

Rural Matters

MAY 2018

Focus On

Pushing the boat out in Portaferry
Rural Community Awards
Identifying Rural Housing Needs
Disabled Facilities Grants
Universal Credit
Social Housing Enterprise

Housing
Executive

Looking Forward

Welcome to this special Balmoral Show edition of Rural Matters magazine.

This year, the Housing Executive stand is situated within the government section of the Eikon Exhibition Centre and we would be delighted to see you there.

We are promoting a range of our services including energy efficiency grants, advice on saving energy and adapting your home, grants for social enterprise projects and also advice on how we can examine the need for more housing for your rural community.

We will launch our 2018 Rural Community Awards at the show with £6,000 of prizes up for grabs for any rural groups who have made a difference within their community. Last year we received a total of a total of 22 applications which showcased a wide range of inspirational projects from groups dispersed throughout the province. Read about the winners of the 2017 competition on pages 6-7 and the projects which most impressed our judges.

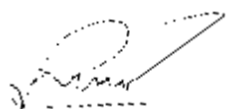
In this edition, we have included a feature on Portaferry on page three where we have 'pushed the boat out', working with partner agencies to regenerate the village through the restoration of old and the building of new housing.

Universal Credit (UC) is here and is the single biggest change to the welfare system since it began. It's being rolled out from September 2017 until December 2018. On page 10 there is advice of how to claim universal credit and contacts who can help you through the process.

On page eight you can read about our rural housing need testing programme and you may be interested in contacting us if you need a home in any of the areas we are focusing on.

We would also like to remind you that we still have home improvement and energy efficiency grants available for eligible applicants. You can find out more about this, including how to apply, in our feature on Grants on page nine.

Finally, we hope you will enter our competition to win an Amazon Fire. Simply fill-in the coupon at the back of the magazine and put it in the box at our stand at the Balmoral show, or return it to the address shown. The answers to the questions can be found in the magazine. Good luck!



Professor Peter Roberts
Interim Chair



Clark Bailie
Chief Executive



Professor Peter Roberts



Clark Bailie



The Balmoral Show is an annual event hosted by the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society (RUAS) which approximately 115,000 people attend over a four day period.

The Housing Executive has funded a stand at numerous shows in the past where we have maximised the opportunity to promote how we identify and address the specific needs of our rural customers and offer advice and guidance to those who wish to avail of our services.

In 2018, the show will run for four days from the 16-19 May and the Housing Executive has a stand located in the government departments section of the main shopping marquee.

In 2017 staff at the Housing Executive stand dealt with approximately 773 queries. 51% of all queries were related to energy efficiency advice and grants; 11% related to social investment and the remainder of queries focused on housing management issues, the rural community awards, rural planning issues and community development opportunities.



Pushing the boat out in Portaferry

Our projects and funding have helped rejuvenate the area

As part of our 'Heritage in Housing' scheme, we partnered with Portaferry Regeneration Ltd, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Ards and North Down Borough Council to deliver a Townscape Heritage Initiative project which was completed earlier this month. This included a Housing Executive investment of over £40,000, for the restoration of two vacant buildings, within the historic conservation area.

The two properties on Ferry Street were originally built in the late 18th Century and have been carefully restored.

This involved painstakingly dismantling and rebuilding the gable end of the rubblestone buildings as well as preserving their key architectural features. They are now two beautiful homes and will provide much needed affordable rental accommodation in Portaferry.

We have also previously helped to regenerate the local area, through our Rural Development Programme match funding initiative, by funding a range of projects to enhance the public realm and encourage civic pride. These included the installation of new signage, painting some of Portaferry's previously unloved buildings and placing benches and hanging baskets at the lough shore for locals and tourists to enjoy.

Sinead Collins, our Rural and Regeneration Manager, explains why we have got involved in rejuvenating Portaferry:

"By partnering with agencies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Portaferry Regeneration Ltd and Ards and North Down Borough Council, the Housing Executive is able to help local communities preserve their history for future generations.

