



# Reaching Rural

Rural Strategy & Action Plan  
Annual Progress Report  
2021-2022





# Foreword

The first year of the Housing Executive's Rural Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025 'Reaching Rural' has now been completed and we are pleased to present this Annual Progress Report, which sets out our activities and highlights our key achievements.

Our tenants and customers drive and inform everything we do. An ambition of the Strategy is to address the continuing and emerging needs of our rural customers. The Strategy was shaped by growing demand and the changing policy context for the development of new rural homes, the need to consider the housing requirements of an ageing population, the growing recognition of the requirement for net zero carbon, energy-efficient rural homes and the challenges and opportunities that all of these factors will present.

All three themes in the Strategy were designed to help realise our vision for rural communities:

***"Towards vibrant, shared, healthy and sustainable rural communities where everyone has access to decent and affordable housing."***

The Strategy is broad ranging and cross-cutting. We delivered a range of positive outcomes for our rural customers during 2021/22, including:

- Approximately £55.41 million was invested in our rural communities where just under 18 percent of our housing stock is located;

- Work commenced on 128 new build social homes in rural areas helping to address social housing need and regenerate communities;
- We helped rural communities in 18 locations across Northern Ireland to examine the need for new social and affordable housing in their areas;
- Our community cohesion team supported 25 rural projects, delivering real benefits in local communities;
- £26 million was invested in the maintenance and improvement of our rural housing stock;
- £6.0 million of Supporting People funding was provided for accommodation-based and floating support services in rural areas;
- Progress was made on working towards a scheme start for the Assisted Technology pilot, to consider how we can provide elderly and vulnerable tenants with assistive technology in their homes;
- Eight prizes were awarded through our Rural Community Awards, recognising and showcasing the invaluable contribution volunteers are making in rural areas; and
- We have ensured that our 'Cost of Living Plan' includes interventions for tenants and customers living in rural areas, including energy and financial inclusion advice.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved in the delivery of the first year of our Strategy. We have worked closely with numerous external bodies and agencies in order to ensure that a collaborative approach is maintained. Our Rural Residents' Forum provides a vital link to

rural communities and gives us insight and perspective on issues of importance to people in rural areas.

We are committed to building on the progress we have made against each of the actions to date, and to ensure that we are providing housing and related support that addresses the needs of our rural customers.

We look forward to a successful year ahead.



*Nicole Lappin*

Nicole Lappin  
Chair



*Grainia Long*

Grainia Long,  
Chief Executive



*Lorcan Doran won the Young Volunteer award, having been nominated by Saintfield Development Association.*

## Introduction

The Housing Executive's 'Reaching Rural' Rural Strategy 2021 - 2025 & Action Plan (The Rural Strategy) was launched by the Minister for Communities in November 2021. The purpose of this report is to advise on progress made during Year 1.

The Rural Strategy encapsulates the significant investment that the Housing Executive contributes to support tenants and customers in rural areas, and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to pay due regard to the needs of our rural communities in line with the duty set out in the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

The Rural Strategy sets out three high level outcomes and twelve priorities under the three cross cutting themes of:

- Supporting rural customers;
- Enabling the provision of affordable rural homes; and
- Securing the future of our rural communities.

It contains 26 high-level actions under the three key themes. These actions formed the basis of the Year 1 Rural Action Plan. At the end of 2021/22, good progress was made against 25 of the 26 actions. Opportunity to progress action 25 regarding the Social Enterprise Programme was limited due to an ongoing review of future delivery of the Social Enterprise Programme in terms of its funding arrangements.

In 2021/22, through the various areas of our business activity, the Housing Executive invested approximately £55.41m in rural areas. This includes a wide range of housing and support services as well as funding to help to create and maintain vibrant and sustainable communities.



*Cloughmills Community Action Team received funding from the Housing Executive for a cross community gardening and crafting project.*

Activity Area	2021/22 Rural Spend (£m)
Planned Maintenance & Capital Improvement Work* -	15.8
Response Maintenance –	10.2
Grounds Maintenance –	1.7
Private Sector Grants* -	10.3
Supporting People –	6.0
Community Development (including, Community Cohesion and Community Involvement) –	0.01
Investment in New Build -	11.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>55.41</b>

*\*Approximate figure based on (average scheme cost) x (no. of rural completions in 21/22)*



# Themes, Outcomes, Priorities



## People

We will consider the particular needs of our rural customers in the delivery of our housing solutions and support service;

We will continue to review and improve our housing support services to meet the needs of an ageing rural population;

We will invest in accessible housing solutions in rural areas;

We will support those who are faced with homelessness in rural areas;

We will facilitate the delivery of community-based support programmes which promote inclusion, cohesion and create opportunities for those living in our rural communities.

