

DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

SECTION 75 EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY SCREENING ANALYSIS FORM

The purpose of this form is to help you to consider whether a new policy (either internal or external) or legislation will require a full equality impact assessment (EQIA). Those policies identified as having significant implications for equality of opportunity must be subject to full EQIA.

The form will provide a record of the factors taken into account if a policy is screened out, or excluded for EQIA. It will provide a basis for quarterly consultation on the outcome of the screening exercise, and will be referenced in the biannual review of progress made to the Minister and in the Annual Report to the Equality Commission.

Further advice on completion of this form and the screening process including relevant contact information can be accessed via the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Intranet site.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

When considering the impact of this policy you should also consider if there would be any Human Rights implications. Guidance is at:

- <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/human-rights-and-public-authorities>

Should this be appropriate you will need to complete a Human Rights Impact Assessment. A template is at:

- <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/human-rights-impact-assessment-proforma>

Don't forget to Rural Proof.

Part 1. Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

Information about the policy

Name of the policy

DfI is screening its decision to apply the revised and updated technical guidance titled '*Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise*¹' (ARWTN) within the Northern Ireland planning system.

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

ETSU-R-97 'The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms' has been in use within the Northern Ireland planning system since it was first published in 1996. It has now been replaced by the ARWTN. The guidance was developed and published by the UK Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), on 19 June 2026. It is to be used by each of the four regions within the UK.

While this guidance is a revision and update of the previous ETSU-R-97, this is a new decision by the Department for Infrastructure to apply the revised guidance in this region's Planning system.

What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes)

The decision to apply the revised ARWTN technical guidance within the NI planning system is to provide a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. As noted above, it is a targeted update and replacement for the original document, ETSU-R-97 'The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms'.

¹ [Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise](#)

Applying the ARWTN establishes the most up to date guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects while supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. The ARWTN provides technical guidance to practitioners, developers, planners and other stakeholders on the environmental assessment and control of operational noise from wind turbines.

It includes methodologies for noise assessment, monitoring and compliance, together with an example planning condition that may be used by planning authorities when granting planning permission for wind energy developments.

The assessment and rating methods are presented in a manner suitable for use in the UK planning systems, for controlling operational noise during the lifetime of a wind energy development.

The ARWTN is the only methodology embedded within UK planning policy and practice and there is no directly comparable alternative of equivalent scope and status.

Using the DESNZ Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise guidance within the Northern Ireland planning system can provide clearer, more consistent noise-assessment standards, which in turn supports equality outcomes. The guidance replaces the older ETSU-R-97 framework and introduces more modern, evidence-based noise assessment criteria to assess how turbine noise is measured and controlled, ensuring that nearby residents including older people, families, and those with health conditions who may be more sensitive to noise disturbance receive a reasonable and evidence-based level of protection. The use of the assessment methodology can reduce the likelihood of disproportionate impacts on specific groups living close to wind-energy developments.

The guidance has the ability to strengthen fairness and consistency in planning decision-making. A unified UK-wide methodology may reduce ambiguity, improve transparency, and help ensure that all communities are assessed using the same objective criteria which can inform the determination of planning applications along with all other material considerations. This can support public confidence in the planning system, reduce conflict, and help balance community wellbeing with the delivery of renewable-energy infrastructure that benefits society as a whole.

Scope of Screening

DfI is screening its decision to apply the use of ARWTN within the Northern Ireland planning system, including its use as a material consideration by local

planning authorities in the assessment of wind energy development proposals. The screening focuses on the equality implications arising from the decision to apply the guidance through the planning system in Northern Ireland.

DESNZ advised that ARWTN is voluntary best practice guidance and was therefore out of scope of the Better Regulation Framework and the requirements of a full Impact Assessment (including full Public Sector Equality Duty assessment). However, DfI understands that a proportionate analysis was undertaken by DESNZ which did not identify any direct impacts on protected groups as a result of a decision to update noise guidance.

This screening does not, therefore, assess or re-evaluate the technical content of the ARWTN guidance published by DESNZ.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?

If so, explain how.

The Department has not identified any adverse impacts on any Section 75 category from its decision to apply the technical guidance within the NI planning system. The guidance provides a current and consistent framework for assessing and controlling operational wind turbine noise and is intended to protect neighbouring communities from adverse noise effects.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

It is the decision of DfI to apply the ARWTN within the Northern Ireland planning system that is being screened. DESNZ, formerly the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) initiated and published the updated guidance for the 'Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Turbines'.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The updated guidance is owned by DESNZ. It is the decision of DfI to apply the updated guidance. The Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Department of Health, Local Councils, the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC), relevant statutory consultees (including Environmental Health Officers), Applicants, Developers and Agents will also use this guidance.

Background

DfI is screening its decision to apply the use of ARWTN within the Northern Ireland planning system.

Wind turbine noise has historically been considered through planning applications and appeals using ETSU-R-97 and associated guidance. ETSU-R-97 has now been replaced by the ARWTN technical guidance.

The ARWTN is a targeted technical update following a scoping review commissioned by DESNZ and published by [WSP](#) in 2023. This review considered evolutions in turbine technology and developments in wind turbine noise assessment methodologies since the ETSU-R-97 guidance was published in 1996. It also considered established best practice and the latest available evidence in the field, including the various WHO guidelines, which are considered and discussed at section 6.2.2 of [WSP's project report](#) in September 2023. A link to this 2023 report can be found at: [Updated guidance for the assessment and rating of wind turbine noise: consultation document \(accessible webpage\) - GOV.UK](#).

During the process of updating the guidance DESNZ worked closely with noise policy leads, acoustic academics and professionals, the Institute for Acoustics, expert acoustic consultants with experience in the field of wind turbine noise assessment, and wind industry acoustic engineers. A public consultation also took place between 4 July to 29 August 2025. DESNZ's response to the consultation can be found at: [Assessment and rating of wind turbine noise guidance: proposed updates - GOV.UK](#).

The technical guidance has been informed by advice from specialists on wind turbine noise (the 'technical advisory team') from Noise Consultants Limited (part of Logika Group), Hoare Lea LLP and Hayes McKenzie Partnership Limited. The Project Team has also drawn on the experience of external peer reviewers.

The noise assessment criteria defined in the technical guidance has been derived with reference to:

- Standards and guidance relating to noise emissions and control of wind turbine noise in the previous ETSU-R-97 guidance, as well as the subsequent Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise Institute of Acoustics (IOA) Good Practice Guidance and proposed planning conditions for Amplitude Modulation.
- A scoping review on behalf of Government which was published in February 2023 (WSP report, which included:
 - An extensive literature review;
 - Results of field measurements;
 - Engagement with stakeholders, including local authorities, Government departments and professional associations.

