and local trusts in relation to stretches of scheduled historic canals. NIEA recognise that historic canals may have a role to play in developing the potential for future waterborne rural tourism. New visitor signage was developed for a number of rural sites, including the Christian heritage site of St. Patrick's Wells at Struell, Co Down.

Recognising the international success of the *Game of Thrones* television series NIEA installed a *Game of Thrones* panel at Quoile Castle, Co Down, a site used in the series. The site is currently attracting coach parties of *Game of Thrones* tourists and NIEA are considering installing further signs at other sites. In 2013 there was an increase of 22,133 recorded visits to rural State Care Monuments. This equates to an estimated total of at least 140,545 recorded visits to rural monuments during 2013. Lastly, £198k of the funds generated from the carrier bag levy has been invested in 19 'rural tourism' type projects across NI. These projects are being managed by local non-profit making organisations and have strong sustainability objectives.

NIEA supports Outdoor Recreation NI to develop and manage a suite of websites promoting the sustainable use of our natural and built heritage including WalkNI.com and BeachNI.com. The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland has been published as a partnership between SportNI, DCAL and NITB. This identifies the key activity required to over the next 7 years to continue to develop "a culture of dynamic, sustainable outdoor recreation in NI".

## **Climate Change**

The first Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme was published in January 2014 and covers the period up to 2019. The Programme sets out key actions to address the risks and opportunities, including those impacting on rural areas that were identified in the Climate Change Risk Assessment report for NI.

## **Waste Management**

The Department allocated some £1.37 million capital funding for 10 projects in 2013-14 for initiatives which will enable local councils to boost waste recycling and reuse.

In addition nine successful projects received revenue funding for waste prevention and recycling projects, totalling £262k, awarded to councils, the community and voluntary sector and the private sector under the Rethink Waste Revenue Fund.

The European Week of Waste Reduction (EWWR) in November 2013, administered by the Waste and resources Action Programme (WRAP) was the focal point for the Rethink Waste campaign in the latter half of 2013. The aim of EWWR is to encourage multiple

actions during a single week across Europe to raise awareness about waste prevention. A total of 2335 different activities were registered in NI from businesses, schools, councils, charities, retailers and individuals. This was an increase of over 400% from 2012 for Northern Ireland, and represented 94% of the UK actions. Many of the actions were carried out by individuals; however community & voluntary organisations, businesses and schools all contributed - over 300 schools from across NI took part.

The Department's funding and support, in conjunction with stakeholders, has provided a network of activity across NI. Funding has allowed for kerbside services for recycling to be extended into rural areas, and for rural household recycling centres to be upgraded.

## **Renewable Energy**

Renewable energy is a key economic driver for NI, particularly in rural areas. These types of applications include single wind turbines, wind farms, hydro-electric schemes, solar panels and biomass/anaerobic digestors. Local Planning Division continues to work with key stakeholders to the planning process to ensure timely processing of planning applications and to discuss areas of concern. The number of decisions issued for renewable energy applications decreased by 18% from 2012/13 to 2013/14 (from 762 to 623 applications). From 1st July 2013 - 30th June 2014 there have been 564 decisions issued for renewable energy applications with 88% approval rate (Provisional figures).

Planning Policy Division carried out public consultation in November 2012 on proposals to introduce new permitted development rights for the installation of anaerobic digestion plant on agricultural units and revised arrangements for agricultural buildings with the view to introducing relevant amendments to the Planning (General Development) Order (NI) 2013 before the end of summer 2013. These amendments were introduced via the Planning (General Development) (Amendment No.2) Order (NI) 2013 which came into operation on 30th August 2013.

Furthermore Planning Policy Division carried out a 12 week public consultation on a new draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) ending 29 April 2014. This important document is being prepared as part of the wider reform of the planning system. Whilst the SPPS is largely a consolidation of existing planning policies, including those within PPS 18 Renewable Energy, there is also an emphasis on improving it in time for the transfer of planning powers to councils next April.

Consultation on the draft SPPS closed on 29 April 2015. Officials are currently analysing all of the responses received. It is envisaged that the SPPS will be finalised by the end of 2014, subject to Executive agreement.

## Department of Finance and Personnel

### Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

NI Neighbourhood Statistics [www.nisra.gov.uk/ninis](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/ninis) continues to allow rural (and urban) communities across NI access to high quality official statistics on their local area. The website contains a series of Frequently Asked Questions on Urban/Rural issues (e.g. how are areas classed as urban or rural?). As part of this dissemination, a helpline and training is available. Training has been provided to a number of rural organisations and community groups have been trained on the use of official statistics (e.g. the DARD Research Discussion Forum and the Rural Community Network). Finally an e-zine or on-line newsletter is available to keep users aware of new/updated statistics and this is circulated widely to DARD staff and representatives of rural community networks.

NISRA has established an interdepartmental working group to review the settlement classification, and the associated urban / rural definition, in the light of the results from the 2011 Census. The working group has representation from all departments. A report from the review will be published this year, as will a (2011 Census) Key Statistics for Settlements report. The report will provide an updated definition of urban and rural areas, based on the 2011 Census, which will provide the basis of future urban / rural statistical reporting across departments.

### Enterprise Shared Services (ESS)

This year, the Digital Transformation Service (DTS) has, through its work programme, assisted DARD in delivering the CAP Reform Programme. DTS has assisted the DARD business side in developing a new organisational operating model that puts the farmer at the core of its design, and ensures that the revised service meets EU requirements and also delivers for the farmer. DTS is also working with the DARD ICT community, to support the development of the new CAP Reform on-line system, by using the agile approach - again putting the needs of the farmer at the centre of system design.

Additionally, the DTS transformation and Digital Inclusion teams are now working closely to ensure that CAP Reform work builds inclusivity measures in at the start, to ensure the needs of the wider rural community, who may have limited internet access, are considered in the design of CAP Reform.

The NI Direct SMS service provides real-time alerts to Strangford Ferry customers to advise of ferry service notifications. Over 1,400 registered users are signed up to receive these alerts. The SMS service is also used by DARD - Countryside Management Compliance Branch provide updates on hedge cutting, field boundaries, etc; and the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise uses the service to advise of issues relating to crop monitoring and potato blight control.

The DFP programme Go ON NI highlights the benefits of being online and improving access to online public information and services. This includes information on DARD and a number of rural initiatives. Go ON NI continues through 2014-2015, and training material is delivered in rural locations.



Specific year-round training sessions are being developed by Supporting Communities NI (SCNI) and LibrariesNI across NI to include running APHIS (Animal and Public Health Information System) workshops and modules. In association with DARD, pilots will commence in the autumn.

The DTS Digital Inclusion Team is running extra APHIS workshops under Go ON NI, through our library network across NI. Whilst the training modules are based on the DARD training site, the DTS team is supporting the outreach element of this training to ensure it reaches the wider rural community.

## Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

### Maximising Access in Rural Areas (MARA) Project

The MARA project, originally launched in March 2012, is now in its final year. MARA aims to improve the health and wellbeing of rural dwellers living in poverty and social isolation across NI. The MARA Project has fostered extensive partnership working with other key organisations including DSD (Social Security Agency and Fuel Poverty Unit), DRD, NIHE, DHSSPS and local Community and Voluntary Organisations as well as the 13 community Lead organisations who have employed and trained enablers to undertake the MARA home visits.

At the end of June 2014, a total of **11,873**, 1st and **8,294** 2nd visits had been undertaken resulting in **13,448** initial individual assessments being completed and **30,968** onward referrals generated for various grants, benefits and services.

From the **30,968** referrals generated, an individual breakdown by referral type is illustrated in the table below:-

#### Breakdown of MARA referrals

Referral Type	Referrals
Benefit Entitlement Check	7,112
Home Safety Check	6,579
Energy Saving Homes Scheme	3,768
Local Services	3,553
Boiler Replacement Scheme	2,598
Rural Community Transport Partnerships	2,440
Occupational Therapy Assessment	2,258
NI Sustainable Energy Programme (Levy Scheme)	1,451
Social Services	632
Flexicare	335
Smartpass	242
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>30,968</b>

At the end of June 2014, the MARA project reached an important stage in that 8 of the 13 Lead organisations finished 1st and 2nd visits and their focus moved to concentrating on outcome management of all open referrals to ensure they are brought to closure with successful outcomes where possible.

Some of the outcomes emerging from the household visits at this point included:-

- 1,313 households benefitted from advise and the installation of an energy efficiency measures through Warm Homes and Levy schemes totalling £1,726,531.

- 4,515 households issued with advice and equipment following a Home Safety Check.
- 236 people received additional welfare benefits from 261 successful claims. These 261 claims alone amounted to £842,054 per annum going into vulnerable rural households.
- 635 householders registered with their Rural Community Transport Provider.
- 198 householders received a Smart Pass.
- A total of 326 boiler replacement applications were approved totalling £217,400 and 188 of these successful applications have been claimed totalling £124,100.

### **MARA - The future**

PHA and DARD regularly meet with the 13 Community Lead Organisations on a bi-monthly basis. As the Project outlined in the approved Business Case neared a conclusion Lead organisations strongly expressed the fact that there was evidence of a continued need for the MARA project in rural areas. With this in mind DARD invited PHA to submit a further business case for additional funding to extend MARA for a further 2 years up to March 2016. The Business Case has been approved by DARD and funding secured for 14/15. At the end of June 2014, 5 Lead Organisations were undertaking additional MARA household visits resulting in 87 household visits being undertaken and 267 referrals generated.

### **MARA Case Studies**

The following are a few examples of case studies/good news stories that have emerged from the MARA Project. As other lead Organisations move towards finalisation of visits and outcome management it is envisaged that further good news stories will arise from other geographical areas across the province.

#### **Case Study 1 - Letter from the daughter of a recipient of the MARA project**

“I just want to thank MARA (and you!) for your kindness to my mother. Last year she benefited from loft insulation and a replacement boiler. As a family we had been trying to insulate the loft by buying 1 roll at a time as we could afford it. It would probably have taken us 10 years to complete it! The boiler you replaced was 40 years old and was just guzzling the fuel, she has noticed a difference already in fuel consumption. As a pensioner and a widow that is something she really appreciates. Two years ago my mother ended up in hospital with pneumonia which then resulted in heart failure because the house was so cold and she would not put the heat on enough because she was afraid of the cost. So thank you seems a very inadequate term for what you have done.

I would like also to convey my appreciation to all those who visited my mother or corresponded with her by phone or letter, I deeply appreciated their patience and sensitivity, especially when forms got lost or had to be resent. The whole process was made very easy and the sense of support immeasurable. I had anticipated more

bureaucracy and less assistance but i was pleasantly surprised. Thank you for making it so simple.

Please convey our heartfelt appreciation to your funders and all who helped make my mother's home a warmer place to live. I know my mother is only one of many beneficiaries but each one will have their own story of appreciation"

### **Case Study 2**

Fermanagh Rural Community Network has had a phone call from an elderly woman's son to say that without our visit he and his mother would not have been aware of the grants running at the present time. This lady lives in a small town that would be considered an affluent area. This lady had lost her husband a few months before and was understandably depressed and living on her own. Since our visit the woman has received new insulation in her attic and a £1000 grant towards a new boiler. Although she was not entitled to any new benefits, she received a blue badge, which was a great help when bringing his mother to the shops. His mother also received a Home Safety Check from Fermanagh District Council which has given both of them great peace of mind. The enabler also referred her for local services. We provided details of local clubs and she now also attends a Wednesday Club in the local hall. Her son mentioned that this has improved her depression so much. He also visited the office to tell us how much he appreciated MARA.