"Portaferry is a beautiful conservation area and I am delighted that we have been able to create affordable housing in its town centre while also maintaining the character of its historic buildings.

"The Housing Executive is committed to fostering vibrant communities and Portaferry is a prime example of how we are helping to stimulate economic activity in local areas while enhancing their unique culture and heritage."



Is it really damp?

People often confuse condensation with penetrating or rising damp. Condensation is caused by water vapour trapped inside your home. If it happens regularly, then mould growth will occur and is the main symptom of condensation. Condensation is most obvious on windows and tiles but can occur on walls and ceilings, in the corners of a room or behind furniture.

Tips to prevent condensation

- Letting air circulate is key, so make sure your home is well ventilated
- Make your home a little warmer. A small amount of heat for a long period is better than short bursts of heat
- If there's water lying on your window sills in the morning wipe it up immediately
- Use your extractor fan or open a window when cooking or drying clothes
- Ensure there is ventilation in your home at night
- Open doors occasionally to allow air to circulate
- Check out www.nihe.gov.uk for more information

Damp

There are two types of damp. A damp patch on the walls or peeling paint may be a sign of penetrating damp. It may be caused by a leak in a roof, water pipe, guttering or plumbing. If you find a white salt-like substance on the surface of your walls up to a metre above ground level, it may be rising damp

IF YOU HAVE EITHER OF THESE CALL US ON 03448 920 901

On 1 June 2018, the Rural Needs Act will come into effect for the Housing Executive along with a number of other public bodies.

The Rural Needs Act will place a duty on us to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering public services.

It will also require us to provide information to the Department for Agriculture, the Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on an annual basis evidencing how we have fulfilled this duty. DAERA will be required to publish this information in a monitoring report to be laid before the Assembly.

Given our long history of working with rural communities and the progress we have made through our Rural Strategy, we welcome this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to identifying rural housing needs and providing the best service we can to our rural customers.

HEATSMART

A service exclusive to you

Heatsmart offers a free and independent heating advice service for Housing Executive tenants. Our partner Bryson Energy can give you information on:

- **Energy Efficiency**

Hints and tips that will reduce your fuel bills and improve the warmth and comfort of your home.

- **Using your heating system**

You can get the best from your heating system if you understand the controls and know how to operate them.

There's a rolling programme of heating replacement and our Heatsmart Programme can help you benefit fully from your new more efficient system when it's installed.

So what are you waiting for? Call Heatsmart today to see if you can save money, and help the environment.

FREEPHONE 0800 142 2865





Cloughmills Crochet Club made the headlines this year when they displayed a model of their village which was knitted by their talented members.

A good yarn!

News of the wool creation which was funded by the Housing Executive, attracted media attention both here and abroad. Members of the close knit County Antrim group have been interviewed by national and local media and now their story has reached American online magazine, Atlas Obscura, based in New York.

May Aitcheson, from the crochet club, said members can't believe how this project has taken off. "We're both surprised and delighted!"

"The idea for the knitted village came from members of the club. We wanted to establish a project which would bring people from different cultural backgrounds together, in a bid to address the issues of social interaction and rural isolation while promoting good relations in the area. We're very proud of the fact that our club and the community group is cross community and open to everyone."

In May of last year the members got together to begin work on the mammoth model of their village.

"The project started off small and then kept growing and growing. Members headed out first with cameras, and then began to craft the houses and other buildings. Everyone in the group did something, even those people who were housebound, knitted little bits and pieces. We created a few sites that no longer exist, including the old shirt factory where many of the members once worked."

Over a period of seven months the crafting of the buildings came together with the help of cardboard and cereal boxes. Teenagers helped out over the summer months, men made 'props' such as fencing, headstones and signage, and the younger generation even donated their toys to authenticate the village.

The knitted village was unveiled before Christmas during a charity coffee morning.