## Property

We will enable the provision of affordable homes which address rural housing needs;

We will work with local councils to help shape planning policies which will deliver affordable homes and contribute to balanced and inclusive rural communities;

We will examine the potential to support the development of models of community-led housing in rural areas.

## Place & Planet

We will invest in the improved energy efficiency of our rural housing stock and consider solutions for the future de-carbonisation of rural household heating systems;

We will support and encourage the improved energy efficiency of private sector homes in rural areas;

We will support and encourage the inclusion of planning policies in Local Development Plans which aim to promote climate change resilience within our rural communities;

We will work with partners to maximise the use of existing land and property assets in rural areas.

## Theme 1: Supporting our rural customers

**High level outcome: We ensure that our tenants and customers within our rural communities feel secure in their environment and can access additional housing support when it is required.**

Our tenants and customers are at the heart of everything we do in the Housing Executive. In line with our corporate mission statement, our aim is to ensure that "everyone is able to live in an affordable and decent home, appropriate to their needs, in a safe and attractive place". We recognise that the journey to achieve this will be different for every customer that we encounter.

Throughout the Rural Strategy we consider the particular journey of a rural customer, how it may differ and what we can change or improve to ensure that we can provide the same level of customer service, regardless of location.

This theme examines how we can promote tenancy sustainment, independent living and reduce homelessness in rural areas. Key achievements included:

- The Housing Executive continued to update the Rural Residents Forum on new and existing services on a monthly basis. The needs of rural customers were considered throughout the development of the new Supporting People Strategy 2021 – 2024. Engagement included a meeting with the Rural Community Network / Rural Residents' Forum;
- The summer 2021 edition of Rural Matters included a range of articles with useful information for rural tenants and customers, including details on how to access the tenant portal, our dementia friendly champions, Home Swapper, and contact details for Rural Support Networks and Domestic Abuse Helpline;
- The format of the 2021 Rural Community Awards was revised to reflect restrictions and to highlight the invaluable work being undertaken by community groups and volunteers in rural areas. 8 prizes were awarded, showcasing the invaluable contribution volunteers are making in rural areas;
- In August 2021, the Housing Executive worked in partnership with NIFHA and Rural Community Network to deliver a rural housing campaign #ReachingRuralNI in order to raise awareness of the role of social/affordable housing in sustaining rural communities, and demonstrated how we take a specific approach to addressing housing needs in rural areas. The campaign generated a very encouraging response on social media and highlighted the benefits of this joint approach.



### What we do differently for rural areas:

- Advise on available support at rural housing information events.
- Work closely with our Rural Residents' Forum to ensure that rural issues and perspectives are considered when developing and reviewing Housing Executive policies, strategies, plans and services.
- Ensure that rural areas receive an equitable share of our funding/support programmes.
- Provide Rural Community Awards to recognise and reward the valuable work of rural community groups.



