

Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)

SECTION 1

Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Name of Public Authority: Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough The Council

1B. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

Connected A Community Plan for Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough 2017-2030 (updated 2025) action plan

1C Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to:

Developing a [Choose an item.](#)

Adopting a [Choose an item.](#)

Implementing a [Choose an item.](#)

Revising a **Plan**

Designing a Public Service

Delivering a Public Service

1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above

Connected A Community Plan for Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough 2017-2030 (updated 2025) action plan.

1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or

Connected: A Community Plan for Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough 2017-2030 action plan.

There are 9 long term outcomes in Connected the community plan and these have been revised following engagement and consultation during the mid-point review. The revised outcomes are-

1. **Connected Community:** Everyone has opportunities to contribute to community life and shape decisions – we have a strong sense of community belonging and take pride in our area.
2. **Healthy Community:** People are making positive lifestyle choices. They are more resilient and better equipped to cope with life's challenges.
3. **Welcoming Community:** Our borough is a safe, inclusive, respectful and peaceful environment.
4. **Enterprising Economy:** Our borough is a productive centre of excellence for entrepreneurship, innovation and investment.
5. **Inclusive Economy:** Everyone has a decent minimum living standard.
6. **Skilled Economy:** People are better equipped to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the dynamic economy.
7. **Creative Place:** Our borough is an inspirational and creative place offering quality, inclusive arts, cultural and heritage experiences.
8. **Sustainable Place:** People understand the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change. We value and protect our biodiversity and natural assets. Our borough is on track to become net zero by 2050.
9. **Revitalised Place:** Our distinctive, inclusive and vibrant urban and rural places are at the heart of community and economic life.

The cross cutting themes of the plan remain connectivity, equality and sustainability and are embedded in Connected, our community plan and its action plan.

The reviewed Connected action plan's priorities for action remain as follows-

- Promoting Good Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion
- Place
- Shared Leadership & Community Engagement

Public Service

1F. What definition of 'rural' is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition)

Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below)

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable

Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used

Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.

Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

SECTION 2

Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes

No

If response is No go to 2E

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The reviewed Connected: A Community Plan is the overarching plan for the borough and works in two ways, firstly as a monitored plan at population level and then through influencing our partners in their service delivery through collaborative actions taken forward by the partnership. The plan can broadly be viewed as presenting positive action measures designed to enhance and improve the quality of the lives of people in the borough, irrespective of their identity, and including those in rural areas.

Our action plan for delivery of Connected has now been updated and during the engagement period rural needs were taken into consideration. We engaged with a wide range of organisations, including TADA rural support network, community transport providers and DAERA who all sit on the wider community planning partnership. We also held engagement activities in rural areas to ensure that rural needs were highlighted throughout the development of the action plan.

Through our Connected Community, Healthy and Welcoming Community outcomes our partnership wants to ensure that our borough is safe, inclusive and that everyone can contribute to community life regardless of where they live in the borough.

Through our Enterprising, Inclusive and Skilled Economy outcomes our partnership will endeavour to attract residents onto programmes and training opportunities from both urban and rural areas.

Through our Creative, Revitalised and Sustainable Place outcomes our partnership will ensure that our distinctive, inclusive and vibrant urban and rural places are at the heart of community and economic life.

While the action plan is a high-level document, and includes other strategies and programmes, each action lead organisation is responsible for ensuring that any rural needs duties are met.

2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

The proposals contained within the action plan will be beneficial to both urban and rural dwellers. There are some actions that will have a specific impact on people in rural areas.

An action within our action plan that may have a specific focus on rural dwellers is that of *Continue to roll out Place Plans*. These plans for urban areas take into consideration how people in our surrounding rural areas use their towns. In addition, the roll out of place plans for rural settlements will be commenced.

Another action under Revitalised Place is that of *-Research infrastructure needs in the borough. Identify priorities and advocate for resources to deliver them*. Through this the action lead and partners will develop a collaborative infrastructure strategy for the borough bringing together research, engagement and priorities for waste water and connections for development, blueways and greenways, public transport, roads and rail connectivity,

broadband and rural transport. This will have a positive impact on people living in rural areas.

The *Shaping Sustainable Places Programme* action will work with partners to identify needs and be project ready when funding becomes available and to deliver projects in rural and urban areas. The action also includes a priority to respond to developments in regional rural policy and to implement in partnership.

2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Rural Businesses | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Rural Tourism | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Rural Housing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Education or Training in Rural Areas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Poverty in Rural Areas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Deprivation in Rural Areas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Rural Crime or Community Safety | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Rural Development | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Agri-Environment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Please state) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.

2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.

SECTION 3

Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Yes No If response is No go to 3E

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Published Statistics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Research Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

- NISRA stats
- Partnership engagement and public consultation report for the review of Connected
- Action Planning day feedback
- Rural statistics on the internet
- Multiple deprivation statistics
- Partner feedback
- Participation or rural community groups during the action planning such as TADA Rural Support network and also DAERA.

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?

The needs of the whole borough were considered but the rural needs have also been considered as the results from the 2021 Census show that just over half of the borough's population (51.5%) lived in urban areas while just under half (48.5%) lived in rural areas.

This is based on the 2015 Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements which recommended a default urban-rural classification, with the boundary at a settlement population of 5,000 (Bands A – E are urban Bands F – H are rural), to be used in the absence of a programme specific definition. Essentially settlements larger than 5,000 people / Band E or above could be considered Urban. Craigavon Urban Area (which includes Central Craigavon, Lurgan and Portadown), Banbridge, Armagh and Dromore are the four urban areas within the borough, all other settlements are classified as rural according to the NISRA default classification. In Northern Ireland overall, 63% of the population are classed as living in urban areas and 37% in rural areas.

