

Derry City & Strabane
District Council

Comhairle Chathair Dhoire
& Cheantar an tSratha Báin

Derry Cittie & Stràbane
Destrìck Cooncil

23 November 2015

Stella McArdle
Clerk, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development
NI Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

To whom it may concern

RE: Rural Needs Bill

I am writing on behalf of Derry City and Strabane District Council in response to the consultation on the Rural Needs Bill. Derry City and Strabane District Council welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process and hope that the consultation leads to the provision of appropriate legislative measures in relation to addressing the specific requirements of our rural communities.

Derry City and Strabane District Council wish to make the following specific points in response to the consultation:

Clause 1: Duty of Public Authorities to Consider Rural Needs

Derry City and Strabane District Council agrees in principle that Public Authorities should be required to Consider Rural Needs (both social and economic) when developing and revising policies. Council feels this represents an excellent opportunity for rural dwellers to have their needs specifically considered in terms of policy development.

Clause 2: Guidance, Advice and Information

Derry City and Strabane District Council would seek assurance that in relation to Clause 2 that all parties involved in these procedures is agreeable to how the guidance, advice and information is distributed. Council would also like to suggest

that the Department consults with the relevant Public Authorities regarding research projects that are commissioned. This would ensure that the all bodies needs and specific areas of interest are facilitated in terms of the policies and procedures that they are trying to revise and implement.

Clause 3: Monitoring and Reporting

Derry City and Strabane District Council would also seek clear guidance regarding what the monitoring would involve and what sanctions would be included if Council's did not meet and/or adhere to the requirements. Additional guidance on reporting/accountability structures would also be required. It is stated that not a significant amount of resourcing will be required to implement these new procedures. However it should be recognised that the required levels of monitoring and reporting will have a direct implications in relation to this how much resourcing is required for implementation.

Clause 4: Co-operation and Monitoring

In relation to Clause 4 Council would like further guidance the structuring of cooperative working with other agencies and if it will be compulsory. Not all rural areas are facing the same issues, our District particularly suffers from issues such as lack of broadband connectivity and infrastructure, access to transport and proximity or services. In relation to windfarms, because of the favourable nature of the landscape, areas in our District were deemed to be at saturation point a number of years ago. However, new windfarm projects continued to be approved for the areas in question. Therefore Derry City and Strabane District Council suggest that cooperation with agencies with similar issues and/or involvement in the implementation of best practice would be of most use to our District.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Kelpie', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

John Kelpie
Chief Executive

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