Community Cohesion  
support for

25  
projects





	Action	Year 1 Update
1.	We will promote the availability of tenancy sustainment advice and funding support through our Rural Residents' Forum, our rural publications and at rural housing information events.	<p>The Housing Executive updated the Rural Residents' Forum on new and existing services on a monthly basis. The draft Rural Strategy was presented to the Forum as part of the consultation and the Forum received a presentation on the Homelessness Strategy.</p> <p>The summer 2021 edition of Rural Matters included a range of articles with useful information for rural tenants and customers including details on how to access the tenant portal, our dementia friendly champions, Home Swapper and contact details for Rural Support Networks and Domestic Abuse Helpline.</p> <p>Due to restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were no in-person rural housing information events during 2021/22. Information was therefore shared online. The Housing Executive will look for opportunities to facilitate in-person events in 2022/23.</p>
2.	We will pilot rural "housing health-checks" as part of a rural housing need test event, where we can provide advice on a range of services related to tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention.	Plans were made for a cluster of rural housing need tests for the Causeway District in June 2022. This will be a pilot for the 'housing health-check' approach and be attended by staff representing the Area Office, Rural Unit, Sustainability Team, Financial Inclusion, Grants, Homelessness, and Place Shaping.
3.	Throughout the development of the Supporting People Strategy 2021-2024, we will pay due regard to the particular needs of customers living in rural areas.	<p>A 12 week public consultation was undertaken on the new Supporting People Strategy. Rural representation (including Rural Community Network, Rural Residents' Forum, councils, community planning, and housing associations) was sought.</p> <p>The needs of rural customers have been considered throughout the development of the Strategy. As the Strategy develops, Supporting People will consider any barriers which may arise and how these can be overcome or mitigated.</p> <p>The final Supporting People Strategy and associated Implementation Plan will be launched in 2022/23. The Strategy and Implementation Plan will be promoted with rural stakeholders, with the assistance of the Rural Unit.</p>
4.	We will commence on site with an Assisted Technology pilot and review it with a view to applications in future schemes.	<p>Progress was made on working towards a scheme start for the Assisted Technology pilot, and we are aiming to start the submission of our applications for statutory approvals in late April 2022.</p> <p>A 'plug and play' installation is proposed using an Artificial Intelligence device set-up, along with a degree of hard-wired landlord components. We envisage the tenants will be able to control their lighting, heating, and video door entry (communal and flat) with the ability to contact friends and family free of charge (to promote independent living). This platform will allow them to view and control their internal environment and temperature.</p> <p>As a Landlord, we anticipate that this technology will enable us to remotely test the smoke alarms, adjust communal lighting, and diagnose heating and ventilation issues along with obtaining usage data. We propose installing air and ground source heat pumps to this block with solar thermal panels, as an aim towards greener technology and to alleviate fuel poverty to our customers.</p>
5.	We will continue to further develop the 'Dementia Friendly' approach and increase awareness and our understanding of dementia across our network of local offices to support independence and dignity for tenants who are impacted by dementia.	<p>The summer 2021 edition of Rural Matters included a range of articles with useful information for rural tenants and customers including details on our dementia friendly champions.</p> <p>Momentum of the Dementia Friendly Homes Service has been maintained by adapting the Dementia Friendly Communities workshops to suit online delivery. We currently have over 140 Dementia Friends throughout the organisation since the roll out of this service. To date, 175 Dementia Packs have been distributed across all of our offices which will help support customers to remain living independently in their home.</p>
6.	When it is fully established, we will analyse information from the Accessible Housing Register to help determine the need for increased accessible housing within new affordable housing schemes in rural areas.	The collection of Accessible Housing Register data is an ongoing process for both the Housing Executive and Housing Associations. We are working with the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations to build the pool of Housing Association accessible stock. The end date for the collection of Housing Executive data has been put back to 2027 as additional stock has been included within the Asset Management Stock Condition Survey. We are working to review how we can prioritise specific Housing Executive stock, and are establishing a Steering Group to take forward the implementation of the Accessible Housing Register.

	Action	Year 1 Update
7.	We will continue to influence local councils to incorporate within their Local Development Plan a policy requiring all homes to be designed to Lifetime Homes standard and a proportion of wheelchair accessible homes in general housing stock in rural areas.	Engagement with each of the local council planning teams is ongoing. Consultation responses are agreed and submitted as required, requesting that all homes be designed to Lifetime Homes standard and a proportion of wheelchair accessible homes be provided within the general housing stock in rural areas. The Housing Executive attended the Fermanagh and Omagh Independent Examination in January 2022.
8.	Considering the learning from the coordinated response to Covid-19, we will consider how on an ongoing basis, we can adopt a flexible approach to accommodate the emergency needs of those who are faced with homelessness in rural areas.	Homelessness Local Area Group (LAG) meetings have been provided with a comprehensive data analysis at each of their meetings outlining, by multi-year comparisons, the change in trends caused by the pandemic. The results of a survey of the LAGs have identified further data sets which will be included going forward. These will feed into the development of Local Action Plans to address the key issues by locality.
9.	We will consider the expansion of the "Housing First" model into rural areas where suitable accommodation is available and a need has been identified.	Work is ongoing to examine options for the upscale of Housing First. A Strategic Outline Case is being prepared for presentation to the Department of Health and Department of Justice to examine potential for provision of a multi-departmental approach, however, this will be subject to appropriate funding being available. Action 40 of The Homelessness Strategy 2022/27 year one Action Plan states: We will seek to expand Housing First provision. To support the delivery of the development of this business case, a research proposal has been submitted to include a feasibility study for the upscale of Housing First in NI on the Research Programme for 2022/23. This will provide an evidence base to inform policy and development.
10.	We will communicate homelessness prevention advice and funding support through our Rural Residents' Forum, our rural publications and at rural housing information events.	The summer 2021 edition of Rural Matters included a range of articles with useful information for rural tenants and customers including details on how to access the tenant portal and contact details for Rural Support Networks and Domestic Abuse Helpline.  As part of the Housing Community Network, the Rural Residents' Forum were informed of the latest call for applications for the prevention fund. The Rural Residents' Forum also made a significant contribution to the development of the Homelessness Strategy 2022-27, which will begin implementation in April 2022.
11.	We will continue to develop and enhance the role of the Rural Residents' Forum, ensuring that they remain relevant and representative of our rural housing communities and that they provide a mainstream consultation service for all Housing Executive strategies and policies.	During 2021/22, we worked with the Rural Community Network to develop and promote the role of the Rural Residents' Forum with regular meetings to discuss issues faced by rural communities and how they can be addressed. The Rural Residents' Forum is advised of any Housing Executive policies/strategies that are out for consultation and compile a response where appropriate. The Forum provided feedback at every stage of the development of the Housing Executive's Rural Strategy. The Forum has also provided consultation responses on the Housing Supply Strategy, and the Rural Policy Framework during 2021/22.  The Forum is also promoted throughout the Housing Executive as a key consultee for policy owners when fulfilling our duty of due regards to rural needs under the Rural Needs Act. One member of the Rural Residents' Forum also sits on the Disability Forum, which helps ensure that the particular challenges facing people with disabilities in rural areas are considered when scrutinising new policies and services.
12.	We will promote our community-based funding and support programmes within rural communities through our dedicated Rural Unit, our area-based Good Relations Officers, our Rural Residents' Forum, community events and through rural publications and digital communications.	Throughout 2021/22, Community Involvement Grants supported 25 rural projects totalling £52,145.50 and Community Cohesion supported 25 rural projects totalling £47,906.27.  The summer 2021 edition of Rural Matters included a range of articles with useful information for rural tenants and customers including details of Rural Support Networks and how members of the Housing Community Network can access training courses free of charge, through Supporting Communities.
13.	We will continue to develop and deliver the Housing Executive Rural Community Awards Competition, using the annual presentation events as an opportunity to promote a range of community-based services with rural communities.	The competition was revised in 2021/22 to reflect ongoing restrictions and to highlight the invaluable work being undertaken by community groups and volunteers in rural areas. Eight winners were presented with awards in March 2022. The competition and winners were publicised on the Housing Executive's website, social media, and newspapers, and will feature in next edition of Rural Matters.



