



# Sustainable Rural Communities

Rural Strategy & Action Plan

Annual Progress Report

2018-2019









## Foreword

The third year of the Housing Executive's Rural Strategy and Action Plan "Sustainable Rural Communities" has now been completed and we are pleased to present this Annual Progress Report, which sets out our activities over the past year and highlights our key achievements.

Significantly, on 1st June 2018 the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 was introduced. We have embraced our statutory duty under the Act to have due regard to the needs of people in rural areas. Whilst the Housing Executive has long recognised that there are various housing issues that are specific to people living in rural areas, and that frequently a different approach is required to address these issues, we welcomed the introduction of the Act as a positive opportunity to reconfirm our commitment to rural communities and as a chance to review and reinvigorate our approach to meeting their needs.

This new duty sits alongside and reinforces our existing commitment to rural communities through our Rural Strategy and Action Plan. We launched the Strategy back in 2016, following extensive consultation with partners in other departments and agencies, and with community representatives from around rural Northern Ireland. At that time we developed a vision for rural housing:

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

All the actions included under the 5 objectives in the Strategy were developed to support the realisation of the vision and to ensure that an equitable share of available resources is directed to rural areas. The Strategy

is broad ranging and cross-cutting with key priority areas included from across the work of the Housing Executive. We are proud of the achievements made to date.

### **Key achievements during 2018/19 include:**

- Some £49.83 million was invested in our rural communities where just under 18 percent of our housing stock is located;
- Work commenced on 129 new build social homes in rural areas helping to address social housing need and regenerate communities – see page 5;
- We helped rural communities in 9 locations across NI to examine the need for new social and affordable housing in their areas – see page 7;
- Approximately £18.1 million was invested in the maintenance and improvement of our rural housing stock – see page 9;
- Some £6.7million of Supporting People funding was provided for accommodation-based and floating support services in rural areas - see page 11;
- Rural community groups were supported through a total investment of approximately £290,000, which included funding for Social Enterprise projects, Community Grants, Community Cohesion funding and capital funding for regeneration projects – see page 15.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved in the delivery of the third year of our Strategy. 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. Our Rural Strategy Implementation Panel includes representatives from across the Housing Executive and from external bodies and agencies in order to ensure we maintain a collaborative approach.

We are committed to building on the progress we have made against each of the actions to date. As we go into the final year of the Strategy, we are determined to ensuring that we that we continue to improve our services in rural areas.

**Professor Peter Roberts**  
Chair

**Clark Bailie**  
Chief Executive



Belcoo Mens Shed

Community Award Winners, Donaghmore



# Introduction

The Housing Executive’s Rural Strategy & Action Plan 2016-2020, ‘Sustainable Rural Communities’, was launched in November 2016. The four year Strategy examines housing needs and issues which are specific to our rural customers and sets out how we plan to work collaboratively with rural stakeholders to address these needs and issues between 2016 and 2020.

At the end of the third year, progress continues to be made towards achieving the actions contained within the Rural Strategy. Eight actions are now completed in full and encouraging progress has been made on 35 of the 36 remaining actions. Work on Action 16 has not commenced as, due to competing priorities, we are not in a position to roll out a second phase of the Solar Photovoltaic Programme at present.

This third Annual Progress Report summarises our activities and successes between April 2018 and March 2019, which contribute to the achievement of our 5 key objectives for rural housing:

- 1 To plan for and enable the provision of affordable homes which meet rural housing needs;
- 2 To improve the condition of rural housing stock and reduce fuel poverty;
- 3 To provide housing support to vulnerable people in rural areas;
- 4 To contribute to the development of safe, cohesive and engaged rural neighbourhoods; and
- 5 To work in partnership with others to assist in rural development.

In 2018/19, the Housing Executive invested approximately £49.83 million in rural areas. This investment included a wide range of housing and support services, as well as funding to help to create and maintain vibrant and sustainable communities.



Community networking event

Activity Area	Spend (£m)
Planned Maintenance & Capital Improvement Work*	9.14
Response Maintenance	9.00
Grounds Maintenance	1.45
Private Sector Grants*	13.43
Supporting People**	6.7
Community Development (including Social Enterprise, Community Cohesion and Regeneration funding)	0.29
Investment in New Build	9.82
<b>Total</b>	<b>49.83</b>

\*Approximate figure based on (average scheme cost) x (no. of rural completions in 18/19)

\*\*Approximate figure as Floating Support services also cover urban areas.



# Objective 1

## To plan for and enable the provision of affordable homes which meet rural housing needs

In March 2019, rural applicants made up just under 14% of the total waiting list for social housing and 12.6% of all applicants who are deemed to be in housing stress. These figures are fairly consistent from quarter to quarter and from year to year. This highlights the need to continue to increase social housing stock in rural areas.

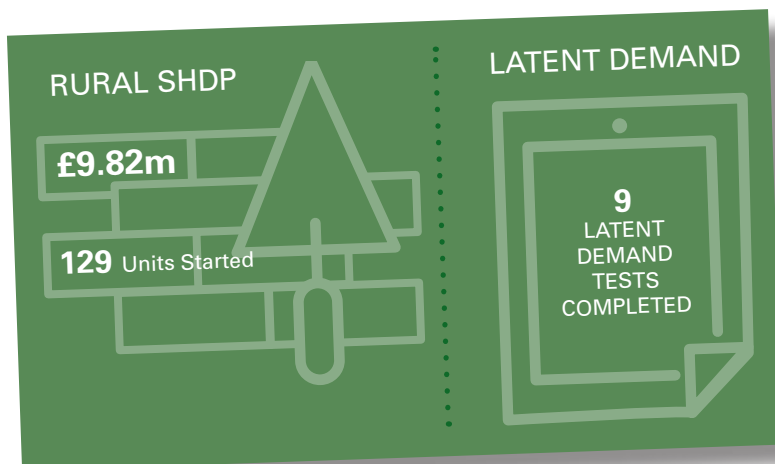
The 7 actions under Objective 1 aim to provide a rural housing enabler service. Though this work we assist rural communities who wish to examine the need for affordable housing in their area and encourage and support housing associations to deliver new housing to address this need.

In 2018/19, we carried out housing need testing in 9 locations and, to date, these tests have led to housing need support being given to 4 social housing schemes. During the year we invested £9.82m into the provision of new social homes in rural areas. This resulted in 129 new homes, including 3 built to wheelchair standard, helping to address housing need and sustain rural communities.

At March 2019, all 7 actions remain on target to be delivered. The key achievements for each action are set out in table 1.

### 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.
- Working 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.



Housing Need Tests were carried out in 9 locations in 2018/19. Housing Need Tests often include a primary school art competition to help to promote the test to families in the area. These are some of the winners this year.