### **Case Study 3**

Another woman with severe mobility restrictions and ill health was referred for an Occupational Therapy Assessment. They referred the matter onto the Housing Executive and the woman was delighted to receive a Disability Access Grant. She got new railings installed, a new back door, new drainpipes and a new lock on the door designed for her disability. After our referral for local services she also attends a club on a Wednesday night in her local town. The women also received a Home Safety Check from Fermanagh District Council and thinks that the simple hand grabber is such a help. She now is a member of Fermanagh Community Transport and uses it regularly, which has taken the pressure off her daughter.

### **Case Study 4**

Another elderly woman who had moved from England some years ago with her husband received a visit. She would be considered well educated and would live in one of the most affluent areas of Fermanagh. She had never really got involved with groups and had no real neighbours. Her husband had died ten years ago and she found herself isolated and vulnerable. She received a MARA visit and has since received a Warm Homes Grant for insulation in both the attic and cavity which has significantly improved her living. She also got a carbon monoxide alarm from the Home Safety Check which she said is something that she would not have thought about before. The biggest thing for her was being referred to the Chit Chat service in Irvinestown. This service provides a friendly morning phone call to individuals. Her motivation for this was that they could call her every



morning to ensure that she was still alive. She was afraid that she would die and not be found for months. Now she receives the morning phone call and also attends local pensioner clubs twice a week. We recently meet her at an event at the other end of Fermanagh and she just couldn't thank us enough, she felt that she was a different person and her life had changed for the better.

### **Case Study 5**

One enabler had to do a visit with an elderly woman he knew from his town. He described her as very private woman that would not have talked openly about grants and benefits in public. She was delighted to receive a visit and received pension credit, a Home Safety Check and a new boiler. The enabler was shocked to find this private lady shouting over the middle of a shop thanking him for his visit and that she had just got her new boiler installed. She said it was a great job and told another woman in the queue to get a visit.

### **Case Study 6**

A couple from England moved to a very rural area of Fermanagh. They were at first sceptic of the visit. However recently the couple phoned the office and both the husband and the wife came onto the phone to tell me how they appreciated the visit. They had got their loft insulated and are entitled to carers allowance and housing benefit. The wife also uses the Fermanagh Community Transport and both of them attend art classes, cooking classes and a senior citizens club three times a week. They are delighted with the outcome of the visit.

### **Case Study 7**

A woman who lived with her sister and had been unwell with cancer for several years received a visit from us. Her sister refused to have strangers in the house and the enabler had to carry out the visit in the car at the bottom of the lane. The woman received a benefit check and is delighted to now receive pension credit. Transport was a big struggle for this woman as she does not drive and needs to attend the hospital at least once a week. She now uses Fermanagh Community transport and doesn't have to pay for a taxi. This woman was just delighted to receive the visit and actually cried that the enabler would not be returning. However the enabler does call in when she is passing the house.

## **Farm Families Health Check Programme**

During the reporting period a total of 3,043 clients have accessed the health check programme.

An interim evaluation report was completed in January 2014 which highlighted that in relation to the immediate outcomes of health checks, some clients commented that screening made them think more about their health, with some noting that screening uncovered a health concern for which they had no prior symptoms. The report also suggested that attending the health checks were successful in helping clients recognise changes that they could make to improve their health and these changes appeared to be sustained at 3 months post health check.

One such example is highlighted below:

A 41 year old male attended for a health check on 23/11/13. His BMI was 39.71, he was 21 stone. His waist measurement was 48 inches. His cholesterol was high at 5.2. He is also a diabetic. This gentleman was given advice on diet, weight reduction and how to go about losing weight, i.e. reducing food intake, looking at diet what he ate for each meal. He also discussed exercise and spoke of his weight and how this affects his diabetes. He returned to the nurses for further advice and support particularly in relation to weight loss.

Six months after his initial visit his BMI was 35.8, his weight was 18 stone 4 lbs. a highlighting a loss of almost 3 stones. His cholesterol has decreased to 4.2 almost within normal range, and his waist has reduced to 43.7 inches. He stated that he lost his weight due to the farm family nurses encouragement and information received.

## Department of Justice

### Community Safety - Tackling Rural Crime

Tackling rural crime is an important strand of the Department of Justice's work on community safety.

Following the launch of the Community Safety Strategy in July 2012, delivery groups were established for each of the eight key strands of the strategy, including one for business and rural crime. Action plans were developed to take forward implementation of the strategy and were designed to cover the period until 31 March 2015, at which point they will be reviewed. The first annual update on progress on delivery of the action plans was provided to the Justice Committee on 20 February 2014.

The Rural Crime Partnership, which comprises membership from the Department of Justice (DoJ), the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), NFU Mutual, and the PSNI have been responsible for taking forward delivery of the rural crime aspects of the business and rural crime action plan.

### Rural Crime Unit

The Rural Crime Partnership, through funding provided by DoJ and NFU Mutual, continue to provide a dedicated crime analyst in the PSNI's Rural Crime Unit whose role is to analyse data from a range of sources to help identify trends and patterns in rural crime issues. The analysis provided by the unit helps to inform PSNI operational responses to these issues and to inform the work of the Rural Crime Partnership (RCP) and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, enabling them to develop initiatives targeted at specific areas of local need.

Whilst the unit key role is focussed on addressing crime, it is hoped that it will have a wider impact, contributing to an enhanced quality of life in rural communities and improved community confidence.

### Theft of farm machinery

In December 2013, in response to findings from the PSNI's Rural Crime Unit about theft of farm machinery, the RCP announced an initiative to provide a subsidy to farmers in hotspot areas in E and F policing districts for the fitting of security equipment to farm machinery. This resulted in over £1.7 million worth of machinery being protected.

In light of the outcomes from the pilot initiative, the Rural Crime Partnership has agreed to a regional roll out of a TRACKER initiative across NI. The initiative will allow farmers to access a discount when purchasing a TRACKER device to be fitted to a tractor. In the event that the tractor is stolen, the signals emitted by the device can be used to trace and recover it. The launch of this initiative is scheduled to take place on 26 July 2014, at the Antrim Agricultural Show.

## **OCTF**

The Organised Crime Taskforce (OCTF) has a sub group dedicated to fuel fraud, an excise evasion offence which generally takes place in rural areas and which impacts on the environment through the associated dumping of laundering waste. The group provides a cross border forum for the sharing of information, the planning of operational work and also the development of policy initiatives such as the adding of excise evasion to the schedule of offences which can be referred to the Court of Appeal for unduly lenient sentencing.

There is a general recognition that organised crime groups can and will diversify where they spot a potentially profitable area. In recent times there has been evidence that some groups involved in the more traditional areas of excise evasion, drugs, ATM theft etc are diversifying into areas including illegal waste disposal, plant theft and livestock theft. The OCTF is monitoring these trends.

## **Policing and Community Safety Partnerships**

PCSPs are delivering a significant number of initiatives to tackle community safety issues in rural communities across NI. Examples of their work during 2013/14 include the provision of information, advice and security equipment to the elderly and vulnerable in rural areas; events to provide farming and rural crime prevention information and advice; free trailer marking; promoting a subsidy for “Tracker” and “Cesar” devices for farmers; a rural CCTV Camera Scheme to help prevent and reduce livestock theft; Neighbourhood watch and Farm Watch schemes; a rural text alert service to farmers; road safety education and awareness events for agricultural contractors and farmers, particularly for young tractor drivers.



## Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

### Together: Building a United Community

The new good relations strategy, Together: Building a United Community was published on 23rd May 2013. The Strategy sets out a range of actions and commitments, with the aim of securing improved good relations across and amongst all communities.

Specifically as a result of the Strategy we will work with rural community organisations to encourage increasing openness and accessibility and to reduce chill factors and fears that prevent open access.

As with all other departments, DARD is represented on the Ministerial Panel and Good Relations Programme Board. The Ministerial Panel ultimately oversees the delivery and implementation of the actions and commitments given within the strategy. The Good Relations Programme Board operates under the strategic direction of the Ministerial Panel and reports to the Panel on progress and performance.

### Social Investment Fund

The Social Investment Fund (SIF) is an £80 million NI Executive Fund designed to deliver social change through reducing poverty, unemployment and physical deterioration. Delivery is managed through nine SIF Investment Zones covering both rural and urban areas, specifically Belfast North, Belfast South, Belfast East, Belfast West, Derry/Londonderry, Northern, South Eastern, Southern and Western Zones.

During this period the SIF Investment Zone Steering Groups prioritised, in line with the funding allocations for their Zone, projects identified within their February 2013 Area Plans. The SIF Steering Groups responsible for this work are comprised of community/voluntary, statutory, business and political representatives.

The first 23 projects from across all nine Investment Zones to complete an intensive appraisal process within the Department were announced in February 2014. OFMDFM officials are now working with the lead partners of these projects to develop Letters of Offer. It is hoped these will start to issue in July 2014 and that delivery of the various projects will start sometime after.

## **Department for Regional Development**

The Department for Regional Development (DRD) has 8 actions within the Rural White Paper Action Plan. During the period 1 July 2013 - 30 June 2014 DRD monitored progress against each of the actions and consider that the action plan is a useful tool to review the impact of our work on rural areas.

### **Regional Development Strategy**

Published in 2012, the Regional Development Strategy 2035 provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors in NI. The document sets out strategic guidance which aims to sustain and improve accessibility for rural communities. A Progress Report detailing actions supporting the guidance issued to the Executive in January 2014. In preparation for the transfer of planning powers to local councils, the Department continues to work with the Transition Committees to develop guidance for local government to assist in the implementation of the Regional Development Strategy.

### **Rathlin Island Action Plan**

DRD continues to oversee the implementation of the Rathlin Island Action Plan. The cross-departmental plan aims to support the residents of Rathlin Island. Key themes progressed during the period up to 30th June 2014 include; Roads, Tourism, Health, and Renewable Energy. As part of the implementation of the Plan a study visit was undertaken to several Scottish Islands by members of the Rathlin Development Community Association and officials from DRD and DARD.

DRD also continues to take forward a project to design and procure a new vehicular and passenger ferry to replace the MV Canna ferry serving Rathlin Island. The Department commenced the procurement of the new ferry in September 2014 and anticipates awarding a contract by March 2015. This followed considerable consultation and engagement with islanders. The project is being progressed alongside the replacement of MV Strangford which is also approaching the end of its operating life.

### **Rural Borewells Scheme**

The Rural Borewells Scheme, funded by DRD, was launched on 6 June 2012. The principle aim of the Scheme is to provide a wholesome water supply for existing properties that have never been served by a public water main. Under this scheme, households where it is financially or technically prohibitive to provide with a mains water supply may be eligible for a grant for a private borewell. The scheme is an extension of the Department's policy of providing a Reasonable Cost Allowance (RCA) of up to £10,000 per property towards the costs of obtaining a water main. This was increased in £12,000 in 2013/2014. The 2012 - 2013 tranche of the scheme assisted 24 properties to obtain a wholesome water supply. The 2013 - 2014 Scheme assist 38 properties. The 2014 / 2015 Scheme is scheduled to assist approximately 26 properties.

## **Dungannon Integrated Public Transport Pilot**

Preparations began in January 2013 to conduct a pilot scheme to assist in determining the long-term approach to public transport planning and ensure the effective use of rural public transport. The Department for Regional Development is co-ordinating this pilot project. The project also involves the Department of Education, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Southern Education and Library Board, the Health and Social Care Board and the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, the Rural Community Transport Partnerships, Translink and the Federation of Passenger Transport, which represents the public transport industry including private operators.

