

Rural Matters



Focus On

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Housing
Executive

Looking Forward

This year was the final year of our Rural Action Plan 2013-2016 and we started work on 57 of the 58 ambitious actions included in the plan. Encouraging progress was made on 95% of the actions.

Key achievements of this 3 year Rural Action Plan included:

47 rural housing needs surveys were undertaken to help rural communities examine the provision of social housing in their area (for details see pages 4-5);

372 social new build homes were delivered in rural areas;

The **extension of floating support** services (in rural areas across Northern Ireland) to help vulnerable people remain in their homes. Tailored care and support packages were made available (see page 9 for a feature on schemes in Fermanagh and Coleraine);

Improvements to the fabric and energy efficiency of rural housing through 5788 'Warm Homes' installations, 1478 'Affordable Warmth' installations, 6846 boiler replacements and 2127 private sector grants;

The Housing Executive's **Oil Buying Clubs** Scheme which was established in 27 rural communities (see page 11);

The introduction of the Housing Executive's **Rural Community Awards** in 2014.

During 2015 we undertook a review of the 'Rural Homes and People' Strategy and published our draft proposals for public consultation in January 2016. We would like to thank everyone who provide the invaluable responses which have helped us to refresh our specific rural housing approach.

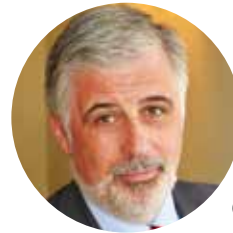
'Sustainable Rural Communities' the new Rural Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020 will be launched in Autumn 2016.

The Strategy recognises the growing pressures from rural communities for local, affordable homes, the need to address increasing levels of unfitness and fuel poverty in rural areas and highlights the national recognition that there is a need to support an ageing population, especially in isolated rural areas.

The launch of the new Rural Strategy is timely given the Rural Needs Act in May is set to be fully introduced by 2018. The Housing Executive welcomes the opportunity to reinforce our commitment to identifying and addressing rural housing needs and to work in partnership with other departments, agencies and local councils in supporting sustainable rural communities.



Donald Hoodless



Clark Bailie



Draft Strategy document

Front cover pic: Junior Wardens in the North West litter picking (see Page 10).

Donald Hoodless, Chairman

Clark Bailie, Chief Executive



In numbers

What we did for rural communities 2015/16



148

New social homes started



1,151

People allocated homes



585

Approved grant applications



5

Areas included in building relationships in communities programme



1,478

Affordable warmth schemes



75

Rural groups in housing community network



12

Rural housing needs tests completed



1,419

Boiler replacement schemes



46

Rural schools received energy awareness education

L - R, Ward Erwin, Housing Executive; Conal McFeeley, Creggan Enterprises; Jennifer Hawthorne, Housing Executive; Hillary McClintock, Mayor Derry City & Strabane District Council; Kevin Hipsley, Hive Studios; Connor Smith, Housing Executive.

Social Housing Investment Scheme

We have £500,000 worth of Social Housing Enterprise Investment awards to make.

Our 2016 Social Housing Investment Scheme is now open for applications to support the local social economy and develop social enterprise initiatives. The first round of awards saw 34 groups benefit and tangible changes have already been made within the successful communities.

From Antrim to Fermanagh we funded alterations businesses, micro-homes, digital studios, online arts newsletters, upcycling initiatives and soft play areas. A range of social enterprise based businesses were considered across Northern Ireland and through our second round of funding your rural community could also benefit.

We have awards ranging from £1,000 up to £50,000 and there are real opportunities for local people

We are offering **Education, Training & Business Start Up Grants** (up to £1,000) **Bronze, Silver & Gold Awards** (£10,000 to £50,000)

to create something which could bring about lasting gains to their community.

Applications to the award of up to £1,000 remains open until all available funds have been allocated whilst the closing date for the Bronze, Silver and Gold awards is 4pm Monday 22nd August 2016.

Contact:- Social Investment Team, Housing Executive
T: 028 9031 8333
E: socialinvestments@nihe.gov.uk

Are more rural homes needed?

Does your Rural Community need more social and affordable homes?

