

**COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT**

**POSITION PAPER ON DARD'S ANTI-POVERTY
AND SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAMME**

BACKGROUND

1. The Committee agreed to review the Department's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme and to make recommendations to the Minister on what should be included in any successor programme.
2. The terms of reference for the review are included below:
 - Seek views of organisations who are actively involved in rural and farming communities exploring the successes and otherwise of the current APSI programme and focusing on key elements for any successor programme.
 - Examine the partnership approach taken by DARD in this programme including its communication methods.
 - Consider the recommendations arising from the interim evaluations and progress made by DARD in implementing the recommendations.
 - Consider and compare approaches taken by other jurisdictions on this issue; and
 - Commission research and consider, at a strategic level, how rural deprivation is measured and used.
3. The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework aims to help to tackle poverty and social isolation in rural areas via a range of measures in partnership with a range of voluntary/community groups and Departments.
4. The TRPSI framework is a key commitment for the Department. It is one of the Department's targets in the Programme for Government and within the Rural White Paper Action Plan. It is also referenced in the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.
5. The framework focuses on three priority areas for intervention; access poverty (focus on access to statutory services), financial poverty (focus on measures that ensure vulnerable rural dwellers can maximise income) and social isolation (focus on

measures that identify and address different types of isolation experienced by different vulnerable groups).

6. The aim of the TRPSI Framework is to cover target areas such as the elderly, lone parents, disabled, ethnic minorities, unemployed, sexual orientation, carers, children and older children and young people.
7. The framework seeks to work in partnership with other key Departments and includes a range of policy interventions and programmes as listed below:
 - Assisted Rural Travel Scheme – with DRD;
 - Maximising Access in Rural Areas (MARA) – with PHA;
 - Community Development – with Rural Support;
 - Farm Families Health Checks Programme – with PHA;
 - Rural Support – with Rural Support;
 - Rural Challenge (Small Grants) Programme;
 - Connecting Elderly Rural Isolated (CERI) – with WHSCT;
 - Youth Employability Programme (BOOST) – with DEL;
 - Rural Youth Entrepreneurship (RYE) Programme with NPP;
 - Rural Borewells Scheme – with DRD; and
 - Fuel Poverty Initiatives – with DSD.
8. TRPSI measures also strive to encourage rural communities to help themselves via the practical delivery of on the ground interventions which compliments existing government strategies. The Framework covers the period 2011-15 and builds on the previous programme which operated in 2008-11. In the current budget period 2011-15, £16 million has been allocated and the programme hopes to extend to March 2016.
9. Each programme within the framework has its own objectives and targets and will be evaluated at the end of the funding period, with an overall evaluation of TRPSI planned during 2015.
10. The Committee heard that during the evaluation, the Department aims to meet with a range of stakeholders to make an informed assessment of the impact of the

initiatives, whether value for money has been achieved and how to identify future funding can be best spent.

11. The Department also intends to engage with other relevant Departments during the evaluation process in order to gain a full assessment of the multi-agency approach which TRPSI has taken.

COMMITTEE APPROACH

12. The Committee took oral evidence from the following organisations and a record of that evidence can be found at the following link:-

[Committee review on DARD Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme](#)

- DARD on 7 October 2014
- Rural Support on 21 October 2014
- Rural Community Network on 4 November 2014
- Rural Development Council on 11 November 2014
- UFU/NIAPA on 18 November 2014
- Public Health Agency on 25 November 2014
- Mr Trutz Haase on 2 December 2014
- NISRA on 9 December 2014

13. Considerable written evidence was also received and can be found at the following link:-

[Committee review on DARD Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme](#)

Stakeholder Event

14. The Committee also hosted a stakeholder event on 20 November 2014 at the Greenmount Campus CAFRE, which was attended by a wide range of voluntary and community groups which benefit from the TRPSI programme, as well as departmental officials. The Committee were delighted to see such a good turnout for the event with individual Members commenting on the commitment and passion that the various attendees had regarding their individual work programmes.

15. Attendees were split into four discussion groups. Each discussion group discussed a specific issue as follows:

- a. Partnership Working,
- b. Rural Proofing,
- c. What initiatives should be included in the successor programme? and
- d. What are the key elements which make the current programme a success?