The pilot aims to demonstrate that the concept of better integration of passenger transport services is achievable and has the potential to provide real benefits in terms of improving services in rural communities, making them more sustainable over the long term. Work has commenced on the Economic Appraisal to examine the long term options for integration of public passenger transport in NI. Detailed information on costs, vehicle numbers and capacity, volunteers, routes operated and passenger numbers has been collected from Health Trusts, the Education and Library Boards, Translink and the Rural Community Transport Partnerships. This information is being analysed by Transport Planning Specialists who will assess the overall demand and supply using scheduling tools to assist the Departments involved in the development of options for the longer term integration of publicly funded passenger transport services.

## Department for Social Development

Over the past 12 months, DSD has continued to work positively to achieve its commitments in the Rural White Paper Action Plan and by doing so attempting to address the many challenges faced by rural communities here in conjunction with the work of the other Executive Departments.

DSD's responsibilities in the Rural White Paper Action Plan have focused mainly on the following key areas: the better co-ordination of rural and urban regeneration needs; community development, social inclusion and rural housing.

### Regeneration, Community Development & Social Inclusion

DSD have continued to engage with DARD colleagues on the longer term implications and considerations associated with the proposed Reform of Local Government in 2015 for regeneration and community development activities especially in the context of the integration of urban and rural Community Planning for the New Councils.

The development of regional support structures which have a strong rural component has contributed to good progress in terms of taking action to address rural regeneration needs and better identify and tackle the causes of deprivation in rural areas. All of the new regional support structures, a number of which are delivered in a partnership arrangement involving both DSD and DARD (Women in deprived and rural areas, generic support for Voluntary and Community sector organisations), are now in place and geared to support voluntary and community sector organisations across all of NI, to include both rural and urban areas.

### Rural Housing

DSD are promoting & developing a shared future in rural housing areas as well as examining best practices in rural housing elsewhere. DSD is committed to the Together Building a United Community strategy creating 10 new shared neighbourhood developments of which 2 schemes are rural (delivering 37 homes) by 2016/17.

DSD continue to seek 'Shared Future' sites across NI whilst NIHE are exploring the possibility to pilot Self Build schemes on NIHE land and rural housing need surveys continue to be carried out.

New modern and energy efficient rural housing stock is provided through the Social Housing Development Programme. 225 rural homes in 22 locations were provided during 2013/14. An Energy Pilot Scheme has been completed & a Private Rented Access Scheme implemented. DSD continue to improve housing conditions in rural areas where Renovation / Replacement / Disabled Facilities / Home Assistance / Discretionary and Mandatory Grants were approved in 2013/14.

Since the launch of the NIHE Rural Action Plan 2013-15 in April 2013, work has commenced on all 58 actions, with encouraging progress made on 56 of the actions. Key achievements to date include exceeding the 2013/14 target for rural new build housing



through the provision of 15 new rural scheme starts which will provide 105 new social homes, helping to address rural housing need and regenerate communities. To improve the energy efficiency of rural housing, the Housing Executive continues to examine and promote energy efficiency measures in rural areas. At the end of 2013/14, 40% of Warm Homes installations were in rural areas, meeting the set annual target. The Housing Executive provided match funding to 18 Rural Development Programme projects during 2013/14 highlighting the way in which the two Departments have been working together in partnership with rural communities to promote village renewal.

Additional new modern and energy efficient rural housing stock is provided through the delivery of the Social Housing Development Programme. During 2013/14, there were 225 new rural homes provided at 22 locations. Also in 2013/14, building commenced for 15 schemes totalling 105 new homes. During 2014/15 it is predicted that an additional 20 schemes totalling 113 units will start onsite. Renovation Grants - 20 Renovation grants and 1 replacement grant were approved in the last quarter of 2013/14. During the last quarter of 2013/14, 242 Disabled Facilities Grants were approved and 15 Home Assistance Grants were approved. Discretionary and mandatory grants - 79% of these approved by NIHE in the final quarter of 2013/14 were in rural areas. The Department for Social Development's Warm Homes Scheme is the primary means of tackling fuel poverty and has an annual target to assist at least 9000 households by providing energy efficiency improvements, 40% of which must be in homes in rural areas. This target has been achieved each year since the scheme was introduced in 2009.

The Department also introduced a Boiler Replacement Scheme in 2012 which provides grant funding for lower income households to replace old and inefficient boilers with newer more energy efficient ones, reducing costs and increasing thermal comfort. 40% of boilers replaced have been in rural areas.

## Glossary of Terms / Abbreviations

ACNI	Arts Council of Northern Ireland
AFBI	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
AFSB	Agri-Food Strategy Board
ALBS	Arms Length Bodies
AOL's	Areas of Learning
APHIS	Animal and Public Health Information System
ARTS	Assisted Rural Transport Scheme
BDOUK	Broadband Delivery UK
CAFRE	College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CAP	Community Arts Partnership
CCMS	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
CERI	Connecting Elderly Rural Isolated
CIIF	Creative Industries Innovation Fund
CLC	Creative Learning Centre
CPD	Central Procurement Directorate
COPE	Central Of Procurement Excellence
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DE	Department of Education
DECLG	Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
DFA	Digital Film Archive
DFP	Department of Finance and Personnel
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DOE	Department of the Environment
DOJ	Department of Justice
DRD	Department for Regional Development
DSD	Department for Social Development
DTS	Digital Transformation Service
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EHOD	European Heritage Open Days
ELB	Education and Library Board
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessment
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ES	Extended Schools
ESA	Education and Skills Authority
ESF	European Social Fund
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate

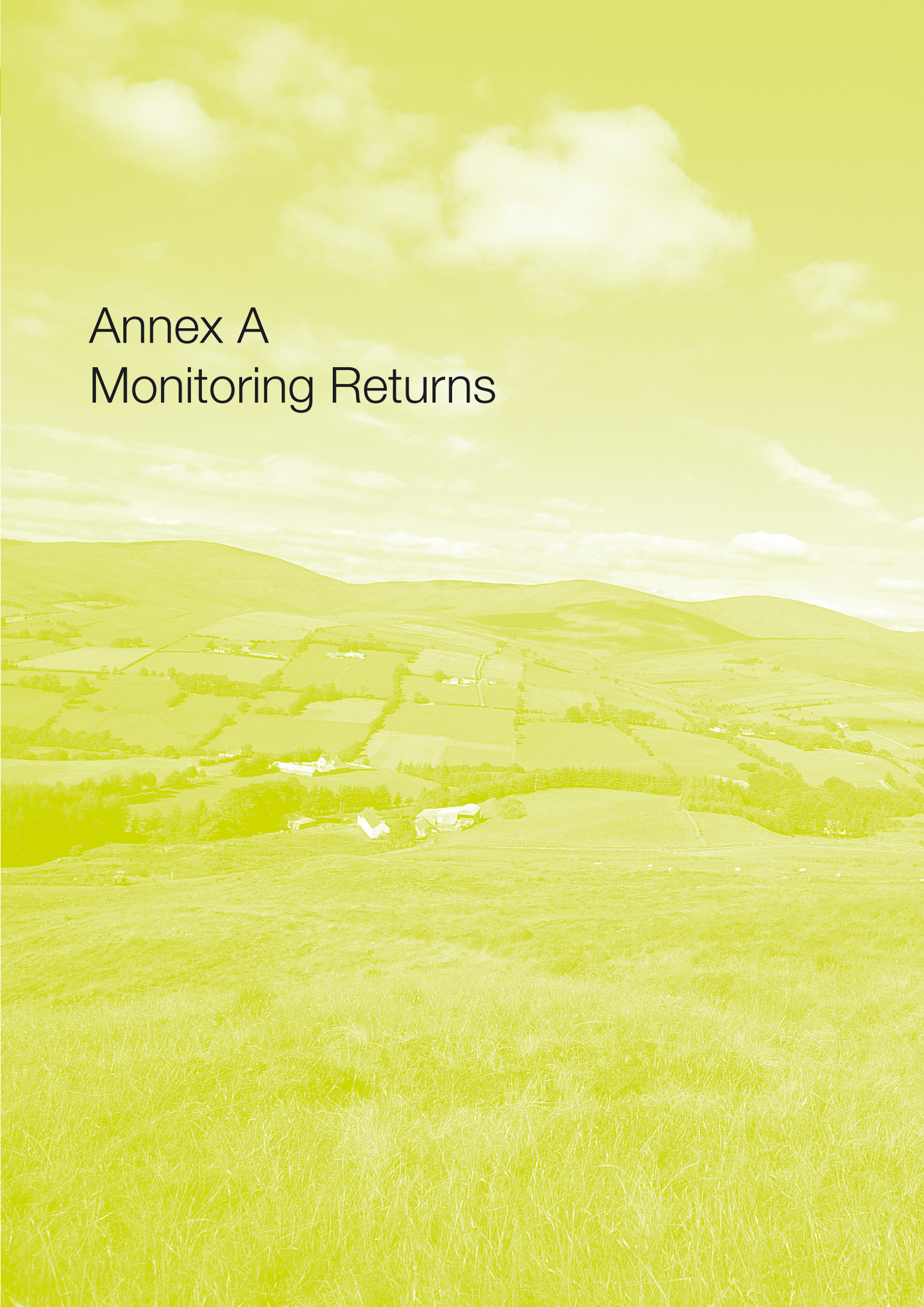
EU	European Union
EWWR	European Week of Waste Reduction
FE	Further Education
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GHGIP	Greenhouse Gas Implementation Partnership
HE	Higher Education
HSBC	Health and Social Care Board
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFA	Irish Football Association
IRFU	Irish Rugby Football Union
LANTRA	Sector Skills Council for land based and environmental industries
LCG	Local Commissioning Group
Líofa	Irish for 'fluent' - Irish language project
MARA	Maximising Access in Rural Areas
MATRIX	An expert panel formed to advise Government on the Exploitation of R&D and science and technology
NI	Northern Ireland
NIAUR	Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation
NIDIRECT	government services website - <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/">http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/</a>
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NINIS	Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service
NIRO	Northern Ireland Renewable Obligation
NISEP	Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
OFCOM	Independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
PCSP	Policing and Community Safety Partnership
PHA	Public Health Authority
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RAFAEL	Renaissance of Atlantic Food Authenticity and Economic Links
RCA	Reasonable Cost Allowance
RCN	Rural Community Network
RCTP	Rural Community Transport Partnerships
RDS	Regional Development Strategy
RHI	Renewable Heat Incentive
RHPP	Renewable Heat Premium Payment
RPA	Review of Public Administration
RTS	Regional Transportation Strategy
RWPAP	Rural White Paper Action Plan
RYE	Rural Youth Entrepreneurship

SAG	Stakeholder Advisory Group
SBRI	Small Business Research Initiative
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SEE	Social Economy Enterprise
SEP	Social Entrepreneurship Programme
SEUPB	Special European Union Programme Body
SEWP	Social Economy Work Programme
SFG	Spatial Framework Guidance
SIF	Social Investment Fund
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SNI	Sport NI
SPG	Supplementary Planning Guidance
SPPS	Strategic Planning Policy Statement
SSP	Sector Specific Project
Timeframe	S - Short Term (1-3 yrs) M - Medium Term (3-5 yrs) L - Long Term (5-10 yrs) O - Ongoing
UBIRFU	Ulster Branch Irish Rugby Football Union
UCGAA	Ulster Council GAA
UFU	Ulster Farmers' Union
VCU	Voluntary and Community Unit
WHSCT	Western Health and Social Care Trust
WRAP	Waste and Resources Action Programme