Is your community faced with housing problems and are not sure how to tackle them? Perhaps younger people are unable to get a home, some families may be living in unsatisfactory housing, and older people could be occupying properties unsuitable for their needs. The Housing Executive can help communities with this - by working with your community to undertake a 'Rural Housing Need Survey'.

What is a 'Rural Housing Needs Survey'?

The Housing Executive uses the housing waiting list to determine where new social housing needs to be built. However, in rural areas, the waiting list can't always be relied upon as an accurate

measure of real need. This is because many people in rural areas do not register as they feel they have little chance of being housed due to low numbers of available properties in their area. The result – no housing need identified and no new homes built. To try to break the cycle, the Housing Executive carries out an intensive examination to encourage people who are in rural areas who are in housing need to register on the waiting list.

How does the survey work?

At the outset we would hold a meeting with the local community representatives to find out initial views. We would agree a timetable with the local community representatives and arrange advertisements to be placed in the local papers to encourage people to come forward and register. At the same time, posters will be

put up in the area and flyers left in local shops and churches etc. Sometimes a "Draw your Dream Home" competition is held if there is a primary school in the area. Along with their competition entry sheet, each child is given a leaflet to bring home to their parents/guardians, explaining about the housing need survey. Occasionally, we will go through neighbouring Housing Lists as some people may have registered for housing in a nearby town, thinking homes cannot be provided in their local area.

How do people register their interest?

The survey normally lasts 3-4 weeks and for those interested, a simple phone call to the Housing Executive gets the process underway. Each person who responds is contacted and their current housing circumstances assessed. If they wish, they are added to the social housing waiting list for their local area.

How are the results analysed?

At the end of the survey, the waiting list is analysed to decide if there is now a need for new housing in the area.

We take into account:

1. How many add their details to the list;
2. Those who were on the Waiting List already;
3. Available social housing in the area;
4. Proposed regeneration or other development initiatives.



Clachan Bridge, Plumbridge (Pic courtesy of Rural Housing)



Clockwise from above:- Children from St Paul's Primary School Irvinestown who participated in a 'Draw Your Dream Home' competition this year with Area Manager, Eddie Doherty; Homes in Killinchy (Pic courtesy of Clanmil Housing)

Following the survey conclusions may include:

- Where a demand for social housing is identified it will be highlighted to housing associations. They try to identify appropriate sites for development and apply to have them included in the Social Housing New Build Programme. Potential housing developments are subject to the availability of suitable land, planning regulations and scheme costs
- Details of those who express an interest in shared ownership will be, with the applicant's permission, forwarded to Co-ownership Housing.
- Where no need is identified, the waiting list will continue to be monitored in case housing need in the area rises in the future.

Where was surveyed during the 3 year Rural Action Plan?

Between 2012 -2015 we carried out surveys in 47 rural areas.

We concluded there was a need for housing in:

Annsborough , Armoy, Balloo, Balnamore, Bellaghy, Carnlough, Carrowdore, Cloughey, Cloughmills, Cullaville, Dromara, Draperstown, Dunadry, Dunloy, Magheramason/Blackstone, Martinstown/Glenravel, Portglenone, Poyntzpass, Sion Mills, Tamnaherin and Toome

Have houses been built following Rural Housing Need Surveys?

Housing schemes have started in six rural settlements:

Balnamore, Carnlough, Cloughey, Dromara, Sion Mills and Toome.

Over the next two years housing schemes are due to start in: Armoy, Balnamore, Cullaville, Dromara, Dunloy, Martinstown, Portglenone, Poyntzpass, and Sion Mills.

Will there be more Rural Housing Need Surveys?

We are planning more. We are happy to visit and talk to local community groups in rural areas where there is a desire to increase social or affordable housing.

If your community group wishes to discuss your areas housing, please contact

Eoin McKinney
Housing Executive
T: 034 4892 0900
E: rural.housing@nihe.gov.uk

A new Rural Strategy

In February, the Housing Executive launched the draft proposals for our new Rural Strategy at an event in Oxford Island - Rural Housing: Practice to Policy. Upwards of 60 delegates, representing areas from Fermanagh to Rathlin and everywhere in between were there giving us their views.

Representatives from councils, government departments, rural support networks and community groups joined us at the event which intended to:

- highlight why the Housing Executive has a specific rural focus and how this shapes our services and activities;
- demonstrate how our intervention contributes to sustainable rural communities; and
- get feedback on our new proposals for the Rural Strategy.

