

**Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template**

<b>Section 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016</b>			
<b>1A. Name of Public Authority.</b>			
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council			
<b>1B. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.</b>			
Development of the Councils annual Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26 as required by Section 87 of the Local Government Act.			
<b>1C. Please indicate (with an 'X') which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.</b>			
Developing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Design a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Delivering a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.</b>			
<a href="#">Draft Performance Improvement Plan: Year 2 – 2025/26</a>			

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

Fermanagh and Omagh is one of the most rural areas in Northern Ireland, with approximately 80% of the population living in rural settings. The unique needs, challenges, and opportunities of rural communities have been carefully considered in the development of the Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26 (PIP).

Section 87 of the Local Government Act Section 87 deals with consultation on improvement duties. Specifically, it outlines how councils must consult with various stakeholders, including the public, when developing and implementing their improvement plans. It ensures that councils involve the public and other relevant parties in shaping their improvement plans. This promotes transparency and accountability, as well as helping councils identify and address issues effectively.

This Plan aims to fulfil the Council's legislation obligation under Section to publish Improvement Objectives. The Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) sets out what we will do in the year ahead to ensure continuous improvement in service delivery and bring about improvement against at least one of the seven improvement areas as stipulated in Section 84 (2) of the Local Government Act: Strategic effectiveness/ Service quality / Service availability / Fairness / Sustainability / Efficiency / Innovation.

It was agreed in the development of Performance Improvement Plan 2024-2025, to align the Council's IOs for the next four years to the core priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan, '[Our Council, Our Plan 2024-2028](#)'. The four objectives agreed are:

- We will prioritise the Council progressing towards Net Zero.
- We will work in partnership to tackle disadvantage to ensure our people have access to opportunities.
- We will work in partnership to achieve a more inclusive economy and to promote shared prosperity across our district
- We will seek to innovate and advance our governance and digital capabilities to improve the quality of our services and the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council.

The Council has reviewed the progress made to date in its 'Taking Stock Report 2025-2026' and is proposing to continue with its current IOs for 2026/27 to build on the progress already achieved but have refined some of the associated actions. By maintaining a consistent approach, the council aims to ensure the efficient use of resources, enhance service delivery, and support long term approaches to build on economic development, environmental sustainability and community wellbeing.

**1F. What definition of 'rural' is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?**

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition).

Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).	<input type="checkbox"/>
A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.</b>	
n/a	
<b>Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.</b>	
n/a	
<b>Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.</b>	
n/a	
<b>Section 2 - Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service</b>	
<b>2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?</b>	
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/> If the response is <b>NO</b> GO TO Section <b>2E</b> .
<b>2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.</b>	
<p>The Plan aims to reflect the needs of society, in both urban and rural settlements in Fermanagh and Omagh. It is based on a shared and strategic vision for the future which aims to improve wellbeing for all. The Plan will have the same positive impact on people in rural and urban areas.</p> <p>The Plan is aligned to the Community Plan for the district and the Council's Corporate Plan 'Our Council, Our Plan 2024-2028' which recognises that the Fermanagh and Omagh District is the largest geographically of all 11 Councils districts in Northern Ireland, covering 3,000km<sup>2</sup>. It also has the smallest population (116,812 in 2021), 70% of whom live outside the two main towns of Enniskillen and Omagh.</p> <p>The objectives and actions outlined in the Plan are designed to benefit all residents, ensuring equity in service delivery, support, and opportunities regardless of geographic location.</p> <p>The positive impacts of the Plan for everyone in the district include:</p>	
<b>1. We will prioritise the Council progressing towards Net Zero</b>	

- Embed the legislative duties contained in the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 into our governance processes, business practices and individual behaviours.
- Improve energy efficiency of the Council's assets/estate and promote more sustainable energy management practices among staff.
- Encourage and enable sustainable environmental behaviours among the residents of, and visitors to, our District.
- Promote and raise awareness of the importance of, and opportunity to, develop circular economy practices, enhance recycling and reduce waste to landfill.
- Improve our energy efficiency and energy consumption behaviours.
- Reduce emissions from the Council's fleet.

## **2. Tackling Disadvantage and Ensuring Equal Access to Opportunities**

- Support those in poverty to ensure they meet their basic needs in an unprecedented time with significant rising costs of living and more and more low paid families suffering food, fuel, and transport poverty.
- Utilise data and intelligence at local level in relation to deprivation and ensure projects and interventions are targeted at the most vulnerable in our society.
- Capturing the lived experience of children and young people will support the shaping of policies and programmes.
- Poverty Proofing will identify how Council can make its services more accessible for those who are impacted by poverty.
- Develop more sustainable pathways out of poverty, communities must be part of the decision-making process to break the cycle of poverty.
- Improve physical and emotional wellbeing by increasing physical activity of key targeted groups including residents with a disability.
- Provide opportunities for everyone to participate in physical activity and encourage uptake to promote improved health benefits.
- Increase opportunities for residents to participate in water-based activities, boosting physical and emotional wellbeing.