# Annex A

## Monitoring Returns





## Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
5	We will undertake a review of the current classification of settlements to ensure that appropriate definitions of 'rural' are available to policy makers where circumstances require.	NISRA / DARD		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Amber = Implementation not due to commence yet</b>			
<i>Update</i>	A NISRA-led review of the classification of settlements is currently being planned and will be based primarily on 2011 census outputs. A NISRA statistician was recruited in September 2013 to work in DARD and has contributed to preparatory work which has been undertaken at NISRA interdepartmental group level.			<i>Update</i>
32	We will explore the merits of establishing a series of key rural indicators to measure the effectiveness of rural development policy and to help inform future policy.	DARD		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Part of the work of the NISRA statistician is to collate statistics from across government in order to enhance the evidence base used to support rural development policy. The first set of rural/urban comparative statistics will be available in late Autumn 2014 and will form the basis for a series of key indicators.			<i>Update</i>
33	We will support the implementation of an enhanced rural proofing process across all Departments to ensure that all major policies and strategies are assessed to determine whether they have a differential impact on rural areas and, where appropriate, make adjustments to take account of particular rural circumstances.	DARD	ALL	S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Proposals for legislation on rural proofing are being developed with the objective of strengthening rural proofing across government. DARD continues to support Departments in implementing rural proofing through the provision of advice, guidance and training.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
38	We will better identify and tackle the causes of poverty and disadvantage in rural areas and to promote social inclusion.	DSD / DARD	OFMDFM	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	AFBI has been commissioned to undertake research on the impact of low income and poverty on the wellbeing of rural households and the role and scope of social enterprises in delivering solutions. DARD implements a £16million package of measures under its Tackling Poverty and Social Isolation Framework aimed at tackling poverty and social isolation in rural areas.			<i>Update</i>
53	We will engage in joint/comparative research, which in turn will inform our policy and programme approaches and future co-operation opportunities.	DARD & DECLG	Defra and other Devolved Administrations	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	AFBI has been commissioned to undertake a number of research projects on behalf of DARD including research on access to services in rural areas, research to determine the contribution that rural areas make to the NI economy and research on the contribution of key services to the quality of life of rural dwellers. The outcomes of this research will be used to engage with DECLG on areas of closer working.			<i>Update</i>
54	We will work together to share learning on rural proofing and use this tool effectively for the benefit of our rural communities.	DARD & DECLG	Defra and other Devolved Administrations	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DARD and DECLG have shared views and learning on rural proofing and DECLG staff have attended DARD run rural proofing training courses.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
55	We will share our learning from non-EU programmes such as CLAR, Anti Poverty and rural social scheme.	DARD & DECLG		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The Steering Committee on Cross Border Rural Development is made up of officials from DARD and DECLG and meets regularly to review the performance and output of current north south rural developments initiatives.			<i>Update</i>
56	We will share our experiences on the LEADER approach and facilitate the implementation of cross-border co-operation projects.	DARD & DECLG		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DARD has undertaken a review of LEADER and the learning from the review has been shared with DECLG. A North South conference on rural development was held in October 2013 which will contribute to strengthening the delivery of the LEADER Programme.			<i>Update</i>
57	We will co-operate through formal and informal fora to share learning in developing policy and programme responses to the challenges faced by our rural areas.	DARD & DECLG	Defra and other Devolved Administrations	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	There have been regular meetings between DARD and DECLG on a range of rural development issues including the Rural Development Programme, the Rural Enablers Project and the INTERREG IVA Programme. The two Departments have also continued to work together in relation to the development of all-island co-operation within their respective Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.			<i>Update</i>
58	We will work closely together in the implementation of our respective Rural White Papers and in any reviews of them.	DARD & DECLG		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DARD is planning to refresh its Rural White Paper Action Plan during 2015. DARD continues to engage with DECLG through the Steering Committee for Cross Border Rural Development.			<i>Update</i>



Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
61	We will implement a package of measures to tackle rural poverty and social and economic isolation over the next three years;	DARD	Other Departments	S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DARD continues to implement a package of measures under its Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework in partnership with other statutory bodies. A total of £16million has been secured to deliver projects under the Framework. More details of the projects funded under the Framework are provided in the Review of Progress section.			<i>Update</i>
64	Working with Defra, the devolved administrations and stakeholders, we will seek to influence the CAP and CFP negotiations to:- > secure a fair and proportionate share of the budget; > ensure that the policies contain sufficient flexibility to allow us to tailor-measures to meet our specific needs; and > simplify the CAP	DARD	Defra and other Devolved Administrations	S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	A political agreement was reached on CAP reform in June 2013 and the legal text was adopted by the end of 2013 with implementation to take place in 2015. DARD achieved most of its key asks with the exception of a definition of active farmers that includes a link to previous production. In the final agreement the mechanism to move towards flat rate per hectare payments and 'greening' were considerably simplified, while full flexibility to tailor measures to meet local needs was also secured. A political agreement has also been reached on the EU Budget and legal text was adopted at the end of 2013. The three elements of the CFP reforms have now been agreed and published. The CFP and CMO Regulations were published in December 2013 and the EMFF Regulation in May 2014.			<i>Update</i>
65	We will seek to maximise opportunities to access other EU funding streams and seek opportunities to work with rural partners/stakeholders to maximise the impact of funding available.	DARD		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The proposals for the new Rural Development Programme were agreed in June 2014 and will be submitted for approval to the European Commission in 2014. DARD will continue to explore opportunities with other Departments on complementarity between programmes such as ESF and ERDF.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
72	We will work with industry to develop and implement a strategic action plan for the agri-food sector.	DARD/DETI	InvestNI	S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	<p>The AFSB's Strategic Action Plan, "Going for Growth" was launched on 16th May 2013. The Report has 4 key targets to 2020: To grow sales by 60% to £7bn; Grow employment by 15% to 115,000; Grow sales outside NI by 75% to £4.5bn; and Grow value added by 60% to £1bn. To deliver these, the Plan makes 118 recommendations addressed to Government and industry, which requires estimated public sector funding of £400m to lever in £1.3bn overall investment to the sector.</p> <p>The Executive Response to the Strategy was approved in June 2014. At 30 June 2014, work is in progress to update the Action Plan underpinning the Strategy. In the meantime, progress has already been made by Government and industry on a number of agreed actions. Some capital funding has also been secured to support delivery.</p>			<i>Update</i>
83	We will work together in facilitating the implementation of cross-border co-operation projects, such as through INTERREG and PEACE Programmes, and in identifying shared priorities for the next round of EU programmes.	DARD & DECLG		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	During the reporting period, DARD has continued to support SEUPB and the organisations funded through the Rural Development theme of the EU INTERREG IVA Programme. Projects are progressing well and are expected to finish by the end of 2014. The PEACE III funded 'Rural Enablers' initiative has ended. The Steering Committee for Cross Border Rural Development met in Enniskillen on 1 April 2014. Officials from DARD and DECLG discussed current progress and future opportunities for co-operation through EU Programmes.			<i>Update</i>
84	We will advance the relocation of the Headquarters of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to a rural area by 2015.	DARD	DFP	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Work is continuing to relocate Forest Service and Fisheries Division to Fermanagh and South Down respectively by June 2015. Rivers Agency will relocate to Loughry College by March 2016 and DARD HQ (Phase 1) to Ballykelly by end of 2017.			<i>Update</i>

## Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
25	We will, with the support of DARD, approve detailed actions plans for the delivery of Sport Matters that will include provision for sport in rural areas and amongst rural dwellers.	DCAL		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The Department continues to ensure that the provision of sports, arts and leisure activities are available to all through Sport Matters Strategy. As part of the delivery of Sport Matters, DCAL and Sport NI have engaged with the Rural Community Network on opportunities for promoting sport in rural areas and how the strategy may help to address issues, such as geographical isolation from facilities, relevant to rural communities. Sport NI's Active Communities programme is designed to provide under-represented groups in sport: women, people with a disability, older people and people suffering from poverty and social deprivation with better opportunities to participate which includes rural communities. The 5th progress report on the implementation of Sport Matters is expected in October 2014. DCAL secured funding of £4.5m within the current Comprehensive Review Spending period towards a programme for promoting equality, tackling poverty and social exclusion through sport. This funding will be distributed equally between UCGAA, UBIRFU and IFA over a three year period and up until 31st March 2015. A number of elements of this programme are being rolled out across rural areas. The programme includes £0.5m to Tyrone GAA's 'Centre of Participation' at Garvaghey with the planned facilities providing outdoor pitches, skills wall, trim trail and gym equipment for community activities. These facilities will tackle poverty and social exclusion throughout a rural area in Co. Tyrone.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
27	Working with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI), we will ensure a geographic spread across its programmes.	DCAL, ACNI	NI Screen	L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<b>Update</b>	The Arts and Older People Programme, Start Up Programme, Intercultural Grants Programme and Small Grants Programmes are all ongoing and continue to ensure a good geographic spread of arts delivery. The NI Screen funded Creative Learning Centres have a specific remit to work with people from rural and hard to reach areas. The Amma Centre, Armagh, works primarily with schools, teachers and young people from these areas and the expansion of the Creative Learning Centres 2013-15 is specifically targeted at reaching further into rural communities. Several projects have been funded by NI Screen in the last year using the "Cinemobile", the mobile cinema that travels to rural areas. These included Science on Wheels for primary and secondary schools bringing science and film workshops to rural areas and the Fighting Words and Kids Own projects bringing creative writing workshops to primary schools in rural areas. The expansion of After School Film Clubs to 300 extended service schools also includes those in rural areas. NI Screen's Digital Film Archive (DFA) can be accessed at a range of locations including rural sites. Customised outreach presentations from the DFA are offered to reach further into these rural communities.			<b>Update</b>



Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
47	We will enable a broad and diverse range of the population to participate in culture, arts and leisure activities.	DCAL ACNI SportNI LibrariesNI	ALBS	L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<b>Update</b>	<p>The Arts and Older People Programme, Start Up Programme, Intercultural Grants Programme and Small Grants Programmes are all ongoing and continue to ensure that a broad and diverse range of the population participate in arts and culture. Northern Ireland Screen's work with the CLCs, After School Film Clubs and the DFA outreach programme (see 27) is being carried out as planned and we are achieving our targets as set out in our Key Performance Indicator report. Libraries NI have developed a number of initiatives to ensure that those from rural communities are able to engage with culture, arts and leisure activities. These includes the provision of 28 libraries in rural areas as well as access to a number of mobile libraries. Libraries NI also began implementation in January 2014 of its new timetable which has greatly improved access to its mobile libraries. In addition the range of services provided by the libraries has been enhanced by the roll out in late 2013 of the new IT system. The new system ensures that all rural libraries now provide faster public internet access and free WI-Fi. It has recently being piloted in the mobile libraries with the intention of introducing it to all mobiles in the foreseeable future. Libraries NI also works closely with DARD through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide the rural community with IT training and support as well as information on matters of particular interest to that community. DCAL, through Sport NI, and in partnership with local councils and schools across the north of Ireland, continues to provide opportunities for people to participate in leisure activities through a broad range of participation orientated programmes/interventions which specifically target underrepresented groups (e.g. Active Communities, Activ8, Active Schools). Actions to improve awareness of suicide and its prevention and promoting positive mental health is ongoing in collaboration with DARD through its network in rural communities. Implementation activities have had a highly sport related theme with Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) central to the delivery of awareness sessions with rural sports clubs. Key messages have been aimed specifically at children and young people through an SNI awareness programme, to support the existing Public Health Agency campaign and carrying the "Minding Your Head" message. The Department funded a pilot programme to increase awareness of issues around suicide prevention within sports clubs at community level in rural and urban areas and the Irish Football Association operates a Health Programme, part of which will address issues around suicide awareness.</p>	<b>Update</b>		

