

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

Revised Regional Strategic Planning Policy on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy, to be incorporated within the Strategic Planning Policy Statement, Edition 2 (SPPS).

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

This is a revision to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) on the topic of renewable and low carbon energy development. When published, the revised policy will replace the Subject Policy titled “Renewable Energy” (The SPPS (2015), pages 90 – 93 refer). In addition, Planning Policy Statement 18 ‘Renewable Energy’ (2009), retained under the transitional arrangements of the SPPS, will be cancelled on publication of the revised policy.

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

The SPPS is the Department’s policy framework for securing the orderly and consistent development of land and the planning of that development under the two-tier planning system. The provisions of the SPPS, including this policy revision to it, apply to the whole of Northern Ireland; must be taken into account in the preparation of Local Development Plans, and are material to all decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.

The revised policy establishes a strategic framework for renewable and low carbon energy development. It does not allocate development sites, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals.

The revision is intended to ensure that regional strategic planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy development remains fit for purpose and up to date to inform decisions on development proposals and plan-making. It is also intended to support the preparation of Local Development Plans by providing an up-to-date strategic planning framework within which councils can develop local planning policies.

The review has been undertaken in the context of wider government policy and legislative developments, including the Energy Strategy (published 16 December 2021), the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 and the draft Climate Change Action Plan 2023–2027 published on 19 June 2025.

The Energy Strategy established a target of 70% renewable electricity consumption by 2030, which was subsequently increased to 80% under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

In addition, the Department for Infrastructure has committed, through an action contained within the Department for the Economy's Energy Strategy Action Plan for 2025, to publish the revised regional strategic planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy.

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

If so, explain how.

Minor positive impacts may arise for all Section 75 groups through the policy's contribution to improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for Northern Ireland's transition to a net zero economy.

The revised policy applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland and does not contain provisions that differentiate between individuals or groups on the basis of any Section 75 characteristic. Any benefits associated with improved energy security, climate change mitigation and sustainable economic development therefore have the potential to be experienced across all Section 75 groups.

A draft revised policy document was subjected to a 12-week public consultation exercise (6 April – 30 June 2023), and no S75 issues were raised by respondents.

In addition, no S75 issues were raised during the process of seeking Executive Committee agreement to the publication of revised regional strategic planning policy on renewable low carbon energy.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Department for Infrastructure is responsible for the revised SPPS which was brought forward following Ministerial direction.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The revised policy is owned by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), and will be implemented by the Department, Council Planning Authorities, and the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC).

Review of this Screening

The first version of this Section 75 Equality screening form was published on 12 December 2025.

Following receipt of representations regarding the screening assessment, correspondence with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, and the publication of updated wind turbine noise guidance, the Department undertook a review of the screening assessment.

The Department has also undertaken a separate Section 75 Equality Screening in relation to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's technical guidance titled *Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise*¹, published on 19 June 2026.

Background

Natural sources of renewable energy of course occur where they are found.

The main sources of renewable and low carbon energy are wind, sun (solar photovoltaic / thermal energy), moving water (hydropower), heat extracted from the air, ground, and water (including geothermal energy), biomass (wood, biodegradable waste, and energy crops such as for use in an Anaerobic Digester)

Planning has an important role in facilitating the delivery of acceptable renewable and low carbon energy development across Northern Ireland. Renewable and low carbon energy development can contribute to energy security, reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels, support the transition to a

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

lower carbon economy, and assist in meeting climate change objectives. It can also stimulate investment in new jobs and businesses.

The revision of regional strategic planning policy is intended to ensure that regional policy on renewable and low carbon energy development remains fit for purpose and up to date to inform decision-making on development proposals and to inform the development of local policies in Local Development Plan (LDPs). The review has been undertaken within the context of wider government policy and legislative developments, including the Energy Strategy (published on 16 December 2021), the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, and the draft Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2027 (published 19 June 2025).

The Energy Strategy established a target of 70% renewable electricity consumption by 2030, which was then increased to 80% by 2030 under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. The revised policy supports the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy development in a manner consistent with these wider policy objectives.

The aim of the policy revision is to maximise sustainable renewable and low carbon energy from a wide range of technologies, at various scales, in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment, without compromising other environmental assets of acknowledged importance. The planning system has already made a positive contribution to meeting and exceeding previous renewable energy strategy targets with 48% of total metered electricity consumption in Northern Ireland being generated from renewable sources located in Northern Ireland to date.²

Policy Development and Consultation

On 21 April 2021, following Ministerial direction, the Department commenced a review of regional strategic planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy.