- The societal need for renewable energy sources to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in line with Government energy policy.
- The ability of manufacturers and developers to meet these noise limits whilst delivering viable schemes.
- Advances in wind turbine technology since the publication of the previous ETSU-R-97 guidance.
- Available research on human response to wind turbine noise and associated impacts, including on health.
- Approaches and methodologies adopted internationally for the control of noise from wind turbines.
- The professional experience of qualified acousticians involved in the formal assessment and regulation of noise emissions from wind turbines and other noise sources.
- Discussions with a panel of representative stakeholders who were invited by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to three workshops.
- Comments received during the consultation period for this guidance.

DESNZ indicate in their updated guidance that the document is a targeted update and replacement for the original document, ETSU-R-97 'The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms'. As already mentioned above, this targeted technical update follows the scoping review commissioned by Government and published by WSP in 2023, which considered evolutions in turbine technology and developments in wind turbine noise assessment methodologies since 1996, as well as established best practice and the latest available evidence in the field, including the various WHO guidelines, which are considered and discussed at section 6.2.2 of WSP's project report in September 2023.

However, it is important to note the findings in section 6.2.2 of WSP's report 'Summary and recommendations', indicates that "The various WHO guidelines, with the exception of the 2018 'Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region' (ENGER), have been based on evidence for sound sources that are dissimilar to wind turbines. It has long been recognised that different sound sources impart varying effects on people, and WSP's report determined that it would therefore be unsafe to apply such evidence to wind turbine sound.

The 2018 ENGER directly addressed wind turbine noise effects but used an approach that directly compared data from studies employing differing methods, which may be misleading. As has been noted in section 3.5.1, the quantity and

quality of evidence have also increased since the reviews supporting the 2018 ENGER.

It is therefore advised that the existing WHO guidelines, including the 2018 ENGER, have limited relevance and are not considered to offer a robust platform for developing a framework of wind turbine noise effects thresholds.

DESNZ recognise that wind turbine technology evolves and therefore there is a need for guidance that adequately reflects current wind turbine characteristics and the latest knowledge and practice. As such, it is anticipated that the ARWTN guidance will be reviewed/updated as necessary.

The Two-Tier Planning System in Northern Ireland

On 1 April 2015, responsibility for planning functions in Northern Ireland transferred from a unitary system to a two-tier planning system. Under this arrangement, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) is responsible for planning legislation, regional policy and the determination of regionally significant and called-in applications. The 11 councils are responsible for preparing Local Development Plans, determining the majority of planning applications and undertaking planning enforcement functions.

Importantly, the planning system includes established statutory processes that enable individuals, communities and organisations to participate in both policy development and in the planning application process. Opportunities for consultation and engagement are available through the preparation of regional strategic planning policy, Local Development Plans and through the determination of individual planning applications.

The use of updated guidance (which is a material consideration in the planning process) does not alter existing statutory consultation requirements, rights of participation or rights of representation within the planning system.

Relationship to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

Paragraph 6.234 of SPPS Edition 2 states that ETSU-R-97 remains the UK standard methodology for the assessment of noise from wind energy development and that it, together with associated Institute of Acoustics guidance, should be taken into account by decision-makers. Footnote 58 further provides that references to ETSU-R-97 should be read as including any future update to the UK standard and/or associated guidance. As such, references to

ETSU-R-97 in planning policy and guidance are intended to be interpreted as references to the updated guidance.

Relationship to Equality Considerations

The ARWTN guidance establishes an updated framework for the environmental assessment and control of operational noise from wind turbines across the UK, including Northern Ireland. The use of the guidance within the NI planning system does not allocate sites, grant planning permission, determine planning applications or confer specific benefits, restrictions or entitlements on any individual or group.

The use of the guidance for the assessment of noise impacts from proposed wind energy developments shall apply consistently throughout Northern Ireland and the ARWTN does not contain provisions that differentiate between persons on the basis of any Section 75 category.

This equality screening is considered proportionate and appropriate for the use of the updated noise assessment guidance, to assess noise impacts from potential wind energy development proposals in Northern Ireland. It recognises that the two-tier planning system enables potential impacts on Section 75 groups to be considered and assessed at the most appropriate level. The detailed implications of individual development proposals are more appropriately assessed through the determination of relevant wind energy planning applications.

Accordingly, equality screening assessments should be undertaken by the relevant planning authority when determining individual planning applications, where required.

The use of the updated technical guidance is one of a number of material considerations that may be taken into account when determining planning applications through the Northern Ireland planning system. This guidance is not determinative of planning outcomes. It should be taken into account alongside other relevant material considerations, including environmental information, consultee responses, representations received and the provisions of the LDP. The relevance and weight to be attached to material considerations remains a matter for the judgement of the decision-taker.

Whether a proposal is acceptable remains a matter for determination by the relevant planning authority on a case-by-case basis.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision? **Yes**

If yes, are they (please delete as appropriate)

other, please specify –

Other –

All stakeholders of the Northern Ireland planning system, including DfI, Local Council Planning Authorities, the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC), developers, applicants, agents and statutory consultees, have a key role to play in using the updated guidance. If this revised guidance is not applied, planning proposals involving wind turbines may not be assessed using the latest technical advice and direction for the assessment and rating of wind turbine noise.

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

Staff – Yes, planning staff will use the AWRTN guidance (a replacement for ETSU-R-97) in the consideration of any applications involving wind turbines.

Service Users - applicants/agents submitting a planning application in relation to wind energy development.

Other public sector organisations -

Planning Authorities (i.e. DfI, Local Councils, the Planning Appeals Commission), Statutory Consultees

Other, please specify - General public including people residing in both urban and rural areas, key interest groups (including the renewables industry, environmental groups, community/voluntary, academic, professional bodies, representatives of rural and agricultural interests etc.)

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they? These include:

- AWRTN
- The SPPS, Edition 2
- The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

- Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022
 - NI Energy Strategy 'Path to Net Zero Energy'
 - Councils' Local Development Plans (LDPs)
 - Noise Policy Statement for Northern Ireland 2014
- who owns them?
 - DESNZ
 - Department for Infrastructure
 - NI Executive
 - Department for the Economy
 - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
 - Local Councils

Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data. The Commission has produced this guide to [signpost to S75 data](#).

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

As outlined above the Department has decided to apply the revised technical guidelines to assess and rate wind turbine noise in the Northern Ireland Planning system. This is due to the fact that the guidance that was in place, ETSU-R-97 has been replaced. The guidance was revised and updated by Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), who as the owners of the guidance, conducted carried out the requires screening. All four UK regions are to apply this new guidance.

The Department notes that WHO Environmental Noise Guidelines identify environmental noise as a potential health and wellbeing issue, particularly in relation to annoyance and sleep disturbance. The development of ARWTN considered the available evidence base relating to environmental noise, including WHO guidelines and research on human response to wind turbine noise, as described in the Background section.

