



Rural Needs Bill

Submission to the N.I Assembly

Agriculture & Rural Development Committee

Introduction

The Fermanagh Trust welcomes the opportunity to respond to the call for evidence to the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee.

The Fermanagh Trust supports the introduction of a Rural Needs Bill. The Bill is important legislation and has potential to be significant and impactful if the draft Bill is strengthened.

Draft Bill

The draft Bill can be summed up as a very short piece of legislation with a limited number of actions namely;

- Providing guidance, advice and information
- Research
- Compile and send information including preparing an annual report.

We encourage the committee to take steps to strengthen the Bill.

Strengthening the Bill

We recommend the committee includes/amends clause and to strengthen the Bill, examples of how this can be achieved include;

- A power for all, “public authorities” to undertake rural impact assessments in policy development, when considering the economic and social needs of rural dwellers.
- A power for all “public authorities” to encourage and facilitate actions to tackle issues identified by rural impact assessments.
- The provision of training to officials responsible for considering rural issues.

Conclusion

We believe the Rural Needs Bill has the potential to help, guide and support policy makers and public authorities to take account of and implement appropriate steps ensuring a fair and inclusive rural society where rural dwellers enjoy the same quality of life as all others in the region.

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