An Issues Paper was circulated to targeted stakeholders on 15 December 2021 for an eight-week consultation period, which concluded on 11 February 2022. More than 40 responses were received.

Having considered the responses received, together with relevant technical evidence, the Department prepared a draft revised policy consultation

² [Electricity Consumption and Renewable Generation in Northern Ireland](#)

document. This was published on 6 April 2023 for a twelve-week public consultation period ending on 30 June 2023.

The consultation sought views from stakeholders and interested parties with an interest in renewable and low carbon energy development. No representations were received raising concerns relating to Section 75 equality considerations.

Key changes introduced through the revised policy include:

- additional support for the repowering, expansion and extension of wind and solar energy developments where impacts are acceptable;
- greater flexibility regarding separation distances for wind energy development;
- improved policy support for emerging renewable and low carbon technologies where robust evidence demonstrates that potential impacts can be satisfactorily addressed.

The policy also ensures that proposals are not permitted where the proposal will result in unacceptable impacts on a range of material planning considerations including, public safety, human health and residential amenity. Such planning applications would be refused planning permission by the relevant planning authority.

Given the cross-cutting nature of the revised policy, it was circulated to Executive Ministers on 19 September 2024. Executive agreement to publication of the revised policy was subsequently secured.

The Two-Tier Planning System

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.

The revised policy forms part of the Department's statutory function to formulate and coordinate planning policy in Northern Ireland under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Importantly, the planning system includes established statutory processes that enable individuals, communities and organisations to participate in both policy development and planning decision-making. 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 revised policy does not alter existing statutory consultation requirements, rights of participation or rights of representation within the planning system.

Relationship to Equality Considerations

The revised policy establishes a strategic framework for renewable and low carbon energy development across Northern Ireland. It does not allocate sites, grant planning permission, determine planning applications or confer specific benefits, restrictions or entitlements on any individual or group.

The policy applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland and does not contain provisions that distinguish between persons on the basis of any Section 75 category.

The revised policy contains safeguards designed to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development does not result in unacceptable impacts.

Paragraph 6.223 provides that “All renewable and low carbon energy development, any associated buildings, and supporting infrastructure will be permitted where the proposal will not result in an unacceptable adverse impact (alone or in combination with other developments) on the following planning considerations:

- public safety, such as roads, rail, and aviation safety (including communications interference);
- human health;
- residential amenity and impacts on other such sensitive receptors⁵² (communities and individuals, including future occupants of committed developments);
- visual amenity and landscape character, including cumulative impact (see also paragraph 6.225 in respect of proposals impacting designated landscapes);
- biodiversity and geodiversity, nature conservation, archaeological or built heritage interests;
- local natural resources, such as air quality, water quality or quantity;
- the capacity of and effects on the transportation network; and,
- impacts on tourism, recreation, and public access to the countryside.”

The policy therefore seeks to balance the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure with the protection of communities, environmental assets and other planning interests.

Equality Screening and Subsequent Stages

The revised policy (para. 6.224) recognises community engagement as an important component of the planning system and community representations are material considerations in both plan-making and decision-taking processes.

This equality screening is considered proportionate and appropriate to the development of regional strategic planning policy. The policy operates at a strategic level and does not itself authorise development or determine specific locations for renewable or low carbon energy infrastructure.

The two-tier planning system enables potential impacts on Section 75 groups to be considered and assessed at the most appropriate level. While regional planning policy provides the strategic framework, the detailed implications of any proposed local policies, development zonings, site-specific requirements and individual development proposals are more appropriately assessed through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications.

Accordingly, equality screening assessments should be undertaken by the relevant council when preparing its Local Development Plan and by the relevant planning authority when determining individual planning applications where required.

In practice, planning applications will continue to be assessed on their individual merits, having regard to the SPPS, the Local Development Plan for the area, local circumstances, statutory consultee responses, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations. The relevance and weight to be attached to material considerations remains a matter for the judgement of the decision-taker.

While the revised policy supports appropriate renewable and low carbon energy development in suitable locations, it does not predetermine the outcome of any planning application. Whether a proposal is acceptable remains a matter for determination by the relevant planning authority on a case-by-case basis.

Wind Turbine Noise Guidance

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.