In considering the use of this technical guidance within the Northern Ireland planning system, the Department has considered Government evidence relating to fuel poverty, energy affordability, public health and climate change, including the **Expert Advisory Panel's Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy (2020)**². This research highlights the relationship between energy costs, socio-economic disadvantage, air quality and health outcomes and emphasises the importance of ensuring that measures associated with decarbonisation and the transition to a low-carbon economy are implemented in a fair and socially inclusive manner.

The evidence indicates that some households, including households experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and households containing disabled persons, may face higher energy-related costs and may therefore be particularly affected by wider changes in energy policy and energy markets. The Department has also considered the latest available evidence on the prevalence of disability in Northern Ireland and the extent of poverty experienced by disabled people and their families. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 'Disability and Poverty in Northern Ireland report' indicates that for the first time

² [Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy](#)

the 'disability price tag' for Northern Ireland, finding that the costs of living with a disability are both substantial and rising, while incomes have not kept pace (Scope, 2023). Furthermore, the Disability Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Report highlights the barriers and inequalities experienced by disabled people in Northern Ireland and reinforces the need to consider the potential impact of public policy on people with disabilities. While the report does not address wind turbine noise specifically, it has been considered as contextual evidence regarding the disability equality category.

Whilst the use of the ARWTN does not directly impact on poverty, the Department notes that improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and the transition to a lower-carbon economy may contribute to wider societal benefits.

The updated technical guidance does not directly deliver renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure, allocate land for development and is not a determinative factor in the assessment of individual planning applications. Rather, it provides a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. Any site-specific impacts arising from individual wind energy developments will be considered through the preparation of LDPs and as part of the determination of planning applications.

The Department recognises that sensitivity and response to environmental noise may differ between individuals. While no evidence has been identified that the use of the ARWTN within the NI planning system would have differential impacts on disabled people as a group, WHO evidence (WHO Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region, 2018) highlights the need to consider potentially vulnerable individuals when assessing environmental noise impacts. The development of ARWTN considered the available evidence relating to environmental noise and human response to wind turbine noise, as outlined in the Background section.

The Noise Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (2014) seeks to avoid significant adverse impacts from noise while taking account of wider social, environmental and economic considerations. The Department considers that that NPS aligns very closely with ARWTN's purpose.

The purpose of ARWTN is to provide a consistent methodology for assessing and controlling operational wind turbine noise in order to protect nearby residents from adverse effects.

The ARWTN does not establish different standards for particular groups and is intended to protect neighbouring communities generally through a consistent assessment framework. Site-specific impacts, including any impacts on individual residents, remain matters for consideration through the planning process.

The use of ARWTN does not alter existing procedural safeguards within the planning system, including statutory consultation requirements, neighbour notification procedures, advertisement requirements and opportunities to submit representations on planning applications.

Summary of Equality Evidence

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the use of ARWTN guidance through the planning system in Northern Ireland is likely to have an adverse impact on any Section 75 category. As the revised technical guidance is current and up to date, the Department anticipates a positive impact from applying it in within the Northern Ireland planning system.

The Department also notes that DESNZ undertook a proportionate analysis which did not identify any direct impacts on protected groups as a result of a decision to update noise guidance (i.e. Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation).

The use of the updated technical guidance for the assessment of noise impacts from proposed wind energy developments shall apply consistently throughout Northern Ireland and does not contain provisions that distinguish between individuals or groups on the basis of Section 75 groups in Northern Ireland (i.e. age, disability, racial group, religious belief, political opinion, marital status, sexual orientation, men and women generally and persons with dependants).

The use of the updated guidance in the planning system in Northern Ireland will not directly deliver renewable wind energy infrastructure nor will it have any bearing on the allocation of land for development. It will not determine the location, scale or acceptability of individual wind energy planning applications. Rather, the use of ARWTN will provide robust evidence based, up to date and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and windfarm developments. Potential impacts associated with specific development proposals will be considered through LDPs, the development management process and any associated equality, environmental or other assessment processes, where required.

Religious belief evidence / information:

The 2021 Census³ for Northern Ireland found that 45.7% of the population identified as 'Catholic', 43.5% as 'Protestant, Other Christian or Christian related' and 1.5% as belonging to other religions. A further 9.3% of the population, reported having no religion or religion of upbringing. This represented an increase from 5.6% recorded in the 2011 Census.

The Equality Commission's Fair Employment Monitoring Report No. 35⁴ indicates that, within the monitored private sector workforce, 49.7% are from a Protestant community background and 50.3% are from a Roman Catholic community background.

DESNZ has indicated that they did not identify any direct impacts on protected characteristics groups. In considering the use of the guidance in the planning system in Northern Ireland as part of this equality screening, the Department has not identified any further evidence, to suggest that the use of the ARWTN is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons of a particular religious belief, or on those with no religious belief, relative to others. The updated technical guidance establishes a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It establishes guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects while supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. The use of the guidance will apply consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of religious belief.

Whilst potential societal benefits generally associated with the use of ARWTN, are identified on pages 2 and 3, the use of the guidance within the NI planning system does not allocate sites, grant planning permission, determine planning applications or confer specific benefits, restrictions or entitlements on any individual or group.

Any site-specific impacts arising from particular wind energy developments will be considered through the preparation of LDPs and during the determination of wind energy planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the LDP, the ARWTN, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations. In addition, equality screening

³ [Census 2021 Main statistics for Northern Ireland](#)

⁴ [Fair Employment Monitoring Report No.35](#)

assessments should also be undertaken by the relevant planning authority when formulating LDPs and when determining individual planning applications where required.

It is also worth noting that the revised policy on renewable and low carbon energy, contained within the SPPS Edition 2 (published December 2025) contains safeguards to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on matters such as human health, residential amenity, public safety, landscape, biodiversity and other environmental interests. Any concerns regarding noise or other amenity impacts will continue to be assessed by the relevant planning authority on a case-by-case basis, informed by specialist consultee advice and relevant technical guidance where appropriate.

The Department has found no further evidence, to indicate that the use of ARWTN will have a differential impact on persons of a particular religious belief, or on those with no religious belief. The use of the ARWTN is therefore not considered likely to result in adverse impacts in relation to this Section 75 category.

Political Opinion evidence / information:

The 2021 Census' 'National Identity statistical bulletin', September 2022⁵ found that 31.9% of the population identified as British only, 29.1% as Irish only, 19.8% as Northern Irish only and 19.2% identified with more than one of these identities or another national identity.

The results of the 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly election indicate that political support is distributed across a range of political perspectives, with substantial support for parties traditionally associated with unionist and nationalist viewpoints, alongside growing support for parties that do not identify with either constitutional position.

DESNZ has indicated that they did not identify any direct impacts on protected characteristics groups. In considering the use of the guidance in the planning system in Northern Ireland as part of this equality screening, the Department has not identified any further evidence to suggest that the use of the ARWTN is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons of a particular political opinion relative to others. The updated technical guidance establishes a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It establishes guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an

⁵ [Census 2021 Main statistics for Northern Ireland - Statistical bulletin - National identity](#)

appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects while supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. The use of the guidance will apply consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of political opinion.