16. A link to the record of the discussions from the event can be found here:

[Committee review on DARD Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme](#)

17. The Committee also commissioned research papers on the following topics:-

- a. Rural isolation, poverty and rural community/farmer wellbeing – scoping paper
- b. Current DARD Programmes/Supports specifically designed to address issues of rural poverty, rural isolation and farmer welfare, rural isolation, poverty and rural community/farmer well-being – scoping paper and;
- c. Mechanisms utilised for the measurement of deprivation and rural deprivation across the UK and Ireland.

18. The link to the research papers can be found here:

[Committee review on DARD Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme](#)

19. The Committee agreed that it was content with the current TRPSI programme in terms of the approach taken to date, the projects and measures it has focused on, the positive impacts that it has made and the allocation of finance to each project. The Committee were particularly interested in the point made by the Rural Community Network and the PHA that “*the social return on investment for MARA in its first phase showed that for every £1 invested by DARD and PHA over £8 was returned*”. This identification of leverage came from an independent project evaluation by Deloitte 2011. The Committee requested further information on this from DARD and noted the written response which indicated that DARD had provided £12,508,904 of funding and that this had levered in £11,100,488 in match funding from a range of organisations. A link to this information can be found here:

KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Community and Voluntary Sector

20. Throughout the review there has been a high level of praise and support for all who help deliver the various TRPSI Framework programmes at a local level. Ranging from the larger regional based rural organisations to the smaller bodies often run on a largely voluntary basis, the Committee firmly believed that these groups have demonstrated a far reaching local knowledge of problems and concerns that exist within their rural community. It is the opinion of the Committee that such organisations and groups have the mechanisms to offer the support required. This has been demonstrated by the successes of the various programmes.
21. Community and voluntary groups, many of whom have been in existence for a number of years, have been very successful in the identification of vulnerable people in rural areas and signposting of services that they can avail of with various successes achieved to date.
22. In oral evidence to the Committee on 21st October 2014 Rural Support stated “*they (RDC and RCN) often signpost our services to people who contact them... they do an excellent work in highlighting some of the policy issues that we do not have the resources to put behind. There is a good working relationship*”.
23. The Committee noted that the evidence presented to it suggests that these groups offer an effective voice for rural communities and appear to have worked collectively with each other to ensure that the best possible outcome is achieved for the person/persons in need. In giving evidence to the Committee on 21 October 2014 Rural Support noted:-

“While a lot of volunteer effort and skills go in, we all agree that it takes a certain amount of coordination. That is where our executive team works morning, noon and night to pull this all together and, indeed, to liaise with all the other organisations, MARA and the PHA included. There needs to be more joined-up thinking.”

24. Community groups were considered best placed to commence the outreach work and specific targeting of rural dwellers for the MARA project. In oral evidence to the Committee on 4th November 2014, the Rural Development Council stated:-

“The programme put local enablers in place, people with local knowledge, to identify those who are most vulnerable. Our mantra is that local people are best placed to identify local solutions”.

25. In oral evidence to the Committee on 4th November 2014, the Rural Community Network stated:-

“We do work very closely together. We are a sister organisation of the Rural Development Council, and the rural support networks were established through the Rural Community Network. It advocated the support and establishment of those organisations across Northern Ireland to ensure complete coverage. I see the organisations as being very strong, but the rural support networks have done a phenomenal job in rolling out MARA. The fact that the infrastructure was in place enabled the Department to put something on the ground very quickly. As an organisation, our job is more about policy and strategic intervention, but the organisations are very much connected: the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN), the rural support networks, the Rural Development Council and us. Those links are building and becoming stronger all the time. We are a very functional family of organisations, but we have a niche market, and our organisation is very much focused on advocating for changes in rural development policy.”

26. The various community organisations and individuals, who gave evidence to the Committee, were generally content with the approach and support given by the Department in respect of the TRPSI Programme. Many considered it to be a success in so much as it has numerous innovative programmes which aim to address the issues of rural poverty and social isolation; and they are delivered in partnership with rural stakeholders. The partnership working aspect was commended by stakeholders, for example:

27. The Rural Development Council stated in oral evidence to the Committee on 11th November 2014:-

“We welcome the programme and commend DARD for its approach to implementation, which is largely focused on partnership working, collaboration and, most importantly for us, engaging rural stakeholders in communities”.