In June 2026, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero published *Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise*, which replaces ETSU-R-97 and provides updated technical guidance for assessing and controlling operational noise from wind turbines. References to ETSU-R-97 in planning policy and guidance are intended to be interpreted as references to the updated guidance. A separate equality screening has been undertaken in relation to that technical guidance.

The guidance is one of a number of material considerations that may be taken into account when determining planning applications. It is not determinative of planning outcomes and must be considered alongside other relevant material considerations, including environmental information, consultee responses, representations received and the provisions of the Local Development Plan.

Any potential noise impacts arising from any proposed application for wind turbines will therefore be considered, where relevant, through the determination of individual planning applications by the appropriate planning authority.

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 planning system, including planning authorities, (DfI, Council Planning Authorities and the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC), developers, applicants, agents and statutory consultees, have a key role to play in interpreting and applying the policy. Planning authorities could contribute to or detract from the intended aim of the policy through any significant delay in the

adoption/or review of their local development plans or resulting from their local interpretation and application of the revised policy.

Main stakeholders affected

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

Staff – Yes

Service Users - applicants/agents submitting a planning application.

Other public sector organisations -

Local Planning Authorities, The Planning Appeals Commission (PAC), Statutory Consultees

Other, please specify - General public, key interest groups (including renewable industry, environmental groups, community/voluntary, academic, professional bodies etc.)

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they? These include:

- The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035
- Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022
- NI Energy Strategy 'Path to Net Zero Energy'
- The revised subject policy must be read together with other policy provisions within the SPPS, such as 'Natural Heritage'.
- Councils' Local Development Plans (LDPs)

- who owns them?

- Department for Infrastructure
- NI Executive
- Department for the Economy
- Other Government Departments
- 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.

Throughout the development of this policy revision, the department has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including government departments in Northern Ireland, Britain and Ireland representatives of the renewable energy sector, business interests, environmental organisations, community and voluntary groups, professional bodies and academic institutions.

The policy review commenced with a **Call for Evidence** issued on 7 March 2016, which closed on 6 May 2016 and attracted 36 responses. An **Emerging Issues Paper**, together with all consultation responses, was subsequently published by the Department.

To further inform the policy review, the Department commissioned independent research in April 2017. In addition, an **Issues Paper** consultation was undertaken between 15 December 2021 and 11 February 2022, attracting 42 responses. This was followed by consultation on a **Draft Revised Policy** between 6 April 2023 and 30 June 2023, which generated 66 substantive responses.

The consultation and engagement exercises assisted the Department in identifying planning, environmental, economic and social considerations relevant to renewable and low carbon energy development. No respondents identified concerns regarding adverse impacts on any Section 75 category arising from the revised policy proposals.

The Department has also considered wider 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)**.³ 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

³ [Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy](#)

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 notes that improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and the transition to a lower-carbon economy may contribute to wider societal benefits.

However, the revised policy is a strategic planning policy and does not directly deliver renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure, allocate land for development or determine individual planning applications. Rather, it establishes a regional planning framework within which decisions are made. Any site-specific impacts arising from individual renewable and low carbon energy developments will be considered through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications.

Wind Turbine Noise Guidance

On 19 June 2026, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) published **Assessment and Rating of Wind Turbine Noise**, which replaces ETSU-R-97 as the principal technical guidance for assessing operational noise from wind turbine development. The updated guidance reflects developments in turbine technology, noise assessment methodologies and the available evidence relating to wind turbine noise.

The updated guidance:

- retains the existing noise criteria established under ETSU-R-97;
- updates descriptions of wind turbine noise characteristics to reflect technological developments;
- formally incorporates established best-practice guidance produced by the Institute of Acoustics; and
- provides updated guidance on the assessment and control of amplitude modulation.

The Department understands that DESNZ developed the updated guidance following technical review, stakeholder engagement and public consultation involving government departments, acoustic specialists, industry representatives and professional bodies, and took account of the responses of those who engaged with their consultation.

The Department has undertaken a separate Section 75 Equality Screening in relation to the updated technical guidance.

Summary of Equality Evidence

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised strategic planning policy is likely to have an adverse impact on any Section 75 category.

The revised policy applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland and does not contain provisions that distinguish between individuals or groups on the basis of age, disability, racial group, religious belief, political opinion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, dependency status or gender identity.

While wider societal benefits may arise from increased renewable and low carbon energy generation, the revised policy itself operates at a strategic level and does not determine the location, scale or acceptability of individual developments. Potential impacts associated with specific development proposals will be considered through Local Development Plans, planning applications and any associated equality, environmental or other assessment processes, where required.

Religious belief evidence / information:

The 2021 Census⁴ 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. 35⁵ 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.

Throughout the development of the revised policy, the Department engaged with a wide range of stakeholders through consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and the Executive clearance process. While information on respondents was not collected by reference to religious belief, no consultation

⁴ [Census 2021 Main statistics for Northern Ireland](#)

⁵ [Fair Employment Monitoring Report No.35](#)

responses identified religious belief as a factor giving rise to differential impacts from the revised policy.

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy 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 revised policy establishes a strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development and applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of religious belief.

Whilst respondents to consultation exercises identified potential societal benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy development, including improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a net zero economy, there is no evidence that any such benefits would accrue differently to persons on the basis of religious belief.

The revised policy does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular renewable or low carbon energy developments will be considered through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the Local Development Plan, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations.

The revised policy 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 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. Furthermore, the practice operationally can enable planning authorities to allow amended proposals to be submitted for consideration and/or conditions to be attached to planning permissions in order for the proposal to be considered acceptable and address potential concerns which would otherwise deem the proposal unacceptable.

Accordingly, the Department has found no evidence to indicate that the revised policy will have a differential impact on persons of a particular religious belief, or on those with no religious belief. The policy revision 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 2022⁶ 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.

Throughout the development of the revised policy, the Department engaged with a wide range of stakeholders through consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and the Executive clearance process. While information on respondents was not collected by reference to political opinion, no consultation responses identified political opinion as a factor giving rise to differential impacts from the revised policy.

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons of a particular political opinion relative to others. The revised policy establishes a strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development and applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of political opinion.

Whilst respondents to consultation exercises identified potential societal benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy development, including improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a net zero economy, there is no evidence that any such benefits would accrue differently to persons on the basis of political opinion.

The revised policy does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular renewable and low carbon energy developments will be considered through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the Local Development Plan, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations.

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

The revised policy 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. Furthermore, the practice operationally can enable planning authorities to allow amended proposals to be submitted for consideration and/or conditions to be attached to planning permissions in order for the proposal to be considered acceptable and address potential concerns which would otherwise deem the proposal unacceptable.

Accordingly, the Department has found no evidence to indicate that the revised policy will have a differential impact on persons holding different political opinions. The policy revision is therefore not considered likely to result in adverse impacts in relation to this Section 75 category.

Racial Group evidence / information:

The 2021 Census⁷ 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.

Throughout the development of the revised policy, the Department engaged with a broad range of stakeholders through consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and the Executive clearance process. While information on respondents was not collected by reference to racial group, no consultation responses identified race or ethnicity as a factor giving rise to differential impacts from the revised policy.

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons from a particular racial group relative to others. The revised policy establishes a strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development and applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of race, ethnicity, nationality or ethnic origin.

⁷ [Census 2021 Main statistics for Northern Ireland - Statistical bulletin - Ethnic group](#)

Whilst respondents to consultation exercises identified potential societal benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy development, including improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a net zero economy, there is no evidence that any such benefits would accrue differently to particular racial groups.

The revised policy does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular renewable and low carbon energy developments will be considered through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the Local Development Plan, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations.

The revised policy 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. Furthermore, the practice operationally can enable planning authorities to allow amended proposals to be submitted for consideration and/or conditions to be attached to planning permissions in order for the proposal to be considered acceptable and address potential concerns which would otherwise deem the proposal unacceptable.

Accordingly, the Department has found no evidence to indicate that the revised policy will have a differential impact on persons from different racial groups. The policy revision 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 2024⁸ 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

⁸ Registrar General Annual Report 2024 Population and Migration | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

to 384,700 children (20.0 per cent of the 2024 population compared with 20.2 per cent of the 2023 population).

The 2021 Census⁹ 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 years.¹⁰

Throughout the development of the revised policy, the Department engaged with a broad range of stakeholders through consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and the Executive clearance process. While information on respondents was not collected by reference to age, no consultation responses identified age as a factor giving rise to differential impacts from the revised policy.

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons of a particular age group relative to others. The revised policy establishes a strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development and applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of age. Whilst respondents to consultation exercises identified potential societal benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy development, including improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a net zero economy, there is no evidence that any such benefits would accrue differently to particular age groups.

