



**Digital  
Transformation  
Flexible Fund**



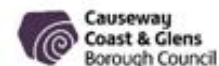
Digital  
Transformation  
Flexible Fund

# Call 2

## Pre-Briefing Sessions



Belfast  
City Council



# Overview

## Background to DTFF



DTFF is a **unique collaboration** between local authorities and several government departments.

At its core is a **£7.5m capital grant** funding pot with the revenue costs to operate the programme supported by all local Councils in Northern Ireland.

The £7.5m capital funding is made up of £6m from Complementary Funding Pot, an additional £1.1m from DAERA focusing on Rural Applications, and £450k from Derry and Strabane's Growth Deal.

It's delivered by all local authorities, administrated by NMDDC and supported by Invest NI.

The William J. Clinton Leadership Institute at Queens University Belfast have been appointed as the specialist delivery agent and will be delivering all briefing sessions and provide an independent evaluation of applications.



# Overview

What is DTFF?



DTFF is a **demand led grant scheme** aimed at **stimulating Digital Transformation** in Small and Micro businesses.

It seeks to **address the financial barriers** to the adoption of new and emerging digital technologies.

It's designed to enable '**business transformation**' rather than 'digitisation' of existing business models or operations.

DTFF is a **Capital grant programme** – it does not provide support or assistance to develop new projects or ideas using emerging technologies.





**What  
technologies  
are funded?**



## Funded technologies

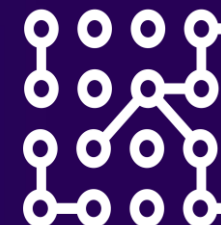
DTFF will enable the purchasing of capital equipment and/or resources for 'off the shelf' software solutions and/or bespoke system development, based on the following advanced digital technologies:



Smart  
technologies



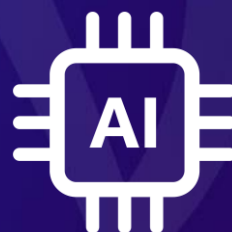
Robotics



Big data



Immersive  
technologies



Artificial  
intelligence



Blockchain

DTFF will not cover the on-going revenue costs of leasing software nor any ongoing maintenance, update or training costs, which should be borne by the applicant.



# Smart technologies/smart environments and the Internet of Things (IoT)

Potential Use Cases for IoT	Examples
<b>Smart building Automation:</b>	Projects that connects various devices in a building, such as lighting, thermostats, door locks
<b>Industrial Automation:</b>	Implementing IoT sensors and smart switches in factories or manufacturing plants to monitor equipment health, track production metrics, and enable predictive maintenance.
<b>Smart Energy Management:</b>	IoT solutions that track energy consumption patterns in homes or buildings
<b>Traffic Monitoring and Management:</b>	Using IoT sensors and cameras to monitor traffic flow, detect congestion, and adjust traffic signal timings accordingly
<b>Smart City Solutions:</b>	Developing IoT-based infrastructure for managing various aspects of urban life, including smart parking systems, air quality monitoring, waste management, street lighting
<b>Healthcare Monitoring:</b>	Wearable IoT devices that track vital signs, activity levels, and medication adherence for patients



A photograph of an industrial robotic arm in a factory setting. The arm is white and blue, mounted on a metal frame. It is positioned over a work area. In the background, there are other industrial equipment and a person in a blue uniform. The scene is lit by overhead fluorescent lights.

# Process Automation via Robotics/Cobotics



**Potential Use Cases for Robotics / Cobotics.  
(Process Automation)**

**Examples**

**Robotics for Manufacturing and Assembly:**

Applications involved in manufacturing or assembly processes.

**Robotics for Inventory Management:**

Robotics employed to automate inventory management processes.

**Cobotics  
(Collaborative robots working alongside humans)**

They offer numerous benefits to small businesses, including increased productivity, improved efficiency, cost savings, and enhanced workplace safety.

Cobots can perform repetitive or mundane tasks with high accuracy and speed, allowing employees to focus on more complex and value-added activities. By automating repetitive tasks, cobots can significantly boost overall productivity and output.

# Big-data and Analytics

```
res.json({ success: false, message: 'Could not register user, username or email might be used' })
} else {
  res.json({ success: false, message: 'Could not register user, Error: ', err })
}
}
else {
  sgMail.setApiKey(configSendgrid.SendgridAPIKey);
  fs.readFile("./templates/emailtemplate.html", 'utf8', (err, data) => {
    if (err) {
      if(err.code == 11100){
        res.json({success: true, message:""})
      }
      res.json({ success: false, message: 'Error: ' + err })
    }
    data = data.replace("###Title###", "Confirm Account");
    data = data.replace("###Message###", "Please click the button below to confirm your account");
    data = data.replace("###Link###", host.baseurl + "api/accounts/confirmemail?email=" + req.body.email);
    const msg = {
      to: req.body.email.toLowerCase(),
      from: 'info@codenetic.co.za',
      subject: 'Account Confirmation',
      content: [
        {
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        }
      ]
    }
  })
}
```

## Potential Use Cases for Big Data / Open Data / Analytics.

The term "big data" is characterized by the three V's: volume, velocity, and variety.

## Examples

### Customer Analytics

By analysing customer data, including purchase history, browsing behaviour, and demographic information, small businesses can gain a better understanding of their customers' preferences, interests, and buying patterns

### Operational Efficiency

Small businesses can analyse their operational data, such as sales, inventory, and production data, to identify inefficiencies and optimize processes

### Predictive Analysis

By employing predictive analytics models, small businesses can forecast future trends, demand, and customer behaviour.

### Decision-making and strategic planning

Big data provides valuable insights for informed decision-making and strategic planning

```
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    "value": data.toString()  
  }  
}
```

A person is wearing a VR headset and holding a glowing blue controller. Their hands are visible in the foreground, and they appear to be interacting with a virtual environment. The background is dark with some glowing particles.

# **Immersive Technologies (AR/VR/MR/Haptics)**

<b>Potential Use Cases for Augmented, Virtual, Mixed Reality and Haptics.</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Product Visualization:</b>	Small businesses can use AR and VR to create interactive and immersive experiences for showcasing their products.
<b>Training and Education:</b>	Immersive technologies can be utilized for training employees and educating customers. VR can simulate real-world scenarios, enabling small businesses to train employees in a safe and controlled environment.
<b>Marketing and Branding:</b>	Immersive technologies offer unique marketing opportunities for small businesses. AR can be used to create interactive and engaging advertising campaigns.
<b>Tourism and Hospitality</b>	Small businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry can use immersive technologies to enhance customer experiences.
<b>Remote Assistance and Support:</b>	Immersive technologies can facilitate remote assistance and support for small businesses. AR can enable technicians or experts to provide real-time guidance to customers or on-site teams, overlaying instructions and visual cues onto the physical environment.



**Artificial Intelligence and  
Machine Learning**

Potential Use Cases for AI and Machine Learning	Examples
<b>Customer Support and Chatbots:</b>	Small businesses can use AI-powered chatbots to provide automated customer support.
<b>Demand Forecasting:</b>	Machine learning algorithms can analyse historical sales data, market trends, and external factors to predict future demand. This helps small businesses optimize inventory management, plan production, and ensure they have the right products available when customers need them, reducing costs and minimizing stockouts.
<b>Predictive Maintenance:</b>	Small businesses that rely on equipment or machinery can use AI and machine learning to implement predictive maintenance. By analysing sensor data and historical maintenance records, algorithms can predict when equipment is likely to fail, allowing businesses to schedule maintenance proactively and avoid costly downtime.
<b>Process Automation:</b>	AI and machine learning can automate repetitive and time-consuming tasks, improving operational efficiency.





# Distributed Ledger Systems/Blockchain Technologies

<b>Potential Use Cases for Distributed Ledger / Blockchain.</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Supply Chain Management:</b>	Blockchain can be used to track and trace the movement of goods along the supply chain. Small businesses can create immutable records of every transaction, ensuring transparency and authenticity.
<b>Smart Contracts:</b>	Small businesses can leverage blockchain to automate and enforce contract terms through smart contracts. These self-executing contracts can automatically trigger actions or transactions when predefined conditions are met
<b>Payment and Financial Transactions:</b>	Blockchain-based cryptocurrencies and digital tokens offer secure and efficient alternatives for small businesses to conduct financial transactions. Blockchain can enable faster, low-cost cross-border payments and facilitate peer-to-peer transactions without the need for traditional intermediaries.
<b>Decentralized Marketplaces:</b>	Blockchain-based marketplaces provide small businesses with opportunities to sell products or services directly to customers without intermediaries. These marketplaces can eliminate middlemen, reduce fees, and provide a secure environment for transactions.

# What is not funded?

## Ineligible Investment Types



DTFF **will not fund** capital investment in the following which could be viewed more as ‘digitisation of existing operations’, rather than digital innovation/transformation:

- Website and e-commerce development
- Social media strategies
- Mobile marketing, paid advertising, blogging and content creation
- Search engine optimisation
- Purchase of generic IT equipment (laptops, printers etc)
- Customer relationship management, database systems
- Non-industrial 3-D printing
- Standalone EPOS
- DTFF cannot fund subscription costs or models.

**This list is not exhaustive and the DTFF Operations Team have the discretion to omit costs if deemed ineligible and/or not within scope of the project.**

# How much grant is available?



**Funding is available between £5,000 - £20,000 (ex VAT) for an investment project.**

Successful applicants will receive up to **70%** of the total value of an investment project and be required to provide a **30%** matched co-investment.

Equipment/software is purchased up front after you receive a Letter of Offer (LoO) and then the 70% claimed back.



# Grant Funding Levels



## Minimum project and Maximum grant levels.

	Minimum Fund	Maximum Fund
Funded Value	£5,000	£20,000
Total Project Value	£7,142.86	Minimum of £28,571.43
Match funding required	£2,142.86	£8,571.43

- The minimum grant available to applicants is £5,000 ex VAT (minimum total project value £7,142.86).
- The maximum grant available is £20,000 ex VAT with a minimum total project value of £28,571.43.
- There is no upper limit to the total project value, but maximum funding remains at £20,000 ex VAT.

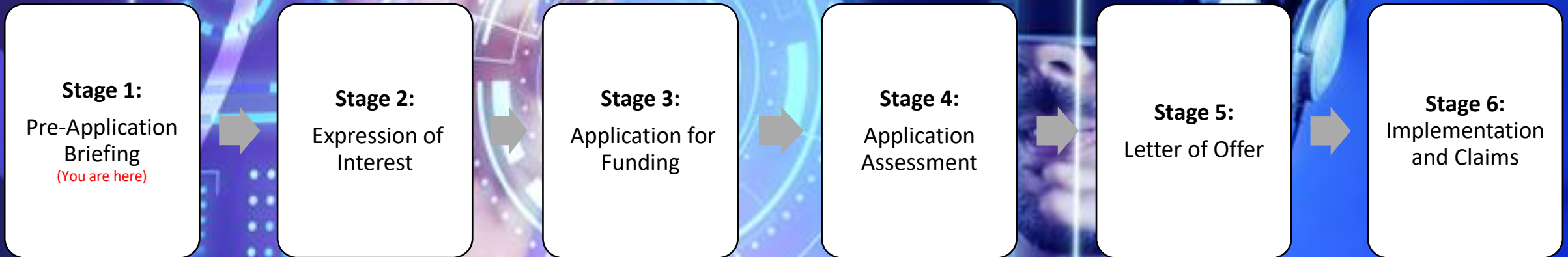
# Eligibility



- Based in Northern Ireland and operate within 1 of the 11 local Council areas;
- A Small (10-49) or Micro (1-9 EE) business;
- VAT registered and actively trading for at least 12 months;
- Open to all sectors with the exception of primary agriculture, forestry and fisheries;
- Have a Digital Transformation Plan or equivalent;
- Project centered on one or more of the six advanced digital technologies;
- Eligible expenditure must be capital equipment (hardware, devices) and/or software/system development; and
- Compliance with State Aid/ Subsidy control limits via De-Minimus/ EU-UK TCA.



# Grants Process



**Stage 2:**  
Expression of  
Interest

# DTFF Expression of Interest is now OPEN

- Expression of Interests must be **completed online** via [www.dtff.co.uk/apply-now](http://www.dtff.co.uk/apply-now).
- Deadline for submitting an Expression of Interest is **12 Noon - 29<sup>th</sup> March 2024**
- It is highly recommended that applicants refer to the **DTFF Applicant Guidance** prior to submitting an Expression of Interest







**Stage 3:**  
Application for  
Funding

If your Expression of Interest is eligible you will be invited to work on a full application and be given access to the Applicant Portal section of the DTFF Website.

- Evidence of match funding and trading duration (bank statements).
- Procurement templates to assist with obtaining 2 quotes and choice of preferred supplier.
- Link to submit full online application.

Applicant Portal



# The Digital Transformation Plan



- DTFF capital investments must be **aligned** to a **Digital Transformation Plan**.
- This has been embedded into the online Application Form and will be **assessed** and **scored** by an **Evaluation Panel**.
- A word version is available on the DTFF website to allow applicants to begin drafting a response.
- DTFF Operations Team **will not** assist in the development of these plans.
- It is the **responsibility of applicants** to develop these plans independently or with support from complementary programme interventions.

## Appendix A – Digital Transformation Plan

All capital investments through the DTFF will be required to be aligned to a Digital Transformation Plan. The purpose of this plan is to demonstrate that a business has thought through the digital transformation they are seeking to make, its relevance to the business and the expected benefits they are aiming to achieve.

As part of the Application Form, applicants **must** complete Section 2: Digital Transformation Plan. It will be this section of the online Application Form that will be assessed and scored by an Evaluation Panel. A word version of the Digital Transformation Plan will be made available allowing you to draft a response.

The Digital Transformation Plan will consist of the following questions for scoring:

<b>Criteria 1</b>	How will the proposed investment contribute to Digital Transformation within your business? (approx. 800 words)	Weighting of 40%
<b>Criteria 2</b>	Summarise the economic outputs and/or benefits that are likely to be delivered from the proposed investment. (approx. 800 words)	Weighting of 40%
<b>Criteria 3</b>	Summarise the business performance improvements that are likely to be delivered from the proposed investment. (approx. 800 words)	Weighting of 20%

**Please Note:** It is the responsibility of applicants to develop this Digital Transformation Plan independently or with support from complementary programme interventions. The DTFF Operations Team **will not** assist in the development of these plans.

# Stage 4: Assessment



DTFF is a **competitive process** and applications will be scored by an Assessment Panel.

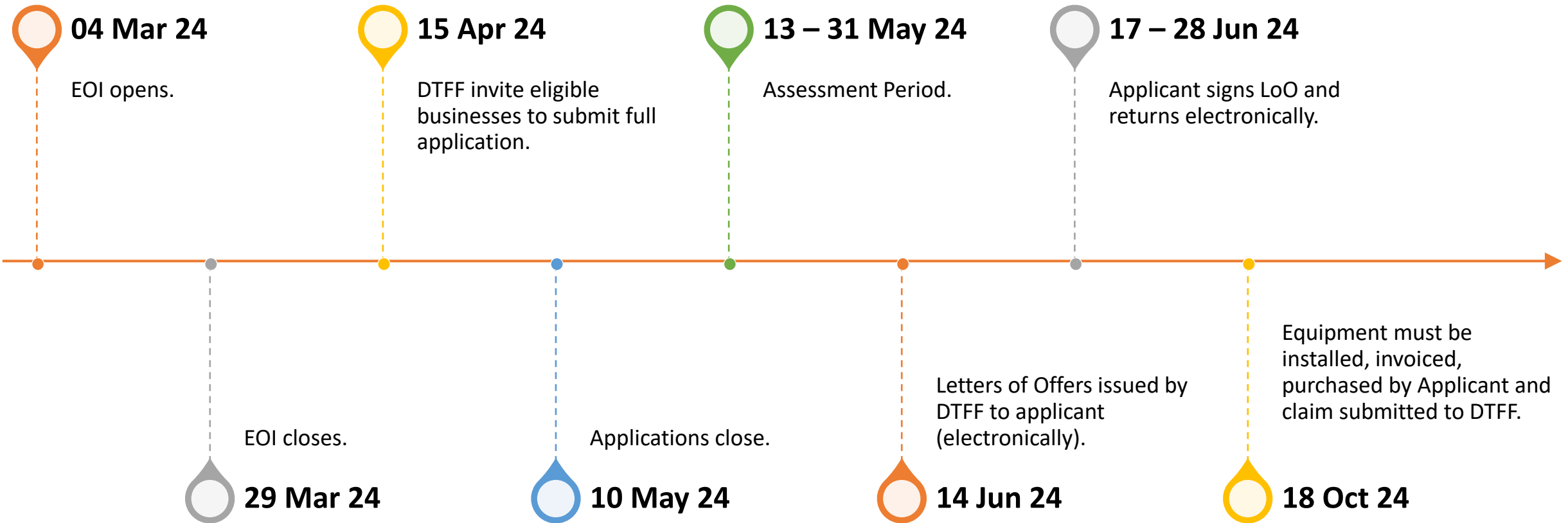
- **Stage 1:** WJCLI will conduct an independent evaluation of all DTFF Applications.
- **Stage 2:** Council officials will independently review sample batches of these applications and provide a score and comments against the assessment criteria.
- **Stage 3:** Projects will then be reviewed and appraised by the DTFF Assessment Panel made up of WJCLI and Council officials.



**QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST**

**WILLIAM J. CLINTON  
LEADERSHIP  
INSTITUTE**

# Estimated Grant Timeline



# Further Support



**Applicants can contact the following organisations who may be able to provide support:**

- Further Education College's across NI;
- Queens University Belfast;
- University of Ulster – Smart Manufacturing Data Hub;
- Local Authorities – Enterprise Support Service;
- Innovate NI; and
- Any other support mechanism as identified by individual applicants.

**Further detail can be found on the DTFF website:**  
[www.dtff.co.uk/further-support](http://www.dtff.co.uk/further-support)



For more information  
contact the DTFF team:

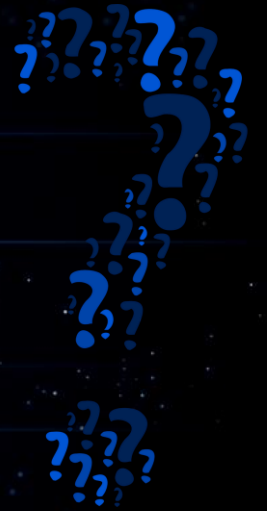
[dtff@nmandd.org](mailto:dtff@nmandd.org)  
Tel: 0330 137 4052  
[www.dtff.co.uk](http://www.dtff.co.uk)



Digital  
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# Any Questions?

[www.dtff.co.uk](http://www.dtff.co.uk)



The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) is delivered by all local authorities in Northern Ireland under the Full Fibre Northern Ireland Consortium (FFNI) and supported by Invest NI. The project is part funded by the NI Executive, UK Government, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and all local authorities in Northern Ireland.