

Initial Rural Needs Impact Assessment for Belfast Agenda

Step 1: Define the Issue

Key questions to consider:

- *What are the objectives of the strategy, policy plan or service?*
- *What impact do you intend it to have in rural areas?*
- *How is 'rural' defined for the purposes of this policy/strategy/service/plan?*
- *What would constitute a fair rural outcome in this case?*

As a result of the Local Government Act 2014, Councils have a duty to lead a community planning process with Community Planning Partner organisations in their area, and to produce a Community Plan every four years setting out long term objectives for improving economic, social and environmental wellbeing (and for addressing poverty, equality and good relations, and contributing to sustainable development). Between 2014 and 2016, Belfast City Council has been leading the community planning process for the city, creating a Belfast Agenda, Belfast's first Community Plan.

Built on extensive public engagement across the city, as well as key city evidence, data and reviews of key existing city plans and strategies, the Belfast Agenda, as the city's overarching plan for improving wellbeing of everyone who lives, works, studies in and visits Belfast sets out:

A new city vision to 2035: 'Belfast will be a city re-imagined. A great place to live for everyone. It will energise and drive a successful economy where everyone can reach their potential. Beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a city shared and loved by its people and admired around the world. It will be a producer of and magnet for talent, investment, innovation and creativity - a compassionate place where people create value and are valued.'

5 population outcome statements:

- *Everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy*
- *Belfast is a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive city for all*
- *Everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential*
- *Everyone in Belfast experiences good health and wellbeing*
- *Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city*

Ambitions for growth and opportunity - By 2035

- *Our urban economy supports 46,000 more jobs*
- *Our city will be home to an additional 66,000 new residents*
- *There will be a 33 per cent reduction in the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived neighbourhoods*
- *Every young person leaving school has a destination that fulfils their potential*

Priorities for the next four years

- Growing the Economy
- Living Here
- City Development
- Working and Learning

Under each priority the plan outlines a series of high level commitments, stretch goals and workstreams.

As a city wide strategic plan, the Belfast Agenda seeks to deliver improved wellbeing outcomes for everyone in the Belfast area, including those outside the main urban area of the city. Impacts on those living in rural areas, as for those in urban areas would be expected to be positive. The plan does not make specific proposals for rural areas at this stage, however more detailed action planning in relation to the proposed workstreams will need to consider any potential differential impacts on rural areas as they are progressed.

Step 2: Understand the situation

Key questions to consider

What is the current situation in rural areas?

What evidence (statistics, data, research, stakeholder advice) do you have about the position in rural areas?

If the relevant evidence is not available, can this be sourced?

Do you have access to the views of rural stakeholders about the likely impact of the policy?

Are there existing design features or mitigations already in place to take account of rural needs?

Population: The population of the Belfast City Council area predominantly reside within the main urban settlement development limit. According to the 2011 Census 331,532 residents (140,659 households) are in the urban area, while only 1,699 (703 households) are rural. This is equivalent to 0.5 per cent of the city's population [Census 2011 Urban/Rural population LGD 2014](#)

Rural Settlements

Hannahstown:

Character: Hannahstown is located in the Belfast Hills within the Belfast Basalt Escarpment Area of High Scenic Value. The settlement is sited on the steeply rising Hannahstown Hill Road and the elevated Upper Springfield Road, 4km west of Belfast City Centre, adjacent to the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area. Hannahstown comprises of three nodes and is of a linear form.

Facilities:

- St Joseph's Catholic Church.
- Playground just outside settlement limit.
- Lamh Derg GAA Complex just outside settlement development limit.
- Graveyard and parochial house.
- Community Hall.

Assets and Constraints:

- Area of high landscape quality.
- Two areas considered to be of greater amenity value, landscape quality or local significance, worthy of protection from undesirable or damaging development by Local Landscape Policy area designation.
- Scheduled and unscheduled archaeological sites, including a souterrain.
- Designated Rural Landscape Wedge.
- Lack of footpath from community centre to Lamh Dhearg.
- Linkages with the Belfast Hills, from Divis Mountain through to Colin Glen and Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.

Loughview

Character: Loughview is a small settlement located 6.5km south east of Belfast City Centre. The settlement developed along the Church Road and was further encouraged by the opening of Loughview Integrated Primary and Nursery School in 1993.

Facilities

- Graveyard.
- Castlereagh Presbyterian Church and Hall opposite.
- The Learning Tree pre-school.
- Loughview Integrated Primary School.
- Young Ones Nursery School.
- Henry Jones Playing Fields.

Assets and Constraints

- Loughview is within an area of High Scenic Value.
- An archaeological site and monument lies just outside the settlement development limit.

Edenderry

Character: Edenderry is a small settlement located approximately 8km south of Belfast City Centre and 8km North East of Lisburn City Centre. The settlement is within the Lagan Valley Regional Park and lies North East of the River Lagan. The mill industries on the River Lagan led to the development of the settlement and it is now a mix of traditional terraced redbrick and newer semi-detached suburban dwellings.

Facilities

- Playground
- Edenderry Gospel Hall.