**Table 1**

	Objective 1 - Actions:	2018/19 Update:
1	Review the current policy and procedures for examining rural housing need during 2016 and thereafter undertake an annual programme of rural housing needs surveys in approximately 5 rural locations.	In 2018/19, we completed housing need tests in Cloughmills, Moneyreagh, Ballycastle, Derrymacash/Derrytrasna, Tamnaherin, Clady, Drumaghlis, Whitecross and Tullylish/Lawrencetown.  To date, four new housing schemes have been supported as a result of these tests.
2	Examine the potential to capture information from rural housing applicants which may help determine where housing shortages exist in rural areas.	Information on where customers want to live is captured through their initial interview in order to help them to make choices about which housing option is best for them. We have developed a proposal for how this information could be reported on to help to determine where housing shortages may exist in rural areas, and are investigating an IT system change to allow this.
3	Ensure rural need for social and affordable housing is highlighted to local councils in the annual Housing Needs Assessment and in the Housing Market Analysis.	In 2018/19, we prepared the 2018-2023 Housing Need Assessment figures to guide the preparation of the Social Housing Development Programme and we ensured that any rural areas of unmet housing need were highlighted in the updated Commissioning Prospectus for housing associations.  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. We have a focus on achieving sustainable development.
4	Based on levels of rural housing need, set and monitor a % target for delivery of the Social Housing Development Programme in rural areas and ensure sufficient rural schemes are included to meet this target.	In 2018/19, 129 units of social housing started on site in rural areas, 3 of which were wheelchair units. This was 7.2% of overall delivery (1,786), which fell short of the target of 11.5% of 1,850 units (213 units) that was set at the start of the year. 60 of these units were provided in new build schemes, 31 were Existing Satisfactory Purchases and 38 were Off The Shelf purchases.
5	Highlight to housing providers in the Housing Executive's Commissioning Prospectus those rural locations where social/affordable housing is required.	The third annual Commissioning Prospectus for the period 2019/20 – 2021/22 was published in February 2019. The Prospectus is available on the Housing Executive website and includes rural areas of unmet need where housing association site search activity should be focused.
6	Undertake a programme of site identification studies to support and encourage the provision of rural housing in rural areas where unmet need has been identified.	We undertake an annual programme of rural site identification studies to assist and encourage housing associations to source development sites in areas of consistent unmet rural housing need. 10 studies were completed during 2018/19 and a further 5 are currently underway.
7	Examine the potential to pilot a rural mixed tenure scheme based on other examples of best practice including community self-build.	We continue to promote mixed tenure schemes. DfC is working on a revised definition of affordable housing and a public consultation will be the next step in that process.  Following the strong response to the housing need test in Swatragh in 2017/18, which included significant levels of expressed interest in affordable housing, we are currently investigating how a mixed tenure scheme might be brought forward in this location. A planning application has been made for a mixed tenure proposal in the village and we are awaiting the outcome.





**Rural Social Housing Starts 2018/19 (Table 2)**

Map Ref	Housing Association	Council	Location	Scheme Type	Units
1	Choice	Mid & East Antrim	Ahoghill	NB	16
2	Triangle	Mid & East Antrim	Ahoghill	OS	5
3	North Belfast HA	Ards & North Down	Ballygowan	OS	5
4	Clanmil	Ards & North Down	Ballywater	ES	1
5	Triangle	Newry, Mourne & Down	Belleeks	OS	5
6	Rural	Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	Blackwatertown	OS	4
7	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Cargan	ES	1
8	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Carnlough	ES	2
9	Rural	Ards & North Down	Carrowdore	ES	1
10	Ark	Newry, Mourne & Down	Castlewellan	ES	1
11	Ark	Newry, Mourne & Down	Castlewellan	OS	1
12	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Claudy	ES	1
13	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Cullybackey	ES	2
14	Triangle	Antrim & Newtownabbey	Doagh	ES	1
15	Rural	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Glenavy	ES	1
16	South Ulster	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Glenavy	CD&B	23
17	Clanmil	Newry, Mourne & Down	Hilltown	OS	6
18	Choice	Mid & East Antrim	Kells	NB	7
19	Ark	Newry, Mourne & Down	Kilcoo	OS	4
20	Choice	Newry, Mourne & Down	Killeavy	ES	1
21	Choice	Newry, Mourne & Down	Killough	ES	1
22	Rural	Newry, Mourne & Down	Killyleagh	ES	2
23	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Magheramason	ES	1
24	Rural	Fermanagh & Omagh	Maguiresbridge	OS	6
25	Ark	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Moirra	ES	5
26	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Newbuildings	ES	2
27	Triangle	Derry & Strabane	Newbuildings	OS	2
28	Choice	Ards & North Down	Portavogie	ES	2
29	Rural	Ards & North Down	Portavogie	ES	1
30	Rural	Newry, Mourne & Down	Saintfield	ES	1
31	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Sion Mills	NB	14
32	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Strathfoyle	ES	4
					<b>129</b>

Choice Housing completed the development of 5 new social homes in Castlecaufield in October 2018, they completed construction on 8 new homes in Nixons Corner in July 2018 and completed construction on 16 homes in Glenavy also in July.