The revised policy does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular renewable and low carbon energy developments will be considered through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the Local Development Plan, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations.

⁹ [Census 2021, Demography](#)

¹⁰ [2022-based Population Projections for Northern Ireland](#)

The revised policy 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. Furthermore, the practice operationally can enable planning authorities to allow amended proposals to be submitted for consideration and/or conditions to be attached to planning permissions in order for the proposal to be considered acceptable and address potential concerns which would otherwise deem the proposal unacceptable.

Accordingly, the Department has found no evidence to indicate that the revised policy will have a differential impact on persons belonging to different age groups. The policy revision 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 Ireland¹¹:

¹¹ [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.

Throughout the development of the revised policy, the Department engaged with a broad range of stakeholders through consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and the Executive clearance process. While information on respondents was not collected by reference to marital status or civil partnership status, no consultation responses identified these characteristics as factors giving rise to differential impacts from the revised policy.

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy 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 revised policy establishes a strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development and applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of marital status or civil partnership status.

Whilst respondents to consultation exercises identified potential societal benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy development, including improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a net zero economy, there is no evidence that any such benefits would accrue differently to individuals on the basis of their marital status or civil partnership status.

The revised policy does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular renewable and low carbon energy developments will be considered through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the Local Development Plan, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations.

The revised policy 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. Furthermore, the practice operationally can enable planning authorities to allow amended proposals to be submitted for consideration and/or conditions to be attached to planning permissions in order for the proposal to be considered acceptable and address potential concerns which would otherwise deem the proposal unacceptable.

Accordingly, the Department has found no evidence to indicate that the revised policy will have a differential impact on persons based on their marital status or civil partnership status. The policy revision 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 over¹². A 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.

¹² [Census 2021, Sexual Orientation](#)

Throughout the development of the revised policy, the Department engaged with a broad range of stakeholders through consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and the Executive clearance process. While information on respondents was not collected by reference to sexual orientation, no consultation responses identified sexual orientation as a factor giving rise to differential impacts from the revised policy.

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons of a particular sexual orientation relative to others. The revised policy establishes a strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development and applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of sexual orientation.

Whilst respondents to consultation exercises identified potential societal benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy development, including improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a net zero economy, there is no evidence that any such benefits would accrue differently to individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation.

The revised policy does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular renewable and low carbon energy developments will be considered through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the Local Development Plan, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations.

The revised policy 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. Furthermore, the practice operationally can enable planning authorities to allow amended proposals to be submitted for consideration and/or conditions to be attached to planning permissions in order for the proposal to be considered acceptable and address potential concerns which would otherwise deem the proposal unacceptable.

Accordingly, the Department has found no evidence to indicate that the revised policy will have a differential impact on persons based on their sexual orientation. The policy revision 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 male¹³. By 2031, projections are that the male/female balance will be 50/50 with that balance persisting to 2051.

NISRA Labour Force Survey¹⁴ 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 males¹⁵, 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 male, a difference of 2.6%.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is leading on the Just Transition Commission for Northern Ireland¹⁶ within the Green Growth Strategy¹⁷. Furthermore, Queens University Belfast published an independent article on 'Mapping a Just Transition in Northern Ireland'¹⁸.

Throughout the development of the revised policy, the Department engaged with a broad range of stakeholders through consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and the Executive clearance process. While information on respondents was not collected by reference to sex, no consultation responses identified men and women generally as a factor giving rise to differential impacts from the revised policy.

¹³ [Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2020](#)

¹⁴ [Labour Force Survey Annual Summary 2020](#)

¹⁵ [NISRA 2020 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#)

¹⁶ [Summary of the responses to the Consultation on the establishment of a Just Transition Commission | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁷ [A Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland - Balancing our climate, environment and economy | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁸ [Mapping a Just Energy Transition in Northern Ireland | Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action \(SECA\) | Queen's University Belfast](#)

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on men or women relative to one another. The revised policy establishes a strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development and applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of sex.

Whilst respondents to consultation exercises identified potential societal benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy development, including improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a net zero economy, there is no evidence that any such benefits would accrue differently to men or women as a result of the policy itself.

The revised policy does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular renewable and low carbon energy developments will be considered through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the Local Development Plan, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations.