## **3. We will work in partnership to achieve a more inclusive economy and to promote shared prosperity across our district.**

- Delivery of Year Two of the Sub-Regional Economic Action Plan will provide a clear, coordinated framework to drive sustainable economic development and businesses growth aligned to the specific needs of Fermanagh and Omagh.
- Entrepreneurs will be supported to start a business, providing access to early-stage enterprise advice and guidance to stimulate business start-up activity.
- Skills development and employability support will help people better match opportunities within key local sectors, supporting inclusive access to quality employment.

- Local communities will benefit from increased enterprise and employment opportunities, helping to retain talent and reduce outward migration, particularly among younger people.
- Clearer pathways into employment will be supported for those furthest from the labour market, including people who are unemployed, economically inactive or under-employed.

**4. We will seek to innovate and advance our governance and digital capabilities to improve the quality of our services and the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council.**

- In line with the Council's People Plan, the implementation and enhanced use of digital HR and records management systems will improve the quality, accessibility and consistency of workforce data. This will support evidence-based decision-making, strengthen talent management, succession planning and learning and development, and improve overall organisational performance.
- The development and implementation of a Customer Service Transformation Strategy and Action Plan will embed a consistent, whole-Council approach to customer service. A phased and prioritised approach will ensure resources are targeted effectively, staff are engaged in the change process, and governance arrangements provide clear accountability for delivery and improvement.
- Investment in IT infrastructure and enhanced digital connectivity across Council facilities will enable more efficient, secure and resilient service delivery. Full fibre connectivity will support future digital initiatives, improve system performance and underpin modern ways of working across all Directorates.
- The increased use of digital and automated processes, including online booking systems for registration services, will improve customer experience by providing more convenient, accessible and responsive services. Citizens will benefit from 24/7 access where appropriate.
- The identification and responsible adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital tools, supported by clear guidance and staff training, has the potential to improve efficiency, service quality and innovation. This will support productivity gains, enhance user experience and contribute to longer-term cost avoidance and service sustainability.

Overall, the Plan is structured to benefit all residents of Fermanagh and Omagh District. The Plan ensures that both urban and rural communities experience improved quality of life, enhanced service provision, and increased opportunities for participation and prosperity.

**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.**

The Policy will not impact upon people in rural areas differently than people in urban areas. As mentioned previously the Plan will have the same positive impact on people in rural and urban areas.

**2D. Please indicate (with an 'X') which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.**

Rural Businesses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Education or Training in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Deprivation in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Crime or Community Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agri-Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (Please state)

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input checked="" 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.

Continuous engagement took place during the 2025-2026 financial year which the development of the PIP 2026/27 draws on. The relevant engagement linked to the IOS for 2026/27 are listed below:

Continuous consultation and engagement carried out by FODC throughout the year which was also considered in the refinement of IOs and associated actions are outlined below.

- Labour Market Partnership - Consultation of the new Action Plan developed through discussions with 12 members including rural representation.
- TPI consultation process. 7 One-to-One interviews and 32 attendees at workshops from amongst the business, statutory and CVS sectors including rural representation.
- Age Friendly Strategy Consultation which specifically focused on the impact of social isolation and infrastructure and access to services.
- Anti-Poverty Strategy Development Consultation which considered the impact of rural living on residents and implications such as infrastructure and access to services.

Common themes that were observed include longer travel times to services including to healthcare appointments which was further exacerbated with limited access on occasions to public transport, increasing dependence of private vehicle ownership. Social isolation was a key concern. Another key issue identified was the need to address the unique needs of farmers, small businesses, and tourism providers in economic actions specifically relevant to the Sub Regional Plan.

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

Fermanagh and Omagh is one of the most rural areas in NI, with approximately 80% of the population living in rural settings. The unique needs, challenges and opportunities of rural communities have been carefully considered in the development of this Performance Improvement Plan.

- Access to services for rural residents must be considered when delivering all interventions
- Remote working and support entrepreneurship through digital hubs and business networks.

**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?**

N/A

## **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.**

The Council is committed to developing a Plan based on the meaningful change the Council hopes to drive forward this year. It aims to improve wellbeing for all including the needs of people living in rural areas.

**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.**

Data and evidence at District Council level have been analysed to inform and support the strategic direction of the plan.

**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.**

N/A


**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:**  
**Kim Weir**

**Position:**  
**Strategic Planning and Performance Manager**

<b>Department: Strategic Planning and Performance</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b> <b>28/04/2026</b>	
<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:</b> Alan Mitchell	
<b>Position/Grade:</b> Lead Officer – Data Science and Intelligence   Strategic Planning and Performance (Interim)	
<b>Division/Branch:</b> Data Science and Intelligence and Strategic Planning and Performance	
 <b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b> 02/06/2026	