

Draft order laid before the Assembly under section 1(7) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 for approval.

DRAFT STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN
IRELAND

2026 No.

RURAL NEEDS

**The Rural Needs Act (Public Authorities) (Amendment) Order
(Northern Ireland) 2026**

Made - - - -

Coming into operation

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs^(a), in exercise of the powers conferred on it by section 1(3) and (4) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016^(b) (“the Act”), makes the following Order:

Citation and commencement

1. This Order may be cited as the Rural Needs Act (Public Authorities) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026.

2. This Order comes into operation in accordance with Articles 3 and 4.

3. The day appointed for the coming into operation of sections 1 to 4 of the Act, as they apply to the public authorities listed in Part I of the Schedule, is the day after the day on which this Order is affirmed by resolution of the Assembly.

4. The Act, as it applies to the additional public authorities listed in Part II of the Schedule, comes into operation as follows –

(a) for the purpose of the training of the additional public authorities, section 2(a) of the Act on the day after the day on which this Order is affirmed by resolution of the Assembly;
and

(b) for all other purposes, the remaining sections 1 to 4 of the Act on 1 April 2028.

(a) The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is renamed the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs by section 1(2) of the Departments Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (c.5) (N.I.)
(b) 2016 c.19 (N.I.)

Amendment of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

5. (1) The Schedule to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 is amended as follows.

(2) In the Schedule, below “Public Authorities” insert “Part I”.

(3) After Part I add -

“ Part II

Agri-food and Biosciences Institute

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Belfast Metropolitan College

Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland

Children’s Court Guardian Agency for Northern Ireland

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

Commission for Victims and Survivors

Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland

Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland

Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland

Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse

Construction Industry Training Board

Exceptional Circumstances Body

General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Governors of the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium

Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland

Health and Social Care Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

Labour Relations Agency

Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland

Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland

Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation

National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland

North West Regional College

Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service

Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education

Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority

Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission
Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee
Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency
Northern Ireland Museums Council
Northern Ireland Police Fund
Northern Ireland Policing Board
Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery
Northern Ireland Screen Commission
Northern Ireland Social Care Council
Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company
Northern Ireland Water Limited
Northern Regional College
Patient and Client Council
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust
Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Regional Business Services Organisation
South Eastern Regional College
South West College
Southern Regional College
Strategic Investment Board Limited
Ulster Supported Employment Limited
Victims and Survivors Service Limited"

Sealed with the Official Seal of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
on ***



Jason Foy
A senior officer of the
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (“the Act”) places a statutory duty on public authorities listed in the Schedule to the Act (“the Schedule”) to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and designing and delivering public services.

Under section 1(3) of the Act, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (“the Department”) must, at least every three years, review the list of bodies and persons set out in the Schedule and may, if it considers it appropriate, amend that Schedule by Order.

This Order amends the Schedule and, in doing so, provides for the inclusion of 54 additional public authorities listed in Part II of the Schedule within the scope of the duty.

The additional public authorities are bodies which, following review, were considered by the Department to exercise public functions and should therefore be subject to the Act.

The additional public authorities will require time to train their staff and prepare for compliance with the Act. Article 4(a) provides for a time gap for the training and preparatory activity before the commencement of duties under the Act in accordance with Article 4(b).

The amendments give effect to the outcome of the statutory review of the Schedule undertaken by the Department in 2024–2026.