Siobhan McCauley, Director of Regional Services in the Housing Executive, set the context for the event by considering the current issues facing rural dwellers and highlighting the opportunities which will be presented through increased collaborative working through Community Planning.

Meanwhile Aidan Campbell highlighted the importance of the partnership that has developed between the Housing Executive and his organisation, the Rural Community Network which provides administration and support for the Rural Residents Forum. Aidan promoted the role of the Rural Residents Forum in providing feedback on how new policies, strategies and services may impact on rural communities and in raising housing issues within their rural areas.

community. He explained how an inter-agency approach was necessary on Rathlin to encourage investment and support which would enable the sustainability of this isolated population. He focused on how the Housing Executive's involvement in assessing housing need facilitated the planning and development of the recent social housing development at Church Bay.

'Jenny was excellent... a speaker who demonstrated the importance of rural community self-help projects so well'

'Great to hear a speaker who was so positive about the work of NIHE'

'Reinforced the need to consider particular needs of rural areas in policy development'

Community Case studies

David Quinny Mee from Rathlin Community Development Association gave an animated insight into the unique issues which face residents of this island

This was followed by a very different but equally as impressive presentation from Jenny Irvine from ARC Healthy Living Centre in Irvinestown.

Jenny was instrumental in developing a family centre in a problematic estate in Fermanagh where intervention was long



Clockwise from above:- Siobhan McCauley, Housing Executive, Sinead Collins, Housing Executive and Patricia McQuillan, Moneydig Community Association and Chair of the Rural Residents Forum; Jenny Irvine ARC Healthy Living Centre Irvinestown; Housing Executive, Supporting Communities and Rural Community Representatives mingle.

overdue to address social issues which impacted on the health and well-being of many families in the area. Jenny advocated the progress which has been made in providing opportunities and vital services for people of all ages in the area. She highlighted the relationship which has developed with the Housing Executive and the importance of the support services in enabling and sustaining tenancies.

'Vibrant, shared, healthy and sustainable rural communities where everyone has access to decent and affordable housing'.

Our draft proposals included:

1. Assist rural communities who wish to examine the need for and provision of affordable housing in their locality;
2. Help to improve the condition of rural housing stock and reduce fuel poverty;
3. Provide housing support to vulnerable people in rural areas;
4. Improve community safety, cohesion and involvement within our rural estates; and
5. Offer funding and support which will assist in nurturing and developing their rural community.

'Really enjoyed the diverse range of speakers'

These were discussed in detail, with examples of potential actions which could be delivered and focusing on short, medium and long term outcomes which should be measured throughout the life of the strategy being proposed.

'Greater awareness of housing issues affecting rural communities'

'The event showed that rural at last seems to be to the fore'

Draft Rural Strategy Proposals

After consultation with various stakeholders, it was agreed that the Rural Strategy should aim to contribute to the overarching vision for rural housing:

'Very interesting and informative presentations'

'Good introduction to policy – a chance to think with practitioners'



Clockwise from above:- David Quinny Mee, Rathlin Community Development Association; Clachan Bridge, Plumbridge; Florencecourt, County Fermanagh (Pics courtesy of Rural Housing)

Workshops

Key issues raised by delegates included:

- The proposed **Rural Needs Bill** will be critical in enabling effective delivery of the Strategy;
- There is a need to **define what sustainable rural communities** are and what sustainable rural development is;
- **Partnership working is key** to delivery and this should be enabled through Community Planning;
- A reduction in the public sector **budget** may have a disproportionate impact on rural communities;
- Recognition of the need for a **specific rural approach** will be required from funders, housing providers, politicians and other public policy/target makers;
- The specific needs of **young people** living in rural areas should be considered;
- **Welfare Reform/Universal Credit** and the effectiveness of the mitigation package for rural dwellers;
- There is a need to consider how **digital inclusion** can be increased in rural areas;
- **Social isolation** is a major issue for some people living in rural areas.

Going Forward:

All responses received are being considered in the development of Sustainable Rural Communities: The Housing Executive's Rural Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020. The strategy is in the final stages of development and will be launched in Autumn 2016.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who took the time to respond to this consultation or to attend any of our consultation events. We look forward to working with rural communities over the next four years and are optimistic that the Community Planning process will provide a fresh opportunity to identify and address rural needs.

