

Correspondence Report – FOR INFORMATION	21 June 2016
CORPORATE POLICY & RESOURCES	

1. Implementation of Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

Correspondence has been received from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs with regard to implementation of the above act.

A copy of the attached as Appendix A (overleaf)

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee receive and note the correspondence.

From the Permanent Secretary
Noel Lavery



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12 May 2016

Dear Chief Executive,

Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

On 8 March 2016, the NI Assembly passed the Rural Needs Bill. The Bill received Royal Assent on 9 May 2016 and will be known as the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

The Rural Needs Act, once commenced, will place a duty on public authorities, including district councils, to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and designing and delivering public services. It also requires public authorities to provide information to DAERA on how they have fulfilled this duty on an annual basis to be published in a monitoring report to be laid before the Assembly. I attach a link to the Bill for your information.

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/legislation/bills/executive-bills/session-2015-2016/rural-needs-bill/rural-needs-bill---further-consideration-stage.pdf>

DAERA is now commencing work to review the existing rural proofing guidance, training and practices in the context of the new functions set out in the Act and to develop new arrangements for monitoring and reporting on rural proofing. DAERA is eager to engage with local government, along with the other public authorities affected, to ensure that the new arrangements are effective, efficient and fit-for-purpose.

At this stage, it is envisaged that implementation would be in two phases:

- (i) departments and councils by 1 June 2017; and
- (ii) the remaining public authorities listed within the Act by 1 June 2018.

It is my intention to arrange a briefing for the Chief Executives' Group on the Act and its implementation in the coming months. In the meantime, I would be grateful if you would nominate a person within your council to be the point of contact for matters relating to the implementation of the Rural Needs Act. The DAERA contact is Astrid Stuart (astrid.stuart@daera-ni.gov.uk 02890524107). I am copying this letter to NILGA, SOLACE and mayors/chairs of each council.

Yours sincerely