

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Section 75 Equality and Good Relations Screening

Part 1. Information about the activity/policy/project being screened

Name of the activity/policy/project

Small Settlements Rural Investment Fund (2022-23)

Is this activity/policy/project – an existing one, a revised one, a new one?

New scheme

Introduction and Background to the project:

Rural Investment Fund – 80% funded by DfC/DAERA

The Rural Investment Fund is an additional grant scheme funded through COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme.

Its aim is to support the economic growth and resilience of the urban centres of Small Settlements (Aghalee, Annahilt, Ballinderry, Dromara, Drumbeg, Glenavy, Hillsborough, Maghaberry, Milltown, Moira and Moneyreagh) through the provision of grants for interior and exterior improvements to commercial buildings, expansions or repurposing of premises. The applicant must be a new business wishing to renovate a vacant property or an existing business planning to repurpose all or part thereof of a currently occupied property to expand their business or change the use of an area within.

It is hoped this fund will help to reduce the number of vacant units in the local area by attracting new business investment and offer financial assistance to existing businesses to offset capital costs to reopen or repurpose their existing business premises.

What are the intended aims/outcomes the activity/policy/project is trying to achieve?

The scheme aims to:

- To encourage new business into the Small Settlements or to support existing businesses to diversify their current offering through repurposing of vacant units (to include unused areas of their current premises). This will enable businesses to make interior and exterior improvements to commercial buildings, expansions or repurposing of premises.
- Improve the offer in the Small Settlements reducing the current vacancy rates and attracting new businesses into the centre.

- Decrease the number of vacant units in the Small Settlements by offering financial assistance to existing businesses to offset capital costs to reopen or repurpose their existing business premises.
- Decrease the number of vacant units in the Small Settlements by offering financial assistance to new businesses who wish to occupy a vacant property.

Who is the activity/policy/project targeted at and who will benefit? Are there any expected benefits for specific Section 75 categories/groups from this activity/policy/project? If so, please explain.

The Rural Investment Fund will be available to businesses throughout the Small Settlements named above and is intended to benefit all eligible business owners who apply and all sections of the community. It is not targeting any specific Section 75 groups but there may be minor incidental benefits to some groups. For example, some older service users or those with a disability may benefit from physical improvements to renovated buildings.

Who initiated or developed the activity/policy/project?

Economic Development Unit, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Who owns and who implements the activity/policy/project?

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council own the policy. The grants programme is 80% funded through Department for Communities (DfC)/ Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and administered by Economic Development.

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the activity/policy/project? If yes, give brief details of any significant factors.

Financial: 80% funded Department for Communities (DfC) / Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) – there is a fixed budget

Other: Time - The project is required to be delivered within timeframes agreed between DfC and LCCC. It is anticipated the project will be finished by March 2023.

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the activity/policy/project will impact upon? Delete if not applicable

Staff - Staff involved in administering the project

Service users - Residents and visitors of all Small Settlements and local business owners

Other public sector organisations – DfC / DfI / DAERA

Voluntary/community/trade unions – n/a

Other – Elected members and groups who may be consulted

Other policies/strategies/plans with a bearing on this activity/policy/project

Name of policy/strategy/plan	Who owns or implements?
Local Development Plan	LCCC
Regeneration and Investment Action Plan	LCCC
Urban Regeneration Community Development Framework	Department for Communities
Interim Equality scheme	Department for Communities

Available evidence

What evidence/information (qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered or considered to inform this activity/policy? Specify details for each Section 75 category.

The following evidence was considered to inform this policy:

- 2011 NI Census Data for all eligible Small Settlements
- Knowledge of local demographics of the settlements concerned
- Planning Regulations and Guidance
- Officers' previous experience administering grant schemes
- Stakeholder meetings/conversations (Council Officers and Members, Business Owners and Residents)

Section 75 Category	Details of evidence/information
Religious Belief	We do not have information on the religious background of eligible business owners who may apply for the scheme but it is expected that they will represent a range of religious beliefs and none. Staff and customers will likely reflect local

	demographics and visitors may be all religions and none.
Political Opinion	We do not have information on the political opinions of eligible business owners in the settlements concerned but it is expected that they will represent a range of views. Staff and local customers will likely reflect local demographics of the various settlements and visiting customers will reflect the wider population.
Racial Group	We do not have information on the racial background of eligible business owners but a small proportion may be owned by BME people (e.g. ethnic food take away businesses). There are fewer BME residents in Small Settlements compared with the overall district.
Age	We do not have information on the age of eligible business owners but they are likely to be of different ages. Staff and customers will be from a range of ages.
Marital Status	We do not have information on the marital status of eligible owners but likely they will reflect the wider population.
Sexual Orientation	We do not have information on the sexual orientation of eligible business owners but likely that they will reflect the population as a whole. It is estimated that between 5 and 10% of the population may identify as other than heterosexual. Staff and customers will similarly reflect population statistics for the district.
Men & Women Generally	We do not have information on the gender make-up of eligible business owners. It is known that, on average, women are less likely to own or run a business but will be well represented in some types of small business that feature on town/village main streets. Staff and visitors are

	likely to be male and female and may include a small percentage of Trans people (reflecting the general picture)
Disability	We do not have information on whether eligible business owners have disabilities. Disabled people are under-represented as business owners but it is likely that some eligible business owners may have a disability as just under 20% of the LCCC population are known to have a disability (Census 2011 data). Staff and customers will reflect the wider population.
People with and without Dependants	We do not have specific information on the dependency status of eligible business owners but it is likely that they will reflect the wider LCCC population. Staff and customers will also include those who care for children, older people or people with disabilities.