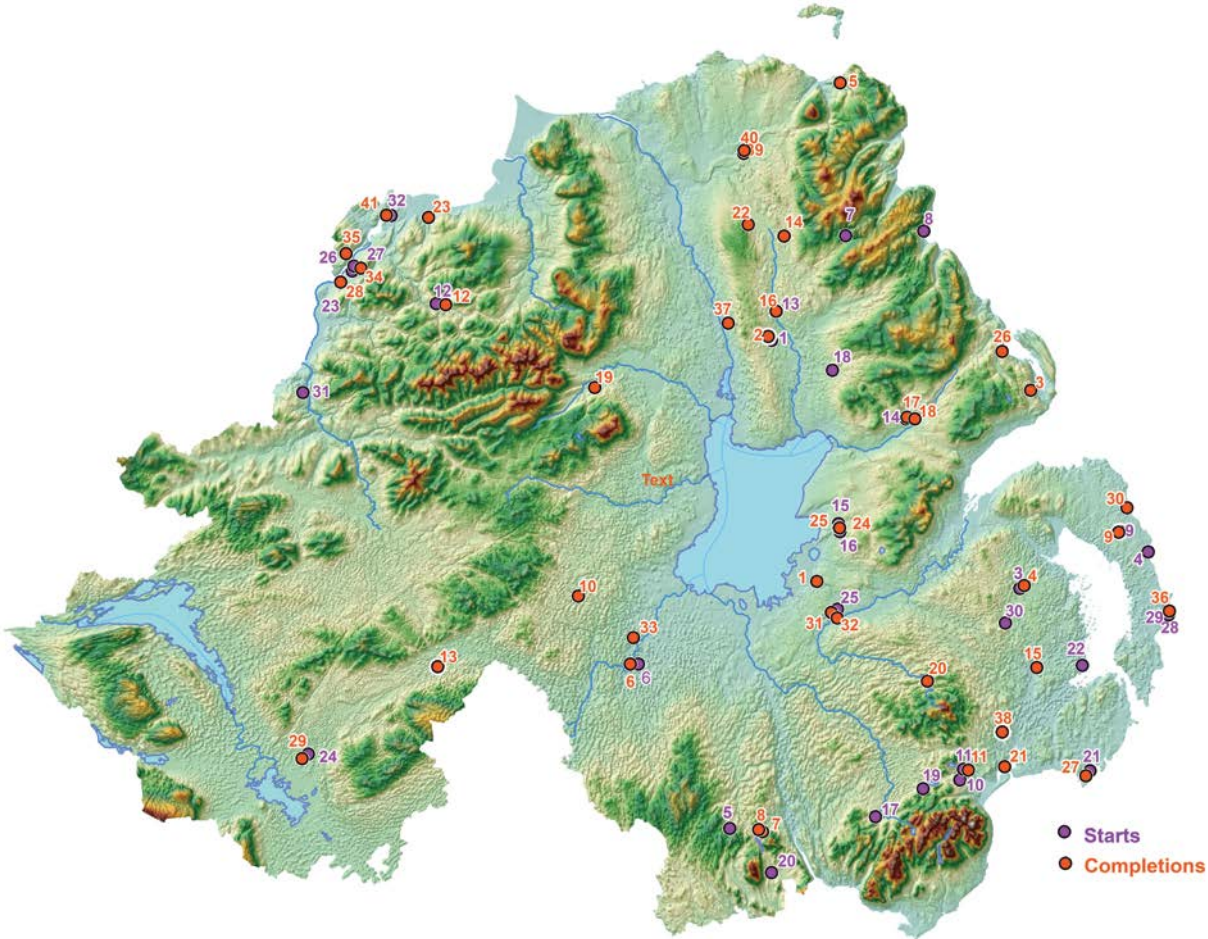


**Rural Social Housing Completions 2018/19 (Table 3)**

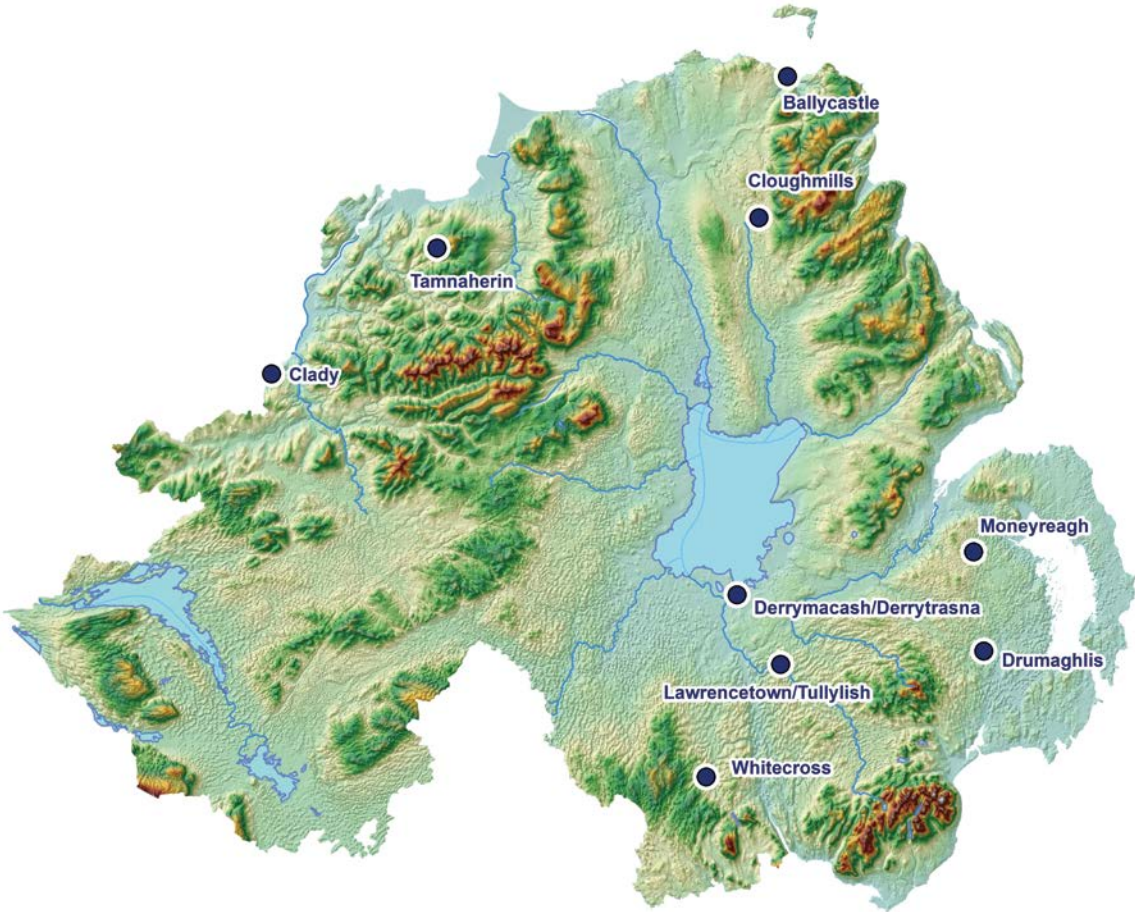
Map Ref	Housing Association	Council	Location	Scheme Type	Units
1	Rural	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Aghalee	ES	1
2	Triangle	Mid & East Antrim	Ahoghill	OS	5
3	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Ballycarry	ES	1
4	Triangle	Ards & North Down	Ballygowan	RH	1
5	Triangle	Causeway Coast & Glens	Ballyvoy	ES	2
6	Rural	Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	Blackwatertown	OS	4
7	Radius	Newry, Mourne & Down	Camlough	OS	5
8	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Carnlough	ES	2
9	Rural	Ards & North Down	Carrowdore	ES	1
10	Choice	Mid Ulster	Castlecaulfield	NB	5
11	Ark	Newry, Mourne & Down	Castlewellan	OS	1
12	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Claudy	ES	1
13	Choice	Mid Ulster	Clogher	RH	1
14	Triangle	Causeway Coast & Glens	Cloughmills	ES	1
15	Rural	Newry, Mourne & Down	Crossgar	ES	1
16	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Cullybackey	ES	2
17	Triangle	Antrim & Newtownabbey	Doagh	OS	4
18	Triangle	Antrim & Newtownabbey	Doagh	ES	1
19	Rural	Mid Ulster	Draperstown	ES	1
20	Connswater	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Dromara	ES	1
21	Clanmil	Newry, Mourne & Down	Dundrum	NB	16
22	Clanmil	Causeway Coast & Glens	Dunloy	NB	10
23	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Eglinton	ES	9
24	Choice	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Glenavy	NB	16
25	Rural	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Glenavy	ES	1
26	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Glynn	ES	1
27	Choice	Newry, Mourne & Down	Killough	ES	1
28	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Magheramason	ES	1
29	Rural	Fermanagh & Omagh	Maguiresbridge	OS	3
30	Connswater	North Down & Ards	Millisle	ES	1
31	Ark	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Moirra	ES	5
32	Connswater	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Moirra	ES	1
33	Rural	Mid Ulster	Moy	ES	1
34	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Newbuildings	ES	5
35	Choice	Derry & Strabane	Nixon's Corner	NB	8
36	Choice	North Down & Ards	Portavogie	ES	2
37	Apex Housing	Mid & East Antrim	Portglenone	NB	10
38	Radius	Newry, Mourne & Down	Seaforde	NB	10
39	Triangle	Causeway Coast & Glens	Stranocum	OS	4
40	Triangle	Causeway Coast & Glens	Stranocum	ES	2
41	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Strathfoyle	ES	3
					<b>151</b>



Rural St



Housing Need Tests 2018/19





## Objective 2

# To improve the condition of rural housing stock and reduce fuel poverty

The 10 actions which support Objective 2 are aimed at promoting energy efficiency and facilitating the improvement of rural housing stock. This includes the provision of home improvement grants for private sector home owners and landlords in rural areas, as well as the planned and response maintenance of our own rural housing stock. As the Home Energy Conservation Authority for NI we also provide energy saving advice and support to people in rural areas.