28. The Committee agreed that it was impressed with type, variety and size of the groups and organisations who were involved with the delivery of the TRPSI Framework. It further noted that it was this which had provided a depth and range that had ultimately contributed to the success of the Framework.
29. **Recommendation: The Department has indicated that there will be successor TRPSI programme when the current programme ends in 2016. The Committee recommends that the Departments build on the successes of the current programme, including the vast knowledge already available from the grass roots organisations in rural communities to help inform and shape a new TRPSI programme.**

The Individual Programmes and Projects within the TRPSI Framework

30. The Committee was clear at the start of its Review that it would take an overview and strategic approach to its consideration of the individual programmes and projects within the TRPSI Framework. It nevertheless took the opportunity to inquire about which programmes had, in the opinion of those who provided evidence to the Committee, been most successful and why.
31. The overall opinion of those who give evidence to the Committee was that they were generally content with the approach and support given by the Department in respect of the TRPSI Programme. Some of the opinions are stated below:-

The Farm Families Health Checks Programme, which is delivered regionally across all rural livestock markets and various community based facilities, provides health screening, advice and signposting to services for farmers, their families and rural dwellers. This programme was commended by the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association who said *“the Farm Families Health Checks Programme is excellent, and we congratulate the Department on bringing them into existence”.*

Organisations commended the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS), which is delivered in conjunction with DRD and the Support for vulnerable elderly project, with the Rural Community Network stating that the projects *“have reduced isolation and kept people well in their homes”*.

The Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (RYE) was also highly commended. RDC stated *“The programme (RYE) is addressing issues that lie at the heart of the tackling rural poverty and social isolation framework: deprivation, inequalities, poverty and social exclusion”*. RDC felt that in order to *“develop sustainable rural communities; it is essential that the young in those communities do not leave but instead have adequate support and opportunities for employment within their local area”*.

As we know, the maximising access in rural areas (MARA) initiative has released previously unclaimed money that benefits the wider economy of Northern Ireland and, specifically, the rural economy. Community development funding and the rural challenge fund have secured resources to support and advise individuals and communities. They have supported and sustained communities through community development, and they have helped those who need services to access the right support in the right ways. The assisted rural transport scheme and the contacting elderly rural isolation project have reduced isolation and kept people well in their homes (RCN)

32. However, the Committee heard again and again from various organisations that one of the most successful project was the Maximising Access to services, grants and benefits in Rural Areas (MARA) project. This is an interdepartmental regional service which aims to support rural dwellers in need. Given that there was consensus that the MARA project was one of the most successful elements of the Framework, the Committee sought and heard from the Public Health Agency in oral evidence on 25th November 2014.

The MARA project set out to proactively target the vulnerable households in identified rural communities using a community development approach. Its overall aim was “to improve the health and wellbeing of rural dwellers in Northern Ireland by increasing access to services, grants and benefits by facilitating a co-ordinated service to support rural dwellers living in, or at risk of, poverty and social exclusion. Its project objectives were:

- increase access to home improvement schemes particularly energy efficiency grants for at least 20% of targeted households;
- increase access to full Benefit Entitlement Checks for at least 35% of targeted households;
- increase access to a range of local services for at least 20% of targeted households;
- increase access to a range of regional/universal services for at least 15%; and
- increase access to community transport for at least 25% of targeted households.

33. The Committee heard that MARA has visited approximately 14,000 households across rural Northern Ireland and was impressed with some of the outputs generated. In written evidence to the Committee DARD provided the following table:-

Estimated Finances levered in through benefits/outputs to date – these and other outputs will be confirmed through scheme evaluation.	
MARA	Warm Homes £1,950,000 Welfare Benefits £1,055,000 per annum Boiler Replacement £202,700 Total = £3,207,700

34. The Committee heard that one of the strengths of the MARA project and a major rationale behind its success was its ability to tap into local knowledge and expertise and to thus target those in most need. The ability to do this quickly and effectively was a key to its success. In oral evidence to the Committee on 4th November 2014, Rural Community Network stated:

“I see the organisations as being very strong, but the rural support networks have done a phenomenal job in rolling out MARA. The fact that the infrastructure was in place enabled the Department to put something on the ground very quickly”.

35. In giving evidence to the Committee on 21st October Rural Support stated:-

“We refer to MARA people who contact us wondering whether they are entitled to some benefits. Very often, a landowner or farm owner thinks that, because they have a bit of land as an asset, they are not entitled to anything. That was one of the key values of the MARA project: to be able to sit down and go through what benefit entitlements they might have.”