# Rural Community Awards



*Annahilt and Magheraconluce Community Association - Community Spirit Award*



*Cloughmills Community Action Team - Mandy McIlreavey, Community Champion Award*



*Donaghmore Horticultural Community - Cleaner and Greener Award*



*Saintfield Development Association - Lorcan Doran, Young Volunteer Award*



*Derriaghy Village Community Association - Community Spirit Award, and Andrew Malcolm, Community Champion Award*



*Enagh Youth Forum, Strathfoyle, - Cleaner and Greener Award, and Mischa Tracey, Young Volunteer Award*

## Theme 2: Enabling the provision of affordable rural homes

**High level outcome: We enable the provision of affordable homes to contribute to balanced, inclusive and sustainable rural communities.**

As Strategic Housing Authority, landlord of just over 14,700 homes across rural NI, and statutory partners in the delivery of each of the local council Community Plans, the Housing Executive has a strategic role in shaping the growth and development of rural settlements that focuses on, but is not limited to, enabling new housing in these areas.

As we emerge from a time of unprecedented change during the Covid-19 pandemic, we will review the impact on housing market areas resulting from this period of mandatory home-working, considering in particular the impact on rural housing.

The provision of social and intermediate housing is a vital element in ensuring that everyone has access to a home that they can afford and in helping communities to grow and thrive. The two main issues which often impact on the provision of affordable housing in rural areas are the availability of sites which are suitable for housing development and identifying sufficient demand for this type of housing. The Housing Executive has developed specific rural policies in relation to the identification of housing need and the delivery of the Social Housing Development Programme.

This theme sets out how we can enable the increased offer of housing in rural areas that is affordable and accessible. Key achievements in Year 1 included:

- An investment of £11.4m resulted in 128 new social housing starts in rural areas. This represented 7.5% of the overall SHDP out-turn of 1,713 Starts, against the strategic rural target of 12.3%;
- During 2021/22, the Rural Unit completed 18 housing need tests to uncover hidden rural need. Four tests were undertaken to support the delivery of proposed housing association schemes, and we engaged with Mid Ulster Community Planning team to organise joint promotion of a test in their area. Whilst we are still analysing the results and the impact on each of the local waiting lists, the response to each of these tests was encouraging;
- A Site Identification Policy and Procedure was developed, that is facilitating work to support developing partners in delivering affordable housing schemes in rural areas of unmet need;
- Engagement took place with each of the local council planning teams to highlight the need for both social and intermediate housing in rural areas to each of the local Planning Authorities and the requirement for plan policies and land zonings that will facilitate the development of affordable housing within mixed-tenure environments; and
- Research commenced to examine how community-led housing can help to address housing supply issues faced by our rural communities.

### What we do differently for rural areas:

- Housing Need Tests to uncover areas of hidden rural housing need.
- Site identification studies to help housing associations to find sites in areas of unmet rural housing need.
- Work with Councils to develop Local Development Plan policies that will support the delivery of sustainable rural housing.
- Include a % target for new rural social housing in the Social Housing Development Programme.