During 2018/19, approximately £18m was invested in the maintenance of our rural housing stock. A further £13.4m was invested in Private Sector Grant funding, contributing to the improvement and increased energy efficiency of rural homes. This year also saw the launch of an exciting new energy efficiency research project "HandiHeat" which will investigate sustainable energy solutions for homes in dispersed rural locations.

At March 2019, 2 actions have been completed and 7 of the 8 remaining actions are on target to be delivered by 2020. The key achievements for each action are set out in table 4.

### What we do differently for rural areas:

- Promote available grants at rural housing information events and at the Balmoral Show.
- Ensure that an equitable proportion of energy promotional activities take place in rural areas.
- The Handi-Heat project investigates energy efficiency measures which may be appropriate for rural areas.



The 'Handi-Heat' project is a 3 year, €2m project that will research how we can deliver renewable energy solutions and improve energy efficiency in rural homes across Northern Europe.

We recently installed new kitchens and bathrooms in almost 80 of our tenants' homes in Keady, Poyntzpass and Richhill. Before the work started every tenant had a one to one consultation with our staff to plan the layout of their new kitchen and bathroom as well as to choose their units and tiles.

This £350,000 investment demonstrates the Housing Executive's ongoing commitment to modernise and improve the homes of our rural tenants.

It is being led by the Housing Executive, with support from the Northern Periphery & Arctic Programme (NPA) and the European Regional Development Fund. The project aims to:

- document current home energy policy and practice across Northern Europe;
- develop viable business models, with innovative solutions to tackle energy problems in rural areas; and
- identify opportunities for rural communities to access renewable energy sources and reduce their reliance on fossil fuels.

Through the project we will also be carrying out a pilot study that provides 4 - 5 of our rural homes with a renewable energy supply, so we can find out how these measures could benefit our rural tenants.

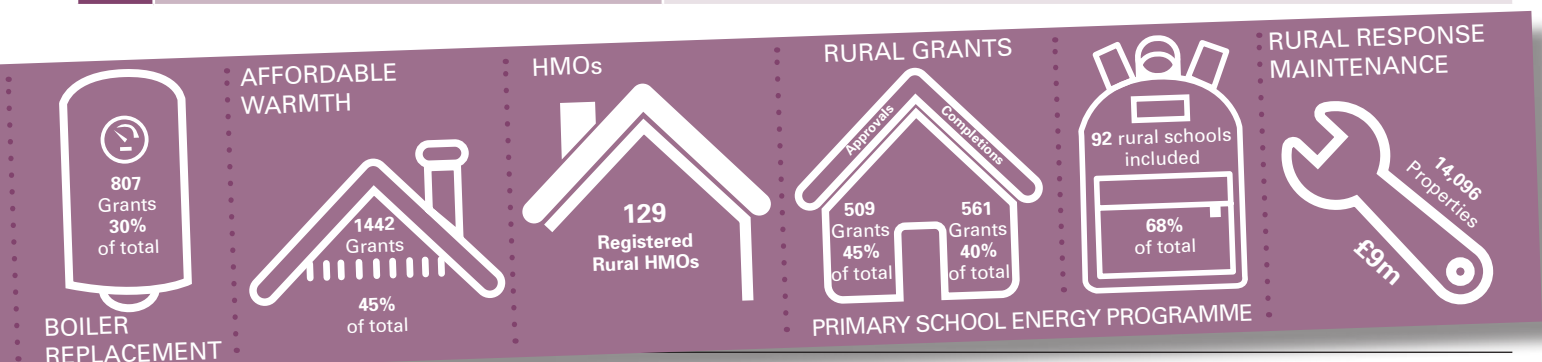
### RURAL PLANNED MAINTENANCE





Table 4

	Objective 2 - Actions:	2018/19 Update:
8	Ensure that Housing Executive planned maintenance programmes deliver investment to rural housing stock in accordance with the new Asset Management Strategy.	By the end of 2018/19 we had completed planned maintenance on 3,720 rural homes, representing 28% of all our planned maintenance completions (13,252). This mainly comprised external cyclical maintenance, double glazing, heating installations and kitchen/bathroom repairs and replacements.
9	Monitor the uptake of Private Sector Improvement Grants in rural areas to ensure that rural home owners receive an appropriate share of grant aid.	In 2018/19, we approved a total of 509 private sector grants in rural areas (45% of total) and 561 grants were completed (40% of total). Approvals included 382 Disabled Facilities Grants, 30 Home Repairs Assistance Grants, 90 Renovation Grants and 7 Replacement Grants. Completions included 354 Disabled Facilities Grants, 38 Home Repairs Assistance Grants, 85 Renovation Grants, 82 Public Health Notice Grants and 2 Replacement Grants.
10	Promote any new and existing Private Sector Improvement Grants which could improve the fabric of housing in rural locations.	Both energy efficiency and mandatory grants (Disabled Facilities) were promoted at rural events in Cloughmills, Derrymacash and Derrytrasna. Grants staff were also available at the Housing Executive stand at the Balmoral Show in May 2018.
11	Monitor the uptake of the Affordable Warmth and Boiler Replacement schemes in rural areas.	During 2018/19, a total of 807 rural properties benefitted from the Housing Executive's Boiler Replacement Scheme, 30% of the overall total. 1,442 rural properties benefitted from the Housing Executive/Council led Affordable Warmth Scheme, 45% of the overall total.
12	Contribute to the Department for Communities (DfC) policy review on support for repair and improvement in the private sector and any revised scheme of assistance which emerges from the review.	The DfC review of the policy on support for repair and improvement in the private sector has not progressed during 2018/19. The Housing Executive remains committed to contributing meaningfully to the review when it recommences.
13	Register and renew registrations of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) identified in rural areas as required.	There are 129 registered rural HMOs. The highest proportion of rural HMOs is in the Mid Ulster District (22) and the lowest is in the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough (2). Responsibility for HMO registration transferred to councils on 1st April 2019.
14	Monitor uptake of the Housing Executive/ Bryson Energy Oil Buying Clubs scheme in rural areas.	This action was completed in 2017/18. There are 27 Housing Executive/ Bryson Energy Oil buying clubs across Northern Ireland with over 4,000 members. Over 80% of these serve rural areas, for example Bannvale, which serves Ahoghill, Bellaghy, Lavy and Portglenone, and Mournderg Partnership which serves Castlederg, Churchtown and Killiter.
15	Ensure that rural areas are included in the Housing Executive's energy efficiency promotional activities including a target of 35% of the schools programme in rural schools.	In 2018/19, the primary school energy programme visited 135 schools across NI. 68% of these schools were in rural areas.
16	Target at least 15% of the Housing Executive's Solar Photovoltaic (PV) programme in rural areas.	The Housing Executive has evaluated the initial phase of the Solar PV programme and, notwithstanding the benefits that Solar PV provides, due to competing priorities we are not in a position to roll out a second phase at present.
17	Consider alternative sources of energy and innovative technologies which could improve the energy efficiency of Housing Executive stock in rural areas.	The Housing Executive launched its new energy efficiency research project "Handi-Heat" in October 2018. The project aims to identify innovative solutions to tackle energy problems for rural communities and includes a demonstration pilot involving 4-5 Housing Executive homes located in rural Fermanagh. This pilot will evaluate a combination of hybrid and low carbon heating solutions and energy efficiency measures. Within the demonstration properties hybrid boilers, heat pumps, solar photovoltaic and energy storage systems will be installed, alongside value for money insulation measures.



