



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Date: 20th November 2015

AFBI recommends the following amendments to the Rural Needs Bill [as introduced]

1. Clause 2: Guidance, advice and information, etc.

- (1) The title should be amended to include training i.e. 'Guidance, training, advice and information, etc.'
- (2) Article (a) to be reworded as follows: 'provide any person with guidance, training, advice and information about issues connected with rural needs or ways of meeting those needs'.

Training for rural needs assessment is vital and AFBI recommends that the Department consider the steps needed to ensure training is available to achieve a common understanding of how rural needs should be evaluated and consistently implemented across public authorities in NI.

2. Clause 3: Monitoring and reporting

AFBI recommends that there should be provision for feeding back information from the Department and/or Assembly to public authorities to encourage learning by public authorities. This aspect might also be considered under Clause 4.

3. Clause 6: Interpretation

AFBI believes that the definition of 'rural needs' is incomplete. It is widely accepted in the literature on rural development that the environment is important to the sustainability of rural areas. The economic wellbeing of persons is a key primary driver.

Thus AFBI believes that, "rural needs" means "the economic, social and environmental needs of persons in rural areas".

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