Contact
Sinead Collins
Housing Executive
T: 034 4892 0900
E: rural.housing@nihe.gov.uk



L-R: Margaret in Castlehill House, Lisnaskea; Coleraine Praxis office.

Partnership Focus - Supporting Praxis

The Housing Executive administers the Supporting People programme on behalf of the Department for Communities (DfC) to provide housing related support which aims to help vulnerable people live as independently as possible in the community.

Floating Support is a flexible free service that provides housing related support for short periods of time from a few weeks up to two years. It aims to help and support people who are in difficulties to remain independent and live for longer in their own home.

Praxis Floating Support in Fermanagh

Supporting People fund Praxis to provide housing related support to 35 older people and 20 people who are experiencing mental health difficulties and need support to enable them to live independently in the Fermanagh area. The level and type of support required is identified before a tailored plan is developed with the service user and Praxis staff and also where appropriate, other health professionals such as the GP, Community Psychiatric Nurse or Social Worker.

This Floating Support service is designed to take account of individual needs and maximise levels of independence in keeping with the principles of recovery for those with a mental health need.

Contact:
Castehill House, Church Lane,
Lisnaskea
Tel: 028 6772 2778

Praxis Floating Support in Coleraine

Supporting People fund Praxis to provide a Mental Health Floating Support service supporting 29 people and Dementia Floating Support service supporting 15 people in the Coleraine area.

There is a group-work service available offering 10 week courses to individuals with mental health, focusing on promoting health and well-being and developing leisure activities e.g. walking groups, cooking, gardening, relaxation and art/crafts.

This person-centred support service offered by Praxis aims to address social isolation by facilitating activities which encourage service users to improve their lifestyle and get involved in community activities.

Contact:
Unit 2, Westbann Development
Centre, 8 Killowen Court, Coleraine
Tel: 028 7032 7708

Widening work skills

Praxis Care has recently launched a new and innovative project in Portadown which provides a wide range of work skills training for up to 30 adults with learning disabilities.

This new service includes a bakery and catering enterprise 'Blissful Bites Bakery', an allotment where trainees can grow their own produce 'Cusher Meadows' as well as an activity group for older people with learning disabilities 'On the Go'. Each of these social enterprises enable those using them to develop specialist work skills whilst also providing a friendly and bespoke service to the local community.

'The development of the new Praxis Care Workskills service represents significant investment in the lives of people with learning disabilities in Northern Ireland and an opportunity to provide meaningful training and support services'. – Nevin Ringland, Chief Executive of Praxis Care.



Junior Wardens in the North West helping to keep the countryside tidy.

Keeping Northern Ireland Beautiful

The Housing Executive is responsible for 87,000 homes across Northern Ireland along with a considerable area of green space.

We have a dedicated team, in house, who along with contractors aim to keep these areas beautiful. We work with a range of agencies and the anti-litter charity, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, which aims to inspire people to take responsibility for creating cleaner, greener and healthier communities.

With the cost of keeping our streets clean rising to over £40million a year it is in all our interests to prevent littering behavior. But there is a hidden cost; its negative effect on health and well being, road traffic accidents, tourism income and crime rates. Litter and dog fouling blights our hedgerows, streets and parks. It can also be lethal, whether it is the plastic that chokes our precious sea life

or the glass that injures valuable livestock.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful has teamed up with councils in Northern Ireland, the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and Tourism NI, for 'Live Here Love Here' to get communities involved in looking after where they live by supporting volunteer clean-ups and providing small grants of up to £5,000 to support community action.

The Housing Executive supports the Live and Love Here Initiative. We regularly help community groups with clean ups in their areas and we welcome any action that will help enhance the appearance of our estates.

With **over 100,000 people involved in cleanups** last year a lot has been achieved to date. You and your community could join this growing movement to rid our land of litter.

Visit www.livehereandlovehere.org

**KEEP
NORTHERN
IRELAND
BEAUTIFUL**

BUYING OIL? **SAVE** ££££

Join the club... **the oil club!**

Nearly 3,000 households have benefited from cheaper oil thanks to 27 oil clubs established across Northern Ireland.