Whilst there are potential societal benefits generally, associated with the use of ARWTN, are identified on pages 2 and 3, the use of the guidance within the NI planning system does not allocate sites, grant planning permission, determine planning applications or confer specific benefits, restrictions or entitlements on any individual or group.

Any site-specific impacts arising from particular wind energy developments will be considered through the preparation of LDPs and the determination of wind energy planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the LDP, ARWTN, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations. In addition, equality screening assessments should also be undertaken by the relevant planning authority when formulating LDPs and when determining individual planning applications where required

It is also worth noting that the revised policy on renewable and low carbon energy, contained within the SPPS Edition 2 (published December 2025) contains safeguards to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on matters such as human health, residential amenity, public safety, landscape, biodiversity and other environmental interests. Any concerns regarding noise or other amenity impacts will continue to be assessed by the relevant planning authority on a case-by-case basis, informed by specialist consultee advice and relevant technical guidance where appropriate.

The Department has found no further evidence, to indicate that the technical guidance for ARWTN will have a differential impact on persons holding different political opinions. The use of the ARWTN is therefore not considered likely to result in adverse impacts in relation to this Section 75 category.

Racial Group evidence / information:

The 2021 Census⁶ found that 1,837,600 (96.6% of the population) identified as being white. The largest minority ethnic groups were Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups (14,400), Black (11,000), Indian (9,900), Chinese (9,500) and Filipino (4,500). Irish Traveller, Arab, Pakistani and Roma ethnic groups each accounted for 1,500 people or more.

⁶ [Census 2021 Main statistics for Northern Ireland - Statistical bulletin - Ethnic group](#)

DESNZ has indicated that they did not identify any direct impacts on protected characteristics groups. In undertaking this equality screening to consider the use of the guidance in the planning system in Northern Ireland, the Department has not identified any further evidence to suggest that the use of the ARWTN is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons from different racial groups. The updated technical guidance establishes a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It establishes guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects while supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. The use of the guidance will apply consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of racial group.

Whilst there are potential societal benefits generally, associated with the use of ARWTN, are identified on pages 2 and 3, the use of the guidance within the NI planning system does not allocate sites, grant planning permission, determine planning applications or confer specific benefits, restrictions or entitlements on any individual or group.

Any site-specific impacts arising from particular wind energy developments will be considered through the preparation of LDPs and the determination of wind energy planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the LDP, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations. In addition, equality screening assessments should also be undertaken by the relevant planning authority when formulating LDPs and when determining individual planning applications where required.

It is also worth noting that the revised policy on renewable and low carbon energy, contained within the SPPS Edition 2 (published December 2025) contains safeguards to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on matters such as human health, residential amenity, public safety, landscape, biodiversity and other environmental interests. Any concerns regarding noise or other amenity impacts will continue to be assessed by the relevant planning authority on a case-by-case basis, informed by specialist consultee advice and relevant technical guidance where appropriate.

The Department has found no further evidence, to indicate that the technical guidance for ARWTN will have a differential impact on persons from different

racial groups. The use of the ARWTN is therefore not considered likely to result in adverse impacts in relation to this Section 75 category.

Age evidence / information:

Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency (NISRA) population statistics for 2024⁷ show the population of Northern Ireland continues to age. The number of those aged 65 and over increased by 2.0 per cent to reach 349,200 people (18.1 per cent of the population in 2024 compared with 17.8 per cent in 2023). In contrast, the number of children aged under 16 has decreased from 388,200 to 384,700 children (20.0 per cent of the 2024 population compared with 20.2 per cent of the 2023 population).

The 2021 Census⁸ similarly demonstrates a diverse age profile within Northern Ireland's population. Of all usual residents, 19.19% were aged 0–14 years, 31.23% were aged 15–39 years, 32.42% were aged 40–64 years and 17.16% were aged 65 years and over.

Population projections indicate that from approximately mid 2027 onwards, the number of people aged 65 and over is expected to exceed the number of children aged 0–15 years⁹.

DESNZ has indicated that they did not identify any direct impacts on protected characteristics groups. In undertaking this equality screening to consider the use of the guidance in the planning system in Northern Ireland, the Department has not identified any further evidence, to suggest that the use of ARWTN is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons of a particular age group, relative to others. The updated technical guidance establishes a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It establishes guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects while supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. The use of the guidance will apply consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of age.

Whilst potential societal benefits generally, associated with the use of ARWTN, are identified on pages 2 and 3, the use of the guidance within the NI planning system does not allocate sites, grant planning permission, determine planning

⁷ Registrar General Annual Report 2024 Population and Migration | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

⁸ Census 2021, Demography

⁹ 2022-based Population Projections for Northern Ireland

applications or confer specific benefits, restrictions or entitlements on any individual or group.

Any site-specific impacts arising from particular wind energy developments will be considered through the preparation of LDPs and the determination of wind energy planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the LDP, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations. In addition, equality screening assessments should also be undertaken by the relevant planning authority when formulating LDPs and when determining individual planning applications where required.

It is also worth noting that the revised policy on renewable and low carbon energy, contained within the SPPS Edition 2 (published December 2025) also contains safeguards to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on matters such as human health, residential amenity, public safety, landscape, biodiversity and other environmental interests. Any concerns relating to noise or other amenity impacts will continue to be assessed by the relevant planning authority on a case-by-case basis, informed by specialist consultee advice and relevant technical guidance where appropriate.

The Department has found no further evidence, to indicate that the use of ARWTN will have a differential impact on persons belonging to different age groups. The use of the ARWTN guidance is therefore not considered likely to result in adverse impacts in relation to this Section 75 category.

Marital Status evidence / information:

The Census 2021 for Northern Ireland contains information in relation to the marital and civil partnership status of the population within Northern Ireland¹⁰:

¹⁰ [Census 2021, Marital and Civil Partnership Status](#)

Table 1: Marital or civil partnership status (Census 2021)

Marital or civil partnership status	Population	Percent
Single (never married/civil partnered)	576,700	38.1%
Married	690,500	45.6%
In a civil partnership	2,700	0.2%
Separated [note 1]	57,300	3.8%
Divorced [note 1]	91,100	6.0%
Widowed [note 1]	96,400	6.4%
Population aged 16 and over	1,514,700	100.0%

[Note 1: These classifications include both the married and civil partnership equivalents. 'Separated' is 'separated (still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership)', 'divorced' is 'divorced or formerly in a civil partnership now dissolved' and 'widowed' is 'widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership']

Table 1 shows just less than half of people aged 16 and over were 'married or in a civil partnership' (45.8%) or 693,200 adults. The second largest group is those people who were 'single (never married/civil partnered)'; this group made up 38.1% of our population or 576,700 adults.

