

Appendix I - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template

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

1A. Name of Public Authority.

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

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.

DAERA is producing a Non-Quota Shellfish Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) which will seek to provide for certain Non-Quota Shellfish (NQS) stocks in Northern Ireland. The NQS FMP will ensure the on-going sustainability of these stocks thus ensuring lasting benefits to the rural communities and businesses that rely on them.

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

Developing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input 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 or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

DRAFT Non-Quota Shellfish Fisheries Management Plan

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

The DRAFT NQS FMP for non-quota shellfish stocks sets out policies designed to restore brown crabs, velvet crabs, lobsters, king scallops and queen scallops to, or maintain them at, sustainable levels.

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).

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.

The definition of rural in this case includes the "coastal communities" across Northern Ireland. The three main fishery harbours are located in Ardglass, Kilkeel and Portavogie.

Ardglass and Portavogie are fishing villages where the population in the most recent census is less than 5,000 whereas Kilkeel is a town with a population in excess of 5,000. Many other communities located in the smaller fishing ports of Northern Ireland will have lesser populations than Ardglass and Portavogie.

However, towns such as Portrush, Portstewart and Ballycastle on the North Coast continue to have a long-standing tradition associated with sea fishing. These towns have populations over 5,000 in the most recent census.

Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.

The DRAFT FMP will impact mainly on the coastal communities in Northern Ireland where there continues to be an association with sea fishing.

However, some of the populations in some locations are in excess of 5,000, but less than 10,000.

Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

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.

Most of the fishers who target non-quota shellfish within Northern Ireland waters are based in or reside in or near coastal rural villages that have fishing harbours or small ports around the Northern Ireland coast.

The Northern Ireland inshore region supports diverse fishing opportunities that make an important contribution to the economies of coastal communities and the introduction of management measures outlined in this document are intended to support fishing at sustainable levels while protecting the marine environment.

The processing of these non-quota shellfish is also largely based in these rural communities, and this practice employs many individuals from these towns or villages and their surrounding rural areas.

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 DRAFT FMP and the subsequent implementation of any proposals therein (post final publication of the FMP) are likely to have a more positive impact on people in rural areas insofar as the immediate and longer term benefits from sustainable fisheries will accrue in communities which are based in and around the ports and harbours in Northern Ireland into which catch is landed, and subsequently processed.

Many of the skippers and crew reside in these rural communities. Many of the processing businesses are also located within those coastal communities, and the majority of their employees are considered to be residing locally in or near these communities.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	<input checked="" 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"/>
Health or Social Care Services 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"/>

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 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 checked="" 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.

Earlier this year, a House of Commons backbench Committee released a [Coastal Communities Report](#), debated on 20 March 2025, which predominantly covered England and Wales but highlighted that coastal communities in Northern Ireland also experience significant social and economic challenges similar to other UK coastal regions. These areas tend to have higher concentrations of agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hospitality businesses, with agriculture, forestry and fishing accounting for 9.4% of businesses in coastal constituencies, compared to only 4.0% in non-coastal counterparts.

Seafish, a non-Departmental public body sponsored by DAERA and other governmental departments, is tasked with supporting the UK seafood industry. It has published several reports which analyses seafood consumption patterns, consumer attitudes, barriers to increased seafood intake, and perceptions of health benefits.

The DRAFT NQS (FMP) was developed through collaborative engagement with industry stakeholders, including various Northern Ireland fishing organisations and individual fishermen, particularly focused on crab, lobster, and scallop fisheries.

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

Rural coastal communities are vulnerable to economic change, but the introduction of proposed fisheries management measures contained in the NQS FMP is not expected to impact the economic needs of people in rural areas. The proposed management measures will support fishing at sustainable levels while protecting the marine environment.

The non-quota shellfish fishing sector is of considerable importance to the Northern Ireland fishing industry, local communities and the NI economy.

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.

Non-quota shellfish fisheries provide essential employment opportunities, both directly through fishing and indirectly through processing, transport, and local supply chains. Many rural households rely on seasonal or part-time fishing income; therefore, management measures must balance ecological sustainability with economic viability to avoid financial hardship. These fisheries are essential for the success of many rural based local seafood businesses, including restaurants, markets, and tourism. Supply chains which are not sustainable could negatively impact rural economies and associated sectors.

Healthy marine ecosystems are vital for the long-term resilience of rural communities. Management measures must ensure that these shellfish stocks which are not subject to quotas (or catch limits) are harvested sustainably to protect future livelihoods.

This FMP takes into consideration the potential impacts on vulnerable groups, including small-scale fishers and those involved in ancillary roles, to ensure fair treatment and avoid exacerbating rural inequalities.

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.

In developing this DRAFT FMP and involving rural stakeholders in the working groups, it recognises that the needs of persons residing in and around the rural coastal communities in close proximity to the fishing harbours and ports of Northern Ireland are reliant on a successful and sustainable fishing industry.

This draft FMP is one of 43 FMPs that are being developed across the UK. Its extent is specific to Northern Ireland waters and covers crab, lobster and scallops, the key non-quota shellfish landed into Northern Ireland ports.

The development of this FMP acknowledges the need for, and reliance on sustainable fisheries for the rural fishing communities and the setting out of short, medium and long-term measures will aim to ensure those are sustainable for future generations.

The crab, lobster and scallop fisheries within scope of this FMP are important to rural fishing communities in Northern Ireland and the measures outlined in the draft FMP are intended to prevent over exploitation of these fisheries, maintaining stock at sustainable levels into the future whilst protecting the marine environment for other marine users, many who are also from rural coastal communities.

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:	Noel Martin
Position/Grade:	Staff Officer
Division/Branch	Sea Fisheries Policy Branch
Signature:	<i>Noel Martin</i>
Date:	31/10/25
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	PATRICK SMITH
Position/Grade:	Deputy Principal
Division/Branch:	Sea Fisheries Policy Branch
Signature:	<i>Patrick Smith</i>
Date:	12 December 2025