May's husband Edgar, who runs the

Cloughmills Cultural & Historical Society, said:

"We were expecting 50 people to turn up and 400 people arrived to see the model village. We raised £3,000 for Macmillan Nurses."

The members, some 35 women of varying ages, meet every Wednesday morning to knit, exchange stories and enjoy lunch together at the Orange Hall in Cloughmills where the knitted village is on permanent display.

May, who started the local club six years ago, said: "I didn't realise the club would be so popular, it's great fun and everyone enjoys coming along."

"We are delighted this project has created so much energy in the village and surrounding area, it has really put Cloughmills on the map. Everyone is asking what we're going to do next!"

"Thanks so much to the Housing Executive for their generous financial support."

Our Area Manager Mark Alexander said:

"After being approached by the group with this idea, we were happy to approve funding which enabled the club to reach out and offer community support through crochet and knitting. We would like to congratulate the group on this amazing project's success and I would encourage other community organisations to approach us with their ideas no matter how unusual!"

For more information on community grant applications please contact your Housing Executive district office on 03448 920 900.



CULLYBACKEY

WINNER

Cleaner & Greener Award, Large Village



SHOWCASED PROJECTS

- Litter picks
- Local park replanted
- Repainting old properties
- Wild flower areas
- Bug hotel
- Local business, schools and residents involved

CAIRNS

WINNER

Community Spirit Award, Small Village



SHOWCASED PROJECTS

- Allotments for all in the community
- Tea hut
- Kids play area
- Art projects (fairy ring)
- All community involved

CASTLECAUFIELD

WINNER

Cleaner & Greener Award, Small Village



SHOWCASED PROJECTS

- Litter picks
- Work with schools
- Floral displays
- Refurbished derelict buildings
- Compost bins

SION MILLS

WINNER

Community Spirit Award, Large Village



SHOWCASED PROJECTS

- Community festival, pantomime
- Senior citizens classes
- ASB intervention classes
- Men's classes
- Ladies fitness classes
- Art classes
- Facebook page

MILLISLE

WINNER

Sustainable Village Award, Large Village



CASTLECAUFIELD

WINNER

Sustainable Village Award, Small Village



In spring 2014 the Housing Executive launched the first Rural Community Awards to great success.

The competition continues to generate huge interest to date and has enabled community groups to showcase a wide range of projects including initiatives which support sustainable living and services which are accessible to the most vulnerable community members.

The competition offers three awards with two categories for each award:

1. Rural Community Spirit Award: (small and large village). The aim of this award is to focus on and reward those communities who work together to make their village or small settlement a better place to live.
2. Cleaner and Greener Rural Community Award: (small and large village). The aim of this award is to encourage and celebrate the effort which is made by rural communities to improve the outlook of their settlement.
3. Sustainable Village of the Year Award: (small and large village). The aim of this overarching award is to acknowledge and celebrate the vital contributions

made by a community who has gone 'above and beyond' to help make their village a better place to live through developing and engaging residents in activities to encourage environmental, social and economic sustainability.

In 2017 there was a wide range of innovative, inclusive and inspirational community projects from community groups dispersed throughout the province.

Each of the shortlisted entries was visited before the six winners were agreed.

Anne Marie McAleese presented the awards, at Killymoon Golf club, Cookstown. Each winner received £1,000 to support and extend activities/projects which benefit their community as well as a plaque to display in their village.

Further information and an application form are available from the Housing Executive website:

nihe.gov.uk/news-rural-community-awards or by contacting Eoin McKinney:

Email: rural.housing@nihe.gov.uk Tel: (028) 9598 2502



Identifying need for new housing in rural areas

Having difficulty in finding a suitable affordable home in your rural area?

The Housing Executive and registered housing associations own and maintain housing in many villages and small settlements across Northern Ireland.

A range of house types are available at an affordable rent, to people who are assessed as being in housing need. This is usually termed as 'social housing'.