The revised policy 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. Furthermore, the practice operationally can enable planning authorities to allow amended proposals to be submitted for consideration and/or conditions to be attached to planning permissions in order for the proposal to be considered acceptable and address potential concerns which would otherwise deem the proposal unacceptable.

Accordingly, the Department has found no evidence to indicate that the revised policy will have a differential impact on men or women generally. The policy revision 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 2018'¹⁹ 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-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 limited²⁰.

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 2025²¹, 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 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. However, these benefits arise from broader energy and climate policy objectives and cannot be attributed solely and directly to this strategic planning policy.

Throughout the development of the revised policy, the Department engaged with a broad range of stakeholders through consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and the Executive clearance process. While information on respondents was not collected by reference to disability, no consultation responses identified disability as a factor giving rise to differential impacts from the revised policy.

¹⁹ [August 2018 NI Wellbeing Report.pdf](#)

²⁰ [Census 2021, Long-term health problem or disability by broad age bands](#)

²¹ [Health Inequalities Annual Report 2025](#)

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on disabled persons relative to non-disabled persons. The revised policy establishes a strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development and applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of disability status.

Whilst respondents to consultation exercises identified potential societal benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy development, including improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a net zero economy, there is no evidence that any such benefits would accrue differently to disabled persons as a result of the policy itself.

The revised policy does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular renewable and low carbon energy developments will be considered through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the Local Development Plan, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations.

The revised policy 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. Furthermore, the practice operationally can enable planning authorities to allow amended proposals to be submitted for consideration and/or conditions to be attached to planning permissions in order for the proposal to be considered acceptable and address potential concerns which would otherwise deem the proposal unacceptable.

Accordingly, the Department has found no evidence to indicate that the revised policy will have a differential impact on disabled persons. The policy revision 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 children²². The Section 75 category of dependants encompasses those with caring responsibilities for children, older persons or others requiring care and support.

Throughout the development of the revised policy, the Department engaged with a broad range of stakeholders through consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and the Executive clearance process. While information on respondents was not collected by reference to dependant status, no consultation responses identified dependants as a factor giving rise to differential impacts from the revised policy.

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have either an adverse or beneficial impact on persons with dependants relative to those without dependants. The revised policy establishes a strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development and applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of dependant status.

Whilst respondents to consultation exercises identified potential societal benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy development, including improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a net zero economy, there is no evidence that any such benefits would accrue differently to persons with dependants as a result of the policy itself.

The Department recognises that broader government evidence highlights the importance of affordable and secure energy supplies for households, including those with children and caring responsibilities. However, the revised policy does not directly determine energy prices, household energy costs or eligibility for support schemes. Rather, it establishes a strategic planning framework within which renewable and low carbon energy development proposals may be brought forward and assessed.

The revised policy does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular renewable and low carbon energy developments will be considered through the preparation of Local Development

²² [Census 2021, Number of dependent children - households](#)

Plans and the determination of planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the Local Development Plan, consultee advice, representations received and all other relevant material planning considerations.

The revised policy 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. Furthermore, the practice operationally can enable planning authorities to allow amended proposals to be submitted for consideration and/or conditions to be attached to planning permissions in order for the proposal to be considered acceptable and address potential concerns which would otherwise deem the proposal unacceptable.

Accordingly, the Department has found no evidence to indicate that the revised policy will have a differential impact on persons with dependants or caring responsibilities. The policy revision 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:

The Expert Advisory Panel's 'Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy' report²³ published by the Department for Communities in 2020 included the 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

²³ [Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy](#)

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 2013/14.²⁴

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.²⁵ 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.²⁶

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.

The use of renewable energy sources can benefit society in general by reducing fuel poverty, providing climate change mitigation, and improving health by reducing pollution associated with carbon gas emissions.

No specific needs, experiences or priorities relating to any s75 category were identified during the policy review process that would indicate the need for differential policy treatment.

²⁴ [Health inequalities annual report 2025 | Department of Health](#)

²⁵ [Scope offers four strategies to reduce the Disability Price Tag | Disability Rights UK](#)

²⁶ [Left Out In The Cold The Hidden Health Costs Of Cold Homes](#)

Religious belief

The use of renewable energy sources can benefit society in general by reducing fuel poverty, providing climate change mitigation, and improving health by reducing pollution associated with carbon gas emissions.

While there are no specific needs identified for this s75 group during the policy review process, the revised policy seeks to ensure that the planning system plays its role in supporting the wider government efforts to address climate change and decarbonisation of the energy sector taking into consideration the views of stakeholders including all societal s75 groups.

