

Title of Report:	Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return
Committee Report Submitted To:	Corporate Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	24 June 2025
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Leader and Champion
Outcome	Establish key relationships with strategic partners to deliver our vision for this Council area
Lead Officer	Head of Policy and Community Planning

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 Rural needs assessment is the process by which policies, strategies, plans, service proposals, etc., are assessed to determine whether they have a differential impact on rural areas and, if so, make any adjustments required taking into account particular rural circumstances.
- 1.2 Rural needs assessment became applicable to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council through the introduction of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. This requires the Council to:
- “... have due regard to rural needs when*
- *Developing, adopting, implementing, and revising policies, strategies and plans, and*
 - *Designing and delivery of public services.”*
- 1.3 The Rural Needs Act also requires the Council to monitor and report on how the Council has complied with this requirement and to produce an annual monitoring report which will be forwarded to the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).
- 1.4 Attached is a copy of the Council’s annual monitoring report to DAERA for the period April 2024 to March 2025 for your consideration.

2.0 **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee recommends approval to Council of the attached annual monitoring report to DAERA on implementation of the Rural Needs (NI) Act 2016.

Appendix 2 - Template for Information to be Compiled

Information to be compiled by Public Authorities under Section 3(1)(a) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

(To be completed and included in public authorities' own annual reports and submitted to DAERA for inclusion in the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report).

Name of Public Authority: Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

Reporting Period: April 20 24 to March 20 25

The following information should be compiled in respect of each policy, strategy and plan which has been developed, adopted, implemented or revised and each public service which has been designed or delivered by the public authority during the reporting period.

<i>Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016¹.</i>	<i>The rural policy area(s) which the activity relates to².</i>	<i>Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service³.</i>
Planning Rathlin Sound Festival 2024	Rural Tourism and Transport Services or Infrastructure.	At planning stage, the organisers considered income levels, religion, cultural habits, education, family structure, and the population density of the surrounding area and borough. The cost of services, travel expenses, local income levels, interest rates, relevant legislation, and unemployment rates were also

		<p>considered.</p> <p>Given the Borough's predominantly rural geography, events were developed to encourage increased social interaction and community engagement.</p>
Planning Ballymoney (Main Street) Environmental Improvement Scheme.	None	Following a consultation process no rural needs have been identified.
Review and development of a Street Trading Policy	<p>Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas.</p> <p>Administration of street trading applications and enforcement of same.</p>	<p>No specific rural needs were identified during the development of the policy.</p> <p>However, it was noted that rural areas may be designated as potential street trading locations in the future. Should this occur, careful consideration will be given to the needs of rural communities, including access to goods and services, as well as the potential benefits and challenges associated with introducing new trading activity.</p>
Planning NI International Airshow 2024	Rural Tourism and Transport Services or Infrastructure.	<p>At planning stage, the organisers considered income levels, religion, cultural habits, education, family structure, and the population density of the surrounding area and borough. The cost of services, travel expenses, local income levels, interest rates, relevant legislation, and unemployment rates were also considered.</p> <p>Given the Borough's predominantly rural geography, events were developed to encourage increased social interaction and community engagement.</p>
Rescinding parking charges in Ballycastle	Rural Businesses, Tourism and Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas.	The Council considered the impacts of displacement parking in residential areas, economic costs to rural boat owners; Ballycastle and Rathin Island residents, and

		<p>staff working in local businesses against the increased turnover of spaces which would provide economic benefits for local businesses.</p> <p>This resulted in an Elected members decision to rescind introducing car parking charging.</p>
Draft Disability Action Plan.	Improvements for disabled individuals in rural areas.	<p>In developing the Action Plan, the council consulted with disabled individuals, including those living in rural areas, to ensure the proposed actions were relevant and inclusive. Council recognised that rural residents often travel longer distances for work and social interaction, face limited public transport and internet access and may experience isolation due to a lack of local services. Additionally, increased migration to rural areas can change community dynamics, further highlighting the need for tailored support.</p> <p>To encourage participation from rural communities, the council offered accessible options such as free-post, telephone, and online submissions.</p> <p>Targeted outreach strategies combined digital and traditional formats such as newspapers, phone consultations, and information at civic centres to improve access. Rural organisations were directly engaged, and additional provisions were made to support people with disabilities, ensuring they had the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the consultation.</p>
Accessibility Household Recycling Centres consultation.	Accessibility of Household Recycling centres.	No rural needs have been identified.

Planning Christmas Parades & Switch On Events.	Tourism, transport services or infrastructure.	The organisers identified the need for individuals from rural areas to have the same access to the event. Using feedback from previous events and by consulting with key stakeholders they identified the longer travel distance, reduced opportunities for socialisation, unemployment levels and additional economic costs. These factors were considered during planning and events developed to encourage increased social interaction, including free car parking and the provision of free family activities. Events were also held in rural areas spread across the borough.
Implementing a Redundancy Policy	None	No rural needs have been identified.
Implementing an Annual Leave Policy	None	No rural needs have been identified.
Reviewing Recruitment Advertising	None	No rural needs have been identified.
Revision/update of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement in Planning.	All areas	Planning applications impacting rural areas may be decided at Planning Committee meetings, with residents encouraged to engage in the Council's Development Plan processes. Efforts were made to ensure inclusive participation for rural residents by accommodating limited internet access, poor transport, and service barriers. Measures were incorporated so rural residents could contribute via post, phone, online, through a representative, or via virtual workshops. To improve rural awareness and communication, targeted outreach strategies were employed, including both digital and traditional formats such as newspapers, phone consultations, and materials at civic centres. Rural organisations were directly engaged, and special provisions provided for

		vulnerable groups through Easy Read materials, Sign Video services, and officer-led consultations. These measures supported rural voices to be heard and their unique needs to be considered throughout all planning and consultation activities.
Reviewing a Grant Funding Policy	All areas	<p>Through sustained engagement with rural stakeholders and elected representatives, key impacts aligned with the Council's strategic objectives were identified. In response, targeted funding interventions were offered to address the needs of both rural and urban communities. Programmes supported a diverse range of themes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Development • Sport and Wellbeing • Community Safety • Good Relations • Culture and Arts • Community and Sports Infrastructure • Business Enterprise • Environmental Enhancement <p>Rural initiatives included the Small Settlements Regeneration Program, Rural Business Investment Scheme, and Rural Broadband Scheme. These interventions have significantly contributed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing quality of life in rural areas. • Tackling rural poverty and social isolation. • Supporting education, training, and youth development. • Improving community safety and social interaction. • Promoting cultural engagement, networking, and

		collaboration.
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NOTES

- 1. This information should normally be contained in section 1B of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
- 2. This information should normally be contained in section 2D of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
- 3. The information contained in sections 3D, 4A & 5B of the RNIA Template should be considered when completing this section.