**Strategic Planning and Corporate Services Group**
Strategic Support Directorate

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**FROM:** **PAUL MCGRANAGHAN**
**DAERA DALO**

**DATE:** **20 October 2026**

**TO:** **DR. JANICE THOMPSON**
**AERA COMMITTEE CLERK**

**SL1 The Just Transition Fund for Agriculture Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2027**

**Summary** The Just Transition Fund for Agriculture Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2027 will provide the legislative framework required to establish and administer the Just Transition Fund for Agriculture in accordance with section 31 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. The Regulations will establish the governance, financial and administrative arrangements necessary for the operation of the Fund.

**Business Area:** Agricultural Policy Division

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| **Issue:** | To invite the AERA Committee to consider the Just Transition Fund for Agriculture Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2027 and agree that they can proceed to the next stage of the legislative process. |
| **Restrictions:** | None |
| **Action Required:** | That you consider the contents of this SL1. |
| **Officials Attending:** | Richard Johnston, Director of Agricultural Policy Division; and<br>Zita Hale, Head of Just Transition Fund for Agriculture Branch. |

**Background**

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs proposes to make the Just Transition Fund for Agriculture Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2027 under powers conferred by section 31 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Section 31 places a statutory duty on DAERA to establish a Just Transition Fund for Agriculture. The purpose of the Fund is to provide advice and financial assistance to the agriculture sector to support delivery of its contribution towards Northern Ireland's statutory climate change targets, including the net zero target for 2050 and associated carbon budgets.

The Regulations will be subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure. A copy of the draft Statutory Rule is attached at **Annex A** and the Explanatory Memorandum is attached at **Annex B** for Committee scrutiny.

**Purpose of legislation/policy background**

The purpose of the Regulations is to establish the legislative framework for the Just Transition Fund for Agriculture.

The Regulations provide the governance, administrative and financial arrangements necessary for the operation of the Fund. They are intentionally enabling in nature and do not prescribe the detailed design of individual funding schemes, eligibility criteria or project selection arrangements. This approach provides sufficient flexibility to support a range of future measures and interventions and avoids the need for frequent amendment of the Regulations as policy priorities evolve.



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More detailed information on the objectives, operation and delivery of the Fund will be set out in a supporting Policy Framework and associated scheme documentation.

**Consultation**

In accordance with section 56(2) of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, DAERA sought advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) on the draft Regulations prior to laying them before the Assembly. The draft Regulations were provided to the CCC on 22 July 2026 and advice was received on 19 August 2026. The Committee welcomed the establishment of the Fund, confirmed its support for the Northern Ireland Executive establishing the Fund, and did not recommend any amendments to the draft Regulations.

The CCC noted that the detailed contribution of the Fund towards Northern Ireland's climate targets will depend on the supporting Policy Framework and requested continued engagement as that framework is developed. DAERA welcomes this engagement and intends to provide the CCC with a copy of the Policy Framework.

DAERA also intends to undertake a public consultation on the draft Policy Framework in autumn 2026 as part of the wider development of the Fund.

**Position in GB/ROI (if appropriate)**

The concept of a "just transition" is being progressed across Ireland and Great Britain through a range of policy and funding initiatives designed to support sectors, workers and communities affected by the transition to a low-carbon economy. In Ireland, the EU Just Transition Fund supports economic diversification, peatland restoration and community development in regions affected by the cessation of peat extraction and peat-fired electricity generation. Funding of up to €169 million is being invested through Ireland's Territorial Just Transition Plan for the Midlands region.

In Scotland, the Scottish Government has established a Just Transition Fund to support the transition of communities and industries in the North East and Moray away from carbon-intensive economic activity, alongside the development of a Land Use and Agriculture Just Transition Plan.



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Wales is progressing a Just Transition Framework and has introduced a Sustainable Farming Scheme designed to support agricultural sustainability and climate objectives, although this is not structured as a dedicated Just Transition Fund.

The Just Transition Fund for Agriculture is being established to fulfil the specific statutory requirement placed on DAERA by section 31 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. While there are broader just transition initiatives elsewhere, the Northern Ireland Fund has been developed within the context of Northern Ireland's legislative framework and climate change targets.

**Equality Impact**

The potential equality implications of the Regulations have been considered in accordance with DAERA's obligations under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

As the Regulations establish a framework rather than individual funding schemes, detailed equality considerations will be assessed further during development of the Policy Framework and any associated schemes. Equality screening and any further assessments deemed necessary will be undertaken as part of the policy development process.

**Regulatory Impact / Better Regulation / Data Protection Impact Assessment**

As the Regulations establish an enabling framework, they are not expected to impose direct regulatory or administrative burdens on businesses. Any detailed assessment requirements will be considered as part of the development of the Policy Framework and future funding interventions.

No data protection issues are anticipated as a result of the Regulations themselves.

**Financial Implications**

The Regulations provide the legal framework for the operation of the Fund. Funding allocations will be considered through normal budgetary processes and in accordance with available resources. The Regulations themselves do not create additional financial commitments beyond those associated with implementation of the Fund.

**EU Implications**

There are no EU implications associated with this statutory rule.

**Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998**

The Regulations do not have any human rights implications, nor are they incompatible with EU law. The Regulations are therefore deemed to comply with the requirements of section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

When the Rule together with the Explanatory Memorandum has been laid at the Assembly Business Office, the Business Office will submit copies to the Committee.

This SL1 will be copied to the Human Rights Commission and Legislative Programme Secretariat whenever the Statutory Rule is provided to the AERA Committee for scrutiny.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

**Paul McGranaghan**
**Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer**

**Enc.**

**Annex A:** **Draft Statutory Rule -The Just Transition Fund for Agriculture Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2027**

**Annex B:** **Explanatory Memorandum for The Just Transition Fund for Agriculture Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2027**

**Cc:** **Human Rights Commission**
**Legislative Programme Secretariat**



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