

Rural Needs Impact Assessment Template (RNIA)

Section 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Name of Public Authority

Belfast City Council

1B. Please provide a short title, which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to the Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

Belfast Green & Blue Infrastructure Plan

1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

Developing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Adopting a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Revising a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Designing a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Delivering a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		

1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan for Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Belfast Green & Blue Infrastructure Plan

1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

The Belfast Green & Blue Infrastructure Plan (GBIP) sets the strategic vision and principles for a green and blue infrastructure network for the City Council area. It provides an overall framework for the consideration of assets, such as parks, countryside, gardens, trees,

ponds, rivers and SuDS measures and it acknowledges the importance and multi-functionality of these. The overall network of these assets brings a wide range of benefits, including environmental protection, biodiversity and environmental resilience, as well as socio-economic benefits, such as health & wellbeing and economic attraction.

The GBIP is high level and sets a strategic vision, framework and key principles for the delivery and enhancement of a network of green and blue assets. It represents an overarching strategy that will guide more detailed strategies and action plans over time. The GBIP is not spatially-detailed or site-specific, but it does set out examples and potential opportunities for future actions across a range of green and blue typologies. It considers the green and blue network in a more holistic approach and it provides examples of best practice, including for SuDS measures. It also considers the setting of the city and the function of the hills and countryside around the city and seeks to create and improve linkages from and through the urban area to the rural surrounds.

The GBIP Vision is *“by 2035 green and blue infrastructure will be strategically planned and delivered to enhance ecosystem services that benefit all living, working in and visiting Belfast.”*

This vision is supported by 5 strategic principles:

- 1. Biodiverse – Although not all green and blue infrastructure assets will be delivered and managed primarily for biodiversity, all green and blue infrastructure should help enhance biodiversity.*
- 2. Planned, interconnected networks – To maximise the benefits of green and blue infrastructure it needs to form an interconnected network. Doing so requires strategic planning to target delivery against the needs of the local communities.*
- 3. Integrated into the urban environment – As with all urban systems, green and blue infrastructure should not be seen as independent. It needs to form an integrated part of the urban fabric of the city.*
- 4. Well designed and managed – To work effectively, all infrastructure, including green and blue assets, need to be well designed and regularly maintained.*
- 5. Appropriately funded – Green and blue infrastructure brings considerable value to the city. This value needs to be recognized and used to help attract sustainable funding to ensure the benefits continue to be felt.*

The GBIP will be supported by a number of more detailed strategies and/or action plans that focus on specific types of green and blue infrastructure, such as open space and biodiversity. It can also be used to aid planning and investment decision-making, including encouraging consideration of potential opportunities to enhance and expand the green and blue infrastructure network through new development.

Section 2 – Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section 2E.

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The GBIP is a high level vision and framework that sets out key principles for the delivery and enhancement of a network of green and blue assets across the entire City Council area. Whilst it is not spatially-detailed or site-specific, it includes examples and potential opportunities for future actions across a range of green and blue typologies. The GBIP will be supported, in time, by a number of more detailed strategies and/or action plans.

Whilst Belfast City Council area is predominantly urban, it also contains countryside areas outside the urban settlement area, including the Belfast, Castlereagh and Holywood Hills and the Lagan Valley Regional Park. Belfast's rural area accounts for approximately 30% (40.75 km²) of the total Belfast City Council area.

The default definition of "rural" used in Northern Ireland is those settlements with populations of less than 5,000, together with the open countryside. The rural population of Belfast (2016 mid-year population estimates, NISRA) is approximately 1,484, including the small settlements of Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview.

The GBIP can be used to aid planning and investment decision-making, including encouraging consideration of potential opportunities to enhance and expand the green and blue infrastructure network through new development. Therefore, the impact of the GBIP will apply across the City Council area, regardless of whether the proposed development is in an urban or rural area.

2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

As stated at 2B above, the GBIP generally applies across the Council area. It can be used to help inform investment and planning decisions in the urban or rural areas and generally seeks to encourage opportunities to enhance and expand the green and blue infrastructure network through new development. It therefore applies equally to urban and rural areas.

2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

Rural Businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education or Training in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deprivation in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Crime or Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Agri-Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state) <input type="text"/>	

Please note that a number of the above impacts may be secondary impacts of the DPS, such as transport/infrastructure, poverty, deprivation and crime.

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A

2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.

N/A

Section 3 – Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**.

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			<input type="checkbox"/>

3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

N/A

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority

N/A

If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

As stated at 2B above, the GBIP generally applies across the Council area. It can be used to help inform investment and planning decisions in the urban or rural areas and generally seeks to encourage opportunities to enhance and expand the green and blue infrastructure network through new development. It therefore applies equally to urban and rural areas.

Whilst the GBIP principles may help to inform planning and investment decisions, particularly by encouraging the incorporation of green and blue infrastructure measures, any resulting impacts (both urban and rural) are primarily environmental, rather than directly social or economic. The primary purpose of the GBIP relates to the environmental needs of the City Council area, including improved environmental quality, ecosystem services and resilience. Whilst such improvements will also bring wider socio-economic benefits, including through improved air quality, reduced flood risk and a more attractive place, these will benefit the entire City Council area.

Notwithstanding the above, the Council has undertaken research to identify the social and economic needs of the city, including its rural area, as part of the Local Development Plan process. This included the preparation of research papers, a Countryside Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment. These have helped to inform the emerging policies in the LDP Draft Plan Strategy. In addition, again as part of the LDP process, stakeholder engagement and surveys have been carried out, including the rural community and relevant agencies and interest groups. Whilst the GBIP is separate from the LDP, there is a linkage between the two. The draft LDP includes a planning policy on the green and blue infrastructure network and references the GBIP and any associated strategies or action plans. Therefore, whilst the research work was not carried out specifically for the GBIP, nor was it exclusive to the rural area, the socio-economic needs of the rural area have been considered through the LDP process. In this regard, the responses to the extensive public consultation on the LDP Preferred Options Paper and the Draft Plan Strategy indicated strong support from a wide variety of interests for an integrated approach to green and blue infrastructure.

Section 4 – Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

N/A

Section 5 – Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes No If the response is **NO GO TO Section 5C.**

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified?

N/A

If the response to Section 5A was YES GO TO Section 6A

5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.

As stated at 2B and 3E above, the GBIP generally applies across the Council area and it applies equally to urban and rural areas. The primary purpose of the GBIP relates to the environmental needs of the City Council area, including improved environmental quality, ecosystem services and resilience. Whilst such improvements will also bring wider socio-economic benefits, including through improved air quality, reduced flood risk and a more attractive place, these will benefit the entire City Council area.

As set out at 3E above, the Council has undertaken research to identify the social and economic needs of the city, including its rural area, as part of the Local Development Plan process. Extensive engagement and consultation has also taken place on the draft LDP. Whilst the GBIP is separate from the LDP, there is a linkage between the two. In this regard, the responses to the extensive public consultation on the first stage of the LDP (the Preferred Options Paper) indicated strong support from a wide variety of interests for an integrated approach to green and blue infrastructure.

Therefore, the GBIP does not seek to specifically address either urban or rural needs. Rather, it seeks to consider the wider environmental quality, ecosystem services and resilience of the entire City Council area.

SECTION 6 – Documenting and Recording

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Dermot O’Kane
Position / Grade:	Principal Planning Officer
Division / Branch:	Planning Service, Place & Economy
Signature:	
Date:	20/05/2019
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Keith Sutherland
Position / Grade:	Development Planning and Policy Manager
Division / Branch:	Planning Service, Place & Economy
Signature:	
Date:	21/05/2019