## Objective 3

# To provide housing support to vulnerable people in rural areas

We recognise that living in a rural area may make it more challenging for people who need additional support or have specific care needs to access key services to meet their needs.

The 9 actions included under Objective 3 are focused on identifying rural homelessness and housing support needs and providing relevant housing support.

During 2018/19, approximately £5.2m of Supporting People funding was invested in accommodation based services in rural areas and a further £1.5m was invested in Floating Support Services.

At March 2019, 2 actions have been completed and the remaining 7 are on target to be delivered by 2020. The key achievements for each action are set out in table 5.

### A Focus on Preventing Homelessness - Homelessness Local Area Groups

As part of the Homelessness Strategy 2017–22 Ending Homelessness Together, a number of Local Area Groups were set up to ensure the delivery of the Strategy at a local level. Each group has produced an Action Plan covering the first three objectives of the Homelessness Strategy

- Homelessness prevention
- Sustaining tenancies
- Chronic homelessness

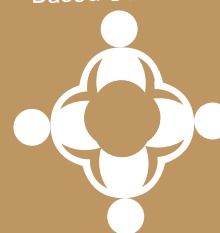
One of the key actions in the Strategy to help prevent homelessness is to improve communication and raise public awareness of the factors that can contribute to making a household homeless. We also want to provide the public with information about agencies and services that can help, and to encourage households to seek help before they reach crisis point.

Homelessness Awareness Week took place in December 2018. During this week, four of the Local Area Groups arranged events in their areas, bringing together a range of speakers from agencies and organisations to share information and forge new partnerships to help to improve services to clients that may find themselves faced with homelessness.

### What we do differently for rural areas:

- Provide online access in our local offices to ensure that rural customers affected by a lack of internet coverage/access can manage their Universal Credit claim.
- Undertake research on customer experiences of Welfare Reform to identify rural specific issues.
- Ensure cross-representation between the Rural Residents Forum and the Disability Forum to make sure that the particular challenges facing people with disabilities in rural areas are considered.
- Provide homelessness advice and support at rural housing information events.

### Supporting People 97 Accommodation Based Services



1000 people receive  
floating support





Table 5

	Objective 3 - Actions:	2018/19 Update:
18	Measure and monitor the extent of homeless applicants who wish to be housed in a rural location in order to inform the review of the Homelessness Strategy and to assist in ongoing strategic planning of services.	Our Homelessness Strategy 'Ending Homelessness Together', published in April 2017, provides strategic direction for how homelessness will be addressed from April 2017 to March 2022.  At the end of March 2019, 2,236 of the 19,629 applicants registered as Full Duty Applicant were on the waiting list for a rural area (11.4% of the total registered as homeless).
19	Ensure that the 'housing options' approach including the new policy, procedures and associated training take account of housing support issues which are specific to rural areas.	An advice note has been issued to all staff to explain the importance of identifying and capturing rural housing needs during Housing Options discussions with our customers.
20	Promote the availability of homelessness advice and support services in rural areas.	In line with our Homelessness Strategy we have implemented a multimedia approach to promoting the availability of homelessness advice and support. Homelessness Local Area Groups have been established across NI. These groups continue to forge new partnerships, with local councils now represented on the South Antrim and Mid & East Antrim Group, the Causeway Group and the Mid Ulster Group. Homelessness Services guides are being produced in all areas and we have updated our website with improved homelessness information and advice. E-learning has been delivered to all staff, and all staff have been provided with information cards as a first stage in the roll out of homelessness awareness training to all sectors. During 2018/19, homelessness information and advice was also provided at events associated with our rural housing need tests.
21	Carry out an exercise to gather information on existing Supporting People services by client group so as to identify potential gaps in rural areas and examine best practice elsewhere to address these.	GIS mapping indicates that 97 accommodation based services are located in rural areas and floating supported is provided to approximately 1,000 people who live in rural areas. This GIS mapping continues to be developed to display services thematically for future planning.  The Supporting People Plan for 19/20 identifies the need to address gaps in floating support for older people and younger people in a range of locations, some of these have a rural element.
22	Develop Outcomes Framework for all Supporting People services to include an update on rural dwellers where appropriate.	This action completed in 2017/18. These outcomes focus on customer experiences of all long/short term services. These experiences are captured on a regional basis and so include rural customers. This work will inform the future commissioning of services.
23	Examine the potential to fund a rural community based service aimed at older people.	The Supporting People Plan for 19/20 identifies the need to further explore the opportunities for the remodelling of floating support. There are a range of policy and practical considerations to progressing this which are under investigation at this time. Rural opportunities for remodelling will be considered alongside urban options.
24	Monitor assessment and provision of housing for wheelchair needs and provision for complex needs on a rural-urban basis.	Accessible housing is a key enabler for people with a disability, allowing them to live in within their own homes and communities if they choose to do so. At the end of March 2019, there were 87 rural applicants on the waiting list who require wheelchair standard accommodation. This is 17.5% of the total (497). There were 1,007 rural applicants who have complex needs, 16.3% of the total (6,183). 2 rural social new build wheelchair standard units were completed in 2018/19.
25	Ensure cross-representation between the Rural Residents Forum and the Disability Forum to ensure that the particular challenges facing people with disabilities in rural areas are considered when scrutinising new policies and services.	One member of the Rural Residents Forum also sits on the Disability Forum which ensures that information from both forums is exchanged. RRF members are also represented on the central and local housing forums and inter-agency groups which helps to ensure that rural issues can be shared and discussed at every tier in the engagement process.
26	Monitor the development of pending Welfare changes and mitigations on Housing Executive activities to determine if any changes are required as a consequence.	Universal Credit is now live across Northern Ireland and it must be claimed online. It is recognised that tenants in rural areas may be particularly affected by lack of internet access. Therefore computers have been provided in our local offices to give customers internet access to allow them to manage their UC claim.  Ongoing communications work and signposting is underway with local offices and community groups, including via the Central Housing Forum which has rural representation.  Work is also continuing on researching customer experiences of Universal Credit and wider Welfare Reforms and developing organisational responses to issues, where appropriate. Rural residents have been represented in all sampling for Welfare Reform related projects to date and Universal Credit Customer Journey Research- Rural Impacts is planned for the 2019/20 Research Programme which will focus specifically on rural residents.