DESNZ has indicated that they did not identify any direct impacts on protected characteristics groups. In undertaking this equality screening to consider the use of the guidance in the planning system in Northern Ireland, the Department has not identified any further evidence, to suggest that the use of the ARWTN is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons of a particular marital status or civil partnership status relative to others. The updated technical guidance establishes a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It establishes guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects while supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. The use of the guidance will apply consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of marital status or civil partnership status.

Whilst potential societal benefits generally, associated with the use of ARWTN, are identified on pages 2 and 3, the use of the guidance within the NI planning system does not allocate sites, grant planning permission, determine planning applications or confer specific benefits, restrictions or entitlements on any individual or group.

Any site-specific impacts arising from particular wind energy developments will be considered through the preparation of LDPs and the determination of wind energy planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the LDP, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations. In addition, equality screening assessments should also be undertaken by the relevant planning authority when formulating LDPs and when determining individual planning applications where required.

It is also worth noting that the revised policy on renewable and low carbon energy, contained within the SPPS Edition 2 (published December 2025) also contains safeguards to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on matters such as human health, residential amenity, public safety, landscape, biodiversity and other environmental interests. Any concerns relating to noise or other amenity impacts will continue to be assessed by the relevant planning authority on a case-by-case basis, informed by specialist consultee advice and relevant technical guidance where appropriate.

The Department has found no further evidence to indicate that ARWTN will have a differential impact on persons based on their marital status or civil partnership status. The use of the ARWTN guidance is therefore not considered likely to result in adverse impacts in relation to this Section 75 category.

Sexual Orientation evidence / information:

The 2021 Census provides a breakdown of sexual orientation of all usual residents aged 16 and over. ¹¹A total of 90.04% stated they were straight or heterosexual, 2.09% stated they were gay/lesbian/bisexual/other sexual orientation, whilst 7.88% preferred not to say/not stated.

DESNZ has indicated that they did not identify any direct impacts on protected characteristics groups. In undertaking this equality screening to consider the use of the guidance in the planning system in Northern Ireland, the Department has not identified any further evidence to suggest that the use of the ARWTN is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons of a particular

¹¹ [Census 2021, Sexual Orientation](#)

sexual orientation, relative to others. The updated technical guidance establishes a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It establishes guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects while supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. The use of the guidance will apply consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of sexual orientation.

Whilst potential societal benefits generally, associated with the use of ARWTN, are identified on pages 2 and 3, the use of the guidance within the NI planning system does not allocate sites, grant planning permission, determine planning applications or confer specific benefits, restrictions or entitlements on any individual or group.

The ARWTN does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual wind energy proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular wind energy developments will be considered through the preparation of LDPs and the determination of wind energy planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the LDP, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations. In addition, equality screening assessments should also be undertaken by the relevant planning authority when formulating LDPs and when determining individual planning applications where required.

It is also worth noting that the revised policy on renewable and low carbon energy, contained within the SPPS Edition 2 (published December 2025) also contains safeguards to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on matters such as human health, residential amenity, public safety, landscape, biodiversity and other environmental interests. Any concerns relating to noise or other amenity impacts will continue to be assessed by the relevant planning authority on a case-by-case basis, informed by specialist consultee advice and relevant technical guidance where appropriate.

The Department has found no further evidence to indicate that the ARWTN will have a differential impact on persons based on their sexual orientation. The use of the ARWTN guidance is therefore not considered likely to result in adverse impacts in relation to this Section 75 category.

Men & Women generally evidence / information:

NISRA population estimates for 2020 show that 50.7% of the population were female and 49.3% were male¹². By 2031, projections are that the male/female balance will be 50/50 with that balance persisting to 2051.

NISRA Labour Force Survey¹³ data indicates that, in 2020, 52% (432,000) of those aged 16-64 in employment, were male, compared to 48% (392,000) who were Female. There are differences between the public and private sector. The public sector has a large majority of females within its composition (65%) whereas just under half (45%) of the private sector workforce is female.

NISRA data also indicates that the 2020 population of Northern Ireland is made up of 961,400 females and 934,200 males¹⁴, however our future workforce balance is estimated to be slightly male dominated as the current population split for ages 0-15 is 192,844 females with 203,081 males, a difference of 2.6%.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is leading on the Just Transition Commission for Northern Ireland¹⁵ within the Green Growth Strategy¹⁶. Furthermore, Queens University Belfast published an independent article on 'Mapping a Just Transition in Northern Ireland'¹⁷.

DESNZ has indicated that they did not identify any direct impacts on protected characteristics groups. In undertaking this equality screening to consider the use of the guidance in the planning system in Northern Ireland, the Department has not identified any further evidence, to suggest that the use of the ARWTN is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on men or women relative to one another. The updated technical guidance establishes a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It establishes guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects while supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. The use of the guidance will apply consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of sex.

¹² [Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2020](#)

¹³ [Labour Force Survey Annual Summary 2020](#)

¹⁴ [NISRA 2020 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#)

¹⁵ [Summary of the responses to the Consultation on the establishment of a Just Transition Commission | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁶ [A Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland - Balancing our climate, environment and economy | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁷ [Mapping a Just Energy Transition in Northern Ireland | Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action \(SECA\) | Queen's University Belfast](#)

Whilst potential societal benefits generally, associated with the use of ARWTN, are identified on pages 2 and 3, the use of the guidance within the NI planning system does not allocate sites, grant planning permission, determine planning applications or confer specific benefits, restrictions or entitlements on any individual or group.

The ARWTN does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual wind energy proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular wind energy developments will be considered through the preparation of LDPs and the determination of wind energy planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the LDP, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations. In addition, equality screening assessments should also be undertaken by the relevant planning authority when formulating LDPs and when determining individual planning applications where required.

It is also worth noting that the revised policy on renewable and low carbon energy, contained within the SPPS Edition 2 (published December 2025) also contains safeguards to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on matters such as human health, residential amenity, public safety, landscape, biodiversity and other environmental interests. Any concerns relating to noise or other amenity impacts will continue to be assessed by the relevant planning authority on a case-by-case basis, informed by specialist consultee advice and relevant technical guidance where appropriate.

The Department has found no further evidence to indicate that the ARWTN will have a differential impact on men or women generally. The use of the ARWTN guidance is therefore not considered likely to result in adverse impacts in relation to this Section 75 category.

Disability evidence / information:

NISRA's 'UK National Wellbeing Measures: Northern Ireland Data August 2018'¹⁸ report indicates that more than one fifth (21.7%) of those aged 16-64 in Northern Ireland reported a disability which was higher than in the UK overall (17.4%).