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
59	We will work to further disseminate and develop the Líofo Initiative in rural areas by organising 3 localised Líofo launches outside of Belfast and Derry and facilitate rural learning where local classes might be unavailable by ensuring that online Irish language courses are signposted on the DCAL website.	DCAL		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<b>Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Líofo website (<a href="http://www.liofa.eu">www.liofa.eu</a>) was launched on 24th February 2014. The website includes a free online learning resource to facilitate learning in rural areas where local Irish Language classes might not be available.</li> <li>• On 7 June 2014, Líofo sponsored and adjudicated at An Carn's annual Feis (Irish language Centre, Carntogher, Co. Derry). Líofo development officer participated in a television interview about the centre and the service it provides in this rural area.</li> <li>• In April 2014, Líofo Officers met with Community Development Officers on Rathlin Island to discuss Líofo and the history of the Irish language on the island and how to revive the Irish Language .</li> <li>• In May 2014, Líofo hosted a stand at the Balmoral show to engage with rural communities and make them aware of the Líofo campaign.</li> <li>• There will be a Líofo intensive Irish Language course in every county on 13th September 2014, funding provided by DCAL may be used by course providers to provide rural transport.</li> <li>• In September 2014, a Líofo launch is planned in Keady, Co. Armagh.</li> </ul>			<b>Update</b>

## Department of Education

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
28	We will ensure that all children, regardless of where they live have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.	DE		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The statutory Curriculum prescribes a number of high-level Areas of Learning (AoLs) as the minimum to be taught across each Key Stage, combining skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers have considerable freedom to decide on the specific content to be taught under each area of learning as well as the resources or programmes they use in their delivery of the curriculum. While all AoLs have to be covered, the curriculum does include an access statement which allows teachers to modify/adapt their teaching to meet the needs of individual pupils thus providing equality of opportunity and access for all.			<i>Update</i>
29	We will ensure that post primary school pupils in rural areas have access to a wide range of courses at 14 and 16 and to promote collaborative working amongst schools serving rural areas to achieve full delivery of the Entitlement Framework.	DE		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The Entitlement Framework is being introduced on a phased basis and is now statutory, with the full requirements to be in place from September 2015. It is designed to ensure that all pupils, regardless of the school they attend, have equality of access to a broad range of economically relevant and engaging courses, supported by high quality, timely careers education, information, advice and guidance. The Department continues to provide funding to support schools working in Area Learning Communities to ensure the needs of all pupils in the area are met, and to more easily facilitate collaborative working including in rural areas.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
30	We will continue, through the Extended schools Programme, to support breakfast clubs and after schools clubs in rural communities.	DE		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The Extended Schools (ES) programme, which targets those schools (approx 500) operating in the most disadvantaged areas, was resourced at £12.4m in the 2013/14 financial year. A further £12.6m has been made available to support the programme in 2014/15. Almost 30% of schools currently eligible to receive ES funding are in rural locations. Where assessed as needed by schools, breakfast and after school clubs can be provided with the aid of ES resources.			<i>Update</i>
31	We will encourage school owners and promoters, through the publication of a DE guidance document targeted at increasing community use of schools facilities, to seek opportunities to provide “out of hours” opportunities for the use of the wide range of facilities available in schools for the benefit of children and the wider community.	DE		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The DE guidance document, Community Use of Schools Premises: A Guidance Toolkit for Schools , which seeks to encourage and assist schools in opening their doors to the wider community, was issued on 13th January 2014.			<i>Update</i>
49	We will ensure, through an area based approach to planning that children and young people have access to high quality education delivered through a network of viable and sustainable schools.	DE		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Area Planning is ongoing and the planning authorities are actively engaging with all communities affected by potential change in education provision. The Sustainable Schools Policy takes account of the specific needs of rural communities.			<i>Update</i>



Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
50	We will engage with key stakeholders in the development of education provision on an area basis.	DE		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Area Planning is ongoing and the planning authorities are actively engaging with all communities affected by potential change in education provision.			<i>Update</i>
51	We will explore innovative and creative solutions to the delivery of education provision in rural areas through the area based planning approach.	DE		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Amber = Implementation commenced but progress is slower than anticipated</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The Shared Education Campus Programme has been launched under the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) initiative. It aims to bring together a range of schools and aid the sharing of classes, subjects and sports and extra curricular activities. The first three successful proposals, which are consistent with area planning, have come from rural schools. A second call for proposals will issue at the end of September 2014.			<i>Update</i>

## Department for Employment and Learning

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
6	We will work with Lantra, the Sector Skills Council to identify the skill needs within the land-based, food and rural sectors. We will roll out the 'Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland' and ensure that a flexible skills delivery infrastructure is in place to meet the skill needs of those in rural areas.	DEL		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for land based and environmental industries is seeking to deliver on the RWP in terms of training opportunities. This has included the recruitment of additional training providers/new instructors across a range of skills areas, and also the development of training courses and qualifications to meet industry requirements; there are currently 31 Lantra approved centres offering training in NI. Between July 2013 and July 2014 - 2,316 learners completed a Lantra Awards training course in NI. DEL offer a supporting role to Lantra but do not any have direct responsibility for this work.			<i>Update</i>
48	We will encourage the participation of older people in Further Education courses and other community development interventions in order to enable them to contribute to the sustainability of rural communities.	DEL		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	FE colleges continue to make their courses available to learners of all ages. In the 2012/13 academic year there were 6,703 professional and technical (vocational) enrolments leading to recognised qualifications in respect of those aged 55 and above. Within this, there were 2,621 enrolments in respect of those aged 65 and over. In addition, there were 10,027 and 5,405 enrolments for these two age groups on recreational courses in FE colleges. (this is the latest validated college enrolment figures).			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
52	We will seek to secure local access to higher education through an equitable distribution of maximum student number places across all of the Further Education colleges.	DEL		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DEL carried out the 2014 College Development Plan process. Colleges submitted their report on their HE in FE performance in 2013/14 and their plans for HE delivery in 2014/15. Meetings were held with colleges' senior management to discuss the plans and these informed a review and re-allocation of the maximum student number (MaSN) allocations across the colleges. The allocations included an additional 146 full-time HE places. The aim of the review and reallocation exercise was to ensure an equitable and rational distribution of HE in FE places across NI and in particular the redistribution of HE opportunities to more rural locations.			<i>Update</i>
79	We will utilise the Connected programme to ensure closer working between the Higher and Further Education sectors and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) and the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) to meet the knowledge transfer needs of our agri-food and biotechnology industry.	DEL		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Connected has continued to link with AFBI and CAFRE across its project work throughout 13/14. A new pilot Sector Specific Project (SSP) was introduced by North West Regional College (NWRC) this year called 'Raising the Steaks for Food Processors to Win New Contracts', which has been specifically created to develop links with AFBI and CAFRE. This pilot SSP has achieved a number of successful outputs in a short time frame. In particular, it has created two successful Invest NI Innovation Vouchers with food companies, Donegal Prime Fish and Brightergold. Both Innovation Vouchers generated through this Connected SSP have been handed over to AFBI and CAFRE to deliver on the vouchers. AFBI is also a key partner in an established SSP with Queen's University and the University of Ulster which is designed to align the renewable energy expertise of the partners with the needs of local companies. Meanwhile, CAFRE has continued to work with NWRC to assess the feasibility of establishing a "Food Development Business Generation and Support Unit" at NWRC. CAFRE has also established a new SSP with the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) centred upon developing an "Engineering Solutions - Agri-Food" scoping project.			<i>Update</i>

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
14	We will continue to support innovative ways of improving broadband quality in rural areas through the operation of the Broadband Fund.	DETI		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Due to a decrease in the number of applications being received (exacerbated by a reduction in the EU intervention rates making participation in the Fund less attractive) and a drop in the quality of projects coming forward, the decision was taken to close the NI Broadband Fund in April 2012 with the remaining budget, some £500k, being reallocated in support of a strategic project aimed at providing improvements in access to a basic broadband service (2Mbps) and increasing availability of superfast (24Mbps or more) broadband by 2015. The contract for this project was awarded on 4 February 2014 and the supplier has commenced implementation, with a view to contract completion by the end of 2015.			<i>Update</i>
15	We will complete the rollout of the Next Generation Broadband Project, to extend access to high speed broadband services to 85% of rural and urban businesses.	DETI		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The Next Generation Broadband Project was completed on time and within budget leading to fibre-based broadband services offering download speeds of up to 40 Mbps (now increased to 80 Mbps) being delivered from 1,265 street cabinets. Prompted by the success of the project, the contractor, BT took the decision to fibre upgrade an additional 1201 cabinets (including those upgraded across Londonderry as part of the City of Culture preparations). The recent OFCOM Infrastructure Report 2013 Update (October 2013) states that NI now has the highest level of Superfast (30Mbps or more) Broadband availability in the UK at 96% of premises. The contract with BT will continue to be monitored until 2016 to ensure that services are being delivered in accordance with specifications.			<i>Update</i>



Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
16	We will continue to work with the telecoms industry, the telecoms regulator and other stakeholders to ensure that we continue to have competitive telecoms services and world class telecoms infrastructure.	DETI		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DETI awarded a contract to BT on 4 February 2014 to deliver the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project (NIBIP) aimed at providing improvements in access to a basic broadband service (2Mbps) and to increase availability of superfast (24Mbps or more) broadband by 2015. In developing this project the Department has worked closely with the telecommunications industry and the regulator and has conducted a full public consultation on the intervention. The Department also has secured a £7.24m (subject to match funding) share of the additional £250m announced by the UK Government in December, to facilitate the extension of superfast broadband services into the most difficult to reach areas.			<i>Update</i>
17	We will continue our engagement with the Department for Culture Media and Sports and Broadband Deliver UK to ensure that our perspective is reflected in the Broadband UK Strategy, which aims to deliver, the best superfast broadband network in Europe by 2015; and an appropriate allocation of funding is received under the Strategy to extend the reach of superfast broadband into rural areas currently unserved or likely to be served by private sector investment alone.	DETI		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DETI has already secured an allocation of £4.4m under the Broadband UK initiative which will be used, in conjunction with other funding sources, including the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, to deliver the objectives of the NI Broadband Improvement Project i.e. improvements in access to 2Mbps and an increase in the availability of superfast broadband (24 Mbps or more) by 2015. DETI has also secured a further £7.24m (subject to match funding) from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and BDUK (the body established by DCMS to administer the UK Broadband Fund) under additional funding announced by DCMS in December 2013. (See Note 16.) This funding will be used to further increase the availability of superfast broadband in the most difficult to reach areas subject to a satisfactory business case being prepared.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
18	We will examine options to maintain 100% access to at least a first generation broadband service across the region on expiry of the existing Remote Broadband Services Contract.	DETI		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Prior to the expiry of the satellite broadband contract with Avanti Communications in January 2012 and, based on a positive value for money case, DETI completed a European-wide, open, competitive and technology-neutral tendering process which led to the appointment of Onwave Ltd to provide satellite broadband services to those areas where a broadband service of at least 512kilobits per second (Kbps) could not be accessed via other means. Onwave has been appointed for a period of three-years ending on 4 January 2015, offering a range of products with download speeds of 20Mbps and price differentiation based on the level of data allowance required. In addition, through the NI Broadband Fund, DETI has supported a number of projects which have extended the availability of fixed-wireless broadband networks offering services of between 3Mbps and 100Mbps.			<i>Update</i>
19	We will undertake full impact screening and consultation in respect of key priorities that may be carried forward under any Telecommunications Strategy covering the period 2011 to 2015.	DETI		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	In March 2011 DETI commenced a full public consultation of its Telecoms Action Plan, for the period 2011-2015, which included seven public meetings in Armagh, Ballymena, Belfast, Enniskillen, Londonderry, Newcastle and Omagh. As part of that process, it also published details of its impact screening, on which comments were also sought. Fifty written responses were received and a formal response to these was published on the Department's website in September 2011, including responses to any impact related comments. In addition, individual responses were issued to a number of stakeholders, who submitted detailed replies, or made representations at the public meeting events. With regard to the NI Broadband Improvement Project, two public consultations were run, in order to obtain views on the proposed intervention area.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
40	We will promote action to address inequalities in accessing alternative cost effective fuel in rural areas.	DSD/DETI		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Planned extension of the natural gas network to main towns in the West of NI will provide additional fuel choice, and help with budgeting of energy costs through the option of gas pre-payment meters for domestic consumers. The Renewable Heat Incentive, (RHI) is being extended to the Domestic Sector and likely to be open for applications before the end of the year. Domestic customers who availed of the interim Renewable Heat Premium Payment Scheme, (RHPP), will transfer across to the RHI.			<i>Update</i>
66	We will continue to support opportunities for revenue creation from visitors in rural areas, through leading the implementation of the 'Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland 2020'.	DETI		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DETI, supported by NITB, undertook a wide ranging consultation on the strategic development of tourism. Out of this work a strategic target was developed to increase the income earned from tourism by 2020 to £1 billion and this has informed the tourism targets set within the Programme for Government and the Economic Strategy. The consultation also led to the identification of 9 key tourism areas within NI. Work is well underway on the development of these 9 key tourism areas/destinations, many of which cover rural areas. NITB is supporting Local Authorities and other stakeholders in these areas to develop Tourism Area Plans which link to the overall tourism priorities. This work will integrate with Councils new community planning powers under RPA going forward.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
67	Invest NI will continue to support investment in tourism accommodation and work closely with other investment stream funders to avoid duplication of public investment.	DETI		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Invest NI continues to offer support for tourism accommodation development. While number of new capital projects remains low, support for development of competitiveness of existing businesses continues. INI continues to liaise with other funders on a case by case basis to ensure no duplication of public funding.			<i>Update</i>
68	We will continue to work with others to encourage rural tourism businesses to become established and sustainable, by helping to improve their capacity and product.	DETI		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Invest NI and NITB continue to work with DARD and others on an ongoing basis to support and develop rural businesses. NITB works with sectorial bodies in rural tourism to encourage the development of 'clustered' products and services that will deliver a complete rural experience for visitors. 'Coasts and lakes' and 'unique outdoors' are two key propositions that offer opportunities to spread the benefits of tourism to rural areas and to encourage farm diversification.			<i>Update</i>
69	We will continue to work with others to ensure a co-ordinated approach to rural tourism development.	DETI		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	NITB is liaising with DARD through its Stakeholder Form on the development of the next Rural Development Programme (2014-2020). Pending sign off by the EU, funding has been allocated to rural economic development that will offer the opportunity for funding streams to be targeted at tourism infrastructure, small business development and with additional potential scope for tourism related projects through village renewal schemes.			<i>Update</i>



Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
70	We will continue to support the development of sustainable rural economies by providing a modern economic infrastructure and access to business support tools.	DETI		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Access to business support tools through a physical network of Invest NI Regional Offices, currently with 8 points of presence across NI; and through a multi-channel contact strategy for the NI business base (access through web, telephone, mobile, text etc; examples being nibusinessinfo website and Invest NI's Freephone no. 0800 1814422).			<i>Update</i>
71	We will continue to work with DARD and DFP to explore where Government, as our largest procurer of goods and services, can use innovative procurement techniques such as pre-commercial procurements to support the growth of rural businesses particularly SME's.	DETI	DFP	O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	This work is ongoing, including briefings to staff in CPD and COPEs.			<i>Update</i>
72	We will work with industry to develop and implement a strategic action plan for the agri-food sector.	DARD/DETI	A&AF	S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	<p>The AFSB's Strategic Action Plan, "Going for Growth" was launched on 16th May 2013. The Report has 4 key targets to 2020: To grow sales by 60% to £7bn; Grow employment by 15% to 115,000; Grow sales outside NI by 75% to £4.5bn; and Grow value added by 60% to £1bn. To deliver these, the Plan makes 118 recommendations addressed to Government and industry, which requires estimated public sector funding of £400m to lever in £1.3bn overall investment to the sector.</p> <p>The Executive Response to the Strategy was approved in June 2014. Work is in progress to update the Action Plan underpinning the Strategy. In the meantime, progress has already been made by Government and industry on a number of agreed actions. Some capital funding has also been secured to support delivery.</p>			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
73	We will continue to promote and support innovation in rural businesses and rural communities, through a suite of innovation programmes, available through Invest NI, including the Innovation Voucher Initiative.	DETI		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Innovation vouchers are worth £4000 and allow businesses to access expertise from a public Sector Knowledge Provider to solve a business issue. There are four open calls for applications per year and these are promoted widely throughout NI by press advertisements, social media and via Knowledge Providers and stakeholders. Around 300 vouchers are awarded per year.			<i>Update</i>
74	Through MATRIX we will continue to provide information and foresight to help rural businesses find new markets and opportunities.	DETI		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	MATRIX is currently undertaking two separate (but overlapping) foresight studies to identify future global market opportunities which NI companies, including rural businesses, can exploit. The studies focus on the Life & Health Sciences and the ICT/Digital sectors and will be available in Q4 2014 and Q1 2015 respectively.			<i>Update</i>
75	We will continue to work with the Agri Food and Biosciences Institute and DARD to encourage knowledge and technology transfer to rural businesses and to leverage support under the EU Framework Programme.	DETI	DARD/AFBI	O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	This work is ongoing using H2020 Contact Point Network.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
76	We will continue to work with DARD, rural communities and the Social Economy Network to promote the social economy sector in rural areas.	DETI	DARD	S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	In October 2012 DETI awarded a contract to Social Enterprise NI (a consortium which includes the Rural Development Council) to design, manage and deliver a Social Economy Work Programme (SEWP). The SEWP commenced on 1 October 2012 and as part of delivery plans the programme includes a series of events (masterclasses, seminars, training etc) across Northern Ireland to promote, develop and sustain the sector. Due to the wide geographical spread of its members Social Enterprise NI has taken a regional approach to implementing its programme and as a result many events have been held in rural areas promoting the availability of support to rural social enterprises and raising awareness of the economic, environmental and social impact made by the sector in those areas.			<i>Update</i>
77	We will continue to work in partnership to organise events to promote available support to rural Social Economy Enterprises (SEEs) and to raise awareness of the importance economic, environmental and social contribution which SEEs make to rural communities.	DETI		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	As part of the SEWP DETI has ensured that Social Enterprise NI (a consortium which includes the Rural Development Council) has organised events in rural areas promoting the availability of support to rural social enterprises and raising awareness of the economic, environmental and social impact made by the sector in those areas.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
78	Invest NI will continue to offer its Social Entrepreneurship Programme with a focus on groups located in disadvantaged areas or which provide a service to a disadvantaged group including those in rural areas.	DETI		0
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within Timeframe. The current contract for the Social Entrepreneurship Programme (SEP) will run to 4th July 2015. The responsibility for the delivery of social entrepreneurship will be transferred to Councils from 1 April 2015. DETI, as the transferring Department, will remain responsible for setting enterprise policy as it contributes to both the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy and the Programme for Government.			<i>Update</i>
88	We will continue to work with others to provide a robust and flexible energy infrastructure to enhance the role of renewable electricity generation and support a sustainable green economy. This will entail strengthening of the electricity grid where necessary to absorb higher levels of renewable generation.	DETI		0
<b>Status</b>	<b>Amber = Implementation not due to commence yet</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DETI engagement with Regulator, Transmission System Operator and Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) continuing to examine opportunity for use of ERDF funding under 2014-2020 programme to support investment in the grid. Impact of 5th NIE Price Determination being considered by Regulator to identify suitable projects for which it can approve NIE match funding element of any investment.			<i>Update</i>



Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
89	We will continue to ensure a joined up approach to achieving the full potential offered by renewable energy solutions.	DETI		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DETI continues to ensure that the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation incentivises renewable electricity generation at levels which bring forward investment at least cost to the electricity consumer. DETI continues to support DARD/CAFRE at the twice yearly 'Practical On-farm Renewable Energy' seminars. Work is starting on the development of a draft cross departmental Community Energy Action Plan.			<i>Update</i>
90	We will work towards extending the natural gas network to main towns in the West and to East Down, to offer energy consumers additional fuel choice, along with the coast and efficiency benefits associated with natural gas.	DETI		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Work to bring natural gas to the main towns in the West took a significant step forward in 2014 with the launch in February of the Utility Regulator's competition for new gas conveyance licences to extend gas infrastructure to Dungannon, Coalisland, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Omagh, Enniskillen/Derrylin and Strabane. The competition closed in May with eight applications and the Utility Regulator announced the preferred licence applicants on 12th August. A determination by the Utility Regulator is expected in November 2014, and new licences are expected to be formally awarded early in 2015. The European Commission has confirmed State Aid approval for NI Executive grant assistance of up to £32.5 million towards the construction of the major (high pressure) gas pipelines within the project. Consideration in relation to how gas might be extended to other areas, including East Down, is ongoing.			<i>Update</i>

Note: Action No. 94 in the Rural White Paper Action Plan is a duplicate of Action No. 89

## Department of the Environment

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
42	We will implement changes to the planning system to provide for improved engagement with local communities in the planning and development of rural areas. These changes will include new requirements under the Planning Act (NI) 2011 for councils to prepare statements of community involvement and for the undertaking of pre-application community consultation in respect of major developments.	DOE		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<b>Update</b>	The Department undertook a public consultation exercise from 28 May to 20 August 2014 on a range of proposals for subordinate legislation on planning reform and the transfer of planning powers to local government. This included proposals relating to both statements of community involvement and requirements for pre-application community consultation on major development proposals. A new Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) is also under development. Published in February this year the consultation draft SPPS introduces new overarching core planning principles, explains the new Local Development Plan and Development Management system requirements, and brings forward new strategic retail and town centres planning policy. In addition, it consolidates existing subject planning policies into a single document. Consultation on the draft SPPS closed on 29 April 2014. Officials are currently analysing all of the responses received. It is envisaged that the SPPS will be finalised by the end of 2014, subject to Executive agreement.			<b>Update</b>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
43	We will ensure planning policy and rural development policy is joined up and find ways to reduce the time taken to consider rural development programme planning applications.	DOE		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DOE officials continue to engage closely with DARD officials to ensure that those applications that are subject to grant funding, are dealt with as a matter of priority. In such cases, Planning will liaise with consultees to speed up responses in order to shorten the planning process. The onus, however, rests with the applicant to alert the department to the timeframe for grant funding at the initial stages of the planning process. Furthermore, those applications that meet the criteria for being dealt with under the streamlined council consultation process will be dealt with expeditiously provided they are not EIA applications, no objections have been received, the recommendation is to approve and the local council within which they are located has agreed to the inclusion of those types of applications within the streamlined process. In relation to the policy development process Planning Policy Division will continue to carry out Rural Proofing Screening and liaise with DARD at the earliest opportunity to take advice on whether any further actions or mitigation measures are required.			<i>Update</i>
81	We will take a range of actions to better understand the cause of, and to reduce the number of, collisions on rural roads which will include carrying out research and investigations into road safety in rural areas, improving the quality of data and evidence used to understand and address road safety problems and undertaking new targeted public information campaigns.	DOE		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	A Road Safety Research Co-ordination Group, involving road safety partners, has been established to help identify emerging trends and provide a sound knowledge base for developing future policies. The various levels of data available from all road safety partner organisations has been established and the Group continues to adopt a data-sharing approach with data now drawn upon as needed. Research specifically on rural road collisions involving children and young people has been completed and new public information campaigns, which include rural scenarios, have been developed and launched.  Performance indicators, including the number of people and the number of children killed in collisions on rural roads, have also been developed to help support better understanding of road safety issues and these are monitored by the Road Safety Strategy to 2020 Delivery Board.			<i>Update</i>