## Objective 4

# To contribute to the development of safe, cohesive and engaged neighbourhoods

We recognise that some of our rural communities have to deal with complex social issues that can impact on quality of life. The Housing Executive is committed to working with these communities to help them to build capacity, build relationships and create safe and inclusive neighbourhoods which improve the outlook for all residents.

The 8 actions included to support Objective 4 are focused on ensuring that we recognise and address the particular needs of our rural housing communities, and that we can help them to address local issues with local solutions.

At March 2019, 1 action has been completed and the remaining 7 are on target to be delivered by 2020. The key achievements for each action are set out in table 6.

### What we do differently for rural areas:

- Work with the Rural Residents' Forum to ensure that rural issues and perspectives are considered when developing and reviewing Housing Executive policies, strategies, plans and services.
- Undertake rural research projects with the Rural Residents' Forum and Rural Community Network.
- Ensure that rural areas receive an equitable share of our funding/support programmes.

Apex Housing Association are delivering their most recent rural Housing for All scheme in Eglinton. Housing for All developments are shared neighbourhoods where diversity is welcomed and people of all backgrounds live, work, learn and play together in a safe and welcoming environment.

New residents all sign up to a Good Neighbour Agreement and, working with a Local Advisory Group, a five year Good Relations Plan is put in place to ensure that the development is embedded in the local community. The plan also supports the development of good relations between the new residents and throughout the wider community.



Two primary schools in Armoyle are taking part in an exciting careers programme "Miniversity" thanks to Community Cohesion funding. Pupils at Armoyle Primary School and St Olcan's Primary School will be encouraged to engage with digital technology in a fun way, and learn about different careers they may wish to pursue. This excellent programme will inspire the future growth and development of the next generation in this rural Co. Antrim area.

### HOUSING FOR ALL



**1 of 5**

Housing for All schemes located in a rural area

### COMMUNITY COHESION



**39** Rural Projects funded  
**£111k**



Table 6

	Objective 4 - Actions:	2018/19 Update:
27	Promote and develop the role of the Rural Residents' Forum in the rural proofing of new and revised Housing Executive policies and strategies.	The Rural Residents Forum is advised of any NIHE policies/strategies which are out for consultation and compile a response where appropriate.  The Forum have also been promoted throughout the Housing Executive as a key consultee for policy owners when fulfilling our duty of due regard to rural needs under the Rural Needs Act NI 2016.
28	Undertake at least one rural research project a year with the Rural Residents' Forum and Rural Community Network.	Following on from their research into the shortage of new build social housing in rural areas in 2017/18, the Forum has produced a bespoke leaflet on latent demand/housing needs tests aimed at promoting the tests to rural residents and community groups. This has been shared in district offices, council offices, at housing need events and will also be distributed at upcoming rural events, such as the Balmoral Show.
29	Ensure that at least one young person from a rural area is included in the shadow housing forum.	Our Community Cohesion Unit is keen to encourage the involvement of our hard to reach customers, including young people, in our housing forums. In 2018/19, 8 members of the Northern Ireland Youth Forum agreed to sit on a steering group which will work to establish a shadow housing forum. The Steering Group will decide in which direction the youth members of the Shadow Housing Forum will enter and engage with the HCN. At least 1 member will be from a rural area.
30	Ensure that rural areas are considered for funding/support programmes stemming from the Housing Executive's Community Cohesion Strategy including:  At least 4 rural estates in the BRIC 2 programme;  At least 10 rural projects funded as part of an Estate Based Strategy.	The BRIC Programme is now closed. Community Cohesion continue to work with the groups who had been in receipt of BRIC funding to offer support through other Cohesion funding streams.  A total of 39 rural projects were on the Community Cohesion funding programme in 2018/19, including 7 in Derry/Strabane, 4 in Causeway Coast and Glens, 14 in Mid-Ulster, 1 in Ards & North Down, 3 in Fermanagh/Omagh, 1 in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, 7 in Newry, Mourne and Down, 1 in Mid & East Antrim and 1 in Belfast (Hannahstown).
31	Consider how the Housing Executive can provide support to agencies and departments in the delivery of 'contested space' interventions in a rural context.	The Housing Executive continues to take part in the 'Beyond Belfast' forum administered by Rural Community Network. This inter-agency forum seeks to raise awareness of interface issues in rural areas, to remove barriers and to encourage the appropriate use of contested spaces.
32	Ensure that rural housing schemes are considered for the TBUC shared new build programme, subject to eligibility criteria.	TBUC has now been renamed as Housing For All. 1 rural Housing For All scheme from 2017/18 is now complete (Garvaghy Road, Portglenone). 2 Rural Housing for All schemes from 2017/18 are progressing onsite - Coolnafinney, Eglinton (14 units) and Downpatrick Street, Crossgar (20 units).  Of the 5 Housing For All schemes that went on site in 2018/19, 1 is in a rural area. This is Lismore Park Sion Mills (14 units). It started onsite in June 2018.  Our Community Cohesion team are working with the Development Programme Group to identify potential Housing For All schemes for 2019/20. 12 have been shortlisted so far and are subject to further investigation. 1 of these is in a rural area.
33	Promote the availability of advice and support services which deal with community safety in rural areas.	In 2018/19, Community Safety projects were funded in Antrim & Newtownabbey, Newry Mourne and Down, Mid & East Antrim and Mid Ulster council areas. These included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good Morning Down, a telephone befriending and support service for older people across the former Down Council area;</li><li>• Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey 4 Tier Home Security Scheme, a flexible tailored approach to meet the specific crime prevention and community safety needs of individuals and situations;</li><li>• Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership; and</li><li>• Mid Ulster Agewell Partnership.</li></ul> Community Safety Warden Schemes supported by the Housing Executive in conjunction with PCSPs are also operational in Newry, Mourne & Down, Antrim & Newtownabbey, Mid & East Antrim, City of Derry & Strabane and Fermanagh & Omagh council areas.  Community Safety initiatives were promoted in the February edition of our Rural Matters magazine and at the Balmoral Show.
34	Ensure that at least one rural community is included in the pilot demonstration project aimed at increasing digital inclusion.	This action completed in 2016/17. Several tenants in Fermanagh/Enniskillen are continuing with the Digital 4 Change project to carry on the momentum and to ensure connectivity with each other.

## Objective 5

# To work in partnership with others to assist in rural development

The Housing Executive has a long history of working with partners in councils, other funding bodies and community groups to support the regeneration of neighbourhoods. The six actions included under Objective 5 recognise that the need for regeneration within rural communities extends beyond the provision of housing, to funding and support aimed at empowering rural communities to undertake projects that address wider social well-being, and improve their quality of life now and into the future.

During 2018/19, approximately £180,000 was invested in the development of our rural communities, this included Social Enterprise funding, Community Grants and capital funding.

At March 2019, 2 actions have been completed and the remaining 4 are on target to be delivered by 2020. The key achievements for each action are set out in table 7.