The 2021 Census provides a breakdown of long-term health problems/disabilities. Of all the usual residents, 11.45% stated that their day-to-

¹⁸ [August 2018 NI Wellbeing Report.pdf](#)

day activities were limited a lot, 12.88% stated their day-to-day activities were limited a little, whilst 75.67% stated their day-to-day activities were not limited¹⁹.

The Joeseph Rowntree Foundation's 'Disability and Poverty in Northern Ireland Report' (published 29 May 2026) indicates the latest available evidence on the prevalence of disability in Northern Ireland and the extent of poverty experienced by disabled people and their families. The report calculates for the first time a 'disability price tag' for Northern Ireland, finding that the costs of living with a disability are both substantial and rising, while incomes have not kept pace (Scope, 2023). The analysis shows that the extra costs associated with disability increased from 52% of total household income before the pandemic to 56% afterwards, with average monthly costs rising from £608 to £808. This financial strain is reflected in living standards with disabled households almost 3 times more likely to experience low affordability, such as being unable to heat their home, pay bills or replace household goods, and only 26% report high affordability compared to 43% of non-disabled households. Recent and unexpected spikes in energy prices are likely to exacerbate these pressures further.

The report also identifies that current or draft policy frameworks in Northern Ireland do not yet give sufficient focus to tackling the extra costs of disability or addressing the structural barriers facing a significant percentage of the overall population with a disability. This leaves a significant gap between the ambition of a fully inclusive and prosperous society envisioned within the current NI Executive's Programme for Government and disabled people's lived reality (NI Executive, 2025).

The Department has also considered wider government evidence relating to poverty, health inequalities and the transition to a lower-carbon economy. Evidence informing the development of an Anti-Poverty strategy has highlighted that poverty increases in households where disability and long-term health conditions are present and that such households can face higher energy-related cost than the general population. According to the Department of Health's Health Inequalities Annual Report 2025²⁰, the main health inequalities in Northern Ireland are linked to area deprivation, with people living in the most deprived areas experiencing significantly poorer health outcomes than those in the least deprived areas. The largest gaps were observed in healthy life expectancy, premature mortality, mental health outcomes, respiratory disease, drug use deaths and pregnancy-related indicators. The transition to zero carbon emissions including the increased use of renewable energy sources, has the

¹⁹ Long-term health problem or disability by broad age bands

²⁰ Health Inequalities Annual Report 2025

potential to contribute to wider societal benefits through improved energy security, reduced dependence on fossil fuels and reductions in emissions associated with fossil fuel combustion. Such outcomes may support wider government objectives relating to health, environmental quality and social wellbeing.

DESNZ has indicated that they did not identify any direct impacts on protected characteristics groups and in undertaking this equality screening to consider the use of the guidance in the planning system in Northern Ireland, the Department has not identified any further evidence to suggest that the use of the ARWTN is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on disabled persons relative to non-disabled persons. The updated technical guidance establishes a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It establishes guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects while supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. The use of the guidance will apply consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of disability status.

Whilst potential societal benefits generally associated with the use of the ARWTN, are identified on pages 2 and 3, In addition, equality screening assessments should also be undertaken by the relevant planning authority when formulating LDPs and when determining individual planning applications where required.

Any site-specific impacts arising from particular wind energy developments will be considered through the preparation of LDPs and the determination of wind energy planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the LDP, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations.

In addition, equality screening assessments should also be undertaken by the relevant planning authority when formulating LDPs and when determining individual planning applications where required.

It is also worth noting that the revised policy on renewable and low carbon energy, contained within the SPPS Edition 2 (published December 2025) also contains safeguards to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on matters such as human health, residential amenity, public safety, landscape, biodiversity and other environmental interests. Any concerns relating to noise or other amenity

impacts will continue to be assessed by the relevant planning authority on a case-by-case basis, informed by specialist consultee advice and relevant technical guidance where appropriate.

The Department has found no further evidence to indicate that the ARWTN will have a differential impact on disabled persons. The use of the updated ARWTN guidance is therefore not considered likely to result in adverse impacts in relation to this Section 75 category.

Dependants evidence / information:

The 2021 Census shows that for Northern Ireland 69% of the population have no dependent children, 12% of the population have one dependent child, 12% have two dependent children and 7% have three or more dependent children²¹. The Section 75 category of dependants encompasses those with caring responsibilities for children, older persons or others requiring care and support.

DESNZ has indicated that they did not identify any direct impacts on protected characteristics groups. In undertaking this equality screening to consider the use of the guidance in the planning system in Northern Ireland, the Department has not identified any further evidence, to suggest that the use of the ARWTN is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons with dependants, relative to those without dependants. The updated technical guidance establishes a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It establishes guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects while supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. The use of the guidance will apply consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of dependant status.

Whilst potential societal benefits generally, associated with the use of the ARWTN, are identified on pages 2 and 3, any site-specific impacts arising from particular windenergy developments will be considered through the preparation of LDPs and the determination of wind energy planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the LDP, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations. In addition, equality screening assessments should also be undertaken by the relevant planning authority when formulating LDPs and when determining individual planning applications where required.

²¹ [Census 2021, number of dependent children - households](#)

It is also worth noting that the revised policy on renewable and low carbon energy, contained within the SPPS Edition 2 (published December 2025) also contains safeguards to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on matters such as human health, residential amenity, public safety, landscape, biodiversity and other environmental interests. Any concerns relating to noise or other amenity impacts will continue to be assessed by the relevant planning authority on a case-by-case basis, informed by specialist consultee advice and relevant technical guidance where appropriate.

The Department has found no further evidence to indicate that the ARWTN will have a differential impact on persons with dependants or caring responsibilities. The use of the updated guidance is therefore not considered likely to result in adverse impacts in relation to this Section 75 category.

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision?

Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below:

As the previous guidance, ETSU-97-R was out of date a key benefit of using ARWTN guidance will allow for a robust evidence based, up to date and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and windfarm developments. The ARWTN contains guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities of all S75 groups receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects whilst also supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. It contains up to date and current methodologies for noise assessment, monitoring and compliance, together with example planning conditions that may be used by planning authorities when granting planning permission for wind energy developments. It will be a tool to assist with the consideration of potential noise impacts associated with specific wind energy development proposals.

The Expert Advisory Panel's 'Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy' report²² published by the Department for Communities in 2020 included the

²² [Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy](#)

impact on poverty in society of high levels of air pollution and the decarbonisation of home heating, electricity and transport.