36. The Committee noted that considerable amount of data has been generated as a result of the MARA project. It is the opinion of the Committee that this data would provide a valuable insight into the issues around poverty and deprivation that the rural community are facing. In providing evidence to the Committee Rural Support indicated:

“I have no doubt that the MARA project is gathering a lot of information that should be used to influence policy and makes changes.”

37. The Committee heard from the Public Health Agency that a detailed analysis of the MARA data is expected to be completed in June 2015. It was generally agreed by all organisations that this evaluation will provide an effective and beneficial means for the Department to build into a successor programme.

38. The Rural Community Network also stated, *“The Department should consider how it can best use the data that TRPSI has generated....MARA is a massive data source and could provide valuable insights into rural poverty and deprivation”.*

39. The Public Health Agency provided additional information to the Committee on statistics on the number of farmers who have used the MARA project as well as a list of super output area by zones. The link to this information can be found here:
INSERT LINK
40. The Committee were disappointed to note that there appears to be no plans for a coordinated approach to making effective use of the MARA data to inform other projects or a future TRPSI programme.
41. **Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the Department, in conjunction with other departments, fully utilises the data capture and evaluation which MARA has produced and uses it to inform and shape the TRPSI successor programme.**

Responsibility for Rural Issues and Rural proofing

42. The issue of who is responsible for rural issues, rural proofing and the next issue considered by the Committee – that of Rural Deprivation – are very closely linked and integral to one another.
43. Practically all those who give evidence to the Committee indicated that it would appear that there is an acceptance by other Government Departments that rural poverty and social isolation is a DARD responsibility. In its written evidence to the Committee The Ulster Farmers' Union noted the following:-

“For this reason, it is very encouraging that DARD are designing and delivering programmes which are ‘tailor-made’ for rural areas but this does not take away from the responsibilities of other Departments to rural dwellers as well as urban ones. It makes sense for DARD to take the initiative on this, and their joined-up work with the PHA, DRD, DSD, DEL and DCAL is very encouraging. However, going forward, might it make sense for an inter -departmental working group to exist on rural wellbeing? All departments can have a positive role to play in improving the lot of rural areas and in our opinion it makes sense for them all to be involved. Part of the issue seems to be that other Government Departments do not factor in the specific issues surrounding rural deprivation in their policy-making and service delivery. “

And

While it is right and proper that DARD should continue to take the lead on this issue, we believe that there needs to be a joined-up approach to this issue. Just because DARD is the only department with “rural” in its name does not mean that it is the only Department with responsibility for rural dwellers.

44. The Committee also heard concern expressed at the lack of importance or expertise that other departments place on rural issues. It was felt that there needs to be full engagement in all aspects of rural life and that greater emphasis needs to be placed on the differing needs of the rural dweller. RCN told the Committee on 4th November 2014 that “*a one size fits all*” approach by Departments does not work for rural issues:

“RCN believes that the challenge remains that other government Departments are not taking rural poverty and social isolation into account to the degree that they should in their service delivery”.

45. At the stakeholder event, concern was expressed that not every Department was working with the Rural White Paper and their policies were not rural proofed. Rural Community Network stated on 4th November 2014:

“It is the responsibility of all Departments to take the lead.... Every Department has a responsibility to police its money and its priority for rural as well as for urban people”.

46. The implementation of the TRPSI programme has focused on partnership working and engaging with rural communities. RDC believe “*that the practical engagement of local people and communities and projects... have made a difference. We very much doubt whether the same results could have been achieved without community connections, and we believe strongly that this is an approach that could be adopted in the delivery of schemes across government*”.
47. **Recommendation: The Committee acknowledges the work that DARD has done through its Rural White Paper Action Plan. The Committee recommends that DARD should undertake an evaluation of the extent to which other government departments and the wider public sector considers rural issues in respect of**

policy, services and resources. The Committee further recommends that DARD develops an inter-departmental working group with the buy in of Senior Civil Servants within the relevant Departments.

