

**Rural Organisation founded by Government to close because of Pension
The Northern Ireland Rural Development Council (RDC) is to close because of pension.**

Established by government in 1991 the organisation was instrumental in supporting the development of rural areas right across Northern Ireland with a sound track record in delivering programmes and in the administration of public funds.

Under the initial Review of Public Administration (2006-2009) the organisation underwent significant change which severed its ties with government paving the way for the organisation to continue as an independent company and, in more recent years, as a registered charity.

The organisation was part of the Local Government Pension Scheme for Northern Ireland administered by NILGOSC. At the time of change there was no reason to believe that future pension demands would threaten the solvency of the organisation.

In a statement on its website the Board said it was closing with utmost regret because of circumstances completely beyond their control.

Tony McCusker Chair stated, *“A series of unfortunate circumstances including a substantial pension deficit, a continued annual hike in pension costs, the inflexibility of the NILGOSC pension scheme regulations and a lack of political stability have all played a part in the closure. We have witnessed a number of charities closing over recent years with increasing pension costs often the main contributor. For us it is extremely frustrating and disappointing that our local government pension scheme is not doing more to protect Northern Ireland charities in the way that other government schemes are across the UK. Government seriously needs to find better solutions, other than insolvency, for organisations to exit the scheme, which are more beneficial to members and to the Fund in the long term.*

RDC has worked with and supported over 7,000 rural projects during its 28 years in operation. We hope that those communities empowered by local action continue to champion rural and we thank all those who we worked with over the years for their commitment and dedication to advancing rural Northern Ireland.”

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