*Rural Housing Association completed the development of 6 new social homes in Strathfoyle.*



*11 new social homes in Millisle by Ark Housing Association.*



18

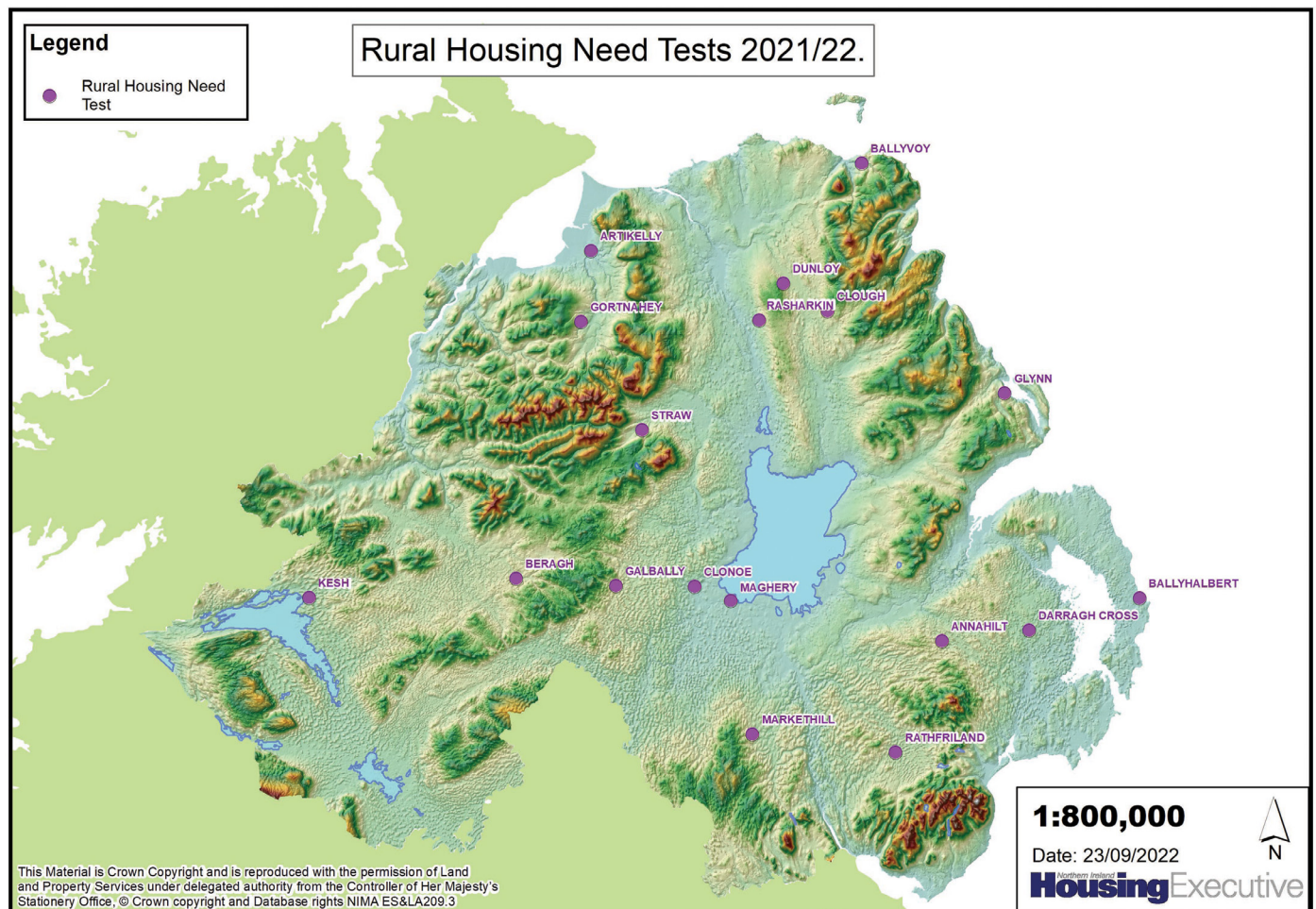
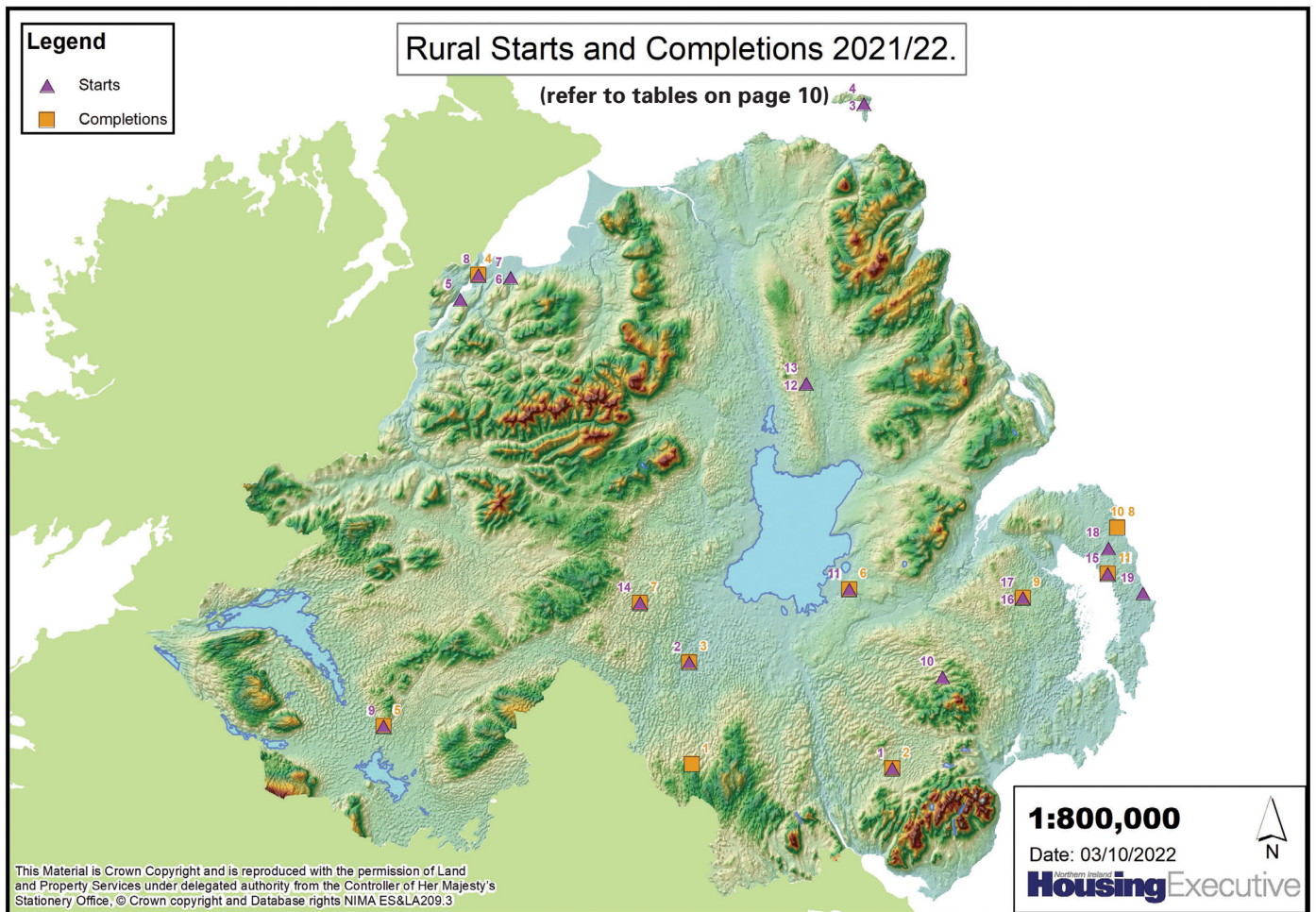
Rural Housing  
need tests