Local Government and Local Action Groups

48. The Committee heard at its stakeholder event that there is concern around the new super councils and what impact that would have on the delivery of services, particularly the urban and rural split. There was a concern expressed by many that the new councils may not always have a rural focus. Those concerned also noted that as Super Councils “bed down”, the focus of policy and service delivery may be on urban areas.
49. The Committee noted with interest that the Community Planning process being undertaken by the Councils were generating considerable interest. In its evidence to the Committee on 4th November 2014 the Rural Community network stated:
“There is a great interest in rural areas, certainly in the Mid-Ulster council area. A community planning process has just started, and there are community engagement events; the first was in Dungannon about three weeks ago. A venue was booked for 50 people, and I think that 120 turned up. It was the same in Cookstown, and Kate was at that meeting. In those areas, there is significant interest from rural community and community groups generally in local government, their new powers and community planning in particular.”
50. The Committee was aware that the expectations of rural people and communities had perhaps been raised as a result of the community planning process. The Committee also understood that the new Councils will have limited budgets and that rural communities are concerned that there may be less services to rural areas as a result. The Committee are likewise concerned that Councils actively ensure that a fair and equitable share of the resources goes into rural and farming communities.
51. Concern was also expressed on how the new Local Action Groups or LAGs would be developed, fit into council structures and the TRPSI Framework. In evidence to the Committee on 11 November 2015, the Rural Development Council noted:

“For us, the new model of delivering LEADER, which has a wider local action group membership and is really about trying to get as many people involved in the process as possible, provides the best opportunity to tackle poverty. The range of measures in priority 6, which includes things like rural services, rural broadband and village renewal, has huge potential in delivering services and reaching those most in need. I think the key challenge will be when it comes to developing strategies. Obviously there is a limited budget and we have to manage expectations, and the key thing will be to align the local needs to the funding priorities, but I think it is achievable”.

52. **Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development engages proactively with the new Councils to ensure that they are active and vigorous in taking rural issues into account in the development of policy and delivery of services in rural and farming communities. Furthermore the Committee recommends that the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development engages with the Councils to ensure that there is full and meaningful cognizance given and interaction with those community and voluntary groups currently successfully involved in delivery of the TRPSI Framework so as to prevent duplication of, or the overlooking of such groups.**

Rural Deprivation

53. The Committee heard that there is a need for better understanding of the dynamics of rural poverty and deprivation for departments, councils and other public sector agencies involved in service delivery. In its written evidence to the Committee the Rural Community Network stated:

“Unlike urban areas which are socially segregated, deprivation in rural areas exists amongst relative affluence. This presents challenges for policy makers as area based interventions which can work well in urban areas where deprivation is spatially concentrated will not work as well in rural areas where poor people live alongside others who are relatively affluent. “

54. Rural Community Network further stated that there needs to be a *“change how the multiple deprivation measures capture rural deprivation”*.
55. The Committee also heard from Mr Trutz Haase on 2nd December when he stated:
“We have to think about how we actually measure deprivation, and whether we are aware, when we measure deprivation, that there are different forms of deprivation”.
56. Mr Haase also referred to “opportunity deprivation” and asked how can you measure opportunities in a rural area. He states, *“ if you go into rural areas and ask people what makes it difficult there, it is always the interaction of their situation with the access to where things are happening.... What characterises rural deprivation is mediated through the difficulty of access to centres of decision, key services and career opportunities”*.
57. The Committee heard evidence that there is concern amongst stakeholders in rural and farming communities that those who develop policy, design services and allocate resources to those policies and services do not fully understand how the multiple deprivation measures are constructed and can be used. There was concern that when asked to take “deprivation” into account, policy makers used the multiple deprivation indices and when you look at these it is clear that none of the top 10% deprived wards are rural. The issue for stakeholders is that there are clearly vulnerable people living in rural areas who are being missed because of the spatial and geographical basis on which deprivation is currently measured.
58. In discussing this with the Committee the Ulster Farmers Union stated:
“The multiple deprivation measure (MDM) used by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) seems to focus disproportionately on the financial aspect. Trutz Haase is coming to brief the Committee in the near future, so I will not say any more on that in the meantime, because he is much more qualified to speak on that than I am. However, we would like to see the human aspect of poverty and deprivation factored into these things and we would like to be able to pinpoint rural areas where poverty exists. It is not like in urban areas, where specific regions, which are almost fenced off, have issues with poverty and others do not. In rural areas, they exist intermingled. One person could be in poverty and the person down the road

could be in relative affluence. We are not sure that the MDM takes that into account at present.”