NISRA also provides the classification at Super Output Area (SOA), 36 out of the borough's

87 SOAs are classified as rural with a further 9 being mixed urban/rural. The rural areas cover a large part of the borough.

The Access to Services domain is particularly relevant to rural areas; this measures the extent to which people have poor physical and online access to key services. The borough has 9 Super Output Areas (10% of the total 87 SOAs in the Borough) in the top 100 most deprived in NI on the Access to Services domain, each of these are defined as rural on the default NISRA classification. 3

The Access to Services domain consists of three indicators:

- Service-weighted fastest travel time by private transport
- Service-weighted fastest travel time by public transport
- Proportion of properties with broadband speed below 10Mb/s

The borough has areas within the top 100 most deprived in NI on each of these three indicators. For example, Bannside SOA in the Borough is the second most deprived SOA in NI in terms of proportion of properties with broadband speed below 10Mb/s.

Through the consultation for the reviewed community plan and the action planning process various rural needs arose such as rural transport, lack of housing and accessibility.

If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A.

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

SECTION 4

Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

The following issues were considered in relation to the needs of residents in ABC in both urban and rural areas. Through the outcomes listed below our action leads, with the support of the community planning team, will consider the social and economic needs of our borough, including those in both urban and rural areas.

- **Connected Community:** Everyone has opportunities to contribute to community life and shape decisions – we have a strong sense of community belonging and take pride in our area.
- **Healthy Community:** People are making positive lifestyle choices. They are more resilient and better equipped to cope with life's challenges.
- **Welcoming Community:** Our borough is a safe, inclusive, respectful and peaceful environment.
- **Enterprising Economy:** Our borough is a productive centre for entrepreneurship, innovation and investment.
- **Inclusive Economy:** Everyone has a decent minimum living standard.
- **Skilled Economy:** People are better equipped to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the dynamic economy.
- **Creative Place:** Our borough is an inspirational and creative place offering quality, inclusive arts, cultural and heritage experiences.
- **Revitalised Place:** Our distinctive, inclusive and vibrant urban and rural places are at the heart of community and economic life.
- **Sustainable Place:** We value and protect our climate, biodiversity and natural assets. People understand the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and our borough is on track to become net zero by 2050.
- The cross-cutting themes of the community plan are **connectivity, equality and sustainability**.
- Our **Community Voluntary Sector Panel** includes members from rural community organisations who advise the partnership on rural issues.
- Following the public consultation for the review of Connected, the community plan and subsequent engagement during the action planning process some of the issues that arose are wider than just rural issues and affect people in both rural and urban areas. These issues include - **social isolation and loneliness**- for people of all ages, particularly in rural areas. The need for more **integrated public transport**, especially in terms of **rural transport** provision in order to provide **access to services** in particular **rail and road links** for those in rural and urban areas, **lack of late night and early morning buses** to allow those in rural areas to get to work was an area for concern.
- **Lack of community venues and provision of programmes** in both urban and rural areas was highlighted as an issue as was **employment and access to jobs and opportunities and affordable and accessible housing**.

SECTION 5

Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy

or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes



No



If response is No go to 5C

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.

Consideration of borough statistics have been utilised when undertaking this review of the action plan for delivery of Connected, our community plan and rural needs will be taken into consideration in all actions taken forward to ensure that rural needs will be met.

Through the engagement for the action plan- consultation and development took place with rural groups & specific actions were prioritised such as the inclusion of rural transport in the infrastructure strategy for the borough.

The following actions are specifically targeted to rural areas:

- An action within our action plan that may have a specific focus on rural dwellers is that of- *Continue to roll out Place Plans*. These plans for urban areas take into consideration how people in our surrounding rural areas use their towns. In addition, the roll out of place plans for rural settlements will be commenced. These place plans for rural settlements will include research and consultation on needs in these rural settlements.
- Another action under Revitalised Place is that of *-Research infrastructure needs in the borough. Identify priorities and advocate for resources to deliver them*. Through this the action lead and partners will develop a collaborative infrastructure strategy for the borough bringing together research, engagement and priorities for waste water and connections for development, blueways and greenways, public transport, roads and rail connectivity, broadband and rural transport. This will have a positive impact on people living in rural areas.
- The *Shaping Sustainable Places Programme* action will work with partners to identify needs and be project ready when funding becomes available and to deliver projects in rural and urban areas. The action also includes a priority to respond to developments in regional rural policy and to implement in partnership.

With all of the actions outlined in our action plan it is the responsibility of the organisation leading to consider rural needs and the Community Planning team in council will support and look for opportunities to ensure rural needs are met.

If the response to Section 5A was YES go to 6A.

5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.



SECTION 6

Documenting and Recording

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

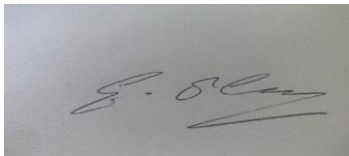
I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained, and relevant information compiled.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by: (Emma O'Carroll)

Position: Community Planning and Evidence
Officer

Department / Directorate: Community Planning, Policy and
Research

Signature:



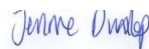
Date: 27/03/2026

Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by: (Jennie Dunlop)

Position: Community & Strategic Planning
Manager

Department / Directorate: Community Planning, Policy &
Research

Signature:



Date: 12th March 2026

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