The findings from the Expert Advisory Panel's 'Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy' report indicated that high levels of ammonia from farming and agribusiness contribute to high levels of particulate matter across the region, interacting with vehicle emissions to hugely impact child health. The impact of air pollution on health differs according to socio-economic conditions. In Northern Ireland in 2016/17, for example, the % gap in the standardised hospital admission rates for respiratory conditions, between residents of the most deprived areas and the least deprived areas is 93%. When we look only at under-75 year olds with respiratory conditions, the gap rises to 113%. These gaps have increased since 2013/14.²³

Research has estimated that families with a disabled child have additional costs of over £500 a month; for almost a quarter (24%) of families with disabled children, extra costs amount to over £1,000 a month.²⁴ Electricity and fuel costs are a large part of those regular expenses. Disabled people with limited mobility often have to use more heating to stay warm, whilst others need to use extra electricity to charge assistive technology items.²⁵

The Anti-Poverty Strategy (APS) advises that there are few signs that such thinking is embedded in public and private sectors in NI at present. But public policy will soon be dominated by decarbonisation of the economy, and the APS needs to ensure that labour market transitions and changes in energy and land use are socially just. In other words, the link between the climate emergency and an APS goes well beyond the issue of 'fuel poverty'.

The strategy needs to engage with the cross-cutting issues of:

- retrofitting of housing and other property;
- decarbonisation of home heating, transport, and electricity production
- changes in agriculture and land use;
- prioritising employment recruitment and training in areas of high unemployment;
- decentralisation from the Belfast urban area, with reduced commuter carbon footprint.

In considering the use of ARWTN, the Department recognises that residents may have differing experiences of environmental noise. Available evidence

²³ [Health inequalities annual report 2025 | Department of Health](#)

²⁴ [Scope offers four strategies to reduce the Disability Price Tag | Disability Rights UK](#)

²⁵ [Left Out In The Cold The Hidden Health Costs Of Cold Homes](#)

indicates that environmental noise can affect health and wellbeing, particularly in relation to annoyance and sleep disturbance. The Department also recognises that some individuals, including some disabled persons and older people, may experience environmental noise differently. However, ARWTN establishes a single evidence-based assessment framework intended to protect neighbouring communities generally and does not establish different standards or levels of protection for different groups.

The use of renewable energy sources, including wind energy development, can benefit society in general by reducing fuel poverty, providing climate change mitigation, and improving health by reducing pollution associated with carbon gas emissions. In considering the use of this technical guidance in the Northern Ireland planning system, the Department acknowledges the wider societal benefits which may arise from increased wind energy generation. However, the Department also accepts that the use of the updated guidance in Northern Ireland will not directly deliver renewable wind energy infrastructure. Rather, a key benefit of the use of ARWTN will allow for robust evidence based, up to date and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and windfarm developments. The ARWTN contains guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects whilst also supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. It contains up to date and current methodologies for noise assessment, monitoring and compliance, together with example planning conditions that may be used by planning authorities when granting planning permission for wind energy developments. It will be a tool to assist with the consideration of potential noise impacts associated with specific wind energy development proposals.

No specific needs, experiences or priorities relating to any s75 category were identified that would indicate the need for differential treatment in relation to how this guidance is applied in Northern Ireland.

Religious belief

While there are no specific needs, experience or priorities relating to religious belief identified for this s75 group in relation to the use of the updated technical guidance in Northern Ireland, the two-tier planning system enables potential noise impacts for all societal Section 75 groups to be considered and assessed in the process of determining individual planning applications.

Political Opinion

No specific needs, experiences or priorities relating to political opinion were identified in relation to the use of the technical guidance within the NI planning system. The guidance applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of political opinion and will allow for a robust, up to date and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and windfarm developments. In addition, the two-tier planning system enables potential noise impacts on for all societal Section 75 groups to be considered in the process of the determining individual planning applications.

Racial Group

No specific needs, experiences or priorities relating to racial group were identified in relation to the use of the technical guidance within the NI planning system. The guidance applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of race or ethnic origin and will provide a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and windfarm developments. In addition, the two-tier planning system enables potential noise impacts on for all societal Section 75 groups to be considered in the process of the determining individual planning applications.

Age

The Department recognises that different age groups may experience environmental noise differently, including children and older persons. However, no evidence has been identified that would indicate the need for different assessment standards or differential application of ARWTN on the basis of age.

The updated guidance applies consistently across all age groups and seeks to provide an up to date and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and windfarm developments. In addition, the two-tier planning system enables potential noise impacts on for all societal Section 75 groups to be considered in the process of the determining individual planning applications.

Marital status

No specific needs, experiences or priorities relating to marital status were identified in relation to the use of the technical guidance within the NI planning system. While there are no specific needs, experience or priorities relating to marital status identified for this s75 group in relation to the use of the updated technical guidance in Northern Ireland, the two-tier planning system enables potential noise impacts for all societal Section 75 groups to be considered and assessed in the process of determining individual planning applications.

Sexual orientation

No specific needs, experiences or priorities relating to sexual orientation were identified in relation to the use of the technical guidance within the NI planning system. While there are no specific needs, experience or priorities relating to sexual orientation identified for this s75 group in relation to the use of the updated technical guidance in Northern Ireland, the two-tier planning system enables potential noise impacts for all societal Section 75 groups to be considered and assessed in the process of determining individual planning applications.

Men and Women Generally

The Paris Agreement²⁶ takes into account the ‘Just Transition of the Workforce and the Creation of Decent Work and Quality Jobs.’²⁷ technical paper. The technical paper indicates that social inclusion through improved access to affordable, environmentally sustainable clean energy with health benefits are of particular relevance to women and residents in rural areas. It also states that the transition towards inclusive and low-carbon economies must be just and fair, maximizing opportunities for economic prosperity, social justice, rights and social protection for all, leaving no one behind. For this reason, the Paris Agreement stated the imperative of just transition as essential elements of climate action. A just transition therefore can play a strong role in promoting equality between men and women.

The Department has considered evidence (see page 23) relating to the concept of a just transition and the importance of ensuring that the benefits and opportunities arising from decarbonisation are shared fairly across society. No specific needs, experiences or priorities affecting men and women differently were identified in relation to the use of the technical guidance within the NI planning system.

The updated guidance applies consistently irrespective of sex and seeks to provide an up to date and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and windfarm developments.

The ARWTN guidance establishes a consistent framework for assessing and controlling operational wind turbine noise and applies equally irrespective of sex. It does not contain provisions that differentiate between men and women, nor does it confer specific benefits, restrictions or entitlements on either group. Accordingly, no differential treatment or alternative measures have been identified as necessary. In addition, the two-tier planning system enables

²⁶ [The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC](#)

²⁷ [Just Transition of the Workforce, and the Creation of Decent Work and Quality Jobs](#)

potential noise impacts for all societal Section 75 groups to be considered and assessed in the process of determining individual planning applications.

Disability

The Department has considered evidence (see page 24) indicating that disabled people and households containing disabled persons may experience higher energy-related costs and may therefore be affected by wider changes in energy systems and energy affordability.

