

*These notes refer to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland)
2016 (c.19) which received Royal Assent on 9 May 2016*

Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

EXPLANATORY NOTES

COMMENTARY ON SECTIONS

Section 1: Duty of public authorities to have due regard to rural needs

Section 1 imposes a statutory duty on those public authorities listed in the Schedule to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and designing and delivering public services. This section also makes provision for the Department to review the list of bodies and persons set out in the Schedule and amend the list to add or remove a body or person exercising functions of a public nature to the Schedule or to modify any entry in the Schedule (by way of an order laid before, and approved by resolution of, the Assembly).

Section 2: Guidance, advice and information, etc.

Section 2 provides an enabling power for the Department to provide guidance, advice and information about issues connected with rural needs or ways of meeting those needs. It also provides the Department with the power to undertake, commission or support (by financial means or otherwise) research into any matter relating to rural needs.

Section 3: Monitoring and reporting

Section 3 imposes a statutory duty on public authorities to compile information on the exercise of its functions under Section 1 of the Act, to include that information in its annual report and to provide that information to the Department. Section 3 further imposes a statutory duty on the Department to publish an annual report on both the information sent to it by the other public authorities and information on the exercise of its own functions under the Act, and for that report to be laid before the Assembly. Section 3 places a requirement on the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to make a statement to the Assembly on the content of the annual report.

Section 4: Co-operation with other bodies

Section 4 makes provision for the Department to make arrangements with other public authorities with a view to securing co-operation and the exchange of information.

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Schedule: Public Authorities for the purposes of this Act

The Schedule lists the bodies and persons who are public authorities for the purposes of the Act.