### What we do differently for rural areas:

- Provide a match funding programme to support the delivery of the 2014-2020 NI Rural Development Programme (RDP).
- Provide Rural Community Awards to recognise and reward the valuable work of rural community groups.
- Ensure that rural areas receive an equitable share of funding/support programmes.



The Housing Executive offers financial assistance in the form of Community Grants up to £5,000 to help resident and community groups to carry out a range of projects that promote health and wellbeing, bring people together, encourage volunteering and improve shared spaces.

We recently gave Derrytresk Community Group a Housing Executive Community Grant to run a 2 day first aid course in their local community centre. The funding was used to bring in a qualified first aid instructor to provide training for 12 local residents.

The parents, sports coaches and local youth club staff who took part all found the training to be invaluable and are now more confident in responding to an emergency situation.

We provided Rural Development Programme match funding to the Peninsula Healthy Living Partnership to develop a new boardwalk and community trail in Cloughey Co. Down. The works, which completed in 2018/19, aimed to improve the accessibility of the coastal area for the benefit of everyone who lives in or visits the village, with a particular focus on making the area accessible for people with limited mobility.

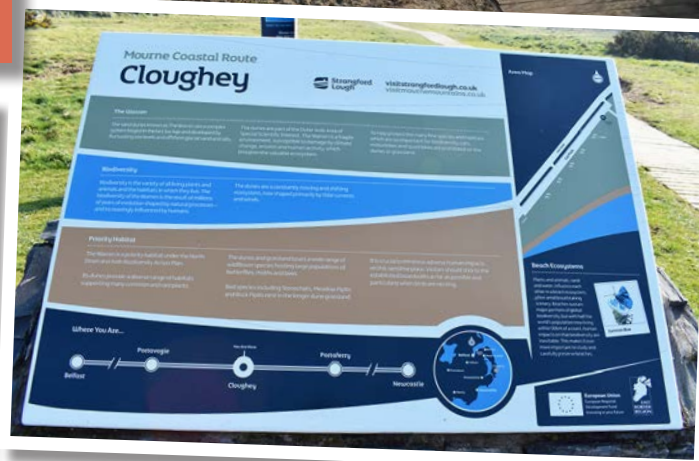
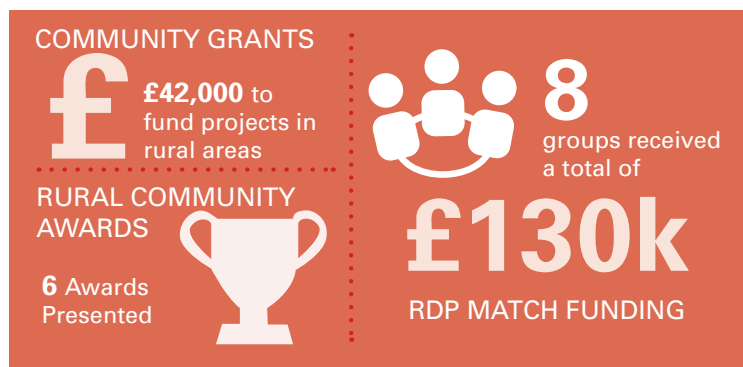




Table 7

	Objective 5 - Actions:	2018/19 Update:
35	Ensure that the issues facing rural communities are raised to local councils through the Community Planning process.	This action completed in 2016/17. During the development of community plans, we highlighted rural housing need and the need to ensure that each plan was fully rural proofed. Each council now has an adopted community plan and, as a strategic partner, we are involved in the implementation of relevant actions.
36	Promote and monitor the uptake in rural areas of Housing Executive community funding initiatives including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Grants;</li> <li>Social Enterprise Funding;</li> <li>Social Enterprise Agreements.</li> </ul>	In 2018/19, 2 social enterprise grants were awarded to people in rural areas. The Social Enterprise Team are currently preparing a new Social Enterprise Strategy, which they hope to launch in Autumn 2019. In preparing the strategy they are engaging with a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties including through our Housing Community Network, our Rural Residents Forum, area managers, and local offices.  In 2018/19, approximately £42,000 of Community Grant funding was awarded to support projects in rural areas. This was 17.3% of all Community Grant funding awarded.
37	Develop and implement a match funding programme to support the delivery of the 2014-2020 NI Rural Development Programme (RDP).	Through our RDP match funding initiative we support the delivery of Basic Services and Village Renewal projects across rural NI. During 2018/19, a total of £130,000 was invested in 8 capital projects that support the development and regeneration needs of rural communities.
38	Monitor the delivery of the 'Heritage in Housing' initiative in rural areas.	The initial 3 year Heritage in Housing match funding project has now completed. The scheme included 4 rural properties in Portaferry and Richhill. We intend to offer a further Heritage in Housing match funding scheme in 2019/20. The THI Areas will be Armagh, Carrickfergus, Donaghadee and Lurgan.
39	Promote and administer the annual 'Rural Community Awards' competition.	The Rural Community Awards competition offers three different awards, with two categories for each award. These are the Rural Community Spirit Award, Cleaner and Greener Rural Community Award and Sustainable Village of the Year Award.  The 2018 Rural Community Awards competition was launched at the Balmoral Show in May and the winners were presented with their awards at a community networking event in October 2018.
40	Monitor and promote the use of surplus Housing Executive land and property in rural areas for community based projects which will promote health and well-being and/or facilitate social enterprise.	Housing Services' Community Lettings policy will continue to facilitate rural communities' development and local initiatives, where practicable. Currently there are approximately 203 community lets and 46 NIHE commercial properties let to community groups across Northern Ireland. 13 of these units are located in rural areas.

The winners of our 2018 Rural Community Awards were presented with their prizes at our Fermanagh and Omagh rural community networking event in October 2018.



# Monitoring & Communication

The four actions included under this theme have been identified as being necessary to support the monitoring and communication of the Rural Strategy. At March 2019, 1 action has been completed and 3 actions are on target to be delivered by 2020. The key achievements for each action are set out in table 8.

This year we published two editions of our Rural Matters magazine, which highlights key projects and initiatives carried out in rural areas as well as providing advice and guidance. We were also pleased to have a stand at the annual Royal Ulster Agricultural Society Balmoral Show again this year. The Show gives us an opportunity to reach out to people in rural areas to explain the range of services that the Housing Executive offers and to answer any queries they may have.



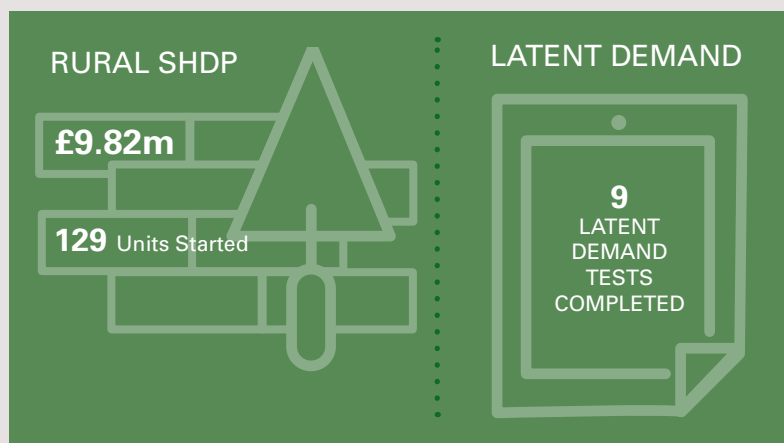
**Table 8**

	Monitoring and Communications-Actions:	2018/19 Update:
41	Publicise the work undertaken by the Housing Executive in rural areas, including publication of 'Rural Matters' twice a year and production of an Annual Progress Report.	The 1st 2018/19 edition of Rural Matters was circulated at the Balmoral Show in May 2018 and the 2nd edition was published in February 2019.  The Year 2 Rural Strategy Annual Progress Report was published in September 2018. Both publications are available on our website <a href="http://www.nihe.gov.uk">www.nihe.gov.uk</a>
42	Monitor and report on the views of rural tenants on the services provided to them by the Housing Executive.	The Continuous Tenants Omnibus Survey indicates that overall satisfaction for the NIHE in rural areas is 90% compared to 86% in urban areas.
43	Liaise with DAERA to revise the policy and procedures for rural proofing to reflect the provisions of the Rural Needs Bill.	The Rural Needs Act came into force for the Housing Executive on 1st June 2018, with the first monitoring report due in September 2019.  In 2018/19, we developed and delivered a bespoke face to face training package which was targeted to nominated staff who are involved in policy writing and service development across the Housing Executive. In accordance with our duty of due regard, during the year we carried out Rural Needs Impact Assessments of 33 policies, strategies, plans and services.  A central database has been designed to record and monitor all policies, strategies and services which have been rural needs impact assessed on an on-going basis, and to make sure that we can fulfil our reporting requirements for DAERA.
44	Liaise with other jurisdictions across the UK to share learning/experiences of rural housing/regeneration initiatives.	The Rural and Regeneration Manager attended the International Centre for Local and Regional Development conference in Dundalk in April 2018 to discuss rural housing and planning issues.  The Rural and Regeneration Unit were also represented at the Rethinking Social Housing series of seminars to lend a rural NI perspective to the discussions. These seminars were hosted by the Chartered Institute of Housing and fed into a UK wide report which explored fundamental questions about the future of the sector.

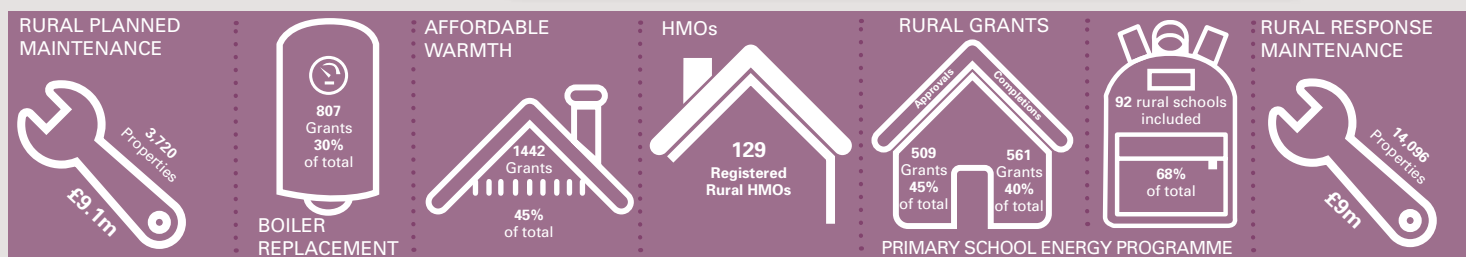


# 2018/19

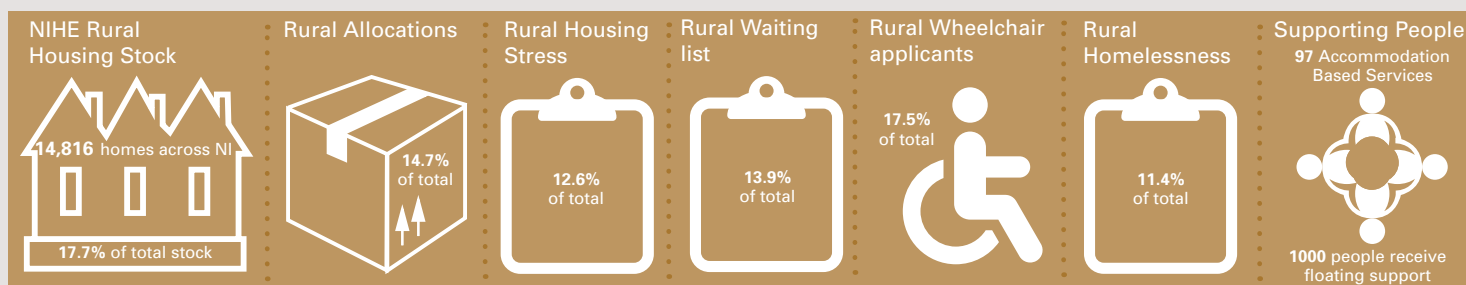
## Objective 1



## Objective 2



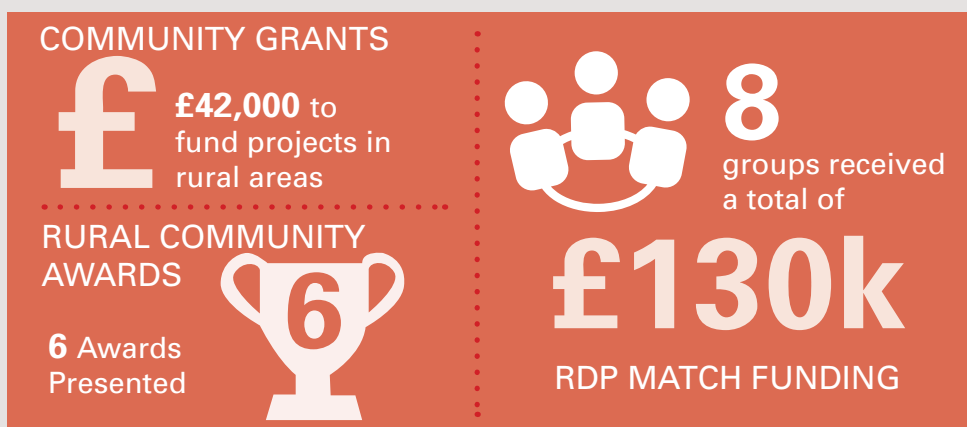
## Objective 3



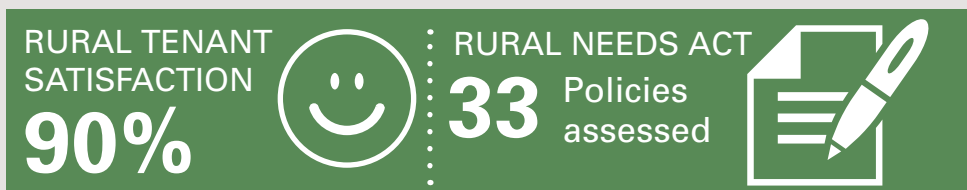
## Objective 4



## Objective 5



## Monitoring and Communication



# 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.

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