However, in rural areas where there is no existing social housing or where most houses have been sold, people in need of a home may not register or seek advice in their local Housing Executive office.

Without names on the local waiting list, the need for any additional social/affordable housing will remain hidden and new housing schemes will not be planned.

Over time, this may impact on

the sustainability of our rural communities.

In an effort to identify hidden housing need, our Rural & Regeneration unit undertake rural housing need tests.

Through these tests we work with rural communities to promote our range of housing services and to encourage those in need of a home to come forward and register on our waiting list.

We will also encourage those who may be interested in affordable home ownership to come forward to help us examine with housing associations, the potential for new low cost or shared ownership housing in rural areas.

In 2017/18 we have carried out housing need tests in:

Dromara
Trillick
Swatragh
Cloughmills
Aghadowey
Moorfields
Erganagh

This year we plan to carry out further tests in:

Moneyreagh
Castlerock
Magilligan
Feeny
Glenmornan
Ardmore
Clady (Strabane)
Magheramason
Glynn
Benburb
Drumaroad
Drumaghlin
Raholp/Saul
Moneyslane
Bryansford inc. Wild Forest Close
Tullylish/Lawrencetown
Tempo

To date the response to these tests has been encouraging but whilst we monitor the waiting lists and assess the results, we would still like to encourage anyone in need of a home in these areas to contact the Rural & Regeneration Unit ruralhousing@nihe.gov.uk or your local office.



More information
is available at
our grants offices.
03448 920 900
or visit our website
www.nihe.gov.uk

Disabled Facilities Grants

Jim and Julia McGuigan were proud recipients of a new shower unit through the Housing Executive's Disabled Facilities Grants scheme.

The Housing Executive's West Area Grants Manager PJ Mulrine stated:

"The Disabled Facilities Grant scheme makes such a difference to the quality of people's lives by enabling them to have their home adapted to meet their mobility needs."

"Our staff spent time assisting Mr and Mrs McGuigan through the application process and they are delighted with their new shower unit."



The service provided by both the Occupational Therapist and the contractor was fast and reliable. The whole process from when we applied until the Housing Executive paid the grant was quicker than we expected. We are extremely happy with the whole service."

Jim McGuigan

How to Apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant

Any owner occupier, landlord or private tenant can apply for assistance to carry out home adaptations, providing there is a person with a disability living or intending to live in the property.

The amount of grant we pay depends on the approved cost of the work and your financial circumstances. If you are on a low income you may get grant aid up to a maximum of £25,000. If the works recommended by the Occupational Therapist are for a dependant child, an assessment of your contribution will not be required.

Your GP or Social Worker will refer you to the relevant Health & Social Services Trust.

An Occupational Therapist will visit you to assess your needs and decide if you require home adaptations. They will then submit their recommendations to the NI Housing Executive.

Payment will be processed after work has been completed to the satisfaction of the Occupational Therapist and the Housing Executive and acceptance of all receipts.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit (UC) is here and is the single biggest change to the welfare system since it began.

It's being rolled out from September 2017 until December 2018.

UC is a payment for people over the age of 18 and under State Pension age on a low income or out of work. It includes support for the cost of housing, children and childcare, as well as support for people with a disability, carers and people who are too ill to work.

As UC is being rolled out it will only apply to new claimants and those on one of the six existing benefits - Job Seekers Allowance (income based), Employment and Support Allowance (income related), Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Housing Benefit (Rent) – being replaced who have a change in their circumstances

If your circumstances do not change you will be moved to UC between July 2019 and March 2022. You do not need to do anything the Department for Communities will contact you about this.

Claiming Universal Credit

UC must be claimed online at www.nidirect.gov.uk/UniversalCredit so you need access to the internet to allow you to set up and manage your claim.

If you need help getting online contact your local Jobs and Benefits Office, some Housing Executive Local Offices do have computers for customers to use and your local library also offers internet access – look out for courses to help you with using the internet.