128

new homes





## Rural Social Housing Starts 2021/22

Map Reference	Housing Association	Council	Location	Scheme Type	Units
1	Rural	Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon	Rathfriland	Off The Shelf	3
2	Rural	Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon	Blackwatertown	Off The Shelf	1
3	Rural	Causeway Coast & Glens	Rathlin	New Build	8
4	Rural	Causeway Coast & Glens	Rathlin	New Build	2
5	Apex Housing	Derry & Strabane	Culmore	Competitive Design & Build	46
6	Apex Housing	Derry & Strabane	Eglinton	Competitive Design & Build	8
7	Apex Housing	Derry & Strabane	Eglinton	Competitive Design & Build	1
8	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Enagh (Derry)	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	1
9	Rural	Fermanagh & Omagh	Lisbellaw	Off The Shelf	4
10	Ark	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Dromara	Off The Shelf	8
11	Rural	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Ballinderry	Off The Shelf	2
12	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	The Diamond	Competitive Design & Build	24
13	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	The Diamond	Competitive Design & Build	2
14	Rural	Mid Ulster	Castlecaulfield	Off The Shelf	2
15	Radius	Ards & North Down	Ballywalter	Off The Shelf	3
16	Radius	Ards & North Down	Ballygowan	Competitive Design & Build	10
17	Radius	Ards & North Down	Ballygowan	Competitive Design & Build	1
18	Rural	Ards & North Down	Carrowdore	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	1
19	Rural	Ards & North Down	Portavogie	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	1