85	We will seek to increase the contribution made by rural tourism by promoting the sustainable use of our natural and built heritage. We will also seek to increase the number of visits to historic monuments located in the countryside by improving access for visitors and undertaking more effective marketing.	DOE	DETI	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	<p>NIEA Built Heritage (renamed Historic Environment Division) undertook the 2013 European Heritage Open Days (EHOD) weekend event in Northern Ireland. This attracted over 62,288 visitors to over 400 listed buildings, 300 of which were outside greater Belfast. EHOD weekend 2013 visitors are calculated to have spent £1.7million in the local economy. In early 2014 a new partnership with Food NI has been put in place for EHOD 2014. This will showcase local food produce hopefully enhancing the rural economy. In 2013/14, the NIEA Grant-aid scheme issued 150 payments for eligible repairs to listed buildings, amounting to a total spend of over £4.6M. New visitor signage has been developed for a number of State Care sites, such as Struell Wells, Green Castle, Narrow Water, Kilfeaghan Dolmen, Ardtolp, Raholp and Loughinisland Churches. Visitor numbers were increased at the rural State Care sites of Devenish Island, Dundrum Castle, Grey Abbey, Nendrum Monastic Site, Tully Castle and Bellaghy Bawn. This has had the benefit of an increase in visitor numbers of 22,133 visitors from 2012. Feasibility studies have been completed for Tullahogue Fort and Dundrum Castle which will allow planning applications to be lodged and new visitor facilities to be built. A project team has been appointed and is working towards delivering a strategic development plan for the Dunluce Castle site. Aimed at attracting visitors to NIEA sites, the majority of which are rural, a £75k advertising campaign ('Wonderful Days Out') promoting NIEA events, sites and properties was delivered in 2013 and in the current year this campaign is running at a value of £44k, together with an additional £15k media sponsorship. Lastly, £198k of the funds generated from the carrier bag levy have been invested in 19 'rural tourism' type projects across NI. NIEA supports Outdoor Recreation NI to develop and manage a suite of websites promoting the sustainable use of our natural and built heritage including WalkNI.com and BeachNI.com. The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland has been published as a partnership between SportNI, DCAL and NITB. This identifies the key activity required to over the next 7 years to continue to develop "a culture of dynamic, sustainable outdoor recreation in NI".</p>	<i>Update</i>		



Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
86	As part of the overall approach, we will maximise opportunities for rural areas to play their part in climate change mitigation and adaptation. We will continue to support DARD in developing climate change policies for rural areas through the Cross Departmental Working Group on Climate Change. This will help ensure that rural areas contribute to the Northern Ireland Executive target to help deliver the on greenhouse gas emissions reductions and to the delivery of its adaptation programme target.	DOE		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DOE continues to support DARD in developing climate change policies for rural areas through the Cross Departmental Working Group on Climate Change and the Greenhouse Gas Implementation Partnership (GHGIP). A report on Phase One of the “Efficient Farming Cuts Greenhouse Gases” reduction strategy focusing on farmer awareness and beginning implementation was published in March 2014. Consideration is being given to further strategic direction required in a Phase Two “Efficient Farming” Action Plan which should outline a direction of travel for the rest of this decade. The GHGIP intends to issue this strategy in 2014, recognising the importance of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 as a central driver towards improved farm efficiency and enhanced environmental outcomes. The first Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme was published in January 2014 and covers the period up to 2019. The Programme sets out key actions to address the risks and opportunities, including those impacting on rural areas, that were identified in the Climate Change Risk Assessment report for NI.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
87	We will help Councils, rural communities and rural businesses to contribute to meeting waste management targets through the Department's Rethink Waste Fund. We will also continue to support the Waste and Resources Action Programme which aims to help businesses and individuals reap the benefits of reducing waste, develop sustainable products and use resources in a more efficient way.	DOE		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The Rethink Waste Fund has allocated approximately £3.2M in grants to date in 2014/15 for resource efficiency projects diverting waste from landfill. Projects have been allocated to councils and other organisations from across NI. An additional £1.5 m capital monies was secured during June monitoring for further projects			<i>Update</i>
91	We will help facilitate the increased deployment of renewable energy production in rural areas by providing a supportive planning policy framework and guidance on renewable technologies.	DOE		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The Department introduced new permitted development rights for anaerobic digestors on agricultural units under the The Planning (General Development) (Amendment No.2) Order (NI) 2013 which came into operation on 30th August 2013. Furthermore, the Department will continue to expedite the processing of applications for renewable energy. In addition, Planning Policy Division carried out a 12 week public consultation on a new draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) ending 29 April 2014. This important document is being prepared as part of the wider reform of the planning system. Whilst the SPPS is largely a consolidation of existing planning policies, including those within PPS 18 Renewable Energy, there is also an emphasis on improving it in time for the transfer of planning powers to councils next April. Consultation on the draft SPPS closed on 29 April 2015. Officials are currently analysing all of the responses received. It is envisaged that the SPPS will be finalised by the end of 2014, subject to Executive agreement.			<i>Update</i>

## Department of Finance and Personnel

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
20	We will work with other government Departments to explore better opportunities for <i>nidirect</i> to support rural dwellers.	DFP		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	NI Direct has assisted the DARD business side in developing a new organisational operating model that puts the farmer at the core of its design. The NI Direct SMS service provides real-time alerts on Strangford Ferry notification, updates on hedge cutting, field boundaries and the service provides advice on issues relating to crop monitoring and potato blight control.			<i>Update</i>
21	We will reduce barriers to access online services.	DFP		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	NI Direct Digital Inclusion teams are now working closely to ensure that CAP Reform work builds inclusivity measures in at the start. Go ON NI continues through 2014-2015, and training material is delivered in rural locations. Specific year-round training sessions are being developed by Supporting Communities NI (SCNI) and LibrariesNI across NI to include running APHIS workshops and modules.			<i>Update</i>
82	We will work closely with DARD to ensure our statistics are disseminated in a format which supports effective rural policy making.	DFP/NISRA	DARD	S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	NI Neighbourhood Statistics <a href="http://www.nisra.gov.uk/ninis">www.nisra.gov.uk/ninis</a> continues to allow rural (and urban) communities across NI access to high quality official statistics on their local area. The website contains a series of Frequently Asked Questions on Urban/Rural issues (e.g. how are areas classed as urban or rural?). As part of this dissemination, a helpline and training is available. Training has been provided to a number of rural organisations and community groups have been trained on the use of official statistics (e.g. the DARD Research Discussion Forum and the Rural Community Network). Finally an e-zine or on-line newsletter is available to keep users aware of new/updated statistics and this is circulated widely to DARD staff and representatives of rural community networks. NISRA staff have liaised with DARD Farm Surveys Branch regarding the hosting of urban/rural data and urban/rural classifications and have now been added to NINIS Area Profiles.			<i>Update</i>

## Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
22	We will work with DARD to roll out a programme of community based health checks and information targeting farm families across all HSC Trust areas.	DHSSPS	DARD	S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	During the reporting period highlighted, the Farm Family Programme has provided a health check service to 3,043 clients with 55% of clients being advised to see their GP. In addition 496 were referred to the MARA programme and 659 clients referred to the Farm Safety Programme. An interim evaluation report was completed in January 2014 which identified that 98% of the clients identified the service as excellent/good and commented that the service was important for meeting the needs of the rural farming community.			<i>Update</i>
23	We will work in partnership with DARD to support rolling out the 'Maximising Access to and uptake of Grants Benefits and Services Project'.	DHSSPS	DARD	S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	At the end of June 2014, a total of 11,873, 1st and 8,294 2nd visits had been undertaken resulting in 13,448 initial individual assessments being completed and 30,968 onward referrals generated for various grants, benefits and services.			<i>Update</i>



Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
24	In seeking to improve services at local level, local commissioners will ensure that the planning, commissioning and delivery of health and social care services is informed by the view and opinions of people living in rural communities.	DHSSPS		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The Public Health Agency is in the process of retendering services across its Health and Social Wellbeing Directorate. As part of this commissioning process, the PHA is engaging with service users, existing services providers etc on a wide scale throughout Northern Ireland. For example, each of the Drug and Alcohol Coordination Teams (DACT) in all of the five Local Commissioning Group areas have been consulted on the content of the Drugs and Alcohol Commissioning Framework. Each DACT has community representation put forward by the Independent Sector Forum. The needs of rural communities have been taken into account in the design of the commissioning specifications due to be released for Drugs and Alcohol Services.			<i>Update</i>
44	In taking forward the development and implementation of the range of health improvement and promotion strategies appropriate protocols and/or structures will be developed to ensure the needs of rural communities are met.	DHSSPS		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The PHA works in partnership with a range of statutory and community partners in the design and delivery of programmes in its Health and Social Wellbeing Improvement Directorate. DARD and a range of rurally based agencies (such as Sub Regional Networks) and community partners are included in such structures at a strategic level and also as delivery partners in some instances for the disbursement of grant aid.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
45	Health and Social Care Agencies will be expected to incorporate a community development approach to their programmes as appropriate in order to support capacity and resilience building in rural communities.	DHSSPS	DARD	S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	PHA (jointly with HSCB) launched 'Working in Partnership' a Community Development Strategy in July 2012. This Strategy recognises and supports the important and pivotal role that community development plays in improving health and wellbeing in local communities. The PHA's thematic action plan on Community Development requires each of the 5 Health and Social Wellbeing Improvement teams to commission community development support.			<i>Update</i>
46	We will work with DARD to explore the impact of rurality, isolation and deprivation on health inequalities.	DHSSPS	DARD	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	We will continue to work on an ongoing basis with the Health Inequalities Monitoring System. In addition, the MARA programme provides a significant opportunity to analyse the impact of rurality and isolation given the extent of the programme and the number and range of clients it interfaces with. Extensive IT systems have been commissioned through the MARA and Family Farm Health Checks which will provide a comprehensive opportunity to study the impact of isolation, rurality and deprivation on rural communities. Until these programmes were commissioned, there was relatively little primary research data available for analysing the impact on health in rural communities. PHA are also contributing to the Interdepartmental Forum established to examine improving the uptake of benefits, services and support, using the experience from MARA to influence wider government strategy development.			<i>Update</i>
80	We will engage with DARD, farm families and the agri-food sector to find opportunities to increase the procurement of fresh, local sustainable food into Health and Social Care facilities e.g. through the RAFAEL project.	DHSSPS		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Red = Implementation not achieved and/or not expected to be achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	This programme can not now proceed following advice from Procurement and Logistics Service in the HSC Business Services Organisation relating to impending changes in procurement of Part B services.			<i>Update</i>