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 activity/policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories

Section 75 Category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious Belief	No specific needs identified other than the need for a fair and transparent application process that is promoted widely to ensure all eligible business owners know about it and are able to apply. There is also a need for objective criteria which are not related to any personal characteristics.
Political Opinion	No specific needs identified as above
Racial Group	All eligible business owners need to know about the scheme and be able to apply. Additional supports in

	terms of promotion may be required for business owners who are newer to the district or who do not have English as a first language.
Age	No specific needs identified in relation to business owners. Any changes to premises that are funded by the scheme should not impact negatively on access for older people.
Marital Status	No different needs identified so long as there is a fair and objective application process.
Sexual Orientation	No different needs identified so long as there is a fair and objective application process.
Men & Women Generally	No different needs identified so long as there is a fair and objective application process.
Disability	Any business owner who has a disability may need reasonable adjustments to enable them to access information about the scheme or to apply. Any improvements to business premises should not impact negatively on access for people with disabilities, either staff or customers.
Dependants	No different needs identified for business owners provided there is a fair application process. Any changes to business premises should not impact negatively on customers who have dependants, eg, parents with buggies or carers of disabled people.

Part 2. Screening questions

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

Section 75 Category	Details of likely impact – will it be positive or negative? If none anticipated, say none	Level of impact - Major or Minor* - see guidance below
Religious Belief	No impact identified provided the scheme has objective	None

	eligibility criteria and the application process is fair. The scheme is available across towns and villages with different demographics. Funding will be awarded to eligible businesses that meet the criteria and business owners from all background will have an equal opportunity to benefit.	
Political Opinion	No impact identified as above	None
Racial Group	No impact as the scheme will be promoted widely so all eligible businesses can apply and be considered against objective criteria	None
Age	No significant impact but some older people may benefit slightly from physical improvements to premises which enhance accessibility.	Minor - positive
Marital Status	No impact identified	None
Sexual Orientation	No impact identified	None
Men & Women Generally	No impact identified	None
Disability	No significant impact identified but some disabled customers may benefit from physical improvements to premises which enhance accessibility.	minor
People with and without Dependants	No significant impact identified but any improvements to physical access features of premises/building may have minor benefits for	minor

	parents/carers with buggies or carers of disabled people	
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* See Appendix 1 for details.

2(a) Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?

Section 75 Category	IF Yes, provide details	If No, provide details
Religious Belief Political Opinion Racial Group Age Marital Status Sexual Orientation Men & Women Generally Disability People with and without Dependents		No opportunities identified at this stage. Current procedures allow for adjustments and support provided.

Equality Action Plan 2021-2025

Does the activity/policy/project being screened relate to an action in the Equality Action Plan 2021-2025? If yes, specify which action.

No

2(b) DDA Disability Duties (see Disability Action Plan 2021-2025)

Does this policy/activity present opportunities to contribute to the actions in our Disability Action Plan:

- to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?
- to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?

No

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

Good Relations Category	Details of likely impact. Will it be positive or negative? [if no specific impact identified, say none]	Level of impact – Minor/Major*
Religious Belief Political Opinion Racial Group	No impact on good relations identified. The scheme is available equally across different towns and villages with different demographics and is not directly relevant to good relations.	None

*See Appendix 1 for details.

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

Good Relations Category	IF Yes, provide details	If No, provide details
Religious Belief Political Opinion Racial Group		This is a financial assistance scheme for businesses that does not lend itself to promoting good relations.

Multiple identity

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

N/A

Part 3. Screening decision/outcome

Equality and good relations screening is used to identify whether there is a need to carry out a **full equality impact assessment** on a proposed policy or project.

There are 3 possible outcomes:

- 1) **Screen out** - no need for a full equality impact assessment and no mitigations required because no relevance to equality, no negative impacts identified or only very minor positive impacts for all groups. This may be the case for a purely technical policy for example.
- 2) **Screen out with mitigation** - no need for a full equality impact assessment but some minor potential impacts or opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified, so mitigations appropriate. Much of our activity will probably fall into this category.
- 3) **Screen in for full equality impact assessment** – potential for significant and/or potentially negative impact identified for one or more groups so proposal requires a more detailed impact assessment. [See Equality Commission guidance on justifying a screening decision.]

Choose only one of these and provide reasons for your decision and ensure evidence is noted/referenced for any decision reached.

