

Response ID ANON-RDPU-PUN5-3

Submitted to Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy Equality Impact Assessment
Submitted on 2022-11-03 10:42:57

Introduction

Your details

1 What is your name?

What is your name?:
Aidan Campbell

2 What is your email address?

What is your email address?:
aidan@ruralcommunitynetwork.org

3 What is your organisation?

What is your organisation?:
Rural Community Network

Gaps in Information

4 Are there any gaps in the information we have used to conduct this Equality Impact Assessment?

Yes

If so, please provide additional sources of information, statistics and evidence that we should consider or suggest areas where further research would be beneficial. :

Further breakdown of S75 categories by local government district should be carried out by DAERA and mapped against the location of peatland across council areas. This may give a more detailed picture of S75 impacts of the implementation of the Strategy in local areas.

More detailed data required on estimates of numbers of people in various S75 categories (& their location) who:

Use peat to heat their homes

Are employed directly in the peat extraction industry

Are employed in the horticulture industry (which may be negatively impacted if a ban on peat is implemented which will affect availability of viable growing medium)

Are employed in mushroom growing/picking/processing (which may be negatively impacted if a ban on peat is implemented which will affect availability of viable growing medium)

Adverse Impacts

5 Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 3 of the EQIA Consultation document?

Yes

If so, please give further details:

Section 3 should explicitly recognise that it is extremely likely that there will be adverse impacts on people from S75 groups who are:

Using peat for home heating as their main source of heating

Employed in the peat extraction industry

There may also be adverse impacts on people from S75 groups who are:

Employed in horticulture industry

Employed in mushroom industry

If a ban on peat affects the viability of these industries.

The EQIA should be more explicit that there is likely to be adverse impact on Catholics in the Religious belief category due to the location of peatland habitats. It should also state that the strategy is more likely to impact on people with an Irish identity (proxy metric for political opinion).

There may be impact on equality of opportunity for people in minority ethnic groups who work in larger peat extraction businesses and in the

horticulture sector (particularly mushroom growing and processing), although RCN has no specific data, migrant workers make up a significant proportion of the workforce the in agri food industry generally in Northern Ireland.

Mitigation

6 Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any potential adverse impacts on any of the Section 75 Equality Groups.

Mitigation:

More detailed work needs to be undertaken with people in rural communities who currently rely on peat as a primary or secondary fuel for home heating. The numbers of households that are reliant on peat as a primary source of heating may be relatively small and some of these households may be eligible for existing schemes to tackle fuel poverty.

If required a further scheme could be developed in partnership with Dept. for Communities to address fuel poverty in these households. Households that are using peat as a way of supplementing their home heating needs should also be considered for eligibility for fuel poverty reduction measures that will improve the thermal comfort of their homes and reduce their home heating costs.

The Department also needs to engage further with businesses and individuals engaged in commercial peat extraction to develop a fair pathway out of peat extraction for these businesses. For some, this may involve the need to build capacity and develop practical skills training courses for peatland restoration contractors. This may help offset loss of employment or business in commercial peat extraction companies/contractors who can be encouraged to shift their focus away from extraction. Other businesses may not be interested in this type of transition and some type of peat extraction exit scheme may be required to facilitate the end of commercial extraction. Our Climate Change Act has committed to a just transition and government needs to engage with the sector to map out how this will happen in practice.

Final Comments

7 Are there any final comments you would like to make with regard to this EQIA ?

Final Comments: