Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Review of NI Business Red Tape: Research into Potential Hub System to Facilitate More Effective Communication between Regulators and with the Business Community

Final Report

25th September 2014

Table of Contents

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF NI SPECIFIC REGULATORS

APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF NI SPECIFIC REGULATORS & CURRENT SYSTEMS USED

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NI Executive has committed to conducting a Review of Business Red Tape to reduce the regulatory burdens facing businesses in Northern Ireland and it is within this context that DETI has set up a Review Team with a senior level Advisory Panel to provide direction, advice and strategic oversight to the Review.

Following initial exploratory discussions with representatives of business bodies and the Advisory Panel, the Review Team commissioned this research to identify potentially relevant information management systems which support businesses in self-assessing their regulatory compliance requirements and affords this profiling to be accessed by regulators responsible for securing compliance.

Specifically the Review Team would like to know what current systems are available that have some or all of the following elements that would be desirable in a "Business Regulation Hub":

- Compilation of a **Core database** that catalogues all regulations that may apply to businesses operating in Northern Ireland, including those regulations deriving from Local (council areas), Regional (NI) and National (UK) authorities. This database will include relevant guidance notes accompanying regulations;
- **Classification system** allowing businesses to register, create an account and generate a core profile (consisting of general information on the business, such as industry sector, employee numbers, location(s) of premises etc.);
- **Interrogation process** which delivers a tailored and filtered list of regulatory requirements and their accompanying guidance notes (deriving from the core regulatory database detailed above);
- **Self-assessment** by individual businesses as to their level of compliance with the regulatory requirements provided by the interrogation process;
- A **support function** to provide assistance in areas of non-compliance;
- Assessments catalogued over time to provide a **historical record** of businesses' regulatory competence, including details of any incidences of non-compliance recorded/catalogued by regulatory body; and
- Accessibility of information by Regulators to facilitate assessment of business regulatory performance to aid risk-based management planning.

The following provides an overview of the key findings of the research against the Terms of Reference set by DETI.

1.1 Current Systems Used by NI Regulators

All 35 regulators that fall under the remit of the NI Executive were profiled in terms of their online systems. A matrix was developed to look at the nine key areas of online services offered by NI regulators. From this it is possible to quantify the current level of online provision offered to businesses and individuals in NI.

Table 1:1: Overview of Online Provision by NI Regulators

Service	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	48.6%	51.4%
Account creation/Profile generation	37.1%	62.9%
Forms available for download	62.9%	37.1%
Self-assessment capability	31.4%	68.6%
Support function	14.3%	85.7%
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	31.4%	68.6%
Fee payment function	31.4%	68.6%
Automatic email reminders/updates	34.4%	65.6%
Risk base approach to exercising regulatory function	25.7%	74.3%

Base: 35 Regulatory bodies in under the remit of the NI Executive

After profiling the 35 Regulatory Bodies under the remit of the NI Executive, only a minority of regulators offer online services across 8 of the 9 key areas considered to be desirable in a Business Regulation Hub. Analysis shows the following key points:

- The only online service offered by a majority (62.9%) of regulators is forms available for download. As this is online provision at its most basic, in that the forms can be downloaded to be filled in and returned in the post, this demonstrates how limited online services currently are for businesses in NI;
- Almost half (48.6%) of NI Regulators have an online information gathering system - this ranges from full profile account creation that allows continuous maintenance of a business's data and compliance information (such as the Charity Commission NI), to simply being able to submit registration information once (Landlord Registry);
- A third (34.3%) offer businesses and individuals the ability to self-assess online. NITB, NIFRS and RQIA, for example, allow the businesses they regulate to submit compliance information between inspections. The routine of inspections, such as Care Homes in the case of RQIA, is set in legislation and cannot be moved;
- Just over one in ten (14.3%) offer a support function online. While this may seem particularly low, it is not that NI Regulators do not provide assistance to businesses in areas of non-compliance, but this is mainly provided on a face-to-face or telephone basis. Regulators such as the DVA and the Drinking Water Inspectorate mentioned that they felt this was the preferred way for businesses to receive support and this was echoed by the Federation of Small Businesses;

- In terms of providing a historical record of regulatory compliance over time, three in ten regulators have a system that links into their online services. Overall, nearly every regulator has some form of database, or databases, that catalogue the compliance of the businesses or individuals they are regulating, but the extent to which this forms part of an integrated system suitable for simple interrogation varies greatly. For example, the DVA holds numerous databases across vehicle licensing, driver licensing, vehicle inspection and haulage registration. However, they are not currently linked together or organised in a way that allows compliance over time to easily extracted;

- Reflecting the low level of suitable historic records held by NI Regulators, just over one in four (25.7%) take a risk based approach to exercising their regulatory function. Regulators that do take a risk based approach such as RQIA, NITB and the Agri-Food Inspection Branch, are able to do so because they have the necessary databases and procedures in place to monitor compliance and target resources where they are needed more effectively. Key to this is having well-managed, up-to-date databases. It also interesting to note that these Regulators also tended to have more extensive online provision; and

- Just under a third (31.4%) offers a fee paying function online. Of those Regulators that do offer a fee payment function, the majority are offering this service either through NIDirect (DVA, Landlord Registry) or the Department of Environment (DOE) Apply Online system. HMRC, the Insolvency Service and NITB operate their own fee paying services through their respective websites.

A detailed table showing all 35 Regulatory bodies and the online services they currently provide is shown overleaf.

Table 1:2: Detailed overview of Online Provision by NI Regulators

NI Regulator	Online information gathering system	Account creation/ Profile generation	Forms available for download	Self-assessment capability	Support function	Historical record of regulatory compliance available	Fee payment function	Automatic email reminders /updates	Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function
The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green
Sport NI	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Red
Northern Ireland Trading Standards Service (ERWIN)	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red
Companies House	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Red
Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB)	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green
Veterinary Service	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Red	Green	Red
NI Environment Agency NIEA	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
CCEA	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red
Insolvency Service	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red
Single Farm Payment Branch	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red
NI Social Care Council	Green	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green
Private Landlords Register	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red
Law Society for Northern Ireland	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Green
Environmental Health Service	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red	Green

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
The Equality Commission NI	Green	Red	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green
Employment Agency Inspectorate	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green
Health & Safety Executive for NI	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS)	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA)	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red	Green
Pharmaceutical Society NI	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red
Roads Service/Transport NI	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red
Building Control Service	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Planning Service	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Drinking Water Inspectorate NI	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Fisheries Division (DARD)	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Forest Service NI	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Agri-Food Inspectorate Branch (AfIB)	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green
Licensing Forum NI	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Minerals and Petroleum Licensing	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
NI Authority on Utility Regulation	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Northern Ireland Research & Statistics Agency (NISRA)	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Ports & Public Transport Division	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red

Rivers Agency (DARD)									
Single Use Carrier Bag Levy Regulator									

Currently provide	
Currently do not provide	

1.2 Desired Functions in the Potential Business Regulation Hub

As discussed in the previous section, the provision of online services similar to those desired in the Business Regulation Hub in NI is mixed. While some Regulators offer almost the entire suite of desired functions, such as the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, there are others offering either none or only one the services. However, there is broad agreement on the functions that NI regulators and Business Representative Bodies would like to see in any future Hub, these are:

- A 'one-stop shop' where businesses or individuals can go to and be confident it will provide them with all the information necessary for them to ensure compliance with every regulation that applies to them;
- Linked to the first the point, any potential website should allow businesses or individuals to create a profile, such as contact details, details of premises, sector and size, so that the system can identify exactly what information it should be providing. This information could then be fed into regulators own systems, to avoid businesses or individuals having to resubmit their details across multiple regulators or agencies;
- Once a profile has been created, the Hub should then provide links to the all the regulators the business or individual is required to register with or apply to. The majority of regulators agreed that there should be some low-level integration of the hub and their systems to allow for the profile information to be shared, but full integration would be unnecessary due to costs and information maintenance; and
- As well as a centralised 'sign-posting' website, most NI regulators mentioned they would like any potential hub to make information more accessible to businesses or individuals. This was echoed by Business Representative bodies who mentioned that complying with regulations is less of a burden than having to find out what is required in the first place. If a future hub provided a communication channel between businesses and regulators, with email reminders or checklists, this would help businesses maintain compliance and cut down on the time spent by regulators chasing up organisations or individuals (and also the cost, i.e. reduce the need for advertising or PR campaigns to raise awareness).

There is already some evidence within the NI regulatory field of systems being developed that mirror some of the functions desired in any future Business Regulation Hub.

A number or Regulators within the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) mentioned the move made by the Department to streamline the information held by different branches across multiple databases.

> **Case Study – DARD Customer Information System**
>
> DARD have been developing their Customer Information System (CIS) to try and centralise the information held on businesses and farmers across the many bespoke systems used by different regulatory branches of the Department. The context for its

development was a realisation within DARD that there was a significant amount of duplication of information across the systems used within the Department. This was information on businesses such as name, proprietor, location, sector etc. In order to reduce this duplication and also remove the requirement for businesses to submit this information numerous times to different branches within DARD, the CIS has been created to allow the information to be entered once. This is then held centrally and all other systems being used by DARD branches feed off it, with the business or farmer information coming from the CIS.

Overall, the system works well and has removed the duplicity across databases held by the Department. However, it must be noted that it was a large undertaking for DARD and took 5 - 6 years to develop.

1.3 Examples of Systems Currently Providing Regulatory Advice

There are websites already available that incorporate a number of the functions desired in the Business Regulation Hub. These also closely align with what the majority of NI regulators and Business Representative Bodies described as their preferred option for any potential system in the future. These were also mentioned frequently as examples of 'starting points' in achieving the desired system.

A brief overview of each is included here, with a summary of the positive and negative points highlighted by consultees relating to each system.

NIBusinessinfo.co.uk

NIBusinessinfo was mentioned as providing a large amount of information for businesses in relation to business regulation, as well as a whole host of other information relating to business start-ups, export growth, IT systems and sales & marketing.

Positives

- Comprehensive source of information;

- Links available to NI and UK Regulators, including License Finder; and

- Reasonably well-known across numerous sectors in NI.

Negatives

- More reactive than proactive, businesses have to know what to look for;

- Well-known, but not well used by small businesses; and

- Confusion between its role and NIDirect, i.e. what services are where.

NetRegs.org.uk

NetRegs was mentioned by NI regulators operating in the areas of the Environment and Environmental Health. It was seen as providing some of the functionality of the desired Business Regulation Hub in that it filtered necessary regulations by business sector (although purely environmental regulations).

Positives

- Straightforward to use;

- Information provided in a clear and tailored way; and

- Links for permit applications or license applications.

Negatives

- Low awareness in NI;

- Limited to one area of regulation; and

- Guidance rather than action focused.

ERWIN

ERWIN has been selected as a case study as part of this research project and is profiled in greater depth later in the report.

ERWIN catalogues all Environmental Health, Licensing and Fire Safety. It also provides guidance notes on each service with further links to other relevant resources on the internet. Businesses can log-on to the website and by filtering regulations by business sector and location, are provided with all relevant regulations and tailored advice.

Positives

- Intuitive user interface, making it easy for businesses to classify themselves by sector, size and location;

- Regulatory information is provided in one place, from a range of different Regulators with guidance notes; and

- Links to online services where they are provided.

Negatives

- Low awareness in NI;

- Some NI Regulators mentioned that in their experience it had significant gaps, particularly relating to NI; and

- Perception that it will eventually close and/or be merged into gov.uk.

1.4 Examples of the Desired Functions Already in Use with NI Regulators

Our analysis of all 35 NI Regulators has shown that the seven core functions seen as desirable in a Business HUB exist across wide range of different regulators; however, there are limited examples of systems that incorporate all into one system. Therefore, in this section we have selected a website or regulator that has the best example of each function desired in the Business Regulation Hub.

A Core Database

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS)
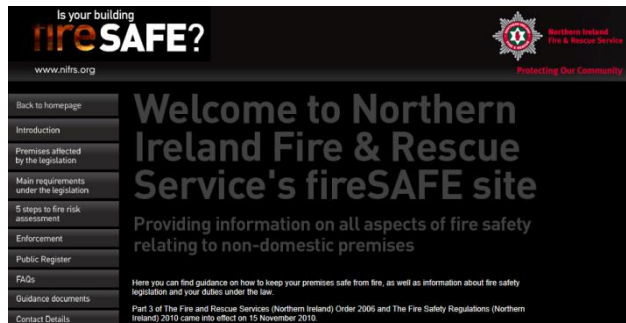
The 'FireSafe' section of the NIFRS website is specifically designed to provide all information regarding fire safety to non-domestic premises. Includes guidance on premises affected by legislation, outlines the requirements for those premises, offers guidance on how to assess risk and provides the necessary documents for Fire Risk Assessments, with templates designed for different types of premises. It also includes the Public Register, a comprehensive, searchable database of all notices served on premises in Northern Ireland and the enforcement action taken.

A Classification System

Companies House

Companies House provides an online service called WebFiling. This allows companies to:

- File forms directly;
- Ensure forms are filled in correctly as the forms have built in checks and pre-populated data, reducing rejections;
- Automatic email acknowledgement when forms are submitted;
- File an Annual Return for significantly less that paper; and
- Make changes to registered office address, office/member information as well as company accounts and change name of resolution.
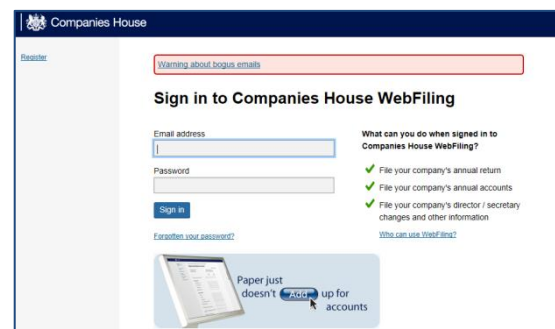
In addition, WebFiling provides access to a system called eReminders – a Free service that notifies companies when company accounts and annual returns are due to be filed. This is one of the most comprehensive business profiling systems in operation with an NI Regulator.

Interrogation process

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

The online services offered by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland only allow charities access to the sections relevant to them based on their size, meaning smaller charities can complete the process much faster. It also saves unnecessary duplication or charities having to fill out irrelevant parts of the website. There is also a built in checklist that allows those filling it in to keep track of progress and highlights sections that still need to be completed before submission. Charities may also attach electronic documents such as its Trustee's Annual Report and annual accounts.

Self-assessment

Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB)

Initial registration with NITB requires accommodation providers to download a form from the website and return it. This will then trigger an inspection by NITB staff so that the provider can gain accreditation. However, once registered, accommodation providers can complete 'Self Statutory Review Forms' online for four years in between mandatory inspections. Inspections will only be carried if NITB deem it necessary or there has been substantial change to the property. Accommodation providers can also pay outstanding invoices through NITB's online services, using credit or debit cards.

Support Function

Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)

The NIEA provides extensive support to businesses using its 'Apply Online' system. Before clicking through to complete an online submission for a license or permit, in-depth advice and guidance is supply to help the applicant complete the forms correctly. There are also links to other guidance material and to the legislation relevant to the regulation. Another useful feature is that it includes a named contact at NIEA for anyone to contact if they need more advice. An example of the support provided before making an application for a Marine Construction License is included below.

RSM McClure Watters (Consulting)
Connected for Success

Marine construction and deposits in the Sea – Marine Construction

Last updated: 5 June 2013

Welcome to the support page for the Marine construction and deposits in the Sea – Marine Construction online form.

We **strongly recommend** that you read all of the supporting information below before proceeding to fill in the **online form** *(to follow)*.

Licence summary	In Northern Ireland, the Department of Environment (DOE) is responsible under the Marine and Coastal Access Act. The Act aims to **protect the marine environment and human health, and to minimise nuisance or interference to other legitimate uses of the sea.** The Department is responsible for controlling all deposits in the sea or under the seabed up to the High Water Mean Spring (HWMS) tide mark. The Department operates a licensing system under the Marine and Coastal Access Act, which regulates the deposit of substances or articles in Northern Ireland's territorial waters (from HWMS out to 12 nautical miles), this includes dredged material.
Eligibility Criteria	Anyone may apply for a Marine Construction Licence.
Regulation Summary	The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007
Application Evaluation Process	Your application will be evaluated through a statutory consultation process with a number of consultees whom the department considers relevant, also a public consultation process through which members of the public may request information or provide comments.
Will Tacit Consent Apply	Tacit consent is where a licence is granted by default if the Licensing Authority has not processed your application within the published processing times. However, due to environmental / public health interests, tacit consent does not apply to marine construction and deposits in the sea. NIEA must process your application before it can be granted. If you have not heard from the Agency within a reasonable period, please contact us. You can do this online or use the contact details below.
Target Completion Period	Depending on the complexity of your application, it will be processed within four months from receipt of a completed application which includes all relevant information and associated material.
Fees	http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/business_and_industry-2/charges.htm
Apply online	Go to www.gov.uk/apply-for-a-licence/marine-construction-works-land-reclamationbeach-replenishment-licence-fepa/northern-ireland-environment-agency/apply-1
Download, print, and post	Forms to download, print and post http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/water-home/marine_licence_applications_and_legislation.htm
Contact Details	Marine Licensing Department of the Environment, Marine Division Marine Strategy and Licensing Team 1st Floor Millennium House 17-25 Great Victoria Street Belfast BT2 7BN E-mail:or trevor.mcquoid@doeni.gov.uk
Application and licence Redress	When an application has been refused or granted subject to conditions (under section 71 of the Act) , or a notice has been issued by the licensing authority to vary, suspend or revoke a marine licence (under section 72 of the Act), or an enforcement notice been issued; the applicant, may by notice, appeal to the Appeals Commission. www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/936/pdfs/uksi_20110936_en.pdf
Consumer Complaint	Follow NIEA customer complaints procedure: http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/11-06.02_complaints_procedure_web.pdf
Public Registers or Databases	A register of licensing information is available for inspection at all reasonable times by members of the public free of charge. This register is available to view at the NIEA Lisburn Office or regional offices if requested.
Local support	Contact the Marine Assessment and Licensing Team
Further Information	http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/water-home/marine_construction_and_deposits.htm

<< Back to Apply Online page

Historical Record

Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)

RQIA maintains detailed databases of the care providers it regulates. Where RQIA identifies concerns about a particular service it may take enforcement action to ensure the safety, wellbeing and protection of those using the services. It may also take enforcement action where it identifies non-compliance with regulations and/or standards.

RQIA publishes details of all enforcement action at adult health and social care services on its website. This includes current enforcement activity, information on services that have achieved compliance with enforcement action.

RQIA also holds comprehensive up to date information on all registered health and social care services in Northern Ireland including nursing homes, residential care homes and domiciliary care agencies. It has developed an online directory that allows anyone using the website to search for these services by name, care category, geographical area, and postcode. Copies of individual inspection reports for each service are available online.

Risk-based

Agri-Food Inspectorate Branch

The frequency of official controls the Agri-Food Inspectorate Branch discharges under a range of mainly EU legislation is determined using a risk-based approach. The nature of this approach will vary slightly in relation to specific regulations, however, a range of weighted factors are scored, the score then determining frequency. This is all based on previous compliance history and information collected from inspections over a long period of time.
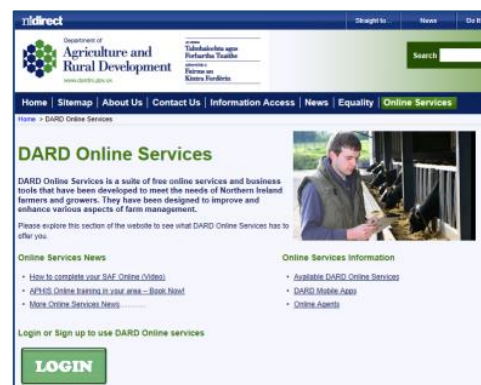
1.5 Costs and Benefits of Different Systems

The Case Studies and consultations have highlighted a number of common benefits and cost savings/efficiencies across the varying regulatory systems in place to facilitate communication between businesses and regulators, specifically:

Benefits/efficiencies to businesses:

- A central, online repository improves access to advice and information for businesses;
- Access to filtered sector-specific information for businesses enables appropriately targeted advice;

- Reduces the amount of time businesses have to spend checking legislation to see whether it is relevant, and then understanding the legal requirements and how they apply to their activities;
- Increased understanding of the implications and costs of noncompliance;
- Reducing costs of compliance through time/resource savings;
- Removes the fear aspect of contacting Regulators in cases of non-compliance, the website can be checked first; and
- Reduces costs relating to bank services if businesses can pay fees online via credit/debit cards.

Benefits/efficiencies to local authorities/regulators:

- A central, online repository provides a consistent, up-to-date and comprehensive information resource for regulatory staff;
- Enables local authorities to provide consistent regulatory advice and information to businesses;
- Reduced administration costs in regards to the processing of license applications or registration forms;
- Information entered online can be transferred directly into Regulators systems, reducing typing or handling errors;
- Provides a clear audit trail for easy examination and interrogation of databases;
- Information for Public Disclosure can be published as soon as it becomes available;
- Improved efficiency by targeting regulatory activity to high-risk areas; and
- Generates efficiencies for local authority regulatory services by significantly reducing duplication of effort in the provision of guidance and advice.

Costs:

Information on the costs associated with implementing different systems was not divulged by the majority of regulators consulted as part of the research. This was due to either confidentiality agreements or tender processes. However, a number were able to give a monetary cost for their systems:

- NI Regulators who have developed their own systems with elements of the desired Business Regulation Hub stated costs ranging from **£100,000** to **£260,000**;
- A UK based IT developer built a similar regulatory system for approx. **£300,000**; and
- A NI based IT provider estimates that in terms of maintaining/updating the system would cost **£250** per regulation per year.

RSM McClure Watters are keen to stress that these costs are merely indicative of the systems already in use and should not be considered as potential costs for the desired Business Regulations Hub. Costs would depend entirely on the final specification and functionality of the system.

2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

2.1 Introduction

RSM McClure Watters (Consulting) Ltd was appointed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) to undertake research into a Potential Hub System to Facilitate More Effective Communication between Regulators and with the Business Community (hereafter referred to as a "Business Regulation Hub").

This section of the report sets out the background to the research, the Terms of Reference set by DETI, our approach to completing the research and the overall structure of the report.

2.2 Background to the Review of NI Business Red Tape

The NI Executive has committed to conducting a Review of Business Red Tape to reduce the regulatory burdens facing businesses in Northern Ireland and it is within this context that DETI has set up a Review Team with a senior level Advisory Panel to provide direction, advice and strategic oversight to the Review.

Following initial exploratory discussions representations of business bodies and the Advisory Panel, the Review Team wishes to commission research to identify potentially relevant information management systems which support businesses in self-assessing their regulatory compliance requirements and affords this profiling to be accessed by regulators responsible for securing compliance.

Specifically the Review Team would like to know what current systems are available that have some or all of the following elements that would be desirable in a "Business Regulation Hub":

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- A **support function** to provide assistance in areas of non-compliance;

- Assessments catalogued over time to provide a **historical record** of businesses' regulatory competence, including details of any incidences of non-compliance recorded/catalogued by regulatory body; and
- Accessibility of information by Regulators to facilitate assessment of business regulatory performance to aid risk-based management planning.

2.3 Terms of Reference

In order for the DETI-led Review Team to progress the Review of Business Red Tape and fulfilling its Economic Pact commitment, this research is required to examine the following areas:

- Current systems are being used by regulators in NI that show elements similar to the Review Team's desired "Business Regulation Hub" Specifically:
- Online information gathering and provision with businesses being regulated;
- Longer-term profiling of business compliance;
- Information sharing procedures with other regulators; and
- A risk-based approach to delivering their regulatory function.
- What systems exist (across the regulatory field and beyond) that could provide a platform to establish a "Business Regulation Hub" for Northern Ireland businesses and regulators;
- Gather evidence where it exists as to the costs and/or benefits of a Classification system allowing businesses to register, create an account and generate a core profile; and
- Recommendations as to the viability of introducing a "Business Regulation Hub" for businesses/regulators active in NI.

2.4 Methodology

The following methodology was developed and agreed with DETI to meet the requirements of the terms of reference:

- **Stage 1: Project Initiation and Planning** - to establish and confirm the scope and final objectives for the research, agree the work programme to be undertaken and finalise timescales for delivery;
- **Stage 2: Preliminary Review of Evidence** - This stage involved the collation of all relevant information on regulators and the systems they currently use. Information was primarily gathered through online searches, and supplemented with direct consultation with regulators. An initial review of the circa 40 regulatory functions delivered in Northern Ireland which impact on business was carried out. Specifically, we reviewed the current systems are being used by regulators in NI to determine which elements are similar to DETI's desired Business Regulation Hub specifications;

- **Stage 3: Stakeholder Consultation** – in-depth interviews with a range in key sectoral stakeholders, including: NI Regulators currently using/not using systems that have elements identified as desirable in a Business Regulation Hub; Regulatory bodies in other jurisdictions that currently use systems with identified elements; Business representation bodies; and IT services firms) were conducted to discuss the viability of introducing a Business Regulation Hub;

- **Stage 4: Development of Case Studies** – three case studies were developed to highlight examples of existing systems that could provide a platform to establish a 'Business Regulation Hub'; and

- **Stage 5: Analysis and Options Workshop** – an Options Workshop with invited guests was facilitated, with a presentation of research findings and a discussion regarding the issues and options for future development.

2.5 Structure of the Report

This report reflects the key findings emanating from Stage 2 – 4 of the approach described above. Subsequent draft reports will reflect the outworkings of an 'Options Workshop' with key stakeholders and further development/refinement of the study's conclusions and recommendations.

The rest of this report is comprised of the following sections which summarise the key findings of the research undertaken:

- Section 3: Strategic Context;
- Section 4: Current Systems in Place;
- Section 5: Stakeholder Consultation;
- Section 6: Benchmarking Case Studies; and
- Section 7: Introduction of Options.

The report is intended to be supported by the following appendices:

- Appendix 1: List of NI Specific Regulators; and
- Appendix 2: Overview of NI Specific Regulators and Current Systems used.

3 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

Regulation is essential to maintain a fair and competitive market place which supports legitimate business and protects society and the environment. With regulation however comes a cost on business to work towards and demonstrate their compliance with the regulatory requirements imposed by Government. Such regulation can come from a range of sources including the NI Executive, the UK Government or indeed the European Union.

This section details the key government policy drivers and developments that have shaped the regulation section in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

3.2 Regulatory Policy in the United Kingdom

Successive governments have sought to address the costs associated with regulation through polices of better regulation or regulatory reform.

One of the main components of these policies since 1998 has been the development of a system of impact assessments for proposals for new or amended regulation. In 2009, the Regulatory Policy Committee was introduced to review and give opinions on impact assessments. The coalition government has introduced the following new controls on regulation since May 2010:

- the Regulatory Policy Committee role has been strengthened to review and give opinions on impact assessments prior to the assessments being published;
- a regulatory review subcommittee of Cabinet (Reducing Regulation Committee) which challenges the need for regulation;
- 'One-in, One-out' policy for new regulation to control the net burden imposed on business;
- Sunset clauses in new regulations which mean they lapse after a specified period unless review justifies their perpetuation; and
- Red Tape Challenges putting the spotlight on different areas of regulation and inviting proposals for their simplification or removal.

In 2008, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills conducted an independent review (The Anderson Review) looking into the best ways Government can give regulatory guidance to businesses. The Review found that the way in which government guidance was produced and disseminated leaves SMEs with a great deal of uncertainty, deterring them from using it and creating additional costs for their businesses. Many businesses involved in the Review were unclear about whether following guidance means they have complied with the law, and were deterred by the amount of information included in guidance and conflicting messages from different parts of the Government. The Review highlighted a number of costs associated with this uncertainty. SMEs were spending upwards of £1.4 billion on paid advice, while there are costs to Government and society as

a whole as a result of noncompliance. The Review concluded that improving guidance and increasing compliance could reduce businesses costs by up to £841 million a year and save £40 million in reduced employment tribunal costs.

3.3 Regulatory Policy in Northern Ireland

The NI Economic Strategy recognises that, in order to secure the Executive's vision for the local economy, it is vital that NI grows its private sector and makes it easier to do business. As the Executive seeks to position NI as one of the best regions in Europe to start and grow a business, it accepts the need for sustained action to improve the regulatory environment in order to create the conditions that will allow businesses across the whole economy to flourish.

In June 2013, the UK Prime Minister, Northern Ireland Secretary of State and the First and deputy First Ministers signed an economic pact called 'Building a Prosperous and United Community'. This pact is a commitment by the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to tackle the important challenges of:

- Rebalancing the economy to meet the challenges of today's global race for investment and jobs; and
- Tackling the long-term entrenched divisions in society.

It follows on from the proposals in 'Together: Building a United Community' announced in May 2013 by the leaders of the NI Executive.

The following four main policy areas have been agreed to help the NI Economy fulfil its potential:

- An investment plan that confirms we are on course to deliver the commitment to £18 billion of capital funding over the period 2005-2017;
- £300 million investment through enhanced capital borrowing powers, and Government top-ups to PEACE IV and EU Structural Funding to support frontline projects;
- To continue Northern Ireland's Assisted Areas Status coverage in order to help the Executive provide the targeted support that has helped to promote over 3,000 new private sector jobs in the last three months alone; and
- A new way forward on Enterprise Zones and planning reform, as well as initiatives to drive investment in infrastructure, promote new businesses and boost tourism.

A key action within the economic pact is reviewing business red tape. This is set-out in section 1.15 'Reducing business red tape' in the 'Building a Prosperous and United Community' document. The Government and the Executive recognise that reducing the regulatory burdens on business is a pressing priority.

The Government and the Executive wish to ensure that all regulations are fair and effective and strike the right balance between protecting consumers, employees and the

environment and freeing people and businesses from unnecessary bureaucracy. Where regulations are ineffective or unnecessary, complying with them will cost time and money and has the potential to restrict economic growth.

DETI's report, Better Regulation Annual Report 2012-13, records what actions were taken by the NI Executive to lessen the burden on business and continue its work towards delivering a fair and proportionate regulatory regime which supports legitimate businesses while protecting the environment and our citizens. The report highlights that an informal mapping exercise undertaken by DETI in early 2013 highlighted that there are potentially 70 different regulatory bodies/functions which impose a burden on business to secure compliance with a regulatory requirement on behalf of government. The report concludes that this is a very complex and demanding landscape for businesses to be aware of and to navigate through.

NI Departmental officials are obliged to consider the regulatory impact on businesses of new or reviewed policies, including those that are designed to introduce new legislative obligations on business. The Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) is the tool designed to support officials in this process. This guidance is being reviewed and redrafted to bring it more into line with other jurisdictions and place a greater emphasis on detailed assessment of potential burdens. A limited stakeholder consultation took place in autumn 2013 on the revised draft guidance, with a view to seeking formal Executive approval and endorsement by March 2014. Revised training and support will be made available to officials in using the new guidance when approved.

3.4 Conclusions

The scale of the costs and benefits arising from regulation means that the management and design of regulations and their enforcement is a key value-for-money issue, both for government and businesses. Successive governments have sought to control the burden of regulation on business and civil society organisations in order to and development of the voluntary sector.

Reducing the regulatory burdens on business has been a strong focus of government policy over recent years, and there is recognition that this is a key factor in encouraging economic growth.

4 CURRENT SYSTEMS IN PLACE

4.1 Introduction

There are currently 35 regulators that fall under the remit of the Northern Ireland Executive. We have profiled each of these each regulator in terms of their remit, function and the systems they currently use to interface with businesses in Appendix 1. This section contains an overview of the provision of online systems among these 35 regulators.

In addition, we have included three examples of well-developed on-line service provision and three examples of regulators with limited online services.

4.2 Current Systems

All 35 regulators that fall under the remit of the NI Executive were profiled in terms of their online systems. A matrix was developed to look at the five key areas of online services offered by NI regulators, they are:

- Online information gathering system;
- Account creation/Profile generation;
- Forms available for download;
- Fee payment function; and
- Automatic email reminders/updates.

From this it is possible to quantify the current level of online provision offered to businesses and individuals in NI.

Table 4:1: Overview of Online Provision by NI Regulators

Service	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	48.6%	51.4%
Account creation/Profile generation	37.1%	62.9%
Forms available for download	62.9%	37.1%
Self-assessment capability	34.3%	65.7%
Support function	14.3%	85.7%
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	31.4%	68.6%
Fee payment function	31.4%	68.6%
Automatic email reminders/updates	34.4%	65.6%

Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	22.9%	77.1%

Base: 35 Regulatory bodies in under the remit of the NI Executive

The analysis shows that there the provision of online service by regulators in NI is low. After profiling the 35 Regulatory Bodies under the remit of the NI Executive, only a minority of regulators offer online services across 8 of the 9 key areas. The only online service offered by a majority of regulators is forms available for download. As this is online provision at its most basic, in that the forms can be downloaded to be filled in and returned in the post, this demonstrates how limited online services are for businesses. Almost half (48.6%) of NI Regulators have an online information gathering system and this ranges from full profile account creation that allows continuous maintenance of a business's data and compliance information (such as the Charity Commission NI), to simply being able to submit registration information once (Landlord Registry). Just under a third (31.4%) offer a fee paying function, the least offered online service among NI Regulators. Of those Regulators that do offer a fee payment function, the majority are offering this service either through NIDirect (DVA, Landlord Registry) or the Department of Environment (DOE) Apply Online system.

Around a third (34.3%) of NI Regulators allow businesses or individuals to self-assess in terms of regulatory compliance online. HMRC has a long established online system of self-assessment that has succeeded in becoming the norm for businesses to submit tax information. HMRC's system is well known in the regulatory area in NI and the Equality Commission and the Charity Commission NI both looked into it before selecting other online systems for their own services (the HMRC system proved too expensive for their needs). NITB allows accommodation providers to self-assess for four years between required inspections, this is done by logging into the NITB website and submitting the necessary information. Self-assessment is a key component of Regulators being able to take a risk-based approach to exercising their regulatory function. Reflecting the low availability of online self-assessment functions among NI Regulators, just one in four (22.9%) currently take a risk based approach.

Interestingly, the least available function provided by NI Regulators through their websites is a support function in areas of non-compliance. While most Regulators do work to support businesses with compliance issues, in the main this is currently provided on a face-to-face or telephone basis.

4.3 Examples of NI Regulators with Well Developed On-Line Service Provision

4.3.1 Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland is the independent regulator of charities in Northern Ireland, responsible for ensuring Northern Ireland has a dynamic and well governed charities sector, in which the public can have confidence. The Commission takes

a risk based and proportionate approach to regulating charities. This means it targets its resources at the highest risks to charities' beneficiaries, assets and reputation and where intervention will have the greatest impact

The Commission is non-departmental public body, supported by the Department for Social Development. Its main role is to register and regulate the estimated 7,000-10,000 charities working within Northern Ireland. The Charities Act (NI) 2008 created the Charity Commission and the same Act sets out its powers.

The regulation and registration of charities in Northern Ireland will bring the region into line with other parts of the United Kingdom. The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and the Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW) operate similarly in their respective jurisdictions.

The registration process for charities was suspended in 2010, as the Charities Act (NI) 2008 needed to be amended to clarify the "public benefit" test. This was resolved in January 2013, following which a consultation was announced prior to commencing registration on 16 December 2013.

The Commission has three registration lists and all charitable organisations are required to check if they are on one. If a charity is not, it must take steps to register by completing an online Expression if intent form. This then allows the charity to be called forward to apply for registration by the Commission. It is not until an organisation is registered as a charity with the Commission that it will be able to apply to HMRC for charitable tax exemptions.

The three registration lists are:

1. Deemed list: organisations registered with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) for charitable tax exemptions by 19 August 2013. This list is set in law and cannot be changed or added to.
2. Non-deemed list: all other charitable organisations, whether long or newly established, which are not registered with HMRC. Organisations will be added to this list as they come forward.
3. Special circumstances list: organisations which have made a case to have their application brought forward or have been placed on this list by the Commission. Organisations may be moved from the deemed list to the special circumstances list. Organisations can only be added to this list by the Commission.

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland provides online services for charities to securely interact with it. Charities are able to begin the application process and then update and amend their completion form.

Specifically, charities are able to:

- Input all the basic information that the Commission needs to keep the charity's entry on the register of charities up to date. This includes details of trustees.
- Submit financial information and details of accounts.

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25th September 2014

- For larger charities, with an income of over £1 million, they can complete their Summary Information Return (SIR).

The system only allows charities access to the sections relevant to them based on their size, meaning smaller charities can complete the process much faster. There is also a built in checklist that allows those filling it in to keep track of progress and highlights sections that still need to be completed before submission. Charities may also attach electronic documents such as its Trustee's Annual Report and annual accounts.

Table 4:2: Charity Commission for Northern Ireland Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function	✓	
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	
Fee payment function		✗
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	✓	

4.3.2 NI Environment Agency

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is an Agency within the Department of Environment with approximately 800 staff.

It takes the lead in advising on, and in implementing, the Government's environmental policy and strategy in Northern Ireland. The Agency carry's out a range of activities, which promote the Government's key themes of sustainable development, biodiversity and climate change.

NIEA aims to be recognised as the leading body responsible for protecting, conserving and promoting the environment and heritage in Northern Ireland and are working towards four long term environmental outcomes:

- the sustainable use and protection of our natural resources;
- improved conservation and management of our natural heritage;

- improved conservation and protection of our built heritage; and
- better public awareness and understanding of the environment.

NIEA has developed a comprehensive online offering that allows businesses and service providers to fill in compliance declarations, register their business practices, apply for licenses and pay regulatory fees. It is called Apply Online and covers the following consent forms and licenses. The service is provided through Gov.uk.

In addition to the Wildlife License, there are 40 applications that can be made online that come under six areas of regulation NIEA is responsible for. These are:

Water Discharge Consents

- Sewage discharged under emergency conditions consent
- Trade effluent and site drainage discharge consent
- Fish farming discharge consent
- Sewage effluent discharge consent
- Transfer ownership of a water discharge consent

Marine Licenses

- Marine Construction
- Deposit of solid waste (e.g. dredged material)
- Tracers Dyes and other materials
- Marine Dredging

Waste Management Licencing

- Registration of carriers / brokers of controlled waste
- Renewal or cancellation of registration as a carrier / broker of controlled waste
- Waste management licence
- Modify the conditions of a waste management licence
- Transfer a waste management licence
- Surrender a Waste Management Licence
- Application for a Mobile Treatment Licence
- Compliance with NIEA Greenfield Soil Declaration
- Application for a Waste management Licence to operate an Authorised Treatment Facility (ATF) for End of Life Vehicles

Register for a waste exemption forms

- Simple exemptions
- Land Treatment for Agricultural Benefit or Ecological Improvement (paragraph 9)
- The Spreading, or Storage and Spreading of Sludge on land which is not land used for agriculture (paragraph 10a)
- The storage of sludge not for agricultural benefit (paragraph 10b)

- Spreading of Waste for the purpose of Reclamation, Restoration or Improvement of Land (paragraph 11)
- Composting and Storage of Biodegradable Waste (paragraph 13)
- The Manufacture of Products from Waste, and the Treatment of Waste Soil or Rock which is to be Spread on Land (paragraph 14)
- Manufacture of finished goods from waste (paragraph 15)
- Use of waste for construction, maintenance or improvement of relevant work (paragraph 19)
- Recovery of scrap metal or dismantling of depolluted end-of-life vehicles (paragraph 45)
- Repair and refurbishment of waste, electrical, electronic equipment (WEEE) (paragraph 49)
- Secure storage of waste electrical electronic equipment (WEEE) (paragraph 50)
- Crushing of waste gas discharge lamps (paragraph 51)
- Secure storage of waste batteries or accumulators (paragraph 52)

Pollution Prevention Control Permit

- Application for a Pollution Prevention and Control Permit Part A Installation
- Application for a Pollution Prevention and Control Permit Part B Installation

Producer Responsibility Registration

- Packaging Regulations – Producers
- Packaging Regulations – Accredited Reprocessor or Exporter
- WEEE Regulations – Producers
- WEEE Regulations – Approved Authorised Treatment Facility or Exporter
- Batteries Regulations – Producers
- Batteries Regulations – Approved Battery Treatment Operator or Exporter

Table 4:3: NI Environment Agency Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability		✗
Support function	✓	
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	

	Yes	No
Fee payment function	✓	
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	✓	

4.3.3 Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB)

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) is responsible for the development of tourism and the marketing of Northern Ireland as a tourist destination to domestic tourists, from within Northern Ireland, and to visitors from the Republic of Ireland. It is a non-departmental body of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and works closely with other tourism bodies to help develop the visitor economy and to market NI to incoming visitors.

All tourist accommodation providers must comply with the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. This stipulates that all tourist accommodation providers must receive certification from NITB before they are allowed to begin operating.

Operators register in the first instance by downloading a PDF form from the NITB website, filling it in and posting it back (with the relevant fees) to the NITB Quality & Standards Unit. The certification process normally takes up to 8 weeks as the premises must be inspected by a NITB Quality and Standards Officer.

Once registered with NITB accommodation providers can manage their compliance via an online portal. Through this it is possible to apply for a change in accommodation category, for example, if a B&B wanted to become a guest house.

There is evidence to suggest that NITB takes a risk based approach to delivering its regulatory function. As part of its responsibilities, NITB carries out statutory inspections of tourists accommodation premises in NI every four years. The purpose of these statutory inspections in to ensure that establishments comply with certain minimum standards, as set out in relevant tourism legislation. In each of the three years between statutory inspections, tourist accommodation providers are required to provide NITB with a brief self-review statement. This self-review process is designed to ensure that certified establishments continue to comply with minimum legislative standards. The 'Self-Review Statement' can be completed online through the NITB online portal.

Table 4:4: NITB Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	

Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	
Fee payment function		✗
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	✓	

4.4 Examples of NI Regulators with limited online services

4.4.1 Health & Safety Executive for NI (HSENI)

HSENI (The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland) is an executive Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). HSENI is the lead body responsible for the promotion and enforcement of health and safety at work standards in Northern Ireland.

HSENI has specific enforcement responsibilities in the following areas:

- Factories
- Building sites
- Farms
- Motor vehicle repairs
- Mines and quarries
- Chemical plants
- Schools and universities
- Leisure and entertainment facilities (owned by District Councils)
- Fairgrounds
- Hospitals and nursing homes
- District Councils
- Fire and police
- Government departments
- Railways.

HSENI provides a range of information and toolkits in regards to health & safety regulations on its website. These are available for employees, employers and trade union representatives. However, it does not provide a system for information gathering or for regulatory compliance.

Table 4:5: HSENI Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✘
Account creation/Profile generation		✘
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function		✘
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✘
Fee payment function		✘
Automatic email reminders/updates		✘
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✘

4.4.2 The Planning Service

The Department of the Environment's planning functions operate from Causeway Exchange in Belfast and from 8 local Area Planning Offices across Northern Ireland. Planning Group is led by the Chief Planner and is comprised of 3 divisions. They are:

- Local Planning;
- Strategic Planning; and
- Planning Policy.

The Planning Group is responsible for the delivery of operational planning functions, the development and delivery of planning policy and legislation, the reform and transfer of some planning functions that will transfer from central to local government.

In addition to the operational functions of Development Management (including enforcement), Development Planning, Conservation and Tree Preservation Orders, Planning Group is responsible for taking forward much of the work required to prepare for the transfer of many operational planning responsibilities to the new 11 Councils, retention of the remaining planning functions within central government and the establishment of new working arrangements between central and local government on planning matters.

The Group is also responsible for the development of planning policy, guidance and advice, together with the legislation required to accelerate a number of reforms to the planning system in advance of the transfer of planning powers to the local councils.

On the Planning Service website (www.planningni.gov.uk) there is a service called Public Access that allows anyone accessing it to:

- Search for Planning applications and Appeals by a variety of criteria such as address, date received and application type;
- View details of Planning applications and appeals using key dates such as date received, date valid or date decided;
- Track the status and progress of planning applications and appeals;
- View the plans, maps, drawings and environmental statements which accompany a planning application including additional plans and revised plans;
- View the details of consultation responses, third party comments or correspondence with the applicant on a planning application; and
- View properties and applications on a map.

It is not possible to submit a planning application through the website, however, the full suite of planning forms is available to download on the website. This can be completed on-screen, printed and then submitted to The Planning Service.

Table 4:6 Planning Service Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖
Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability		✖
Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✖
Fee payment function		✖
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

4.4.3 Pharmaceutical Society NI

The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland was established by the Pharmacy and Poisons Act (NI) 1925. As a regulatory body, it seeks to protect the public by:

- Setting and promoting standards for pharmacists' admission to the register and for remaining on the register;
- Maintaining a publicly accessible register of pharmacists, and pharmacy premises in Northern Ireland;
- Handling concerns about Fitness to Practise of registrants, acting as a complaints portal and taking action to protect the public; and
- Ensuring high standards of education and training for pharmacists in Northern Ireland.

Pharmacists and Pharmacies can download the relevant registration forms from the Pharmaceutical Society's website. These must then be returned in the post along with the necessary fees. There is currently no provision to complete these forms or pay fees through the website.

In terms of profiling compliance, the entire Register of Pharmacists and Pharmacies in NI is made available online to search online. Pharmacists are profiled giving their name, registration number, date of registration and details of any fitness to practice issues. Pharmacy details provided on the register include name and address, contact number and registration number.

Table 4:7 Pharmaceutical Society NI Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖
Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download	✔	
Self-assessment capability		✖
Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✔	
Fee payment function		✖
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

4.5 Summary

Overall, the online provision by NI regulators is mixed. While a majority now offer forms and application packs to download from their website, it is only a minority that offer

services similar to the desired 'Business Regulation Hub'. In particular, very few offer profile or account generation and a function to allow either regulators or businesses to profile compliance over time. A significant minority of NI Regulators offer no online provision at all, indicating the scale of the task required in creating a regulation hub.

Information sharing procedures are also limited, with nearly all NI Regulators exercising their regulatory function independently from other regulators. This is potentially a major issue to address when designing the hub as information sharing procedures will be necessary for the hub to function as desired. Due to the legislation surrounding how information is shared between regulators this could present a potential barrier to regulators working collaboratively online.

The most developed online systems being used by NI regulators such as the Charity Commission NI, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and HMRC all offer the type of online systems desired in a 'Business Regulation Hub'. However, they are all separate systems and a key consideration in developing the desired 'Business Regulation Hub' needs to address how this would be overcome.

5 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

5.1 Introduction

As part of the research, we consulted with a range of interested parties representing the following groupings of stakeholders:

- NI Regulators currently using systems that have elements identified as desirable in a Business Regulation Hub;
- NI Regulatory bodies not currently using systems with identified elements;
- Regulatory bodies in other jurisdictions that currently use systems with identified elements;
- Business representation bodies; and
- IT services firms.

The purpose of the consultation exercise was to test the assumptions derived from the preliminary desk based research and to gain a further understanding of:

- Systems currently used in NI;
- Awareness of alternative systems used by other regulators in NI and elsewhere; and
- Viability of introducing a Business Regulation Hub for regulators and businesses in NI and benefits/challenges of this.

This section provides a summary of the salient issues raised by stakeholders during consultation.

5.2 NI Regulators currently using well-developed online systems

Stakeholders from NI Regulatory bodies using online systems with identified elements of the potential hub were asked their views on the systems already in place and the viability of introducing a business regulation hub in NI.

Responses have been collated under the following key areas:

- Profile of systems currently used;
- Benefits of introducing the current system;
- Awareness of alternative systems used by other regulators in NI and elsewhere; and
- Viability of introducing a Business Regulation Hub for regulators and businesses in NI.

5.2.1 Profile of systems currently being used

Elements included and excluded

Most the online systems already in operation with NI Regulators offer two key things, the ability to register details/required information and pay associated fees or costs where necessary. They also include extensive registration forms, license applications and other forms required by regulatory bodies in PDF form that are available to download so that they can be filled in by hand and returned in the post. While most systems require individuals or businesses to register login details in order to use the online services, very few include a function that automatically contacts those using the online system that information needs updating or if regulations have changed. Significantly fewer systems include a function to generate a profile, i.e. allowing businesses to enter details regarding sector/business size and tailor information specifically to that business. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has a particularly well developed system that allows accommodation providers to register (a statutory requirement), pay their registration fees and arrange for NITB inspectors to visit their premises. Accommodation inspections are only required every four years if there are no changes to the premises so NITB have included a function in their system where providers can self-certify each year between inspections.

When systems were introduced

NI Regulators have been developing and introducing their online services since the middle of the last decade with most implementing their systems between 2006 and 2009. Although some, such as the Landlord Register, have only come online in 2014.

Rationale for the introduction of these systems

The main driving factor mentioned by all NI Regulators behind the move to online services was the EU Services Directive which EU Member states were required to implement by 28 December 2009[1]. The Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) introduced their system 'RITS' in 2005 for exam awarding bodies to register new qualifications and gain accreditation. The driving force behind this was that the previous paper-based system took a long time from registration to accreditation and there were issues with forms and papers getting lost between the regulator and the awarding body. The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI) operates within an identical legislative framework as its counterpart body in England and Wales who had already developed a comprehensive online system that was working very well. Therefore when CCNI were set-up in 2009 they took the decision to put all their services online and use the system from

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[1] The Service Directive (Directive 2006/123/EC of 12 December 2006 on services in the internal market) is designed to facilitate the establishment of a business in a Member State. It requires Member States to set up "points of single contact", i.e. one-stop shops through which service providers can obtain all relevant information and complete all procedures relating to their activities. It also requires Member States to ensure that all these procedures and formalities can be completed at a distance and by electronic means.

England and Wales. They only made minor adjustments to make it friendlier to an NI audience.

In GB, Defra launched Defra-Lex in April 2014 to try and streamline and consolidate the legislation for which it is responsible. Defra realised that as a Department of Government, it did not actually know what legislation sat within its responsibilities nor what was live or inactive. Defra-Lex was designed to give the Department a definitive legislation management tool and to provide a streamlined update-to-date record of legislation to the public. Working in conjunction with Legislation.gov.uk, DEFRA have identified 130,000 pieces of legislation that are live and can now, under the auspices of Better Regulation, reduce by 80% by the end of 2014. Defra feel that it is important that any Department seeking to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses first creates a system that allows them to properly manage all relevant legislation.

Design and development

With the exception of CCEA, there was very little consultation between regulators and businesses/service providers in regards to the development of the online systems. Regulators such as NITB and the Landlord Register felt it was better to focus on their requirements so they could be sure the system captured exactly what they needed from businesses/service providers. Regulators also mentioned that as regulations are backed by legislation, and there was often a consultation with businesses regarding the legislation, businesses/service providers were in effect consulted earlier in the process.

Some NI Regulators worked in conjunction with NIDirect regarding the design and development of their system. However, a significant minority of those consulted did not want to disclose the name of the IT company that designed their system. There were also significant number that bought systems already in use in England and Wales. IT companies mentioned by other NI Regulators include BT, Asidua and Silverbear.

Costs involved with designing and developing/implementing systems

The majority of NI Regulators did not wish to disclose the costs in involved, however, some mentioned that they thought the difference in cost between buying an 'off the shelf' product and designing their own bespoke system was negligible and therefore they had proceeded with bespoke systems.

The small number of Regulators who did disclose costs revealed that they ranged from £100,000 to £260,000. Maintenance costs for one system were £10,000 per year in the early years of its launch but once the majority of the bugs had been fixed the Regulator found its own IT Department could take over the on-going management.

5.2.2 Benefits of introducing current system

A key benefit of the online systems already implemented is the reduced administrative burden on NI Regulators. As information is entered in to their systems directly through an online portal, it is readily available and up-to-date. The reduction in paperwork has the

additional benefit of reducing amount of errors in databases held by NI Regulators and reduces the instances of paperwork or files getting lost.

A number of NI Regulators also mentioned the benefits in terms of a more robust and transparent audit trail. The online systems feed directly into the Regulator databases, therefore both the regulatory body and the business/individual have a clear record historical record of when forms were submitted. If there are any issues or checks needed, it is much easier to find and extract the information than if it was stored in paper files.

Some NI Regulators have also been able to integrate their online information gathering system with other public access websites so that information can be made public within a matter of hours. For example, NITB requires businesses to register with it and provide details on their accommodation for consumers. This can change regularly as businesses change or expand, and as this happens they are required to update their details through an online portal. Once this is done NITB can then automatically update the information it has previously published on the business on discovernorthernireland.com. This quick turnaround between information received and information being published was also highlighted as a benefit by CCEA. Using its RITS system, new qualifications from awarding bodies are received through the online portal. CCEA then begin the accreditation process and as soon as the qualification is accredited it is published online. Previously, this process required extensive paperwork and communication via mail. The time from notification to accreditation has reduced significantly, with fewer errors due to lost paperwork.

Payment or relevant fees online is also an important aspect of the online systems currently utilised by NI Regulators. This was highlighted as a particular benefit by the Insolvency Service and the Landlord Register. The key benefit of this is that it reduces cash and cheque handling by staff (and therefore reducing the possibility of errors and fraud). In addition, Regulators feel that it is also more convenient for businesses or individuals as they do not have to travel to an office to pay the relevant fee.

In summary the key benefits of the online systems already in use are:

- Accuracy of data;
- Quick turnaround of information;
- Audit trail;
- Reduced fraud risk; and
- It is more convenient for businesses and individuals;

5.2.3 Awareness of alternative systems used by other regulators in NI and elsewhere

Awareness of systems used by other regulators is generally low, however, there is knowledge of other systems that are designed to help businesses or individuals ensure they are compliant. The systems that NI Regulators are most aware of elsewhere tend to be systems that signpost businesses to regulators or provide information regarding regulatory compliance. The most mentioned systems are:

- NIbusinessinfo.com;
- Netregs.org.uk; and
- Everythingregulation.org.uk ('ERWIN').

Netregs.org.uk and Everythingregulation.org.uk ('ERWIN') were mentioned as having some particularly useful functions. Businesses or individuals can enter in details about the sector they are operating in or what work they are planning and the website will show all the licenses, permits or registrations needed to operate. Trading Standards feel that while everythingregulation.org.uk is a good system, it is not complete in the information it provides. Therefore there is the potential for businesses to assume that they are completely compliant with every regulatory requirement, when in fact 'ERWIN' has not directed them to every single requirement.

5.2.4 Viability of introducing a Business Regulation Hub for regulators and businesses in NI

In terms of developing a Business Regulation Hub for regulators, there are mixed views among regulators. Nearly all agree that one centralised website would be ideal for businesses but trying to include all the functions provided by all the NI Regulators in one place is overly ambitious. The main reasons for this are:

- A perception among stakeholders that there are a number of Data Protection Act issues regarding information sharing;
- Some Regulators such as CCEA are so sector specific that they do not see the value in integrating their system with other regulators;
- The potential costs outweigh the savings of introducing the system. NI Regulators feel that any online system would have to be backed up with a dedicated help system for business or individuals to contact for advice, either online or telephone. Given the complex and ever changing legislation behind most regulatory functions, each regulator would have to provide the expertise for their area. Therefore any efficiencies achieved by removing the administration of paper based systems would be swallowed up by expanded help desk provision;
- Regulators such as NITB. Trading Standards and RQIA mention that a significant number of small businesses in Northern Ireland are still not utilising the internet. This is either because of a lack of access to high-speed internet or staff not having the IT skills needed to make use of online services; and
- Regulators also mention that one centralised hub, even if online, would not have the desired outcome of reducing the regulatory burden on businesses. Putting it all in one place may make it easier for businesses to ensure they are compliant but the real issue is reducing the amount of regulation needs to be addressed through legislation.

Instead of a centralised online services based hub, NI Regulators feel that an information and signposting website would be best. Many Regulators mentioned an upgraded NIBussinessinfo.co.uk that mirrors the functionality of netregs.org.uk, in that businesses or

individuals can input their details i.e. sector and service and then the website will inform them of the various certificates, licences or registrations required. NITB mentioned that this functionality would be particularly helpful to accommodation providers, as they are not always aware that they can also be required to register with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, Environmental Health, Food Standards Agency and the Land and Property Service. NITB think that having one centralised directory would make it less confusing for businesses.

5.3 NI Regulatory bodies not currently using well-developed online systems

Stakeholders from NI Regulatory bodies with limited or no online systems were asked their views on their organisations use of online systems the viability of introducing a business regulation hub in NI.

Responses have been collated under the following key areas:

- Profile of any system(s)/procedure(s) currently used by businesses in relation to regulatory compliance and access information;
- Consideration given to introducing a system with any online elements;
- Awareness of alternative systems used by other regulators in NI and elsewhere; and
- Viability of introducing a Business Regulation Hub for regulators and businesses in NI.

5.3.1 Profile of any system(s)/procedure(s) currently used by businesses in relation to regulatory compliance and access to information

NI Regulators that are not currently using online systems are satisfied with the systems they currently have in place. As these Regulators, such as DVA and the Drinking Water Inspectorate, have enforcement as a large part of their remit face-to-face interaction with businesses is a significant part of their work. A lot of the information they hold is gathered through inspections and testing, so the opportunities to move this data collection online are limited. The Equality Commission's regulatory function is narrow and so the investment in a more sophisticated system would be pointless given how well their current paper based approach works. However, DVA mentioned that they are considering moving to a more risk based approach to their regulatory function, in order to manage risk better and to target their resources better. It is aimed at reducing the burden of regulation on compliant businesses.

5.3.2 Consideration given to introducing a system with any online elements

It is interesting to note that a common reason given as to why regulators have not moved systems online is the complexity of the legislative framework within which they exercise their regulatory function. As the legislation can be added to or changed at an EU, UK or NI level, there processes have to be kept under constant review. It is felt among Regulators

not using online systems that try and put this into a website for businesses might be more confusing than having it explained in person by an expert.

The Equality Commission looked into the HMRC online system as a platform that could be adopted for it to interact with employers. However, it was deemed too expensive to operate and maintain. They also thought that complicating the process by asking employers to create an account might be off-putting. At present, employers simply download and return a single registration form, once that is received by the Equality Commission they handle all communication with the business and work with them to ensure compliance.

5.3.3 Awareness of alternative systems used by other regulators in NI and elsewhere

Awareness of alternative systems is limited to NIBusinessinfo, NIDirect and systems being used by similar regulators in the rest of the UK. In particular, the DVA is currently investigating the potential for it to develop a system that mirrors the functionality of its sister agency in the UK, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA). This is driven by the wider European context, where the EU wants to standardise driving and vehicle operating standards across Member States.

5.3.4 Viability of introducing a Business Regulation Hub for regulators and businesses in NI

The idea of a Business Regulation Hub for Regulators and businesses in NI is welcomed by those regulators not offering online systems presently. However, in terms of functionality, these Regulators think that it has to be a 'sign-posting' website that directs businesses to the relevant regulators own systems. They feel that incorporating every potential regulatory function in one place would only serve to confuse businesses and would require almost daily updating and maintenance due to changes in legislation.

5.4 Business representation bodies

Stakeholders from business representation bodies were asked their views on the current needs of NI businesses in relation to regulatory compliance and the viability of introducing a business regulation hub in NI.

Responses have been collated under the following key areas:

- Current needs to NI businesses in relation to regulatory compliance and access to information;
- Awareness of alternative systems used by other regulators in NI and elsewhere; and
- Viability of introducing a Business Regulation Hub for regulators and businesses in NI.

5.4.1 Current needs of NI businesses in relation to regulatory compliance and access to information

The Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce were keen to stress that the feedback they are receiving from their members is that the quantity of regulation is not the main issue, it is the time and effort required to figure out what regulations apply and who it is necessary to contact to ensure they are compliant and meeting their obligations. Businesses can manage to operate successfully, even in a heavily regulated environment but they need to know what is required, in an as efficient and comprehensive way. NICC feels that at present, Regulators are not proactive with businesses in aiding their compliance, too often businesses are having to chase agencies for clarification or find out what they need to do.

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) agree that information is key to helping small business ensure they are compliant. However, reducing red tape is also important as small businesses do not have the administrative resources to cope with large amounts of regulation. In the FSB's experience the small businesses are also reluctant of contacting agencies and regulators for advice. This is because they are worried that it might trigger and inspection of that they will be bombarded with more regulations. They have found compliance issues tend to be driven by ignorance rather than small businesses deliberately disregarding their requirements.

5.4.2 Awareness of alternative systems used by other regulators in NI and elsewhere

ERWIN was mentioned by NICC as a good example of what is required in regards to Trading Standards. However, there were still some questions as to whether it covered all regulations, particularly for Northern Ireland. Netregs was mentioned by FSB as providing a good and useful service but there is very low awareness of it among their members. NIBussinessinfo was also mentioned as a good example but rarely used by small businesses.

5.4.3 Viability of introducing a Business Regulation Hub for regulators and businesses in NI

Business representative bodies think that not only is a Business Regulation Hub viable in Northern Ireland, it is necessary. There is a strong appetite for an online based information system that can sign-post businesses to the regulatory bodies they need to comply with based on their sector or service. NIBusinessinfo was mentioned as being half way there and that it could provide the platform for such a hub, given that it is well established with businesses.

NICC mentioned that businesses often contact them asking for advice regarding regulation or legislation, and they direct them on to the relevant body. Ideally, they would like a comprehensive website that they could simply direct businesses to. Although, they were keen to stress that it would require almost constant updating due to changes in legislation

and the reorganisation of government departments/agencies. The FSB are currently lobbying for a 'Small Business Advice Network' that would provide a 'One Stop Shop' for small businesses, covering everything from regulatory advice to export development initiatives. Therefore it would be in favour of the business regulation hub including all regulatory functions in one place. However, based on previous experience, it would have to be extremely well publicised to get businesses to use it as small businesses still prefer to do most things on a face-to-face basis.

5.5 IT services

Stakeholders from IT services were asked for their previous experience of developing systems for regulators and the viability of introducing a business regulation hub in NI.

Responses have been collated under the following key areas:

- Previous experience of developing systems for regulators;
- Costs associated with developing and maintaining the systems; and
- Current systems that exist with any of the elements listed above that could provide a platform to establish a Business Regulation Hub.

5.5.1 Previous experience of developing systems for regulators

There are two key aspects to developing systems for regulators that IT service providers mentioned, the first is ensuring the necessary Data Sharing Agreements are in place; and the second is the quality and integrity of the information stored on the centrally. These are both equally important because you cannot have one without the other. The Data Sharing Agreements allow the information to be collated and de-duplicated, while a properly managed database provides a clear audit trail that allows compliance with Data Sharing Agreements to be easily assessed.

The Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) is currently developing a system called the Intelligent Regulatory Information System (IRIS) for two Local Authorities and a County Council in the East Midlands. In their experience the biggest difficulty to be overcome is getting the correct Data Sharing Agreements in place between the various regulators. Integrating systems, although a challenging, is much less of an issue as there is always a solution, it just needs to be developed by programmers or software engineers. Data Sharing Agreements need require a willingness on the part of all regulators involved to work together and to put the required procedures in place to make it work. They have found this second aspect to take up more time, and therefore cost, than any other.

The Department of Social Development (DSD) also developed an online system called the 'Government Funding Database' to manage information regarding voluntary organisations who receive funding grants. It was developed following an NI Audit Office report that highlighted a large amount of cross-over in the funding provided by different public bodies in NI. The purpose of the system was to reduce duplicate funding and reduce fraud. The system has been positively received by both the voluntary sector and funders. Voluntary

organisations can log-in and check funding opportunities and view what other organisations are receiving. DSD are currently piloting a function within the system that allows voluntary organisations to upload documents such as funding applications through the website, previously organisations could only update information relating to their profile on the system.

NIBusinessinfo previously provided a 'Business Regulation Checklist' until 2011, this was part of the wider UK service called Business Link. It was closed down due to very low usage levels and replaced with License Finder on the gov.uk website. Research revealed that the tool had an high drop-out rate between users starting checklist and completing it, 75% who put in their business details dropped out without finishing. Also, 50% of the content uploaded to the Business Regulation Checklist was never viewed.

5.5.2 Costs associated with developing and maintaining the systems

The overall cost to the DSD for implementing the 'Government Funding Database' so far has been approximately £100,000 of which £69,000 was the initial outlay in the design and building of the system. It has been in operation since 2004, over the first 4 years an IT company was retained at a cost of £10,000 a year to maintain and adapt the system as necessary. However, this contract was not renewed once the system reached a point that it could be maintained by DSD's own IT department. It was noted that this may change in the future if significant upgrading of the system needs to take place.

HSL state that the IRIS system has cost approximately £300,000 and they feel that this represents good value for money. If system such of this was to be taken up by regulators, either regionally or nationally, they think on-going maintenance costs would be reasonable. However, if the system was to provide a lot of regulatory guidance, this could potentially require a significant amount of updating but the system could be designed from the beginning to deal with this.

NIBussinessinfo estimate that the maintenance of a system like the desired Business Regulation Hub would cost £250 per regulation per year. This would cover the cost of hosting the information, updating and maintaining the content and providing the services needed for businesses to submit information online. The potential system could cost up to £500,000 per year to maintain. However, it must be stressed this is purely an estimation based on a system incorporating every aspect of the desired hub.

5.5.3 Current systems that exist with any of the elements listed above that could provide a platform to establish a 'Business Regulation Hub'

HSL believe that the IRIS system, although still only being piloted, could provide a basis for any future business regulation hub for Northern Ireland, particularly from the Regulator viewpoint. This is because it is fundamentally a system that links data across many different regulatory fields and allows detailed, interrogation of the information stored to profile compliance over time. A specific aspect of IRIS that could be considered in any potential hub for NI is the 'Probabilistic Organisation Match' function. This was designed to

deal with one of the biggest issues HSL have come across when designing these kind of systems, trying to determine in the entry is a new record or the same record under a different name/address/contact. For example, when data is being uploaded to IRIS in the being it was submitted from a range of regulators, none of which had a common classification system. Therefore businesses could be registered under different names on different databases. The Probabilistic Organisation Match, using sophisticated algorithms, determines what is a unique record and what are duplicates, ensuring the database is accurate and organisations are not double-counted. IRIS also have sophisticated interrogation functionality that allows regulators to profile compliance overtime and identify patterns, not just in businesses but across all forms of data collected (i.e. if certain people are the cause of non-compliance across a number of businesses). Therefore investigations, where necessary, no longer need to be premises focused (which can be a burden on businesses), they can now be more targeted at an individual or process.

The 'Government Funding Database' provides an example of a centralised database working in the local context. The DSD were keen to stress two important things they have learned from developing this system:

1. **Systems are only as good as the information entered into them –** Leaving too much for organisations to fill in themselves results in a large amount of gaps and errors. It is important to have a user interface that ensures those using it enter the required information correctly and in detail; and

2. **Inputs need to be compatible with outputs –** A key function of the system was to allow the DSD to respond to information requests about funding to community and voluntary organisations quickly. These requests often come from Councillors and MLAs, so in principle the DSD wanted to be able to extract data based on constituency or county. However, in practice a lot of organisations classified themselves as covering 'All of Northern Ireland'. Therefore the system had to be redesigned to produce reports based on the postcode of the registered office, rather than the area the organisation claims to serve. DSD also note that this is still not perfect as the Head Office may be outside the area served but they have found it to give a more accurate picture than relying on the information submitted by organisations.

In summary, IRIS displays a lot of the functions that would be appealing to regulators, such as the interrogation functions and compliance profiling. It is also possible that a system like this could reduce the regulatory burden on businesses as it could provide a centralised platform that would enable them to register once, with a range of agencies. The Government Funding Database is an example of a well-developed user interface that allows the on-going exchange of information between government and external organisations.

5.6 Conclusions

Stakeholders are generally in favour of an online business regulation hub. While the core system incorporating all regulations, profile creation and an interrogation system for businesses is seen as the ideal system, the majority of stakeholders feel this is both unworkable and unnecessary. Instead, the feel that a simpler, 'sign-posting' website with some classification functions would be best.

Looking specifically at each element of the potential 'Business Regulation Hub':

- Views on **existing platforms** are positive where regulators have introduced online systems. The NI Environment Agency and HMRC were mentioned consistently as good examples of regulators providing extensive online services. Interestingly, it is worth noting that both systems link into gov.uk. Existing 'hub' type platforms such as NIBusinessinfo.co.uk, netregs.org.uk and everythingregulation.org.uk are also viewed positively are mentioned as potentially providing a base for any future 'businesses regulation hub'. The key issue as to why they have been under used by businesses in the past is a general lack of awareness;
- **Compiling a core database** that catalogues all regulations that may apply to businesses operating in NI including guidance notes is ambitious in the extreme given the amount of legislation and regulations involved. In addition, this database would require constant maintenance to ensure it was up to date. Instead stakeholders feel regulations and guidance should remain with the regulators as they have the expertise and knowledge required in their area of responsibility;
- **Creating a classification system** is important regardless of what functions the hub actually incorporates. All stakeholders agree that it is important for businesses to be able to access the information and regulations they need in a clear and concise manner based on their sector. However, registering an account or creating a profile is seen as step too far as this may put businesses off. Some stakeholders also feel this could potentially open the system up to data protection/security issues.

- Similar to the point above an **interrogation process,** is important to tailor the information so that businesses only receive relevant information. Stakeholders would then like businesses to be forwarded on the relevant regulator for the detail of requirements and to use their online services (if available);

- As more regulators are moving towards a risk based approach to exercising their function, **self-assessment** should be part of any online system. However, as stakeholders think that interaction between businesses and regulators should still be conducted through each regulators own system, this does not need to be included in the business regulation hub;

- It is agreed by all stakeholders that a **support function** needs to incorporated within a hub, regardless of the final design;

- Having a **historical record** of compliance, while desirable for both regulators and businesses would present potential difficulties in terms of data sharing between government agencies/departments and the Data Protection Act. Stakeholders perceive the Data Protection Act to present the greatest barrier to implementing this function, they also mentioned that some of the legislation behind regulations also restricts the use of compliance information. Businesses representative bodies mentioned that compliance data is very confidential to businesses and they would have concerns about it being accessed too easily, whether by the public, certain grades of staff or other regulators;

- The main **key challenge** to creating a 'business regulation hub' mentioned consistently by both regulators and business representative bodies is the issue of data sharing arrangements. Regulators mentioned that the legislative framework they operate within can be incredibly restrictive in terms of what they can do with the information they hold. Business representative bodies mention that they are unsure that business would be keen for their details, including compliance information to be stored centrally and then accessed by a wide range of government agencies. Other **barriers** mentioned include the complexity of merging the huge amount of regulatory functions into one system and then designing so that it is intelligent enough to tailor the information it gives to each individual business. It would also require constant updating and an extensive helpdesk system; and

- In terms of **viability,** almost all those consulted believed that it was both viable and inevitable given the progress made with online services by the UK Government. However, the 'business regulation hub' should be a sign-posting service that directs businesses on to the systems already offered by regulators. It is believed that trying to combine everything in one place, would not only be incredibly complex but would only serve to confuse businesses and potentially cost a lot of money.

6 BENCHMARKING CASE STUDIES

6.1 Introduction

This section presents three case studies to highlight examples of existing systems that could provide a platform to establish a 'Business Regulation Hub'. The aim of the case studies is to provide an outline of the implementation process for each and to consider any recurring issues or benefits, which are relevant to the development of any new system in Northern Ireland. The following issues are considered for each of the case studies:

- Description and Rationale for intervention;
- Functionality of intervention; and
- Key benefits of the intervention.

The section concludes by considering what lessons can be learned from the cases reviewed, and therefore, the implications for Northern Ireland.

6.2 Everything Regulation, Whenever It's Needed

6.2.1 Background to Introduction

The Everything Regulation, Whenever It's Needed (ERWIN) website was launched in July 2009. It is a collaborative project involving the Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Fire and Rescue (FRS) and Licensing services across the East of England. The website was introduced in order to help businesses to comply with regulations by providing simple, consistent and easy to understand information, tailored to meet the needs of particular types of business.

The project, which addresses many of the recommendations of the Anderson Review[2], aims to provide consistent guidance to businesses that is targeted, simplified, prioritised and covers all major regulatory service legislation. The service is free for business to use.

6.2.2 Aims and Objectives

ERWIN aims to provide consistent guidance which will:

- simplify and interpret the legislation;
- provide sector specific advice and information for businesses, so they have appropriately targeted advice;
- assist businesses to prioritise the work they need to do in order to meet the legal requirements;
- be tailored to include all of the legislation that is applicable to the particular activities of the business;

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[2] The Anderson Review (The Good Guidance Guide, published by BIS on 28th January 2009) focused on the need for government to give businesses greater certainty over finding, following and interpreting guidance on regulation.

- be easy to access, timely, easy to understand and use simple checklists;
- give clear instructions on how to comply; and
- increase transparency about the likely outcome if the business fails to comply with particular requirements.

The following objectives were also set for the service:

- To establish a progressive and collaborative approach to providing regulatory advice and information to businesses;
- To generate efficiencies for each Local Authority involved by avoiding the duplication of work and effort and by sharing the maintenance of currency of advice material;
- To ensure consistency and simplicity of advice and information for businesses;
- To provide regulatory information in an innovative way that will make it more accessible and useful for businesses; and
- To engage with businesses to understand how they want business advice to be given.

6.2.3 Functionality

Businesses select their sector and business type to access a list of information sheets on each area of regulatory legislation applicable to them. These are ordered in terms of priority as follows:

- Priority 1: An area of applicable legislation where there is a risk that contravention will have a large effect on the business's reputation, or there is a high likelihood of a significant criminal penalty, or there is a risk of medium- or large-impact in terms of other costs (such as through personal injury claims, loss of goods or licence, damage to the competitive trading environment, or implications for animal health). Additionally, if there is a potential or actual risk to personal health and safety, or a large potential cost to the consumer;
- Priority 2: Where there is a risk that contravention will have a medium effect on the business's reputation, or there is a medium likelihood of a significant criminal penalty, or there is a risk of small impact in terms of other costs, or potential medium- or small-costs to the consumer. There must be no risk to personal health and safety.
- Priority 3 – Where there is a risk that contravention will have no more than a small effect on the business's reputation, no more than a small likelihood of criminal penalty, and no risk of impact in terms of other costs. There must be no risk to personal health and safety, and no potential cost to the consumer.

Businesses also have the option to register with website and create a profile. They can also opt to share their details with their local authority. Businesses who register are automatically updated when legislation changes or new legislation, specific to their business, comes into effect.

ERWIN holds a database of all relevant locally enforced regulations. It also has document search function on the home page to search for specific legislative areas by keyword. This database is intended to provide guidance and advice to businesses as well as Local Authority Officers and Business Advisors.

The home page of ERWIN is shown below:

Chart 6:1: Everything Regulation, Whenever It's Needed (ERWIN) Home Page
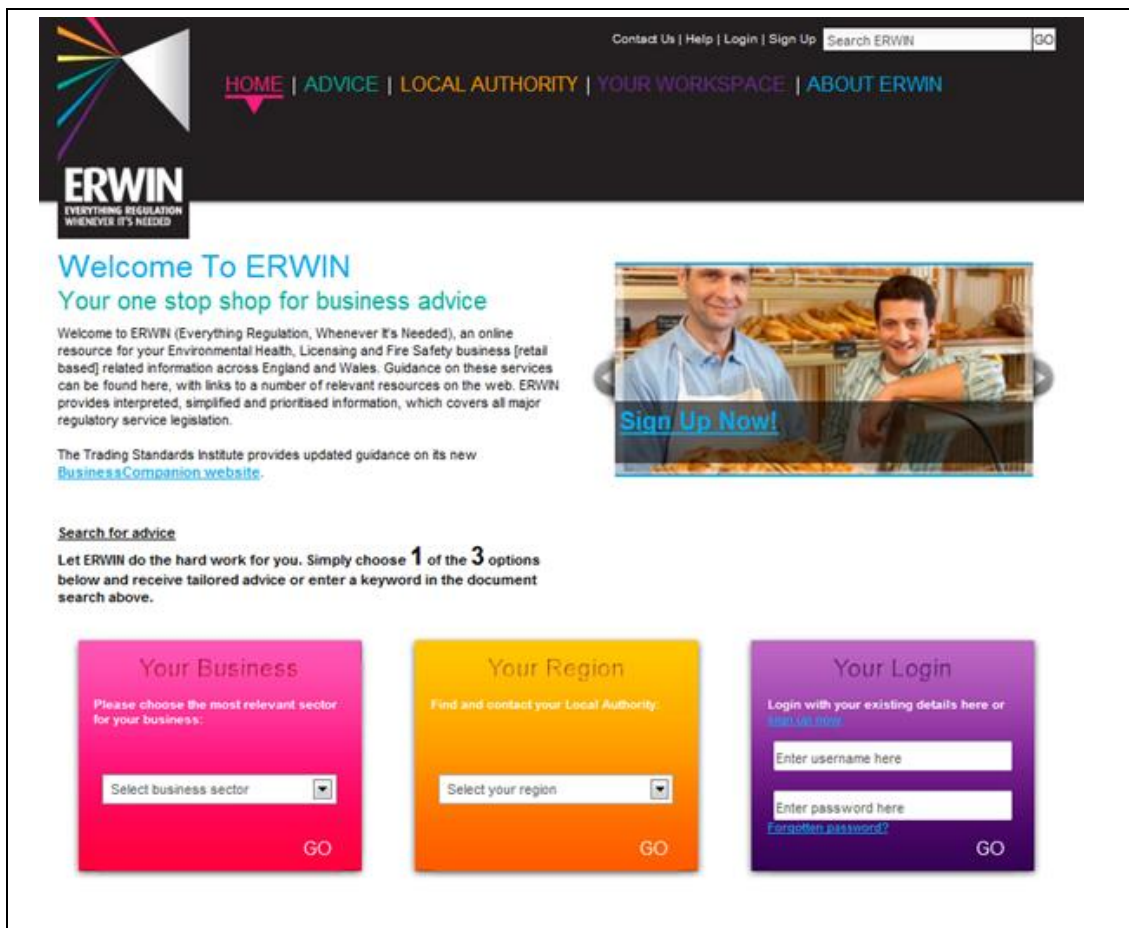
Source: www.everythingregulation.org.uk

6.2.4 Future Developments

The development of the project was informed by regional consultation with a wide range of businesses and aims to address business concerns about overly complex information on legislation; about difficulties identifying applicable legislation; and about a lack of consistency in the advice provision by different local authorities. The project continues to work closely with businesses in a consultative way to ensure future developments are relevant to their needs.

6.2.5 Key Benefits

The ERWIN project provides the following benefits to businesses:

* Provides sector specific advice and information for businesses, so they have appropriately targeted advice;
* Simplifies and interprets the legislation and gives clear instructions on how to comply;
* Increase transparency about the likely outcome if the business fails to comply with particular requirements;
* Reduces the amount of time businesses have to spend checking legislation to see whether it is relevant, and then understanding the legal requirements and how they apply to their activities;
* The prioritisation of legislative requirements enables businesses to prioritise the allocation of their own resources to those compliance activities that require the most immediate action;

ERWIN also provides the following benefits to Local Authorities:

* It is a consistent, up-to-date and comprehensive information resource for Local Authority staff;
* Enables local authorities to provide consistent regulatory advice and information to businesses; and
* Generates efficiencies for local authority regulatory services by significantly reducing duplication of effort in the provision of guidance and advice.

Other key features:

* The development of the project was informed by consultation with businesses, and this consultation has continued as the project evolves; and
* The service is free for business to use.

6.3 Intelligent Regulatory Information System

6.3.1 Background to Introduction

The Intelligent Regulatory Information System (IRIS) is a data sharing pilot involving local and national regulators, using data-sharing agreements and a software tool. The pilot is being delivered in 2014 through Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's Better Business for All programme[3]. Through developing a new relationship between regulatory services and businesses, the programme aims to reduce both real, and perceived, regulatory barriers to business growth. IRIS was developed under the work strand *'Supporting business to be compliant and tacking rogue traders'*.

6.3.2 Aims and Objectives

The aims of IRIS are to:

- Develop a facility for regulators to place the information they hold about premises / businesses in one place;
- Enable information to be shared across regulators and across regulatory functions;
- Facilitate targeting and service planning by regulators; and
- Reduce burdens on business through reducing duplication in the provision of information.

6.3.3 Functionality

IRIS provides a facility for Regulators to place the information they hold about a business in one place where all Regulators can access it. It also uses an extended version of the HSE's 'FIND-IT' tool. This tool was developed by the Health & Safety Laboratory and is being piloted by North West Leicestershire District Council, Charnwood Borough Council, Leicestershire Fire & Rescue and Leicestershire County Council Trading Standards.

FIND-IT uses Ordnance Survey's detailed AddressBase dataset to search and filter results, to pinpoint the geographical position of a business across a suite of Ordnance Survey raster datasets. This information is combined with other datasets held regulators to target its inspections and allows information to be checked and validated prior to any visit. The system also provides a clear, evidence-based audit trail showing why each visit has been made and where it took place.

The tool enables staff to identify and locate businesses considered to be at high risk of breaching regulations. It also helps reduce the number of 'redundant' site visits; these are

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[3] The Better Business for All (BBfA) programme aims to address the national priority of reducing the regulatory burdens on business to aid economic recovery by helping create better relationships between regulators and business at the local level. It was created by Leicester and Leicestershire LEP (LLEP) and then adopted by Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP), both LEP regulatory pathfinders, in partnership with BIS.

visits based on insufficient information sources, resulting in inspectors going to sites where there has since been a change of ownership, where the occupants have left, or where the inspector is unable to find the location.

6.3.4 Future Developments

The pilot of IRIS is due to be completed in December 2014. Following this, an evaluation of the service is planned to measure its effectiveness and impact and make recommendations on future developments and delivery.

6.3.5 Key Benefits

The IRIS project provides the following benefits to Local Authorities:

- Central access to enforcement data, inspection data and Business Regulatory Risk data;
- Information regarding Health & Safety, Fire Safety and Trading Standards is linked together to give a complete picture of business compliance;
- Information can be interrogated in more sophisticated ways, to identify patterns in non-compliance (i.e. is it certain individuals, service providers or inspectors);
- Improved efficiency by targeting regulatory activity to high-risk areas;
- More effective and efficient use of resources;
- Evidence-based audit trail to improved transparency and accountability;
- Easy identification and risk-ranking of new businesses; and
- Validated information which reduces errors in the field.

The IRIS project provides the following benefits to businesses:

- Improved access to advice and information;
- Reducing costs of compliance;
- Dealing with Rogue Traders;
- Improved confidence in advice;
- Access to other advice – business grants, rate reductions, start-up help;
- Supporting start-up businesses; and
- Better co-ordination of Regulatory activities.

6.4 Probability Risk and Impact SysteM

6.4.1 Background to Introduction

The Probability Risk and Impact SysteM (PRISM) is the Central Bank of Ireland's (CBI) risk-based framework for the supervision of regulated firms[4]. Launched in 2011, PRISM is both a supervisory tool and a software application and is designed to be implemented by CBI supervisors on circa 10,000 regulated firms across Ireland.

6.4.2 Aims and Objectives

The aims of PRISM are to:

- Assess firm risks in a systematic and structured fashion;
- Undertake a sufficient and proportionate level of regulatory engagement with all firms;
- Allocate regulatory resources based on impact and probability;
- Adopt a consistent way of thinking about risk and regulation across all firms;
- Ensure that action is taken to mitigate unacceptable risks in firms; and
- Provide firms with clarity around the assessment of the risks they pose and how to mitigate these.

6.4.3 Functionality

The system categorises all regulated firms into four separate impact categories, which are based on the level of damage a firm could cause to the financial system, economy and consumers were it to fail. Firms will be categorised as high impact, medium-high impact, medium-low impact or low impact, which will determine the number of supervisors assigned and level of interaction with each firm.

The CBI will engage with firms at a level that corresponds to their impact category; the higher the impact, the higher the level of engagement. Engagement will involve reviews, inspections and meetings, and the frequency and level of engagement will be associated with the firms' impact rating.

Firms are informed of their impact ratings, but they are not public domain. Firms also receive a 'to do list', outlining the actions that need to be taken to address any risks the CBI finds are too high. Firms are then required to take action to address these risks and bring them to an acceptable level.

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[4] The Central Bank of Ireland is responsible for the regulation of all financial services firms in Ireland.

6.4.4 Key Benefits of the System

The PRISM system offers the following benefits to the firms regulated by the CBI:

- It creates a common framework for CBI supervision of financial firms, thereby creating a consistent regulatory and supervisory interaction with equivalent firms;
- It is proportionate. Regulatory actions are tailored to individual firms, creating cost savings through reduced regulatory burden; and
- The sharing of risk ratings and the risk mitigation programme gives each firm clarity around what they need to achieve to comply with regulations.

6.5 Summary

The Case Studies highlight a range of different systems to facilitate communication between regulators and businesses. Although differing in their design and functionality, a number of common benefits can be seen across the three approaches:

- An online information source provides more clarity for businesses in what regulations they need to comply with, how to achieve this and the implications of non-compliance;
- A reduction in the cost of regulatory compliance to businesses;
- Enables local authorities/regulators to provide consistent advice and information to all businesses; and
- Generates efficiencies for local authority regulatory services by significantly reducing duplication of effort in the provision of guidance and advice, as well as targeting resources to the higher risk areas.

7 POTENTIAL OF OPTIONS

7.1 Introduction

This section presents a number of (non-exhaustive) options for the Business Regulation Hub, based on the desk research of the current systems used by regulators, examples of systems currently used in the case studies and stakeholder feedback regarding desired requirements.

The following issues are considered for each of the options to assess their feasibility:

- Similarities with current systems used by NI Regulators;
- Compatibility with current systems already in place;
- Fit with case studies;
- Stakeholder feedback; and
- Viability Considerations – potential opportunities and barriers.

7.2 Option 1: An Information and Signposting Facility

7.2.1 Description

This option would involve the development of an online platform with the following features:

- A searchable database of regulation advice, guidance and sign-posting filtered by business sector and type;
- Signposting to relevant regulators depending on individual business needs;
- Enable businesses to select a profile (based on sector/size etc) and be updated with changes in regulation/legislation relevant to them;
- This system could be used by regulators as a comprehensive data source, ensuring that they provide consistent advice to businesses.

7.2.2 Similarities with current systems

This Option closely resembles the ERWIN project (see Benchmarking Case Study Section) operating in England and Wales. It is also similar to NetRegs, the Environmental Regulation Hub for Northern Ireland and Scotland. Both systems have similar functionality, including:

- Provides sector specific advice and information for businesses that is targeted and prioritised;
- Provides clear instructions to businesses on how to comply and the outcomes if the business fails to do so; and
- It is a consistent, up-to-date and comprehensive information resource for Local Authority staff.

7.2.3 Compatibility with current systems already in place

This option would have limited impact on the systems already in place with NI Regulators as it is designed to sign-post businesses on to Regulators own systems.. This would mean that businesses would not have to re-submit this information multiple times to different regulators (similar to DARDs Customer Information System). If this was to be incorporated, the impact on existing systems would be greater. It would also require a number of Data Sharing Agreements. However, overall this option is highly compatible with the systems already in place.

7.2.4 Fit with case studies

ERWIN has introduced the following two key benefits:

- Reduces the amount of time businesses have to spend checking legislation to see whether it is relevant, and then understanding the legal requirements and how they apply to their activities; and
- Generates efficiencies for local authority regulatory services by significantly reducing duplication of effort in the provision of guidance and advice.

7.2.5 Stakeholder feedback

The following feedback from stakeholders supports the development of this option:

- The level of regulation and legislation is not the main area of concern for businesses, it is finding the regulations they need to comply with and understanding the legislation. An information and signposting hub would address this;
- Regulators have the necessary systems in place, online or otherwise, ensure compliance. They do not see the merit in trying to consolidate diverse, complex systems into one place. Also, it would require constant updating that would have to be done by the regulators themselves as they have the necessary expertise;
- Enabling businesses to create a profile, and filter information by sector is a much more efficient way to source compliance information than having to call regulators or attend meetings. If it incorporated email reminders, businesses could be contacted immediately when there is a legislative change; and
- Regulators could streamline their own services, by uploading guidance notes and legislation to the hub to help businesses prepare for the online services.

7.2.6 Key considerations

Opportunities
- Provides a centralised information and signposting hub that incorporates all business sectors in NI;
- Focus on signposting reduces potential costs in developing a new system from scratch;

- Helps businesses by providing a 'one-stop shop' for all their regulation related enquires, saving time having to contact individual regulators; and
- Allows Regulators to retain control of their own online services that they can amend as and when they deem it necessary while still providing businesses with one central hub for regulatory information and advice.

Barriers

- Publicity and awareness – previous and current systems similar to this have not been utilised to the degree that makes them viable in the long term;
- Concerns from businesses as to the extent of information that will need to be provided when creating a profile and the security of the data where it is stored; and
- Potential duplication of systems already in existence such License Finder.

Summary – Option 1

This option is technically viable given similarities to systems already in existence (such as ERWIN, Netregs and NIBusinessinfo.co.uk). The impact on systems already in use by Regulators would be minimal as they would still be hosted and operated independently.

However, businesses may have concerns over the security of the data they would need to provide. Also, the similarity to systems currently used means there is little added value for businesses. Regulators also feel that systems like this option have been tried before and had very low user levels.

7.3 Option 2: Information Sharing between Regulators

7.3.1 Description

This option would involve the development of an online platform with the following features:

- A system allowing businesses to register, create an account and generate a core profile based on their regulatory requirements; and
- An updateable database for regulators to place the information they hold about businesses that can be shared across other regulators and across regulatory functions.

7.3.2 Similarities with current systems

This Option closely resembles the IRIS project (see Benchmarking Case Study Section) operating through the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership. The IRIS system includes the following capabilities:

- Improved access to advice and information for businesses, as well as improved confidence in the advice provided;
- Central access to enforcement data, inspection data and Business Regulatory Risk data for Local Authorities;
- Easy identification and risk-ranking of new businesses;
- Evidence-based audit trail to improved transparency and accountability.

7.3.3 Compatibility with systems already in place

This option would involve the development of a new system that incorporates the desired database for NI Regulators to place the information they hold into one place. In terms of compatibility, it would require the information stored across regulators in NI to be in the same format, so that it could all be easily shared across regulatory functions. This would could requires a significant amount of work to ensure databases are in order. It was also require functionality to allow businesses to register and generate a core profile, similar to Option 1. Therefore this Option already requires more investment and could potentially take much longer.

7.3.4 Fit with case studies

IRIS has introduced the following key benefits:

- Improved efficiency in Local Authorities by targeting regulatory activity to high-risk areas, enabling more effective and efficient use of resources;
- Reduced burdens on business through reducing duplication in the provision of information; and
- Reduced costs of compliance for businesses.

7.3.5 Stakeholder feedback

The following feedback from stakeholders supports the development of this option:

- The key concern regarding this option are issues surrounding data sharing between regulators and the perceived inflexibility of the Data Protection Act;
- Stakeholders also mentioned that legislation backing some regulatory functions in NI also limit the ability of regulators to share data with other agencies. For example, when developing the Landlord Register each Council in Northern Ireland refused to be the Data Controller as the legislation backing the Landlord Register was so restrictive in what the data collected could be used for. The Department of Social Development would have needed agreements from each Council that the data would not be available to any other regulatory or enforcement division within its area; and
- Businesses tend to be quite dynamic organisations, changing name, location and services regularly so maintaining an account may create more work than it would save. However, the IRSIS Probabilistic Organisation Match is specifically design to counteract this.

7.3.6 Key considerations

Opportunities

- Improved advice and information for businesses resulting in greater confidence in the regulatory system;
- Centralised regulatory data across numerous fields would allow better profiling and targeting of non-compliant businesses;
- Identification of factors impacting compliance across different sectors or regulatory areas;

Barriers

- Putting in place the necessary data sharing agreements and getting a diverse group of regulators to work together;
- Cost of developing system; and
- Convincing businesses that this is of benefit to them and not an additional burden.

Summary – Option 2

This option would offer efficiencies for businesses when interacting with Regulators, and would enable a more collaborative and streamlined approach to the exercising of regulatory functions among agencies. The IRIS project demonstrates that a system hosting data-sharing functionality can be developed. However as the IRIS project has not completed at the time of writing, its success cannot be evaluated. Concerns remain as to the complexity and cost of building a similar system for a cohort of regulators in Northern Ireland.

7.4 Option 3: A National Hub for all Northern Ireland Regulators

7.4.1 Description

This option would encompass all the features a Hub originally outlined or envisioned by DETI. Specifically, it would involve the development of an online platform that would include:

- A core database that catalogues all local, regional and national regulations that may apply to businesses operating in Northern Ireland, including relevant guidance notes accompanying regulations;
- A classification system allowing businesses to register, create an account and generate a core profile;
- An interrogation process which delivers a tailored and filtered list of regulatory requirements and their accompanying guidance notes;

- A self-assessment tool whereby individual businesses can determine their level of compliance with relevant regulatory requirements;
- A support function to provide assistance in areas of non-compliance;
- Assessments catalogued over time to provide a historical record of businesses' regulatory competence, including details of any incidences of non-compliance recorded/catalogued by regulatory body; and
- Accessibility of information by Regulators to facilitate assessment of business regulatory performance to aid risk-based management planning.

7.4.2 Similarities with current systems

There are currently no similar systems either in NI or the UK to Option 3. However, it incorporates aspects of a number of systems currently in use across the regulatory field.

7.4.3 Compatibility with systems already in place

As this option would necessitate the development of a completely new system or the wholesale redesign of existing systems, it is not compatible with current systems.

7.4.4 Fit with case studies

Option 3 incorporates the functionality of all three case studies as well as other functions.

Key benefits introduced would include:

- Reduces the amount of time businesses have to spend checking legislation to see whether it is relevant, and then understanding the legal requirements and how they apply to their activities; and
- Improved efficiency in Local Authorities by targeting regulatory activity to high-risk areas, enabling more effective and efficient use of resources.

7.4.5 Stakeholder feedback

Stakeholder consultations raised a number of potential issues with some features of this option:

- The amount of regulations, legislation and accompanying guidance that would be required would be enormous. This in itself is not a constraint but maintaining and updating this database would require a significant amount of resource;
- Attempts made at a similar system in the past, both at UK and NI specific level had low levels of usage and were subsequently closed and consolidated into gov.uk. Most stakeholders think that while publicity may have been a contributing factor, if there was a genuine need for the service it would still have been used by businesses;
- Business representative stakeholders mentioned that there may be a reluctance among businesses to create an account and store information on a centralised

system, particularly one potentially dealing with multiple sensitive information sources;

- A self-assessment tool would be ideal for businesses but does not remove the need for inspections by some regulators. It is impossible to place some regulatory functions online, such as inspections;

- One potential benefit of the system would be a reduced administrative burden on both regulators and businesses. However, regulatory body stakeholders feel that any cost savings made through a reduction in administration would be cancelled out by support each regulator would need to provide for businesses using the hub. It is felt that the expertise required to give the correct advice in each area of regulation would require whole new departments within some agencies; and

- Longer-term, some stakeholders feel the businesses regulation hub in this form is achievable, but it could take as much as 20 years for it to be realised. There needs to be a streamlining of regulations first, followed by legislation addressing how government departments and regulators share information.

7.4.6 Key considerations

Opportunities
- Improved advice and information for businesses resulting in greater confidence in the regulatory system;
- Centralised regulatory system for both businesses and NI Regulators would greatly reduce the administration costs of compliance assurance for both;
- Improved information would allow more regulators to move to a risk-based approach to exercising their regulatory function;

Barriers
- Centralising the enormous amount of business regulations from the EU, UK and NI Governments could take years;
- The potential savings from this system would be outweighed by the costs of maintaining and updating regulations as they change;
- The expertise needed to provided assistance to businesses regarding regulations will still rest with each regulator, therefore any support function could not be centralised without moving entire departments within regulators; and
- Perceived data sharing and Data Protection Act issues.
-

Summary – Option 3

While concerns remain over the depth of information required for an individual user's profile, businesses welcome the prospect of a self-assessment option and the potential to reduce the burden/frequency of inspection. This option is technically feasible (based on consultations with IT stakeholders) but presents the greatest challenge due the complexities involved. It would require a holistic approach, where

regulator systems are fully integrated but are also in an open format online where businesses can create a profile, upload information and view guidance information.

7.5 Summary

There is consensus among stakeholders that the development of a Business Regulation Hub would be a welcome contribution to regulatory reform, regardless of what form or functionality the system eventually takes. While there is recognition that, depending on final specification, it has the potential to become a long and complex process each distinct group of stakeholders justified their views regarding technical viability accordingly:

Regulators

- Embryonic, small scale systems with aspects of the functionality desired in the Hub are already in operation with some regulators;
- EU Directive 2009/140/EC places a onus on public agencies to provide services online and a Hub offers the opportunity to centralise services for businesses across Government in NI; and
- Centralising information held on businesses, such as company data, across the regulatory field would reduce duplication (and so the burden on business to re-enter/re-register information multiple times). Regulators would also have to spend less time updating their databases as this would be shared across multiple agencies and would be almost under constant review.

Businesses

- NI Businesses do not currently have a service available to them that they can use and be confident that they are compliant with every regulation and Regulator relevant to their industry;
- Online services offer businesses, particularly SMEs lacking administration departments, an efficient and cost effective way of interacting with Regulators; and
- NIBusinessinfo.co.uk is 'half way there', it offers a host of guidance and advice, but it is not intuitive or customisable based on industry (although License Finder on gov.uk does over this).

IT Services

- Data sharing issues, in their experience, are not as big an issue as Regulators perceive. When developing similar systems, this simply required putting the necessary Data Sharing Agreements in place at the beginning of the process;
- The IRIS pilot and DEFRA-Lex are example of systems in development or already in use that offer the functionality of the desired business regulation hub; and
- In terms of developing a system, there are no technological barriers to what can be designed and built. However, the complexity of the system would determine the length of time and investment required to produce the final Hub.

In summary, there is a case for the development of a Business Regulation Hub in Northern Ireland. The key requirements of a Hub, are summarised below:

- Data Sharing Agreements in place between Regulators;
- Complete legislative and regulatory guidance regarding responsibilities;
- Information security – data uploaded needs be secure;
- Knowledgeable help and support services need to be available for assistance; and
- Publicity – it will have to be well publicised in order to encourage businesses to use it.

7.5.1 Potential modular roll-out

There is scope to view the options developed earlier in the section as separate modules that could form the basis for a process or 'modular roll-out' over time. This is based on stakeholder feedback that indicated that the best approach may be to develop the Hub in stages as this would allow familiarity among businesses to grow (key to the long term success) as a first step. This would essentially be a sign-posting website that acts as a gateway that links on to Regulators own websites and systems.

Once utilisation levels are satisfactory and the system is being viewed by businesses as the 'one-stop shop' for regulatory and compliance information then the next module is added. Businesses can now enter in information directly to the website, saving businesses the hassle of having to re-enter things like company information multiple times with multiple regulators.

The final module would be the introduction of one single database and system that is used by all Regulators in NI to ensure businesses are compliant. Businesses would continue to upload information to the website but it would now feed into one system rather than a plethora of Regulators own systems.

An outline of this process is summarised in the diagram overleaf.

Figure 7.1 Potential modular rollout of options for the Business Regulation Hub

Modular Implementation – NI Regulatory Bodies

Year 0:
Information and Signposting Hub created

Option 1: An Information and Signposting Hub

Year 1 – 5
- System becomes operational and is publicised to businesses;
- Becomes the 'one stop shop' for businesses seeking regulatory and compliance information;
- System beds in, is amended and updated as bugs become apparent. User feedback used to improve functionality.

Year 5:
Information sharing functionality added

Option 2: Information Sharing between Regulators

Year 6 – 10
- Capabilities similar to the IRIS system developed;
- Information sharing agreements in place between relevant regulators;
- Businesses prepared for the new functions included within the Hub.
- New functions monitored for usability and amended and updated as necessary.

Year 10: Launch of National centralised Business Regulation Hub

Option 3: A National Hub for all Northern Ireland Regulators

Year 10 – 15
- Hub develops to offer all the functions of the desired 'Business Regulation Hub';
- All NI Regulators online systems and services available through the Hub with accompanying advice and legislation overview;
- Business now using a single website for all license applications, certifications and required operating licenses;
- NI Regulators all using the same, streamlined information databases to monitor compliance and profile businesses over time.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF NI SPECIFIC REGULATORS

List of Northern Ireland Specific Regulators
Building Control Service
CCEA
Charity Commission for N Ireland
Company Law
Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWINI)
Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA)
Employment Agency Inspectorate(EAI)
Environmental Health Service
Equality Commission
Fisheries (DARD)
Forest Service NI (DARD)
Health & Safety Executive for NI (HSENI)
Insolvency Service
Law Society for Northern Ireland
Licensing Forum NI
Minerals and Petroleum Licensing
NI Authority on Utility Regulation
NI Environment Agency
NI Fire & Rescue Service
NI Social Care Council
NI Statistics & Research Agency
NI Tourist Board
Pharmaceutical Society NI

List of Northern Ireland Specific Regulators
Planning Service
Ports & Public Transport Division (DRD)
Private Landlords (Register)
Agri Food Inspectorate (DARD)
Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority
Rivers Agency (DARD)
Roads Service (DRD)
Single Farm Payment Branch
Single Use Carrier Bag levy Regulator (DOE)
Sports NI
Trading Standards
Veterinary Service DARD

APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF NI SPECIFIC REGULATORS & CURRENT SYSTEMS USED

8 INTRODUCTION

.All 35 regulators that fall under the remit of the NI Executive were profiled in terms of their online systems (the complete list is included Appendix 1). A matrix was developed to look at the nine key areas of online services offered by NI regulators, they are:

- Online information gathering system;
- Account creation/Profile generation;
- Forms available for download;
- Self-assessment capability;
- Support function;
- Historical record of regulatory compliance available;
- Fee payment function;
- Automatic email reminders/updates; and
- Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function.

From this it is possible to quantify the current level of online provision offered to businesses and individuals in NI.

Table 8:1: Overview of Online Provision by NI Regulators

Service	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	48.6%	51.4%
Account creation/Profile generation	37.1.0%	62.9%
Forms available for download	62.9%	37.1%
Self-assessment capability	34.3%	65.7%
Support function	14.3%	85.7%
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	31.4%	68.6%
Fee payment function	31.4%	68.6%
Automatic email reminders/updates	34.4%	65.6%
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	22.9%	77.1%

Base: 35 Regulatory bodies in under the remit of the NI Executive

BEGINNING OF APPENDIX 1

8.1 Building Control Service[5]

Building Control Northern Ireland is a voluntary umbrella grouping of the Building Control Departments of the 26 Councils and the five Group Building Control Offices.

The Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) is responsible for the development and the implementation of policy and legislation relating to the Building Regulations for Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Building Regulations are legal requirements made by the Department of Finance and Personnel and administered by the 26 District Councils. The Regulations are intended to ensure the safety, health, welfare and convenience of people in and around buildings. They are also designed to further the conservation of fuel and energy.

Councils have a statutory duty to enforce the Building Regulations and the Group Units have a role, defined by statute, to monitor and co-ordinate the work of the Councils in their area, to ensure uniformity and consistency in the interpretation, application and enforcement of the Building Regulations within and between Groups across Northern Ireland.

Building Control is responsible for ensuring that the Building Regulations, a set of construction standards laid down by Parliament, are enforced within each local Council area. The standards include requirements on health, structural stability, fire safety, energy conservation and accessibility.

These standards are enforced through plan assessment and site inspection by impartial professionals with a thorough knowledge of The Building Regulations and other relevant British Standards, Codes of Practice and guidance.

When a building is completed Building Control will issue a Certificate of Completion once it is satisfied that all necessary Building Regulations have been adhered to.

In terms of online services, application forms are available to download from the Building Control NI website. These can be filled in and returned with the appropriate fee to the relevant council area. The website also offers extensive information and guidance regarding building regulations, applications and hazards involved in construction. Each area is set out with its own downloadable information sheet.

Table 8:2: Building Control Service Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖

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[5] Taken from www.buildingcontrol-ni.com (accessed May 2014)

Account creation/Profile generation		✘
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability		✘
Support function		✘
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✘
Fee payment function		✘
Automatic email reminders/updates		✘
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✘

8.2 Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment[6]

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) was established on 1st April 1994 and is a non-departmental public body reporting to the Department of Education in Northern Ireland. CCEA's duties and functions are to:

- keep under review all aspects of the curriculum, examinations and assessment for grant aided schools and colleges of further education and to undertake statutory consultation on proposals relating to legislation;
- advise the DE on matters concerned with the curriculum, assessment, examinations and external qualifications and accredit and approve qualifications;
- conduct and moderate examinations and assessments, ensuring that standards are recognised as equivalent to standards of examinations and assessments conducted by other bodies or authorities exercising similar functions in the United Kingdom;
- publish and disseminate information relating to the curriculum, assessment and examinations;
- develop and produce teaching support materials for use in schools;
- the development of educational technology and the production of multimedia resources; and
- carry out research and development.

CCEA Accreditation regulates GCSEs, GCE AS, A Levels, Other General Qualifications and Entry Level qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in Northern Ireland.

The regulation of qualifications is undertaken collaboratively with partner regulatory authorities in England (Ofqual) and Wales (Welsh Government).

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[6] Taken from www.rewardinglearning.org.uk (accessed May 2014)

Qualifications are subject to statutory regulations because learners, employers and other 'customers' have a legitimate interest in the continuing availability of high quality qualifications that are fit for purpose, command public confidence, and are understood both by those who study for them and those who use them.

All qualifications that are regulated are listed in the Register of Regulated Qualifications.

To offer non-vocational qualifications in N Ireland, potential awarding organisations must first seek recognition from CCEA Accreditation.

CCEA provides a range of online services for both examiners and candidates. These include:

- Online Results for Centres
- Online Candidate Record Sheets
- Direct claims
- Online Key Skills ICT Portfolio
- Online Moderation
- Online Essential Skills Registrations
- Online Essential Skills Outcomes

This suite of applications is together called 'E-Moderation' is operates as a separate website within the CCEA website. It is designed to modernise the collection of controlled assessment/coursework marks, and for some subjects, the provision of uploaded samples for moderation.

Exam officers have the facility, through centralised login, to manage the registrations for E-Moderation subjects within their centre. Once teachers are registered by the Exams Officer login details will be automatically emailed to the teacher.

Table 8:3: CCEA Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability		✗
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✗
Fee payment function	✓	
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✗

8.3 Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland is the independent regulator of charities in Northern Ireland, responsible for ensuring Northern Ireland has a dynamic and well governed charities sector, in which the public can have confidence. The Commission takes a risk based and proportionate approach to regulating charities. This means it targets its resources at the highest risks to charities' beneficiaries, assets and reputation and where intervention will have the greatest impact

The Commission is non-departmental public body, supported by the Department for Social Development. Its main role is to register and regulate the estimated 7,000-10,000 charities working within Northern Ireland. The Charities Act (NI) 2008 created the Charity Commission and the same Act sets out its powers.

The regulation and registration of charities in Northern Ireland will bring the region into line with other parts of the United Kingdom. The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and the Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW) operate similarly in their respective jurisdictions.

The registration process for charities was suspended in 2010, as the Charities Act (NI) 2008 needed to be amended to clarify the "public benefit" test. This was resolved in January 2013, following which a consultation was announced prior to commencing registration on 16 December 2013.

The Commission has three registration lists and all charitable organisations are required to check if they are on one. If a charity is not, it must take steps to register by completing an online Expression if intent form. This then allows the charity to be called forward to apply for registration by the Commission. It is not until an organisation is registered as a charity with the Commission, that it will be able to apply to HMRC for charitable tax exemptions.

The three registration lists are:

1. **Deemed list:** organisations registered with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) for charitable tax exemptions by 19 August 2013. This list is set in law and cannot be changed or added to.
2. **Non-deemed list:** all other charitable organisations, whether long or newly established, which are not registered with HMRC. Organisations will be added to this list as they come forward.
3. **Special circumstances list:** organisations which have made a case to have their application brought forward or have been placed on this list by the Commission. Organisations may be moved from the deemed list to the special circumstances list. Organisations can only be added to this list by the Commission.

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland provides online services for charities to securely interact with it. Charities are able to begin the application process and then update and amend their completion form.

Specifically, charities are able to:

- Input all the basic information that the Commission needs to keep the charity's entry on the register of charities up to date. This includes details of trustees.
- Submit financial information and details of accounts.
- For larger charities, with an income of over £1 million, they can complete their Summary Information Return (SIR).

The system only allows charities access to the sections relevant to them based on their size, meaning smaller charities can complete the process much faster. There is also a built in checklist that allows those filling it in to keep track of progress and highlights sections that still need to be completed before submission. Charities may also attach electronic documents such as its Trustee's Annual Report and annual accounts.

Table 8:4: Charity Commission for Northern Ireland Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function	✓	
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	

Fee payment function		✘
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	✓	

8.4 Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA)

The DVA is an Executive Agency of the Department of the Environment and provides a high level of licensing, testing and enforcement services to ensure that the Northern Ireland vehicle fleet and its drivers continue to be compliant with relevant regulations.

The DVA's online system allows vehicle tests and practical and theory driving tests to be booked online through NIDirect. From this website it is also possible to download various forms for taxing vehicles and applying for commercial licenses. The forms can then be completed and returned to the DVA, it is not possible to submit them online.

Table 8:5: DVA Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✘
Account creation/Profile generation		✘
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability		✘
Support function		✘
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	
Fee payment function	✓	
Automatic email reminders/updates		✘
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	✓	

8.5 Environmental Health Service[7]

Environmental Health is concerned with the health, well-being and safety of people and the environment in which they live, work and/or visit.

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[7] Please note that this has been amended from the originally published version at the request of Environmental Health Services.

The twenty-six District Councils in Northern Ireland are all responsible for their own environmental health service provision, supported by four Environmental Health Committees. They all undertake a broadly similar range of services. Some councils offer an online application and payment system, supplemented with downloadable forms that can be filled in and returned in the post, for example dog licensing and food premises registration.

Examples of the services provided by Environmental Health Services include:

- Animal Welfare

- Construction Products

- Consumer Protection

- Dog Control

- Environmental Protection & Air Quality

- Food Control & Infectious Diseases

- Health & Safety

- Licensing

- Public Health and Housing

- Tobacco Control

Most Environmental Health Services and Group Committees also provide a range of non-regulatory services including Emergency Planning, Bio Diversity, Home Safety check schemes, and projects concerned with reducing health inequalities and promoting sustainable communities and environments.

Table 8:6: Environmental Health Service Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation		✗
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	
Fee payment function	✓	
Automatic email reminders/updates		✗

Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

Online information gathering and fee payment system available in Belfast only

8.6 Health & Safety Executive for NI (HSENI)

HSENI (The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland) is an executive Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). HSENI is the lead body responsible for the promotion and enforcement of health and safety at work standards in Northern Ireland.

HSENI has specific enforcement responsibilities in the following areas:

- Factories
- Building sites
- Farms
- Motor vehicle repairs
- Mines and quarries
- Chemical plants
- Schools and universities
- Leisure and entertainment facilities (owned by District Councils)
- Fairgrounds
- Hospitals and nursing homes
- District Councils
- Fire and police
- Government departments
- Railways.

HSENI provides a range of information and toolkits in regards to health & safety regulations on its website. These are available for employees, employers and trade union representatives. However, it does not provide a system for information gathering or for regulatory compliance.

Table 8:7: HSENI Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖
Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability		✖

Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✖
Fee payment function		✖
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

8.7   Licensing Forum NI

The Licensing Forum NI does not currently provide online services or a website.

Table 8:8:   The Licensing Forum Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖
Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download		✖
Self-assessment capability		✖
Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✖
Fee payment function		✖
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

8.8   NI Environment Agency

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is an Agency within the Department of Environment with approximately 800 staff.

It takes the lead in advising on, and in implementing, the Government's environmental policy and strategy in Northern Ireland. The Agency carry's out a range of activities, which promote the Government's key themes of sustainable development, biodiversity and climate change.

NIEA aims to be recognised as the leading body responsible for protecting, conserving and promoting the environment and heritage in Northern Ireland and are working towards four long term environmental outcomes:

- the sustainable use and protection of our natural resources;
- improved conservation and management of our natural heritage;
- improved conservation and protection of our built heritage; and
- better public awareness and understanding of the environment.

NIEA has developed a comprehensive online offering that allows businesses and service providers to fill in compliance declarations, register their business practices, apply for licenses and pay regulatory fees. It is called Apply Online and covers the following consent forms and licenses. The service is provided through Gov.uk.

In addition to the Wildlife License, there are 40 applications that can be made online that come under six areas of regulation NIEA is responsible for. These are:

Water Discharge Consents

- Sewage discharged under emergency conditions consent
- Trade effluent and site drainage discharge consent
- Fish farming discharge consent
- Sewage effluent discharge consent
- Transfer ownership of a water discharge consent

Marine Licenses

- Marine Construction
- Deposit of solid waste (e.g. dredged material)
- Tracers Dyes and other materials
- Marine Dredging

Waste Management Licencing

- Registration of carriers / brokers of controlled waste
- Renewal or cancellation of registration as a carrier / broker of controlled waste
- Waste management licence
- Modify the conditions of a waste management licence
- Transfer a waste management licence
- Surrender a Waste Management Licence
- Application for a Mobile Treatment Licence
- Compliance with NIEA Greenfield Soil Declaration
- Application for a Waste management Licence to operate an Authorised Treatment Facility (ATF) for End of Life Vehicles

Register for a waste exemption forms

- Simple exemptions
- Land Treatment for Agricultural Benefit or Ecological Improvement (paragraph 9)
- The Spreading, or Storage and Spreading of Sludge on land which is not land used for agriculture (paragraph 10a)
- The storage of sludge not for agricultural benefit (paragraph 10b)
- Spreading of Waste for the purpose of Reclamation, Restoration or Improvement of Land (paragraph 11)
- Composting and Storage of Biodegradable Waste (paragraph 13)
- The Manufacture of Products from Waste, and the Treatment of Waste Soil or Rock which is to be Spread on Land (paragraph 14)
- Manufacture of finished goods from waste (paragraph 15)
- Use of waste for construction, maintenance or improvement of relevant work (paragraph 19)
- Recovery of scrap metal or dismantling of depolluted end-of-life vehicles (paragraph 45)
- Repair and refurbishment of waste, electrical, electronic equipment (WEEE) (paragraph 49)
- Secure storage of waste electrical electronic equipment (WEEE) (paragraph 50)
- Crushing of waste gas discharge lamps (paragraph 51)
- Secure storage of waste batteries or accumulators (paragraph 52)

Pollution Prevention Control Permit

- Application for a Pollution Prevention and Control Permit Part A Installation
- Application for a Pollution Prevention and Control Permit Part B Installation

Producer Responsibility Registration

- Packaging Regulations – Producers
- Packaging Regulations – Accredited Reprocessor or Exporter
- WEEE Regulations – Producers
- WEEE Regulations – Approved Authorised Treatment Facility or Exporter
- Batteries Regulations – Producers
- Batteries Regulations – Approved Battery Treatment Operator or Exporter

Table 8:9: NI Environment Agency Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download	✓	

Self-assessment capability		✖
Support function	✓	
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	
Fee payment function	✓	
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	✓	

8.9 Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) serves the entire population of Northern Ireland, an area of over 5,500 square miles, with a population of 1.81 million, providing them with a range of fire and rescue services.

Part 3 of the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and the Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 came into effect on 15 November 2010. This simplified existing Fire Safety legislation in non-domestic premises and reinforced the modern risk based approach to fire prevention.

The Fire Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 was repealed on 15 November 2010 and the previous fire certification process ceased. Existing premises that have previously been subject to that Order will most likely be compliant in terms of their Fire Safety measures. However, it is now necessary for those premises to have a current Fire Risk Assessment.

The legislation has significantly changed the way in which employers and people in control of premises are required to manage fire safety. Responsibility for fire safety in the workplace now clearly rests with the employer and those with any degree of control of premises (deemed the appropriate person).

They must take reasonable steps to:

- Reduce the risk from fire
- Ensure people are able to escape safely if there is a fire.

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service is the enforcing authority in respect of the majority of premises and will visit premises to ensure compliance with Fire Safety legislation. In 2012 it produced the NIFRS Enforcement Policy, which took into consideration the Better Regulation Agenda, The Enforcement Concordat, The Regulators Compliance Code, The Human Rights Act, The Data Protection Act and The Code for Prosecutors (PPSNI).

Audits are carried out following nationally agreed guidelines so that any advice given is consistent and proportionate to any risk in the premises being visited.

Inspectors carry out audits in a fair and open manner in accordance with the NIFRS Enforcement Policy.

During the audit the Inspector will ask to view the following documents, where applicable to each premises:

- Fire Risk Assessment
- Fire Precautions Log Book
- Records of Staff Training and Fire Drills
- Records of Testing and Maintenance of Firefighting Equipment (Extinguishers)
- Records of Testing and Maintenance of all Fire Safety Systems including Fire Alarms, Emergency Lighting, Sprinkler System, Smoke Ventilation System.

- Fire Safety Standards within The Building

As part of the audit, the Inspector may wish to view the fire safety standards in all or part of the building. The Inspector may also wish to talk to members of staff to confirm their level of fire safety awareness.

NIFRS publishes an online Public Register of all buildings that have notices served for non-compliance. This lists alphabetically all the premises, the type of notice served on it, issue date, a PDF copy of the notice and information relating to when compliance was achieved.

There is no requirement to register with NIFRS regarding Fire Risk Assessment however, an extensive range of downloadable documents are available from the NIFRS website. These include Fire Risk Assessment Templates and a Fire Safety Log Book template.

Table 8:10: NI Fire & Rescue Service Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✘
Account creation/Profile generation		✘
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function		✘
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✘
Fee payment function		✘
Automatic email reminders/updates		✘
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✘

8.10 Planning service

The Department of the Environment's planning functions operate from Causeway Exchange in Belfast and from 8 local Area Planning Offices across Northern Ireland. Planning Group is led by the Chief Planner and is comprised of 3 divisions. They are:

- Local Planning
- Strategic Planning
- Planning Policy

The Planning Group is responsible for the delivery of operational planning functions, the development and delivery of planning policy and legislation, the reform and transfer of some planning functions that will transfer from central to local government.

In addition to the operational functions of Development Management (including enforcement), Development Planning, Conservation and Tree Preservation Orders, Planning Group is responsible for taking forward much of the work required to prepare for the transfer of many operational planning responsibilities to the new 11 Councils, retention of the remaining planning functions within central government and the establishment of new working arrangements between central and local government on planning matters.

The Group is also responsible for the development of planning policy, guidance and advice, together with the legislation required to accelerate a number of reforms to the planning system in advance of the transfer of planning powers to the local councils.

On the Planning Service website (www.planningni.gov.uk) there is a service called Public Access that allows anyone accessing it to:

- Search for Planning applications and Appeals by a variety of criteria such as address, date received and application type;
- View details of Planning applications and appeals using key dates such as date received, date valid or date decided;
- Track the status and progress of planning applications and appeals;
- View the plans, maps, drawings and environmental statements which accompany a planning application including additional plans and revised plans;
- View the details of consultation responses, third party comments or correspondence with the applicant on a planning application; and
- View properties and applications on a map.

It is not possible to submit a planning application through the website, however, the full suite of planning forms is available to download on the website. This can be completed on-screen, printed and then submitted to The Planning Service.

Table 8:11: Planning Service Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖
Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability		✖
Support function		✖

Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✕
Fee payment function		✕
Automatic email reminders/updates		✕
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✕

8.11   Agri-Food Inspectorate Branch (AfIB) (DARD)

The Agri-Food Inspectorate Branch discharges its official controls under EU legislation. It has oversight of the following areas:

- Beef labelling;
- Poultry registration, marketing rules, welfare regulations, food hygiene in the production of poultry and eggs;
- Beef deadweight price reporting;
- Beef carcase classification;
- Hygiene compliance for milk purchasers, hauliers, processors and distributors; and
- Animal feed and primary production hygiene.

The AfIB have a number of databases which record inspection and sampling activity; record outcomes and generate letters/notices as appropriate. In some cases databases can be easily interrogated to examine trends within a sector or in a specific business. This information is currently not accessible via online services. Although, as part of DARD's ICT development strategy, it is hoped that the systems will eventually all move online.

The frequency of official controls discharged under EU legislation is determined using a risk-based approach. The nature of approach varies slightly between each regulation, however, a range of weighted factors are scored, the score then determining the frequency of inspection.

Table 8:12: Agri-Food Inspectorate Branch Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✕
Account creation/Profile generation		✕
Forms available for download		✕
Self-assessment capability		✕

Support function		✘
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	
Fee payment function		✘
Automatic email reminders/updates		✘
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	✓	

8.12 Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is the independent body responsible for monitoring and inspecting the availability and quality of health and social care services in Northern Ireland, and encouraging improvements in the quality of those services.

RQIA was established under The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. The Order also places a statutory duty of quality upon health and social care organisations, and requires the DHSSPS to develop standards against which the quality of services can be measured.

RQIA registers and inspects a wide range of health and social care services. Inspections are based on minimum care standards which will ensure that both the public and the service providers know what quality of services is expected.

Inspectors visit a range of services including nursing, residential care and children's homes to examine all aspects of the care provided, to assure the comfort and dignity of those using the facilities, and ensure public confidence in these services. We are also responsible for the regulation day care settings, domiciliary care agencies, nursing agencies and a range of independent health care services.

RQIA also has a role in assuring the quality of services provided by Health and Social Care (HSC) Board, HSC trusts and agencies, to ensure that every aspect of care reaches the standards laid down by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and expected by the public.

Where RQIA identifies concerns about a particular service it may take enforcement action to ensure the safety, wellbeing and protection of those using the services. It may also take enforcement action where it identifies non-compliance with regulations and/or standards.

RQIA publishes details of all enforcement action at adult health and social care services on its website. This includes current enforcement activity, information on services that have achieved compliance with enforcement action.

RQIA also holds comprehensive up to date information on all registered health and social care services in Northern Ireland including nursing homes, residential care homes and

domiciliary care agencies. It has developed an online directory that allows you to search for these services by name, care category, geographical area, and postcode. Copies of individual inspection reports for each service are available online.

Table 8:13: RQIA Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation		✗
Forms available for download		✗
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	
Fee payment function		✗
Automatic email reminders/updates		✗
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	✓	

8.13 Single Farm Payment Branch

The Single Farm Payment Branch is part of DARD and is responsible for overseeing applications from farmers for the Single Farm Payment Scheme (SFPS) in Northern Ireland. The SFPS was introduced by EC Council Regulation 1782/2003 and replaced the crop and livestock payments from 1 January 2005. The new scheme breaks the link between production and support. Instead, farmers will have to observe certain conditions (known as Cross Compliance) in return for receipt of direct agricultural support. Scheme Managers are responsible for the day to day operation of the Scheme and provide applicants with on-going support regarding the processing of payments.

As part of DARD Online Services, it is possible for farmers to make a Single Application through SAF Online. The online application process has many benefits, such as 24hr availability, automatic checking so that potential errors are highlighted to the applicant immediately (reducing mistakes) and faster payments. However, unlike the paper application, which presents field information for farm businesses as known to the Department at a fixed point in time, the online system is updated with more current information. Therefore, as applicants complete the online form their claim can be validated against the latest field information held on the land database (LPIS).

Table 8:14: Single Farm Payment Branch Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability		✗
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✗
Fee payment function		✗
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✗

8.14 Northern Ireland Trading Standards Service

The role of the Trading Standards Service is to promote and maintain fair trading, protect consumers and enable reputable businesses to thrive within Northern Ireland. This is done by enforcing a wide range of consumer legislation in order to protect consumers and honest businesses. We will also give advice to businesses in order to help them comply with the law.

The Northern Ireland Trading Standards Service regulatory approach is generally targeted and risk based. Infringements of legislation can come to the attention of the Trading Standards Service in a number of ways:

- Complaints by members of the public
- Complaints made by traders
- Inspections of trade premises carried out by Trading Standards Officers
- Targeted investigation of individual traders, trade sectors or practices
- Matters referred by other agencies
- Other sources of information and intelligence

If it is found that the law has been contravened in the majority of cases the only action that will be taken with the trader is suggestions and advice about how things can be improved. In more serious a formal investigation is conducted. At the conclusion of that investigation the case is reviewed and a decision taken as to the appropriate enforcement outcome. This will usually be one of the following:

- A Written Warning
- A Formal Caution
- A Formal Undertaking
- A Recommendation to prosecute or commence other legal proceedings, including injunctive action.

The Trading Standards Service does not offer an online compliance mechanism for business to register or create an account. However, it does refer business on to the ERWIN (Everything Regulation Whenever It's Needed) website. The ERWIN website was launched in July 2009. The basic concept of the project is simple – to provide regulatory services information in an innovative way that will make it more accessible and useful for businesses. The project, which addresses many of the recommendations of the Anderson Review[8], aims to provide consistent guidance which will:

- simplify and interpret the legislation;
- provide sector specific advice and information for businesses, so they have appropriately targeted advice;
- assist businesses to prioritise the work they need to do in order to meet the legal requirements;
- be tailored to include all of the legislation that is applicable to the particular activities of the business;
- be easy to access, timely, easy to understand and use simple checklists;
- give clear instructions on how to comply; and
- increase transparency about the likely outcome if the business fails to comply with particular requirements.

ERWIN has expended to include Environmental Health, Licensing and Fire & Rescue. The aim is to provide a national, coordinated and consistent approach to Business Advice across a full range of regulatory services. It is hoped that ERWIN will eventually provide a one-stop-shop website for businesses.

Table 8:15: Northern Ireland Trading Standards Service Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download	✓	

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[8] The Anderson Review of Government Guidance on Regulation - Business Perspectives on Government Guidance, July 2008

Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function	✓	
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✘
Fee payment function	✓	
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✘

Fee payment function is available depending on Local Authority/ Government provision through separate websites

8.15 Companies House

The commencement of the Companies Act 2006 on 1 October 2009 has provided provided a single company law regime that applies to the whole of the United Kingdom. Companies are UK companies rather than GB or Northern Ireland companies, and the same legislation applies to all. As a consequence, Companies Registry Northern Ireland (CRNI) has integrated with Companies House, under the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Northern Ireland has retained a registry function and presence similar to Companies House Scotland. The office will remain in Belfast with a Registrar for Northern Ireland.

Companies House provides an online service called WebFiling. This allows companies to:

- File forms directly;
- Ensure forms are filled in correctly as the forms have built in checks and pre-populated data, reducing rejections;
- Automatic email acknowledgement when forms are submitted;
- File an Annual Return for significantly less that paper;
- Make changes to registered office address, office/member information as well as company accounts and change name of resolution.
- In addition, WebFiling provides access to:
- eReminders – a Free service that notifies companies when company accounts and annual returns are due to be filed.
- PROOF (PROtected Online Filing) – Free protection from hijack[9] by preventing attempts to change registered address or directors by using paper returns. Once registered for PROOF, Companies House will normally reject any paper versions of the following forms:
    - Appointments

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[9] Company hijacks normally involve fraudsters changing the details of a company's directors and registered office.

- Terminations
- Change of Particulars (Company Officers)
- Change of Registered Office Address
- Annual Return

This helps ensure that any changes made have been registered by the company itself.

The information Companies House holds on all companies registered is then made available online via Companies House Direct (CHD) and WebCHeck. CHD is a subscription service which allows subscribers to access and download company information directly. Over 240 million images of company documents are available including company accounts, as well as a wide range of database information. The WebCHeck service offer a searchable Company Names and Address Index free of charge which allows the user to search for information on over 3 million companies. The searches can be carried out on a company either by using its name or by using its unique company registration number. In addition to the free company details, it is also possible to purchase a company's historical information, including accounts and annual returns and a selection of company reports for a one-off charge.

Table 8:16: Companies House Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function	✓	
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✗
Fee payment function	✓	
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✗

8.16 Drinking Water Inspectorate NI

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWINI) is responsible for regulating drinking water quality in Northern Ireland for public and private supplies. It monitors drinking water quality

against regulatory standards and carries out inspections of water sampling and assessing water treatment, distribution policies and practices.

Under the 'Private Water Supplies (NI) Regulations 1994' anyone with a private water supply which serves two or more properties or a commercial premises and the water is use for domestic or food/drink production purposes are required to register their supply with DWINI. In order to register, a Private Water Supplies registration form must be submitted to DWINI. This can be obtained through the Environmental Health Department of the local council or by downloading a copy from the DWINI webpage. It can then be filled in and returned to the Inspectorate.

Table 8:17: Drinking Water Inspectorate NI Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✗
Account creation/Profile generation		✗
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability		✗
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✗
Fee payment function		✗
Automatic email reminders/updates		✗
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✗

8.17 Employment Agency Inspectorate

The Employment Agency Inspectorate (EAI) of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is responsible for the regulation of the Northern Ireland private recruitment sector. EAI inspectors investigate complaints, follow up allegations of misconduct, and undertake targeted checks of employment agencies and businesses.

EAI has an online information gathering system for complaints about an employment agency. Work seekers and employees can complete and submit a Complaint Form via the EAI section of the Department of Employment and Learning website.

Table 8:18: Employment Agency Inspectorate Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation		✗
Forms available for download		✗
Self-assessment capability		✗
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✗
Fee payment function		✗
Automatic email reminders/updates		✗
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	✓	

8.18 The Equality Commission NI

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is a non-departmental public body established by the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Its powers and duties derive from a number of statutes which have been enacted over the last decades, providing protection against discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, race, religion and political opinion, sex and sexual orientation. It also has responsibilities arising from the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in respect of the statutory equality and good relations duties which apply to public authorities.

Employers are required to register with the Commission if they have 11 or more employees working 16 hours or more per week. Businesses can register with the Commission online through its website. If ownership of the business changes hands, the new owner must apply directly to the Commission to have the register changed.

The Equality Commission also requires employers to monitor the community background of their workforce and submit and annual monitoring return. The forms for carrying out both these functions are available on the Commission's website, they can then be completed on returned by mail. There is no online capability for businesses to create a profile and submit monitoring information or update details.

Table 8:19: Equality Commission Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	

Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✖
Fee payment function		✖
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

8.19 Fisheries (DARD)

Fisheries and Environment Division has administrative responsibility for sea fisheries, aquaculture and fish health policy in Northern Ireland.

It is also responsible for the enforcement of fisheries legislation; the licensing of aquaculture; fishing vessel licensing; the administering of fisheries grant schemes and supporting the operation of the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (FCILC) and the Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority (NIFHA).

The Fisheries and Environment Division provides a wide range of forms to download and return via mail on its section of the DARD website particularly relating to:

- Fisheries Grants Application Forms;
- Vessel licensing;
- Fishing vessel days at sea scheme;
- Applications forms relating to and aquaculture licensing business; and
- Diseases status and designation notices.

At present, there is no online system for gathering this information.

Table 8:20: DARD Fisheries Division Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖
Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download	✓	

Self-assessment capability		✖
Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✖
Fee payment function		✖
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

8.20 Forest Service NI (DARD)

The Forest Service is an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Its aim is to contribute to the economic development of the entire forestry sector in Northern Ireland, whilst at the same time promoting the sustainable management of forests for multiple use and conserving and enhancing the rural environment.

The Forest Service section on the DARD website is very similar to the Fisheries Section. There is no online system for information gathering or a portal for businesses or forest users to create a profile or an account. However, there are a number of forms that can be downloaded and returned via mail to the Forest Service.

Table 8:21: Forest Service NI Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖
Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download	✔	
Self-assessment capability		✖
Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✖
Fee payment function		✖
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

8.21   Insolvency Service

The Insolvency Service is a Branch within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's Business Regulation Division.

Its purpose and role is:-

- to administer and investigate the affairs of bankrupts and companies in compulsory liquidation;
- to establish the reasons for the insolvency;
- to handle the disqualification of directors in all corporate insolvencies;
- to deal with any fraudulent activity in the management of insolvent businesses;
- to regulate the insolvency profession;
- to operate the Insolvency Account; and
- to formulate Northern Ireland-specific insolvency legislation and policy.

The Insolvency Service recently introduced a Public Portal which enables customers to pay deposits and complete their forms online. New users are required to create an account to use the Online Forms Service. The forms and services available through the Public Portal are:

- Form 6.31 Statement of Affairs (Debtor's Petition): This is required if someone wants to present a petition to the High Court to make themselves bankrupt.

    - If the bankruptcy order is made then the information supplied on the form will be made available to the Official Receiver and will be available to view online.

- Pay bankruptcy deposits on-line using a credit/debit card.
- Bankruptcy Questionnaire: required by the Official Receiver if adjudicated bankrupt following a petition presented by a creditor.
- Detailed Bankruptcy Questionnaire: required by the Official Receiver if adjudicated bankrupt following either a petition presented by a creditor or by the individuals themselves.
- Liquidation Questionnaire: this is a questionnaire that the Official Receiver will ask a company director to complete following the making of a Winding-Up Order.

Debt Relief Orders (DROs), Bankruptcy Restrictions Order (BROs) and Insolvency Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) information can be viewed through the Insolvency Service's DRO register. This allows users to search for records by entering in an individuals name.

Table 8:22: Insolvency Service Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No

Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability		✗
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✗
Fee payment function	✓	
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✗

8.22 Law Society for Northern Ireland

The Law Society of Northern Ireland was established in 1922 when a Royal Charter was granted to solicitors in Northern Ireland to permit the setting up of the Incorporated Law Society of Northern Ireland. As laid out in the Royal Charter, the Law Society of Northern Ireland powers and duties are to represent and regulate the solicitors' profession in Northern Ireland with the aim of protecting the public. Under the Solicitors (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, the Law Society acts as the regulatory authority governing the education, accounts, discipline and professional conduct of solicitors in order to maintain the independence, ethical standards, professional competence and quality of services offered to the public.

Table 8:23: Law Society for Northern Ireland Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download		✗
Self-assessment capability		✗
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✗
Fee payment function	✓	
Automatic email reminders/updates		✗
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✗

8.23 Minerals and Petroleum Licensing

Anyone who wants to explore for, drill for or extract oil or gas in Northern Ireland must hold a Petroleum Licence granted by DETI under the Petroleum (Production) Act (Northern Ireland) 1964. The application and licensing process is underpinned by regulations which, among other thing, set out arrangements for making and determining applications, permissible terms and conditions for granting a Petroleum License and the model clauses which may be incorporated in a Petroleum License.

A significant amount of information regarding applications is provided in the Minerals and Petroleum section of the DETI website. However, there is no provision for applications to be made online, nor is there a portal that could be used to monitor compliance with licensing.

Table 8:24: Minerals and Petroleum Licensing

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✗
Account creation/Profile generation		✗
Forms available for download		✗

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Self-assessment capability		✘
Support function		✘
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✘
Fee payment function		✘
Automatic email reminders/updates		✘
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✘

8.24 NI Authority on Utility Regulation

The Utility Regulator is responsible for regulating the electricity, gas, water and sewerage industries in Northern Ireland. Its work is carried out in line with statutory duties set out in the Energy (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 and the Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. In terms of regulation, its work involves:

- Issuing and maintaining licenses for gas, electricity and water companies to operate in Northern Ireland;
- Ensuring companies meet relevant legislation and license obligations;
- Setting customer service standards for regulated companies in Northern Ireland.

The Utility Regulator does not provide an online service for the companies it regulates. Instead it published guidance documents for organisations seeking to apply for electricity (supply and generation) or gas licenses (supply and conveyance).

Table 8:25: NIAUR Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✘
Account creation/Profile generation		✘
Forms available for download		✘
Self-assessment capability		✘
Support function		✘
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✘

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Fee payment function		✖
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

8.25 NI Social Care Council

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) is the regulatory body for the social care workforce in Northern Ireland. It seeks to raise standards in social care and increase public confidence in the workforce by registering social care workers, setting standards for their conduct, training and practice and supporting professional development across the workforce. NISCC is a non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

NISCC has developed a new website that allows social care workers to apply to register online, update details and pay fees. It also has a public facing register that allows people to check if a social car worker's registration is valid and appropriate for their job. Social care workers can create a profile on the website and then login to manage the information they are required to give to remain registered. They can pay relevant fees and update training and CPD information.

Table 8:26: NI Social Care Council Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✔	
Account creation/Profile generation	✔	
Forms available for download		✖
Self-assessment capability	✔	
Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✔	
Fee payment function	✔	
Automatic email reminders/updates	✔	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	✔	

8.26 NI Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA)

NISRA is an Agency of the Department of Finance and Personnel and is the principle source of official statistics and social research on Northern Ireland.

NISRA does not have regulatory responsibilities similar to the other organisations being profiled. However, it has large, well-developed online systems for disseminating information. Users can also access data over different periods of time and manipulate data to suit their own requirements. For example, it is possible to look at the age (single year bands) of the population of NI by Local Council District, Health and Social Care Trust or Electoral Ward. This is provided through the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (NINIS), a separate section on the NISRA website dedicated to statistical and locational information relating to small areas across Northern Ireland.

Table 8:27: NISRA Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖
Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download		✖
Self-assessment capability		✖
Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✖
Fee payment function		✖
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

NB. No regulatory online services but extensive and well developed online information systems.

8.27 Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB)

NITB is responsible for the development of tourism and the marketing of Northern Ireland as a tourist destination to domestic tourists, from within Northern Ireland, and to visitors from the Republic of Ireland. It is a non-departmental body of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and works closely with other tourism bodies to help develop the visitor economy and to market NI to incoming visitors.

All tourist accommodation providers must comply with the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. This stipulates that all tourist accommodation providers must receive certification from NITB before they are allowed to begin operating.

Operators register in the first instance by downloading a PDF form from the NITB website, filling it in and posting it back (with the relevant fees) to the NITB Quality & Standards Unit. The certification process normally takes up to 8 weeks as the premises must be inspected by a NITB Quality and Standards Officer.

Once registered with NITB accommodation providers can manage their compliance via an online portal. Through this it is possible to apply for a change in accommodation category, for example, if a B&B wanted to become a guest house.

There is evidence to suggest that NITB takes a risk based approach to delivering its regulatory function. As part of its responsibilities, NITB carries out statutory inspections of tourists accommodation premises in NI every four years. The purpose of these statutory inspections in to ensure that establishments comply with certain minimum standards, as set out in relevant tourism legislation. In each of the three years between statutory inspections, tourist accommodation providers are required to provide NITB with a brief self-review statement. This self-review process is designed to ensure that certified establishments continue to comply with minimum legislative standards. The 'Self-Review Statement' can be completed online through the NITB online portal.

Table 8:28: NITB Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	
Fee payment function		✗
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function	✓	

8.28 Pharmaceutical Society NI

The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland was established by the Pharmacy and Poisons Act (NI) 1925. As a regulatory body, it seeks to protect the public by:

- Setting and promoting standards for pharmacists' admission to the register and for remaining on the register;
- Maintaining a publicly accessible register of pharmacists, and pharmacy premises in Northern Ireland;
- Handling concerns about Fitness to Practise of registrants, acting as a complaints portal and taking action to protect the public; and
- Ensuring high standards of education and training for pharmacists in Northern Ireland.

Pharmacists and Pharmacies can download the relevant registration forms from the Pharmaceutical Society's website. These must then be returned in the post along with the necessary fees. There is currently no provision to complete these forms or pay fees through the website.

In terms of profiling compliance, the entire Register of Pharmacists and Pharmacies in NI is made available online to search online. Pharmacists are profiled giving their name, registration number, date of registration and details of any fitness to practice issues. Pharmacy details provided on the register include name and address, contact number and registration number.

Table 8:29: Pharmaceutical Society NI Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖
Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability		✖
Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	
Fee payment function		✖
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

8.29 Private Landlords Register

Under the Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 all private landlords must provide accurate and up to date information about themselves and their properties to the Registrar. From the 25 February 2014 all private landlords must register immediately prior to the letting of a new tenancy or where there is an existing tenancy, within 12 months. Registration will last for a period of 3 years at the end of which there is a requirement to re-register. The cost of registration varies depending on how it is done (online registration costs £70 and paper registration costs £80). Landlords already registered under the Houses in Multiple Occupation Registration Scheme must register but are exempt from the registration fee.

Online registration is completed through the NIDirect website and users must first create an account. Once this is complete users can sign in and enter all the necessary details for registering including:

- Personal details (including name, DOB, contact details)
- Details of managing Agents
- Details of property/properties held
- Pay the £70 fee

Once a profile has been generated Landlords can then manage their registration through NIDirect.com.

The register is then made available on NIDirect and it is searchable by both property (to see if it has a registered landlord) and by landlord (to check if they are registered/registration is up to date).

Table 8:30: Private Landlords Register Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download		✗
Self-assessment capability		✗
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✗
Fee payment function	✓	

Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✗

8.30 Ports & Public Transport Division (DRD)

The Portsn & Public Transport Division (DRD) does not currently offer online services nor does it have a website

Table 8:31: Ports & Public Transport Division (DRD) Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✗
Account creation/Profile generation		✗
Forms available for download		✗
Self-assessment capability		✗
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✗
Fee payment function		✗
Automatic email reminders/updates		✗

8.31 Rivers Agency (DARD)

The Rivers Agency is a division of DARD and is the statutory drainage and flood defence authority for Northern Ireland. Its aim is to reduce risk to life and damage to property from flooding from rivers and the sea and to undertake watercourse and coastal flood management in a sustainable manner. The Rivers Agency does not currently provide an online service for information gathering or regulatory compliance.

Table 8:32: DARD Rivers Agency Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖
Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download		✖
Self-assessment capability		✖
Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✖
Fee payment function		✖
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

8.32 Roads Service (Transport NI)

Transport NI is a business unit within the Department for Regional Development, playing a significant role in facilitating the safe and convenient movement of people and goods throughout the province, promoting the safety of road users, delivering road maintenance services and managing and developing the transport network.

Transport NI does not provide an online portal for consents and licences but has downloadable PDF forms that can be printed off and returned to Transport NI offices. However, through NIDirect it is possible to pay parking tickets and report a problem with the roads.

Table 8:33: Roads Service (Transport NI) Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✖
Account creation/Profile generation		✖
Forms available for download	✔	
Self-assessment capability		✖

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Support function		✖
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✖
Fee payment function	✓	
Automatic email reminders/updates		✖
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✖

8.33 Single Use Carrier Bag levy Regulator (DOE)

The Single User Carrier Bag levy Regulator does not currently offer online services nor does it have a website.

Table 8:34: Single Use Carrier Bag Levy Regulator Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system		✗
Account creation/Profile generation		✗
Forms available for download		✗
Self-assessment capability		✗
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available		✗
Fee payment function		✗
Automatic email reminders/updates		✗
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✗

8.34 Sport NI

Sport NI is the leading public body for the development of sport in Northern Ireland. Sport NI creates and develops programmes and partnerships that will address its three strategic objectives:

1. Increased participation in sport and physical recreation;
2. Improved sporting performances; and
3. Improved efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of sport.

In terms of regulatory responsibilities, Sport NI has an important role in safety and certification of sports venues.

- Monitors the performance of District Council staff in the execution of the certification process and regulation process to ensure appropriate levels of safety are adopted at larger venues and structures in Northern Ireland.
- Provides technical/legal advice, including drafting of guidance material to all relevant parties and liaising with interest groups i.e. emergency services.

Sport NI provides the full range of forms and guidance documents on its website to assist District Council Officers in the certification process. It also provides forms to assist venue operators in drafting the safety management documentation. These are available in PDF format and can be downloading of Sport NI's website.

Sport NI does not provide an online system that allows users to create a profile in terms of regulation but it does have a similar function for organisations seeking funding. Organisations can create an account and select which funding they are interested in and get help with the application process. The system also notifies organisations of future funding programmes when they become available.

Table 8:35: Sport NI Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	
Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function	✓	
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	
Fee payment function		✘
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✘

8.35 Veterinary Service DARD

As part of DARD Online Services, it is possible for farmers to register births and deaths for herds in Northern Ireland through APHIS Online. This is a legal requirement and failure by a farmer to do so could lead to investigations and possible prosecutions.

Table 8:36: Veterinary Service Online Services Summary

Online provision summary	Yes	No
Online information gathering system	✓	
Account creation/Profile generation	✓	

Forms available for download	✓	
Self-assessment capability	✓	
Support function		✗
Historical record of regulatory compliance available	✓	
Fee payment function		✗
Automatic email reminders/updates	✓	
Risk-based approach to exercising regulatory function		✗