What's needed to make a UC claim?

Before you sit down at a computer to start your claim have the following:

Sorted out:

- An email address and access to your account
- Photographic ID (eg UK or Ireland Passport / NI Driving licence / Electoral ID Card)
- A bank account that is able to receive benefit payments

In front of you:

- Your postcode
- Details of the bank or building society you want your Universal Credit paid into - if you currently use a post office account to receive a benefit payment this can be used
- Details of how much your home is to rent weekly or monthly and how much - if you're in private rented accommodation you will need your tenancy agreement or some evidence to verify your housing costs
- Your landlord's details, if renting, or mortgage lender details if you own your home
- Details of any savings you have
- Details of any income that's not from work (eg from an insurance plan)
- Details of any other benefits you're getting.
- Details of the people who live in your home (eg a partner and/or children).

How long will a claim take?

If your UC claim is successful, it will be a minimum of five weeks from the point you submit your claim until you receive your first payment. Payments are split and made twice a month.

If waiting for your first UC payment will put you into financial difficulties, there is help available. Ask your UC Agent for details.

More about Universal Credit

To find out more about UC you can visit NI Direct **www.nidirect.gov.uk/UniversalCredit**

Phone the Independent Welfare Changes Helpline on **Freephone 0808 802 0020** (9am to 5pm).

Call into your local Citizens Advice NI, Advice NI office or Independent Advice centre to receive advice in person.

Phone Housing Rights Service: **(028) 9024 5640** (9.30am to 4.30pm)





The Housing Executive's Social Housing Enterprise Programme aims to develop economically vibrant and self-sustaining communities through the creation and development of social housing enterprises.

From the launch of the programme in 2015 we have invested almost £1.4 million across Northern Ireland.

This has created 68 new jobs, supported 137 existing jobs and provided 774 training opportunities.

Awards from £1,000 up to £50,000 have given people real opportunities to create initiatives that can bring about lasting benefits to their community. A diverse range of social enterprises have benefited from the scheme, from a digital studio in Derry/Londonderry to a family support centre in Newry.

One such initiative that is benefiting urban and rural communities in the Dungannon area is Serenity Holistic Wellness CIC. Based at The Cube in the Dungannon Enterprise Centre, Serenity Holistic Wellness CIC offers a range of holistic therapy services which aim to enhance the lives of the people in Dungannon and the surrounding areas who are dealing with physical, emotional, and mental difficulties. Social enterprise funding enabled Jackie Grimley, founder of Serenity Holistic Wellness CIC to purchase essential equipment and materials to allow her to deliver her services.

The programme re-opens for applications in late 2018 and we would encourage people from rural areas with a good idea and an entrepreneurial spirit to apply for funding. In the meantime, if you have an idea which could benefit your community we would invite you to contact us. We collaborate with a number of other organisations who could help bring it into reality. The Social Housing Enterprise Team can be contacted for advice and support on **03448 920 900** or at **socialinvestments@nihe.gov.uk**



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 žodžių ir raštu, jums pageidaujant Housing Executive gali suteikti nemokamas vertimo paslaugas; dėl išsamesnės informacijos prašome kreiptis į vietinį skyrių.

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.



WIN!

Amazon Fire

We are giving the chance for two of our readers to win an Amazon Fire!
The closing date is 1 June 2018 and we will present the winners in the next edition of the magazine.

You can enter at our stand at the Balmoral Show or simply return the tear off slip to:
Eoin McKinney, Rural Unit, Housing Executive 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8PB.

1. How many prizes are available through the Rural Community Awards competition?

2. What is the maximum amount payable on a Disabled Facilities Grant?

Name

Tel

Email

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

Housing
Executive

www.nihe.gov.uk

[facebook.com/housingexecutive](https://www.facebook.com/housingexecutive)

[@nihecommunity](https://twitter.com/nihecommunity)

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