Assets and Constraints

- The settlement has been designated as an area of village character.
- The area surrounding the settlement development limit has been designated as a Local Landscape Policy Area as well as a site of Local Nature Conservation Importance.
- An ASAI and State Care Monument, Giants Ring, is located just outside the settlement development limit to the North West.
- Lack of services and facilities.
- Location within Lagan Valley Regional Park and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Proximity to River Lagan.

- Two Listed Buildings.
- Proximity to Lisburn and Belfast City Centres.
- Quality Landscape Setting.
- On public transport route.
- No meeting place.

Engagement with rural stakeholders:

Views of stakeholders across the city have been taken into account throughout the plan creation process. Key stages included:

- Belfast Residents Survey (2014) – A survey of approximately 1500 households across Belfast.

The Belfast Conversation (2015) – an extensive city wide programme of engagement which included public workshops, stakeholder meetings, social media feedback and an online questionnaire. Over 600 people participated in this engagement, generating nearly 7000 comments and suggestions. As part of this engagement programme, engagement meetings were held with Rural stakeholders in the Edenderry Village (Edenderry Residents' Association) and Hannahstown (Hannahstown Community Association) areas. The Belfast Conversation feedback summary is available [here](#)

- Public consultation on the draft Belfast Agenda (Dec 2016-Apr 2017) – An 18 week public consultation was held to seek views on the draft Belfast Agenda. The consultation programme included a series of public consultation briefings around the city, stakeholder consultation meetings and workshops, and an online consultation questionnaire. During the consultation period, views of rural stakeholders were sought through specific consultation meetings with Edenderry Residents Association and Hannahstown Community Association.

Step 3: Develop and appraise options

Key questions to consider

Are there barriers to delivery in rural areas?

If so, how can these be overcome or mitigated?

Will it cost more to deliver in rural areas?

What steps can be taken to achieve fair rural outcomes?

For Belfast, barriers to service delivery for people living in rural areas might not be considered to be as severe as those in more remote parts of Northern Ireland. Areas of Belfast outside the main urban area, including the three rural settlements of Edenderry, Lough View and Hannahstown are within relative proximity to the urban service centres within the main metropolitan area, and to the city centre. In addition transport services exist along arterial routes from these rural settlements to the city centre.

As a high level city wide strategic plan, the Belfast Agenda sets direction for more detailed planning of services across city partners. As the priorities and workstreams are developed further in more detailed action planning stages, partners will need to consider rural issues, evidence and needs in more detail to identify any specific barriers to delivery and/or mitigations required.

A key area of work in taking forward the Belfast Agenda has been identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process in relation to understanding and tackling inequalities (in relation the range of s75 groups) as specific priorities and workstreams contained in the community plan are taken forward.

As part of this work on inequalities, needs of people living in rural areas will be considered further to ensure that any potential differential impacts are identified, and any necessary mitigations/alterations included within more detailed action plans, programmes, strategies and policies as they are developed.

Step 4: Prepare for Delivery

Key questions to consider

*Do the necessary delivery mechanisms exist in rural areas?
Have you considered alternative delivery mechanisms?
What action has been taken to ensure fair rural outcomes?
Is there flexibility for local delivery bodies to find local solutions?
Are different solutions required in different areas?*

The Belfast Agenda sets the high level strategic framework, identifying high level outcomes, priorities for partners to focus on over the coming years. The plan does not make specific proposals for rural areas at this stage, however more detailed action planning in relation to the proposed workstreams will need to consider delivery mechanisms ensuring fair rural outcomes and potential impacts on rural areas as these are progressed. Therefore further rural needs impact assessment will need to be undertaken as appropriate at relevant stages of the action planning processes.

Step 5: Implementation & Monitoring

Key questions to consider

*Have you set any rural specific indicators or targets to monitor?
How will the outcomes be measured in rural areas?
Are there any statistics or data that you will collect to monitor rural needs and impacts?*

The Belfast Agenda identifies a series of suggested population indicators for monitoring progress towards the wellbeing outcomes in the plan. As part of work to further understand inequalities in the city it is intended that data breakdown for relevant section 75 groupings, deprivation and also people living in rural areas will be sought, where available, (and considered in future data development requirements) for consideration of potential impacts and needs.

Step 6: Evaluation & Review

Key questions to consider

What processes are in place to evaluate and review the implementation of the policy, strategy, plan or service?

Have rural needs been factored into the evaluation process?

How will lessons learned in relation to rural outcomes be used to inform future policy making and delivery?

As required by the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, a progress monitoring review will be published within two years of publication of the plan. A review of the Community Plan must also be undertaken within four years of publication of the plan, and if appropriate a revised plan should be published to reflect updated needs of the area, with updated objectives and actions to be delivered.

It is envisaged that future reviews of this Belfast Agenda will be aided by work on understanding inequalities and city performance on the long term outcomes. This will assist in undertaking rural proofing of future action plans and project/programme delivery to take rural needs into account.

Furthermore, as action planning and programme delivery progresses further evaluation of impacts on communities, including people living in rural areas can be appropriately considered.

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