Screening Decision/Outcome	Reasons/Evidence
<p>Option 1</p> <p>Screen out – no equality impact assessment and no mitigation required [go to Monitoring section]</p>	<p>It has been concluded that a detailed equality impact assessment is not necessary as no negative impacts have been identified and any incidental impacts are likely to be minor and positive. To ensure equality of opportunity, the scheme will be advertised as widely as possible - on the Council website, social media channels and word of mouth from Council Officers. No additional mitigations are deemed necessary as the needs of particular user groups have already been taken into account in planning the scheme.</p>

<p>Option 2</p> <p>Screen out with mitigation – some potential impacts identified but they can be addressed with appropriate mitigation or some opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified [complete mitigation section below]</p>	
<p>Option 3</p> <p>Screen in for a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)</p> <p>[If option 3, complete timetabling and prioritising section below]</p>	

Mitigation (Only relevant to Option 2) - N/A

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

If so, give the **reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative activity/policy and ensure the mitigations are included in a revised/updated policy or plan.

Timetabling and prioritising for full EQIA (only relevant to Option 3) - N/A

If the activity/policy has been ‘**screened in**’ for full equality impact assessment, give details of any factors to be considered and the next steps for progressing the EQIA, including a proposed timetable.

Is the activity/policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details.

Part 4. Monitoring

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

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

What will be monitored and how? What specific equality monitoring will be done? Who will undertake and sign-off the monitoring of this activity/policy and on what frequency? Please give details:

Regeneration will monitor the activity of the scheme generally as part of normal review and evaluation, this will also allow us to improve any future schemes by implementing lessons learned. Monitoring will include how/where the scheme was promoted, how many enquiries were received, how many applications were received, how many were successful, outcomes of the funding and how they contributed to council objectives, feedback from applicants, complaints, etc.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

	Position/Job Title	Date
Screened by: Becky Gamble Yvonne Burke	Project Support Officer Regeneration Manager	29/06/22
Reviewed by: Mary McSorley	Equality Officer	04/08/22
Approved by: Paul McCormick	Head of Economic Development	18/10/22

Note: On completion of the screening exercise, a copy of the completed Screening Report should be:

- approved and 'signed off' by a senior manager responsible for the activity/policy
- included with Committee reports, as appropriate
- sent to the Equality Officer for the quarterly screening report to consultees, internal reporting and publishing on the LCCC website
- shared with relevant colleagues
- made available to the public on request.

Evidence and documents referenced in the screening report should also be available if requested.

Appendix 1 Project Overview

Small Settlements - Rural Investment Scheme (2022-23)

Project Description and Background:

Funding has been secured through the Department for Communities (DfC), Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to deliver a Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme.

For the purpose of the Small Settlements funding allocation DfC/DfI/DAERA defined an eligible small settlement of normally having a population of between 1,000 and 4,999.

The Rural Investment Fund is an additional grant scheme funded through COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme.

Its aim is to support the economic growth and resilience of the urban centres of Small Settlements (Aghalee, Annahilt, Ballinderry, Dromara, Drumbeg, Glenavy, Hillsborough, Maghaberry, Milltown, Moira and Moneyreagh) through the provision of grants for interior and exterior improvements to commercial buildings, expansions or repurposing of premises. The applicant must be a new business wishing to renovate a vacant property or an existing business planning to repurpose all or part thereof of a currently occupied property to expand their business or change the use of an area within.

It is hoped this fund will help to reduce the number of vacant units in the local area by attracting new business investment and offer financial assistance to existing businesses to offset capital costs to reopen or repurpose their existing business premises.

All businesses within the named Small Settlements are eligible to apply.

Successful applicants will receive a grant of up to 80% - maximum £30,000 (ex VAT).

Applicants must demonstrate a contribution of a minimum 20% of the overall costs (ex VAT) has been paid.

This does not preclude applicants from carrying out additional enhancement works, however the extra costs incurred will not be covered by Council. Successful candidates must only carry out the works as agreed in advance of the release of funding from the Council.

Expression of Interest and Application Form are yet to be approved.

Aims of the Scheme:

The scheme will assist a new business wishing to renovate a vacant property; or an existing business planning to diversify their current offer through repurposing an unused area within their premises.

The aim of the Rural Investment Fund is to:

1. Improve the offer in the commercial centre of Small Settlements by reducing the current vacancy rates and attracting new businesses
2. Decrease the number of vacant units in what is considered as the commercial centre of a Small Settlement by offering financial assistance to existing businesses to offset capital costs to reopen a business or repurpose their existing business premises.
3. Decrease the number of vacant units in what is considered as the commercial centre of a Small Settlement by offering financial assistance to new businesses who wish to occupy a vacant property.
4. To enhance the environment and raise the image of the area.

Project Duration

The project is to be completed by March 2023 to meet the deadline for funding.

Appendix 2 – Equality Commission guidance on equality impact

*Major impact:

- a) The policy/project is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality matters 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.

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.

No impact (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.