59. And in its oral evidence the Rural Development Council stated:

“I think we all see the challenges in measuring deprivation, particularly if you use multiple deprivation measures that bring together a range of domains, which, basically, skew the funding, or whatever, to more urban centres because they have higher populations and demonstrate higher needs in the deprivation indices. If you were to separate those out and look at access to services you would get a different picture. You would get more rural communities coming forward regarding deprivation against access to services. So, there are key ways of measuring isolation. If you focus on some indices that are more relevant you would get a different picture.”

60. The Rural Community Network provided the following concrete examples of the issue and these did create a degree of concern amongst the Committee:

“An outworking of that was the social investment fund programme, which targets the 10% most deprived, the criterion being the 10% most deprived rural wards. At the time, we raised the issue of rural deprivation with OFMDFM. In fairness, it came back and said that, if any community could make a specific case for their area using other evidence, it would look at it. The social investment fund, which used that 10% measure, was about tackling deprivation and poverty and, to an extent, tackling the legacy of the Troubles. It will be interesting to see whether any rural projects are funded through the social investment fund. I suspect not because it will be very difficult for a rural community to produce objective evidence of deprivation if their area is not high in the multiple deprivation measure. That is a practical example of the outworking.”

61. The Committee heard from NISRA (DFP) on this issue on 9th December 2014 and noted the following:

“As you will have heard from many of your witnesses, because the super output areas, which cover about 2,000 people, cover large physical areas, it is difficult to find concentrations of deprivation in rural areas, whereas it is easier to find them in urban

areas. As you will see in your papers, NISRA has developed rural guidance for use in policy areas that deliberately want to target rural areas.”

62. NISRA further advised the Committee that Wales has just published its updated deprivation measures, England is consulting on an update and Scotland will do something similar, aiming to publish in 2016. NISRA advised, *“We are waiting for OFMDFM and the Statistics Co-ordinating Group, which is a cross-departmental group, to give us direction on the way forward and what it might like us to do”*. This is considered by many of the stakeholders as a vital to ensuring the needs of the rural community are met by both councils and departments.
63. The Committee noted with concern and agreed with the many witnesses who indicated that government departments and the wider public sector did not fully appear to understand or use correctly the NI Multiple Deprivation Indices. The Committee was also concerned that there appeared to be a lack of even basic awareness of the “Guidance for Rural Areas” which had been issued by NISRA. The Committee was concerned that despite this Guidance being available there was no evidence to suggest that it was being used (other than the Rural Development Fund).
64. The Committee discussed the extent of the use of the Guidance for Rural Areas with NISRA and in its oral evidence to the Committee on 9th December it stated:

“Centrally, since I have been here, I have not done that work, but I intend to kick it off at a meeting next Monday. I want the Departments to tell us how they are using the indices, and we will have that information. As I said earlier, it is part of the user engagement side of having it being a national statistic. It just so happens that the meeting is next Monday. They will then feed back to us centrally how they are actually using the measures to target their policies.”

65. **Recommendation: That the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development actively engages with DFP to ensure that NISRA is commissioned to undertake an update or review of the NI Multiple Deprivation Indices and that review should also consider the identification of rural deprivation, and specifically the suitability of the indicators employed and geographical areas used. The Committee also recommends that the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development engages with DFP to ensure it undertakes to establish how**

government departments are using the indices and if indeed any cognizance is given to the Guidance for Rural Area.

Budget for the successor programme

66. RCN also state that “*Rural areas require a flexible approach to service delivery, with a focus on outreach and partnership with grassroots organisations. TRPSI has demonstrated that that approach can work and deliver concrete results*”. This has been as a result of the allocation of budget to resource as opposed to capital.
67. The Committee heard from the Department that £1.7 million of the TRPSI budget will move from resource to capital, with a proviso that this is spent within one year.
68. The Department advised that the capital element should provide more sustainable development; however the Committee expressed concern that the monies would be allocated to capital, which is considered more difficult to spend and is not necessarily where the need is.
69. The Committee also agreed that the TRPSI budget allocation 2015/16 with its inclusion of £1.7 m capital does not appear to have allocated based on the needs of the programme or consultation with stakeholders.
70. **Recommendation: That the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development acknowledges that the funding for the TRPSI Framework has been resource based and that consequentially engagement with the stakeholders will be required to ensure that (i) suitable capital projects can be identified and (ii) that such projects can be delivered within the framework.**