With world oil prices increasing it is making good sense to join an oil club. According to the Consumer Council NI the average price of 500 litres of oil in NI has increased by nearly £30 since the first week of March 2016.

The oil clubs, funded by the Housing Executive and managed by Bryson Energy, have on average saved members 12% per 500 litre fill.

Membership is free and open to anyone – Housing Executive tenants, owner-occupiers, housing association tenants and those who privately rent.

Oil clubs are simple but effective; the more people who buy oil together the more the cost can be reduced. Even better, households can buy as little as 200 litres of oil. When all orders are put together a better price can be obtained and the saving made is passed on equally to all.

More rural households are wanted to 'join their local oil club'!

So contact our partner:

Bryson Energy
T: 0800 142 867
TEXT: 079 3984 3716
E: oilclubs@brysonenergy.org

to see if there is a club near you and start saving!

0800 1422 867

FREEPHONE



Embracing all our neighbours



If English is not your first language and you need help with interpreting & translation the Housing Executive can provide free services on request, please ask for further details at your local office.

MANDARIN

如果英语不是你的母语，并且你需要帮助来进行口译和文字翻译，那么Housing Executive可以根据请求而提供免费的服务，请在你当地的办公室询问进一步的详情。

CANTONESE

如果英語不是你的母語，並且你需要幫助來進行口譯和文字翻譯，那麼Housing Executive可以根據請求而提供免費的服務，請在你當地的辦公室詢問進一步的詳情。

POLISH

Jeśli język angielski nie jest Państwa językiem ojczystym i potrzebują Państwo pomocy w zakresie tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych, Housing Executive oferuje bezpłatne usługi tłumaczeniowe na życzenie. O szczegóły prosimy pytać biuro lokalne.

PORTUGUESE

Se o Inglês não for a sua língua materna e precisar de ajuda com tradução e interpretação, o Executivo de Habitação pode providenciar serviços gratuitos mediante solicitação, pode obter mais informações no seu escritório local.

LITHUANIAN

Jei anglų kalba nėra jūsų gimtoji kalba ir jums reikia pagalbos dėl vertimo žodžiu ir raštu, jums pageidaujant Housing Executive gali suteikti nemokamas vertimo paslaugas; dėl išsamesnės informacijos prašome kreiptis į vietinį skyrį.

RUSSIAN

Если английский не является вашим родным языком и вам требуется помощь с устным и письменным переводом, Жилищное управление может предоставить по запросу бесплатные услуги переводчика. За более подробной информацией обратитесь в ваш местный офис.

SLOVAK

Ak angličtina nie je váš materský jazyk a vyžadujete si pomoc s prekladom a tlmočením, kancelária úradu pre otázky bývania (Housing Executive) vám ochotne poskytne tieto služby bezplatne. Prosím, požiadajte svoju miestnu kanceláriu o viac informácií.

For customers with sensory disabilities, information can be provided in alternative formats like large print, Braille or audio. Sign language interpreters can also be provided, but please give as much notice as possible to allow us to meet your request.

Useful Contacts

Housing Executive

Enquiries: 03448 920 900

Textphone: 18001 03448 920 900

Repairs: 03448 920 901- 24 hours

Housing Benefit: 03448 920 902

Benefits

Advice line: 0800 232 1271

Textphone: 0800 232 1715

Crime

Emergency Calls: 999/

Textphone 18000

PSNI non emergency: 101

Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111

NI Water

Waterline: 0345 744 0088

(interruption)

Leakline: 0800 028 2011

Flooding incident: 0300 2000 100

Gas

Emergency: 0800 002 001

Minicom: 0800 731 4710

Electricity

Power cut: 03457 643 643

Minicom: 03457 147 128

Health & Social Care Trusts

Belfast Area HQ: 028 9504 0100

Northern Area HQ: 028 9442 4000

South Eastern Area HQ: 028 9055 3100

Southern Area HQ: 028 3833 4444

Western Area HQ: 028 7134 5171

Citizen's Advice NI: 0300 1 233 233

Advice NI: 0800 028 1881

Housing Rights Service: 028 9024 5640

Women's Aid Helpline: 0808 802 1414

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Executive**

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