## Department of Justice

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
7	We are developing a new Community Safety Strategy which will ensure that the needs of rural communities are taken into account.	DOJ		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<b>Update</b>	The Community Safety Strategy was agreed by the Justice Committee and the Executive in June 2012, and published on 26 July 2012. Subsequently action plans for each of the 8 strands of activity detailed in the Strategy, including business and rural crime, were developed and agreed by the Justice Committee on 17 January 2013. The first annual update on delivery of the action plans was provided to the Justice Committee on 20 February 2014. This update included actions taken at a strategic level to support safer rural communities, and prevent and reduce crime. This work has included the funding of a dedicated rural crime analyst within the PSNI's Rural Crime Unit, the development of an initiative to help tackle the theft of farm machinery, and the work of the Organised Crime Taskforce (OCTF) in addressing organised crimes affecting rural locations such as fuel laundering.			<b>Update</b>
8	At a local level, partnerships such as Policing and Community Safety Partnerships will ensure that the needs of rural communities are reflected in policing and community safety action plans.	DOJ		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<b>Update</b>	The Department of Justice and the Northern Ireland Policing Board jointly fund Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), which are established by each Council in NI, to make a positive difference to communities in the area, contribute to a reduction in crime and enhance community safety in the district. Each partnership is required to identify local priorities following consultation and engagement with the local community, the statutory and the voluntary sectors and other relevant organisations and to submit an annual Action Plan, setting out its proposals for dealing with the issues that have been identified, to the Department of Justice and the Policing Board. These arrangements enable PCSPs, and District PCSPs in Belfast, to respond to the specific needs of their area including where rural crimes are a priority.			<b>Update</b>

## Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
60	We will publish the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy to build a united community and improve community relations; including in our rural areas.	OFMDFM		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The new Good Relations Strategy, Together Building a United Community was published on 23 May 2013.			<i>Update</i>
62	We will work with relevant rural communities to encourage them to engage in the strategic area planning process, where appropriate, under the Social Investment Fund to tackle issues associated with poverty and deprivation.	OFMDFM		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	In February 2014, twenty three projects were announced from across the 9 SIF Investment Zones. These had been through an intensive appraisal process within the department and were moving to Letter of Offer. These are now about to issue to the project lead partners. The projects will address issues associated with poverty and deprivation in both rural and urban areas.			<i>Update</i>
63	We will promote and encourage applications from rural areas for the Contested Spaces Programme.	OFMDFM		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The second call for application under the Contested Spaces Programme in 2012 resulted in an increase in rural applications and OFMdFM is now funding several rural projects under the programme.			<i>Update</i>

Note: Action No. 92 & 93 in the Rural White Paper Action Plan are duplicates of Action Nos. 62 & 63



## Department for Regional Development

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
1	We will seek to support and sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside and help improve accessibility for rural communities by taking account of the Spatial Framework Guidance (SFG 13 & 14) contained in the Regional Development Strategy 2035 in future plans and programmes of all Departments.	DRD	All Departments	S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	A Progress Report detailing actions supporting the guidance within the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS), including actions relating to rural communities, issued to the Executive in January 2014. Work is ongoing with the Transition Committees to advise local councils on their responsibilities in relation to the RDS guidance following the transfer of planning to local councils. The Department is procuring new ferries to replace two existing ferries [one for the Ballycastle - Rathlin Island ferry service and one for Portaferry - Strangford ferry service] that are reaching the end of their operational life. The new ferries will enable the Department to continue to provide essential transport services to the rural community.			<i>Update</i>
2	We will maintain the road infrastructure to keep it safe, effective and reliable within the limitations of available funding.	DRD		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Transport NI will continue to bid for additional structural maintenance funds during in-year monitoring rounds to help deliver on its commitment with the Action Plan.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
9	We will contribute to the delivery of the new Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) which has a strategic objective of improving access in rural areas. Following adoption of a new RTS an implementation plan post 2015 will be developed to include programmes of measures designed to achieve this strategic objective. This may include road improvements, more innovative public transport services, more Park & Ride sites, better management of our transportation networks and improved road safety measures.	DRD		L
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	A draft Delivery Plan with a prioritised list of transport interventions targeted at delivering the strategic objectives of the New Approach to Regional Transportation has been developed with some final work ongoing to finalise costs. The proposals of the Delivery Plan will then feed into the development of the DRD Infrastructure Investment Plan which will identify those projects being taken forward over the budget period 2015-19 including those which will improve access in rural areas.			<i>Update</i>
10	We will work with other stakeholders in developing a comprehensive information service for rural public transport services.	DRD	DE, DARD, DHSSPS & Translink	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	A pilot is currently underway in the Dungannon area, involving DRD, DARD, DHSSPS, Dept of Education, Southern Education & Library Board, Southern Health Trust, Translink and Community Transport to trial the feasibility of providing more integrated public transport services, including the provision of information. Transport planning consultants have been appointed in June 2014 to examine the options and cost implications of N Ireland-wide implementation.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
11	Subject to enactment of the Transport Bill we will develop local public transport plans aimed at ensuring the effective use of rural public transport.	DRD	DE, DARD, DHSSPS & Translink	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Progress on this will need to await the outcome of the Dungannon pilot, which should provide a template for how best to implement local public transport plans for integrated services.			<i>Update</i>
12	We will consider how best to join up transport services that operate in rural areas to ensure most effective use of rural transport resources.	DRD	DE, DARD, DHSSPS & Translink	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	A pilot is currently underway in the Dungannon area, involving DRD, DARD, DHSSPS, Dept of Education, Southern Education & Library Board, Southern Health Trust, Translink and Community Transport to trial the feasibility of providing more integrated public transport services. Transport planning consultants have been appointed in June 2014 to examine the options and cost implications of N Ireland-wide implementation.			<i>Update</i>
13	We will examine options to provide financial assistance for householders in areas where no water main is near their homes to get a mains extension or have access to some other wholesome water supply.	DRD		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	The Rural Borewells Scheme, funded by the Department, was launched on 6 June 2012. The principle aim of the Scheme is to provide a wholesome water supply for existing properties that have never been served by a public water main. Under this scheme, households where it is financially or technically prohibitive to provide with a mains water supply may be eligible for a grant for a private borewell. The scheme is an extension of the Department's policy of providing a Reasonable Cost Allowance (RCA) of up to £10,000 per property towards the costs of obtaining a water main. This was increased to £12,000 in 2013/2014. The 2012 - 2013 tranche of the scheme assisted 24 properties to obtain a wholesome water supply. The 2013 - 2014 Scheme assisted 38 properties. The 2014 / 2015 Scheme is scheduled to assist approximately 26 properties.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
26	We will seek to ensure the sustainability of island life and the promotion of a vibrant island community by supporting the objectives contained in the Rathlin Island Action Plan.	DRD	Other named Departments	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Actions are ongoing to continue to support the islanders and a study visit was facilitated by DRD for representatives of the island to visit several Scottish Islands in April 2014. This visit enabled the islanders to learn about sustainability issues such as community enterprise and renewable energy. The Department has started the procurement process for a new ro-ro ferry to replace the existing MV Canna and therefore sustain this essential transport service.			<i>Update</i>



## Department for Social Development

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
3	We will take action to better co-ordinate urban and rural regeneration needs.	DSD		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DSD and DARD officials have explored arrangements for closer working and sharing of expertise. They have identified two broad strands to guide future cooperation: the first, relating to short term actions to explore the feasibility of a pilot in a rural settlement; and the second relating to the longer term relationship between the Departments and the new local authorities as they respond to the Reform of Local Government.  DSD has consulted with the 11 New Councils on the development of a funding package which gives greater weight to rural settlements in the allocation of funds.			<i>Update</i>
4	We will maximise, and where possible integrate, funding opportunities available for regeneration of urban and rural communities.	DSD		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DSD and DARD have developed shared regional support arrangements for generic support for the voluntary and community sector as well as for faith based and women's organisations in areas of disadvantage and rural areas. Joint DSD/DARD support arrangements are currently in place through to March 2015.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
34	We will promote and develop further 'Shared Future' housing in rural areas.	DSD		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Within the OFMdFM Together Building United Communities (TBUC) Strategy the Department is committed to creating 10 new shared neighbourhood developments. Among the 10 proposed sites for taking forward these developments, 2 rural schemes have been identified and will deliver 37 new homes. These schemes will be delivered in Saintfield (23 homes) and Killyleagh (14 homes) between 2014/15 and 2016/17. The Department continues to seek additional potential 'Shared Future' sites across Northern Ireland.			<i>Update</i>
35	We will examine best practice solutions to rural housing issues elsewhere – North/South and East/West - and fund pilot projects based on these findings.	DSD		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Community Self build and Mixed Tenure Pilot Schemes - NIHE are actively exploring the possibility to pilot a Self Build schemes on NIHE land. Investigations are being carried out on examples of similar initiatives elsewhere. The NIHE are currently preparing to carry out a latent demand test in the Lurgan area. During 2013/14, NIHE carried out a rural housing need survey in the Poyntzpass area and are now examining the potential for a mixed tenure scheme in this area. Energy Pilot Scheme - This scheme has now been completed and has been shortlisted in the Sustainable Housing Awards 2014. Private Rented Access Scheme - The NIHE tendered the contract to provide a private rented sector access scheme and Smartmove Housing has been awarded the contract.			<i>Update</i>
36	We will continue to improve housing conditions in rural areas (subject to funding).	DSD		O
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
<i>Update</i>	Additional new, modern and energy efficient rural housing stock is provided through the delivery of the Social Housing Development Programme. During 2013/14, there were 225 new rural homes provided at 22 locations. Also in 2013/14, building commenced for 15 schemes totalling 105 new homes. During 2014/15 it is predicted that an additional 20 schemes totalling 113 units will start onsite. Renovation Grants - 20 Renovation grants and 1 replacement grant were approved in the last quarter of 2013/14. During the last quarter of 2013/14, 242 Disabled Facilities Grants were approved and 15 Home Assistance Grants were approved. Discretionary and mandatory grants - 79% of these approved by NIHE in the final quarter of 2013/14 were in rural areas. (Please note for Discretionary and mandatory grants, rural is outside Belfast and Derry City Council areas).			<i>Update</i>
37	We will progress the actions in the NIHE Rural Action Plan 2009/10 – 2012/13 and prepare a further plan from 2013/14 onwards.	DSD		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation commenced and on track to be achieved within timeframe</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Work has commenced on all 58 actions in the Rural Action Plan 2013-15, with encouraging progress made on 56 of the actions. Key progress to date includes exceeding the 2013/14 target for rural new build social housing through the provision of 15 new rural scheme starts which will provide 105 new homes. Match funding was provided for 18 Rural Development Programme projects during 2013/14 to help enable project delivery. Progress is continuing to be made in improving the energy efficiency of homes in rural areas. For example at the end of 2013/14, 40% of Warm Homes installations were in rural areas, meeting the set annual target. An Annual Progress Review will be published in August 2014 detailing first year progress of the NIHE Rural Action Plan.			<i>Update</i>
38	We will better identify and tackle the causes of poverty and disadvantage in rural areas and to promote social inclusion.	DSD/DARD	OFMDFM	M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DSD and DARD have developed shared regional support arrangements for generic support for the voluntary and community sector as well as for faith based and women's organisations in areas of disadvantage and rural areas. Funding for these arrangements has been agreed until 31st March 2015.			<i>Update</i>

Action No.	Action	Lead Dept	Support	Timeframe
39	We will ensure that the new fuel poverty strategy takes account of the particular needs of rural households and houses.	DSD		S
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	Target to deliver 40% of energy efficiency measures to rural areas has been met in the 12/13 and 13/14 years.			<i>Update</i>
40	We will promote action to address inequalities in accessing alternative cost effective fuel in rural areas.	DSD/DETI		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	We continue to support local groups who bulk buy fuel to reduce costs.			<i>Update</i>
41	We will develop integrated regional and local community development structures which have a strong rural component.	DSD		M
<b>Status</b>	<b>Green = Implementation achieved</b>			
<i>Update</i>	DSD and DARD have developed shared regional support arrangements for generic support for the voluntary and community sector as well as for faith based and women's organisations in areas of disadvantage and rural areas. Funding for these arrangements has been agreed until 31st March 2015.			<i>Update</i>



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Kintra Fordèrin**