## Rural Social Housing Completions 2021/22

Map Reference	Housing Association	Council	Location	Scheme Type	Units
1	Radius	Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon	Keady	New Build	1
2	Rural	Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon	Rathfriland	Off The Shelf	3
3	Rural	Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon	Blackwatertown	Off The Shelf	1
4	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Strathfoyle	New Build	6
5	Rural	Fermanagh & Omagh	Lisbellaw	Off The Shelf	4
6	Rural	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Aghalee	Off The Shelf	2
7	Rural	Mid Ulster	Castlecaulfield	Off The Shelf	2
8	Ark	Ards & North Down	Millisle	Competitive Design & Build	11
9	North Belfast HA	Ards & North Down	Ballygowan	Off The Shelf	3
10	North Belfast HA	Ards & North Down	Millisle	Rehab	1
11	Radius	Ards & North Down	Greyabbey	Off The Shelf	3



A Dream Home Design competition took place in Rasharkin, as part of a housing needs test.



Dunloy Housing Needs Test



	Action	Year 1 Update
14.	We will undertake cyclical analysis of rural waiting lists and ensure that rural areas of unmet need are highlighted for our developing partners in the Annual Commissioning Prospectus.	<p>At the end of March 2022, there were 6,630 applicants on the waiting list for a home in a rural area, this accounts for 14.9% of the total waiting list.</p> <p>4,243 rural applicants were in Housing stress (64% of total rural applicants) and 2,967 applicants had Full Duty Applicant status (44.8% of all rural applicants). There were 121 rural applicants who require Wheelchair Accommodation (18.6% of the total 649 applicants) and 1,547 rural applicants who have Complex Needs (17.6% of the total 8,769 applicants).</p> <p>Between March 2021 and March 2022, there were 786 properties allocated in rural areas.</p> <p>The latest Commissioning Prospectus for the period 2022/23 – 2024/25 was published in January 2022. The Commissioning Prospectus provides a strategic overview of housing need and demand in Northern Ireland. It also provides housing associations and other stakeholders the information they require to make informed decisions about where to search for land and property to deliver new social and intermediate housing. The Prospectus highlights the need for a specific focus on rural housing and details the rural target for each council area as well as a breakdown of the settlements which should be targeted.</p>
15.	We will continue to deliver an annual programme of at least ten rural housing need tests, which is shaped by requests from rural community representatives, analysis of existing waiting lists and land availability.	<p>18 housing need tests were completed (3 of these started in 2020/21) to uncover hidden rural need in Annahilt, Artikelly, Ballyhalbert, Ballyvoy, Beragh, Cappagh/Galbally, Clonoe, Clough, Darragh Cross, Dunloy, Glynn, Gortnahey, Kesh, Maghery, Markethill, Rasharkin, Rathfriland and Straw. The tests in Dunloy, Ballyvoy and Rasharkin and Rathfriland were undertaken to support the delivery of proposed housing association schemes.</p> <p>Whilst we are still analysing the results and the impact on each of the local waiting lists, the response to each of the tests was encouraging.</p>
16.	We will examine how we can engage our Community Planning partners in our rural housing need testing process, considering all new channels of communication in order to maximise our reach in rural communities.	We engaged with the Mid Ulster Community Planning team to organise joint promotion of a test in their area for Cappagh and Galbally. Tests are planned for a cluster of Causeway settlements in Summer 2022, which will also be promoted through Community Planning.
17.	We will carry out site identification work to assist developing partners in delivering affordable housing schemes in rural areas of unmet need.	A new Site Identification Study policy and procedure was finalised during 2021. Site Identification Studies were prepared and issued for Claudy and Eglinton. It is hoped that this preliminary work will contribute to the future new build programme for rural areas.
18.	We will continue to identify and assess a range of alternative options to increasing housing supply and addressing housing need in rural areas.	<p>Following approval of a business case for a pilot Modern Method Construction (MMC) low energy new build, we are working towards a June/July 2022 start on site.</p> <p>A business case for a pilot Housing Executive landlord private sector acquisition programme has been prepared and is under consideration.</p> <p>A site has been identified at Hunter's Park, Bellaghy for a rural new build pilot. This is subject to a pre application discussion with Planning and business case approval.</p>
19.	We will highlight the need for both social and intermediate housing in rural areas to each of the local Planning Authorities and the requirement for plan policies and land zonings which will facilitate the development of affordable housing within mixed-tenure environments promoting cohesion and sustainability.	Meetings are ongoing with each of the local council planning teams and consultation responses are agreed and submitted as required, where we are promoting the need for both social and intermediate housing in rural areas.
20.	We will engage with housing authorities and organisations involved in the funding and support of community-led housing across the UK to examine how this approach could help to address housing supply issues faced by our rural communities.	Research commenced to examine the opportunities for community-led housing in Northern Ireland and how this approach could help to address housing supply issues faced by our rural communities.