Political Opinion

No specific needs, experiences or priorities relating to political opinion were identified during the policy review process. The revised policy applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of political opinion and seeks to support wider government objectives relating to climate change, energy security and decarbonisation within the framework of the planning system.

Racial Group

No specific needs, experiences or priorities relating to racial group were identified during the policy review process. The revised policy applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of race or ethnic origin and seeks to support wider government objectives relating to climate change, energy security and decarbonisation within the framework of the planning system.

Age

The Department considered evidence indicating that poor air quality can adversely affect health outcomes, particularly for children and vulnerable people. However, no age-specific needs, experiences or priorities were identified during the policy review process that would require differential policy measures.

The revised policy applies consistently across all age groups and seeks to support wider government objectives relating to climate change, energy security and decarbonisation within the framework of the planning system.

Marital status

No specific needs, experiences or priorities relating to marital status were identified during the policy review process. The revised policy applies consistently irrespective of marital status and seeks to support wider government objectives relating to climate change, energy security and decarbonisation within the framework of the planning system.

Sexual orientation

No specific needs, experiences or priorities relating to sexual orientation were identified during the policy review process. The revised policy applies consistently irrespective of sexual orientation and seeks to support wider government objectives relating to climate change, energy security and decarbonisation within the framework of the planning system.

Men and Women Generally

The Paris Agreement²⁷ takes into account the ‘Just Transition of the Workforce and the Creation of Decent Work and Quality Jobs.’²⁸ 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 outlined in the previous section (see page 22) 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. However, no specific needs, experiences or priorities affecting men and women differently were identified during the policy review process.

The revised policy applies consistently irrespective of sex and seeks to support wider government objectives relating to climate change, energy security and decarbonisation within the framework of the planning system.

²⁷ [The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC](#)

²⁸ [Just Transition of the Workforce, and the Creation of Decent Work and Quality Jobs](#)

Disability

The Department has considered evidence outlined in the previous section (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.

However, no disability-specific needs, experiences or priorities were identified during the policy review process that would require differential treatment through this strategic planning policy. The revised policy applies consistently irrespective of disability status and seeks to support wider government objectives relating to climate change, energy security and decarbonisation within the framework of the planning system.

Dependants

The Department has considered evidence outlined in the previous section (see page 26) relating to households with children and caring responsibilities, including evidence on energy affordability and health impacts associated with air pollution.

However, no specific needs, experiences or priorities relating to persons with dependants were identified during the policy review process that would require differential treatment through this strategic planning policy. The revised policy applies consistently irrespective of dependant status and seeks to support wider government objectives relating to climate change, energy security and decarbonisation within the framework of the planning system.

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 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**:

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for persons of any particular religious belief or for persons with no religious belief.

The revised policy establishes a strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development and applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland regardless of religious belief. It does not allocate development sites, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals.

The policy may contribute indirectly to wider societal benefits associated with improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a lower-carbon economy. Any such benefits would have the potential to be experienced across all Section 75 groups.

What is the level of impact? **Minor positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for persons holding different political opinions.

The revised policy applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland and does not distinguish between individuals on the basis of political opinion. The policy may contribute indirectly to wider societal benefits associated with improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a lower-carbon economy. Any such benefits would have the potential to be experienced across all Section 75 groups.

What is the level of impact? **Minor positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for persons from different racial groups.

The revised policy applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland irrespective of race, ethnicity or nationality. The policy may contribute indirectly to wider societal benefits associated with improved energy security, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and support for the transition to a lower-carbon economy.

What is the level of impact? **Minor positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**:

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for persons in different age groups.

The policy applies consistently across all age groups and establishes a strategic planning framework within which renewable and low carbon energy development can be assessed. The policy may contribute indirectly to wider societal benefits associated with improved air quality, climate change mitigation and improved energy security.

What is the level of impact? **Minor positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**:

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for persons of different marital or civil partnership status.

The policy applies consistently irrespective of marital status or civil partnership status and does not contain provisions that differentiate between persons on that basis.

What is the level of impact? **Minor positive**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**:

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for persons of different sexual orientations.

The policy applies consistently throughout Northern Ireland and does not distinguish between individuals on the basis of sexual orientation.

What is the level of impact? Minor positive

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

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for men or women.