The Department also recognises that sensitivity and response to environmental noise may differ between individuals. While no evidence has been identified that the use of the ARWTN within the NI planning system would have differential impacts on disabled people as a group, WHO evidence (WHO Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region, 2018) highlights the need to consider potentially vulnerable individuals when assessing environmental noise impacts. The ARWTN has taken account of the latest evidence. It is intended to provide a consistent assessment framework for protecting neighbouring residents from adverse noise effects and does not establish different standards on the basis of disability.

The updated guidance applies consistently irrespective of disability status and contains guidelines for the control of wind turbine noise so that neighbouring communities receive an appropriate level of protection from adverse noise effects whilst also supporting the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure.

In addition, the two-tier planning system enables potential noise impacts for all societal Section 75 groups to be considered and assessed in the process of determining individual planning applications.

Dependants

The Department has considered evidence (see page 27) relating to households with children and caring responsibilities, including evidence on energy affordability and health impacts associated with air pollution.

The Department recognises that households with dependants may have particular interests relating to residential amenity, wellbeing and sleep disturbance. However, ARWTN is intended to protect neighbouring communities generally and no specific needs have been identified that would require differential application of the guidance.

The updated guidance applies consistently irrespective of dependant status and provides an up to date and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and windfarm developments. In addition, the two-tier planning system enables potential noise impacts for all societal Section 75 groups to be considered and assessed in the process of determining individual planning applications.

Part 2. Screening questions

Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the questions 1-4 which are given on pages 66-68 of this Guide.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of a 'major' impact

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;

- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

In favour of 'minor' impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting and/or applying appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of none

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

Screening questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:

This targeted technical update to ETSU-R-97 follows the scoping review commissioned by Government and published by WSP in 2023, which considered evolutions in turbine technology and developments in wind turbine noise assessment methodologies since 1996, as well as established best practice and the latest available evidence in the field. The Department's decision to introduce the ARWTN technical guidance within the NI planning system is to provide a consistent framework for assessing and controlling operational wind turbine noise and is intended to protect neighbouring communities from adverse noise effects a robust and proportionate framework for assessing and rating operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. As such the impact of the guidance is considered potentially positive for Section 75 groups.

What is the level of impact? **Positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: As outlined above.

What is the level of impact? **Positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: As outlined above.

What is the level of impact? **Positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**: As outlined above

What is the level of impact? **Positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**: As outlined above

What is the level of impact? **Positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**: As outlined above

What is the level of impact? **Positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**: As outlined above

What is the level of impact? **Positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**: As outlined above

What is the level of impact? **Positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**: As outlined above

What is the level of impact? **Positive**

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories? **No**

The use of the ARWTN guidance establishes a robust and proportionate framework from which to assess operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It does not confer benefits, restrictions or entitlements on specific groups and applies consistently across all Section 75 categories.

The Department has not identified any additional opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity through incorporating the use of this guidance into the Northern Ireland planning system.

Detail opportunities of how this policy could promote equality of opportunity for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

Religious Belief -

If No, provide reasons:

No additional opportunities identified. The ARWTN is technical guidance. It applies consistently irrespective of religious belief and existing opportunities for participation in plan-making and in the planning application process remain unchanged. The guidance does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual wind energy development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular wind energy developments will be considered through the determination of planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess wind energy proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the LDP, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations.

Political Opinion - If No, provide reasons: No – as above

Racial Group - If No, provide reasons: No – as above

Age - If No, provide reasons: No – as above

Marital Status - If No, provide reasons: No – as above

Sexual Orientation - If No, provide reasons: No – as above

Men and Women generally - If No, provide reasons: No – as above

Disability - If No, provide reasons: No – as above

Dependants - If No, provide reasons: No – as above

3. **To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

Please provide details of the likely policy impact and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:

No – This is technical guidance and does not present opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious beliefs.

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: As outlined above.

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: As outlined above.

What is the level of impact? None

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Detail opportunities of how this policy could better promote good relations for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

Religious Belief -

No. The use of the updated technical guidance provides a robust and proportionate framework from which to assess operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It is not specifically aimed at promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Department has not identified any additional opportunities to better promote good relations through incorporating the use of this guidance into the Northern Ireland planning system.

Political Opinion - No - as above.

Racial Group - No – as above.

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

(For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Generally, individuals may fall within more than one Section 75 category (for example, disabled older people, or individuals from minority ethnic groups with caring responsibilities).

The Department's decision to apply the updated guidance in Northern Ireland should potentially have a positive impact on people with multiple identities.

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

None

Part 3. Screening decision

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced - please provide details.

In deciding to apply the updated guidance, the Department has carefully considered the available quantitative and qualitative evidence, and the nature of the updated ARWTN technical guidance.

No evidence has been identified to indicate that the use of the updated technical guidance is likely to result in a significant adverse impact, either directly or indirectly, on any of the Section 75 categories.

The use of DESNZ's updated guidance within the Northern Ireland planning system provides a robust, evidence-based and up-to-date framework for the assessment of operational noise from individual wind turbines and wind farms. It does not allocate wind energy development sites, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual wind energy development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from such development will be considered as part of the determination of wind energy planning applications, where equality considerations can be assessed at the appropriate level.

While no adverse or differential impacts have been identified, the use of the guidance in Northern Ireland may contribute indirectly to wider societal benefits associated with harnessing wind to provide improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a lower-carbon economy. Any such benefits have the potential to be experienced across all sections of the community.

In addition to the ARWTN guidance, it is also worth noting that the revised policy on renewable and low carbon energy, contained within the SPPS Edition 2 (published December 2025) contains safeguards to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development (including wind energy development) does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on matters including human health, residential amenity, public safety, landscape, biodiversity and environmental quality. The Department has concluded that the use of ARWTN within the Northern Ireland planning system is not likely to have a significant adverse impact on equality of opportunity or good relations. Accordingly, the use of ARWTN technical guidance as a material consideration in the planning system is screened out and a full EQIA is not required.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

N/A

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted, applied or proposed to be adopted or applied by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

Mitigation

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

No

If so, **give the reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

N/A

Timetabling and prioritising

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been '**screened in**' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion [Author pick 1 2 or 3 if a full EQIA is to take place]

Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations **Rating 1 -3**

Social need **Rating 1-3**

Effect on people's daily lives **Rating 1-3**

Relevance to a public authority's functions **Rating 1-3**

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? **No**

If yes, please provide details. N/A

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Philip McGowan & Joy Hargie
Position/Job Title: PPTO
Date: July 2026

Approved by: Rosemary Daly
Position/Job Title: Director of Regional Planning Governance and Legislation
Date: September 2026

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each policy screened should be 'signed off' and approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy, made easily accessible on the public authority's website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.

For Equality Team Completion:

Date Received: 31.07.26
Amendments Requested: Yes
Date Returned to Business Area: 06.08.26
Date Final Version Received / Confirmed: 30.09.26
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