## Theme 3: Securing the future of our rural communities

**High level outcome: We contribute to the inclusive and sustainable growth and increased climate resilience of our rural communities.**

Rural communities are essentially the custodians of our rural environment and their sustainability is intertwined with the sustainability of the rural economy, agriculture and tourism. The right balance has to be found in facilitating the necessary growth of our villages and small settlements without compromising our natural landscape.

Through this strategic theme, we have considered the ways in which the Housing Executive can contribute to the increased resilience and sustainability of our rural communities, whilst also delivering a range of outcomes for individual customers and households.

This theme sets out how the Housing Executive will contribute to the sustainable and inclusive growth and increased climate change resilience of our rural communities over the next four years, whilst also delivering a range of outcomes for individual customers and households. Key achievements included:

- The outcomes of the HANDIHEAT and RULET energy efficiency and renewable energy pilots are being monitored to identify alternative energy sources for our rural properties, which will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in these areas. A mix of energy efficiency measures were fitted in 6 houses at the HANDIHEAT pilot site in Lisnaskea, Co Fermanagh. Project RULET is being tested in 10 Housing Executive homes in Omagh and is trialling a number of energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating measures;
- The Housing Executive are partners in the 'Village Catalyst' project alongside DAERA, the Historic Environment Division of DfC and the Architectural Heritage Fund. This project focuses on restoring buildings at risk in rural settlements to provide a range of required community services. The Housing Executive provided funding towards a Village Catalyst project in Rathfriland, which will restore a former bank to a community facility and also provide 4 units of rented accommodation on upper floors to help address housing demand in the village.

### What we do differently for rural areas:

- Through energy efficiency and renewable energy pilots, identify alternative energy sources for our rural properties.
- We are a partner in the Village Catalyst programme to facilitate sustainable growth of rural communities.



  
**1,620**  
private sector grants  
approved in rural areas



*HANDIHEAT pilot in Lisnaskea.*

	Action	Year 1 Update
21.	We will continue to assess the investment required to improve the energy performance of our rural housing stock.	Work is ongoing to assess the measures and costs required to improve the energy efficiency of rural stock and will be completed in early 2022/23.
22.	We will continue to develop and monitor the outcomes of energy efficiency and renewable energy pilots such as the HANDIHEAT and RULET Projects to identify alternative energy sources for our rural properties which will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in these areas.	The outcomes of the HANDIHEAT and RULET energy efficiency and renewable energy pilots are being monitored to identify alternative energy sources for our rural properties, which will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in these areas. A mix of energy efficiency measures were fitted in 6 houses at the HANDIHEAT pilot site in Lisnaskea, Co Fermanagh. Project RULET is being tested in 10 Housing Executive homes in Omagh and is trialling a number of energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating measures.
23.	We will promote our Energy Advice Service and the availability of our Energy Efficiency Grants for private sector homes through our 'Rural Matters' publication and at rural-focused events and seminars.	The summer 2021 edition of Rural Matters included features on oil buying clubs and available grants.  The HANDIHEAT Final conference took place in September 2021.  HEATER webinars and a final conference are planned for 2022/23 and will share info on energy efficiency and focus on energy related topics to support rural and vulnerable householders.
24.	We will use our role as statutory consultees in the preparation of Local Development Plans to promote the need for planning policies which support sustainable development, increased energy efficiency and a reduction in carbon emissions.	We continue to work with Councils on the preparation of their Local Development Plans in order to promote the inclusion of housing policies that support the needs of rural communities, to help deliver sustainable development.
25.	We will continue to promote our Social Enterprise programme in rural areas recognising the particular benefits to our rural housing communities from supporting and enabling new social enterprises in these areas to realise their full potential.	The Housing Executive continued to provide advice and support to rural communities in relation to Social Enterprise. There is currently a review ongoing of the future delivery of the Social Enterprise Programme.
26.	We will maximise opportunities to facilitate the sustainable growth of rural communities through collaborative investment and support.	The Housing Executive are partners in the 'Village Catalyst' project alongside DAERA, the Historic Environment Division of DfC and the Architectural Heritage Fund. This project focuses on restoring buildings at risk in rural settlements to provide a range of required community services. The Housing Executive provided funding towards a Village Catalyst project in Rathfriland, which will restore a former bank to a community facility and also provide 4 units of rented accommodation on upper floors to help address housing demand in the Village.



# 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。

## 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.



**Housing Executive**

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