The policy applies consistently regardless of sex and does not contain provisions that would impact differently on men and women. The policy may contribute indirectly to wider societal benefits arising from climate change mitigation and the transition to a lower-carbon economy.

What is the level of impact? Minor positive

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**:

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for disabled people.

The policy applies consistently irrespective of disability status and does not contain provisions that differentiate between disabled and non-disabled persons. The policy may contribute indirectly to wider societal benefits associated with improved environmental quality, climate change mitigation and energy security.

What is the level of impact? Minor positive

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**:

The Department has not identified any evidence to suggest that the revised policy is likely to have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for persons with dependants.

The policy applies consistently irrespective of dependant status and may contribute indirectly to wider societal benefits associated with energy security and the transition to a lower-carbon economy.

What is the level of impact? **Minor positive**

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?

No. The revised policy establishes a strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development. 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 this policy revision. No such opportunities were identified through consultation responses, stakeholder engagement or the Executive consideration process.

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 policy applies consistently irrespective of religious belief and existing opportunities for participation in plan-making and planning decision-making remain unchanged. The revised policy does not allocate land, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from particular renewable or low carbon energy developments will be considered through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications. In these instances, planning authorities will assess proposals on their individual merits, taking account of the SPPS, the Local Development Plan, 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**:

The revised policy is not specifically designed to promote good relations between persons of different religious beliefs. However, it applies equally throughout Northern Ireland and does not contain provisions that would be expected to adversely affect good relations between persons of different religious beliefs.

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:

The revised policy is not specifically designed to promote good relations between persons of different political opinions. However, it applies equally throughout Northern Ireland and does not contain provisions that would be expected to adversely affect good relations between such groups.

What is the level of impact? **None**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

The revised policy is not specifically designed to promote good relations between persons from different racial groups. However, it applies equally throughout Northern Ireland and does not contain provisions that would be expected to adversely affect good relations between such groups.

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 revised policy concerns the strategic planning framework for renewable and low carbon energy development. 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 opportunities to better promote good relations through this policy revision, nor were any such opportunities identified through consultation responses or stakeholder engagement.

Political Opinion -

If No, provide reasons: No additional opportunities identified.

Racial Group -

If No, provide reasons: No additional opportunities identified.

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).

There is no evidence to suggest that the revised policy will have any negative 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.

The Department has carefully considered the available quantitative and qualitative evidence, consultation responses, stakeholder engagement, relevant research and the nature of the revised policy.

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

The revised policy establishes a strategic framework for renewable and low carbon energy development. It does not allocate development sites, grant planning permission or determine the acceptability of individual development proposals. Any site-specific impacts arising from renewable and low carbon energy development will be considered through the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications, where equality considerations can be assessed at the appropriate level.

While no adverse or differential impacts have been identified, the policy may contribute indirectly to wider societal benefits associated with 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.

The revised policy contains safeguards to ensure that renewable and low carbon energy development does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on matters including human health, residential amenity, public safety, landscape, biodiversity and environmental quality. Furthermore, the practice operationally can enable planning authorities to allow amended proposals to be submitted for consideration and/or conditions to be attached to planning permissions in order for the proposal to be considered acceptable and address potential concerns which would otherwise deem the proposal unacceptable. These safeguards will continue to operate through plan-making and development management processes.

The draft revised policy was subject to public consultation between April and June 2023 and was subsequently considered through the Executive clearance

process. No concerns relating to Section 75 equality considerations were raised during these processes.

Accordingly, the Department has concluded that the revised policy is not likely to have a significant adverse impact on equality of opportunity for any Section 75 category and is not likely to have an adverse impact on good relations. The policy is therefore screened out for the purposes of an Equality Impact Assessment.

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 or proposed to be adopted 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?

The Department has not identified any adverse equality impacts requiring mitigation measures or alternative policy approaches.

The policy applies consistently across all Section 75 categories, and no evidence has been identified to indicate that amendments or alternative approaches are required to promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

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: [Stuart Freeman](#)
Position/Job Title: [SPTO](#)
Date: [November 2025](#)
Review Date: [July 2026](#)

Approved by: [Joy Hargie & Philip McGowan](#)
Position/Job Title: [PPTO](#)
Date: [November 2025](#)
Review Date: [July 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:

Reviewed Screening Received: [09.07.26](#)
Amendments Requested: [Yes.](#)
Date Returned to Business Area: [22.07.26](#)
Date Final Version Received: [22.07.26](#)
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