



Sustainable Rural Communities

Rural Strategy & Action Plan

Annual Progress Report

2016 - 2017

Foreword



We are delighted to present the 'Sustainable Rural Communities' Annual Progress Report for 2016/17. In November 2016 we launched our Rural Strategy & Action Plan, which identified those housing needs and issues which are specific to rural areas and indicated how we plan to work with rural stakeholders to make a difference to rural communities over the next four years.

During the first year of the Rural Strategy, we are pleased to report that work has commenced on all 43 actions, with encouraging progress made on 42. Actions included within the strategy have been developed to ensure that an equitable share of available resources is directed to rural areas and to contribute to our vision for rural housing:

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

This report summarises our progress to date, highlighting our key achievements which include:

- In 2016/17 the Housing Executive invested a total of approximately £48.4million in our rural communities where 14% of our housing stock is located;
- 84 new build social homes were started in rural areas helping to address rural social housing need and regenerate communities - see p4-5;
- The process for testing rural housing need was revised, and this year tests on Rathlin Island and in Bishopscourt/Ballyhornan have generated an encouraging response - see p2;
- In 2016/17 approximately three million litres of oil were purchased through oil buying clubs supported by the Housing Executive and Bryson Energy,

helping rural households to save on energy costs - see p7;

- The Housing Executive's revised Homelessness Strategy 'Ending Homelessness Together' published in April 2017, with full consideration given to the specific needs of rural customers - see p9;
- The Housing Executive worked with Fermanagh/Omagh Council to fund a community safety warden to work with communities in rural areas - see p11.
- The Housing Executive has facilitated the refurbishment of four properties in Richhill and another two close to completion in Portaferry through the Heritage in Housing programme - see p13.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have been involved in the delivery of the first year of the Strategy. 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. Our Rural Residents Forum also provides a vital link to rural communities and assists us in the rural proofing of our policies and strategies. We hope to maintain the momentum gained in the delivery of actions during year one for the next three years and to continue to improve our service in rural areas.

Professor Peter Roberts
Interim Chair

Clark Bailie
Chief Executive

Rural Housing Need Testing 2016/17

Two rural locations were chosen in 2016/17 to pilot the new rural housing need test.

The areas chosen were Rathlin Island and Bishopscourt/Ballyhornan, Co. Down. Housing associations had found development sites in both locations but there was insufficient evidence of housing need to support a new social housing development.

Information events were held on Rathlin Island in October 2016 and in Bishopscourt/Ballyhornan in January 2017. The informal events were held in community halls and were attended by Housing Executive staff and representatives from local community groups and from the nominated housing association.

Housing Executive staff were on hand to explain what the test was about and guide people through the housing application process.

The representatives from Rural Housing Association and Ark Housing Association displayed images of their existing housing schemes and were able to discuss their proposals for the new schemes.

Community representatives from Rathlin Community Development Association and Ballyhornan Realm Interagency Group worked closely with the Housing Executive to publicise events and encourage local people to attend.

The response to the information events in both locations exceeded expectations and an increase in the number of people on the waiting lists for both areas has enabled support to be given for new build schemes which the housing associations are now working on.

Introduction

In November 2016, 'Sustainable Rural Communities', the Housing Executive's Rural Strategy & Action Plan 2016-2020 was launched by the former Minister for Communities.

The strategy examines housing needs and issues which are specific to our rural customers and sets out how we plan to work with rural stakeholders to address these needs and issues over the next four years.

The Rural Strategy also reaffirms the Housing Executive's commitment to rural proofing all policies, strategies and services and the need to ensure that the monitoring and delivery structures are in place to fulfil the new statutory duty when the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 comes into effect in June 2018.

In 2016/17, the Housing Executive has invested a total of approximately £48.41 million in rural areas which includes a wide range of housing and support services as well as funding to help to create and maintain vibrant and sustainable communities. See table below:

This first Annual Progress Report summarises the progress that has been made between April 2016 and March 2017 against the 43 actions contained within the Rural Strategy which will contribute to the achievement of our five key objectives for rural housing:

- 1) To plan for 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.

Activity Area	Spend (£m)
Planned Maintenance & Capital Improvement Work*	10.3
Response Maintenance	8.1
Grounds Maintenance**	0.84
Private Sector Grants*	15.7
Supporting People***	7
Community Development (including Social Enterprise and Regeneration funding)	0.5
Investment in New Build	5.97
Total	48.41

* Approximate figure based on (average scheme cost) x (no. of rural completions in 16/17)

** Figure based on spend between May 2016 and April 2017

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



Rural advice at Balmoral Show

The Balmoral Show is an annual event hosted by the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society (RUAS). In May 2017 approximately 115,000 people attended over a four day period.

The Housing Executive funded a stand at the show which provided the opportunity to promote how we identify and address the specific needs of our rural customers and offered advice and guidance to those who wish to avail of our services.

The 2017 Rural Community Awards were launched by the Director of Regional Services and the Director of Bryson Energy at the Balmoral Show stand and advertised through social media and on the Housing Executive website.

Staff at the Housing Executive stand dealt with queries related to energy efficiency advice and grants; social investment and housing management issues, the rural community awards, rural planning issues and community development opportunities.

There were a large number of entries to 'win an Amazon Fire' competition promoted in 'Rural Matters' and the winner was Alison Hempton from Gortin.

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 1

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

	Outputs - Actions	Progress at March 2017
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 five rural locations.	Following a review of the rural housing needs survey process and pilot tests in Rathlin and Ballyhornan, a revised policy/procedure was drafted and approved following consultation with local and regional managers. In 2016/17 tests took place in Rathlin, Ballyhornan and Seaforde. All three delivered positive results.
2.	Examine the potential to capture information from rural housing applicants which may help determine where housing shortages exist in rural areas.	When a customer contacts the Housing Executive we look in detail with them at their housing options and choices. The starting point is to determine and capture where the customer wants to live, including in rural areas, and provide them with effective, relevant housing advice and information at the earliest possible stage which will let the customer make choices about which option is best for them.
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.	Rural housing need and rural housing perspectives have been included in responses to Preferred Option Papers for the new Local Development Plans. The Housing Executive responses have highlighted a preference for sustainable development, which incorporates the provision of homes within existing settlements with a limited amount of housing within the open countryside in appropriate circumstances.
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 2016/17 the rural target (10.8% 166 units) was not met. A total of 84 units were started in rural areas, 40 of which were Existing Satisfactory Purchases/Off The Shelf units demonstrating the increasing difficulty in delivering rural new build schemes. This has been attributed to a lack of available development sites in rural areas, the increased cost associated with the development and management of small, dispersed schemes and general delays in getting schemes on site. However, the gross rural new build target for 2017/18 currently contains 193 units which if delivered will be a considerable uplift from 2016/17. With the renewed focus through the Rural Strategy on working closely with associations and communities to identify rural need and potential housing sites, it is hoped that we can facilitate rural schemes where they are needed.
5.	Highlight to housing providers in the Housing Executive's Commissioning Prospectus those rural locations where social/affordable housing is required.	The Commissioning Prospectus has been published and is available on the Housing Executive website. This includes rural areas of unmet need where 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.	A programme of rural site identification studies has been agreed with and is being undertaken by the Regional Placeshaping teams. Once completed, studies will be circulated to housing associations to enable and encourage the identification of housing development sites.
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 where possible. At present the affordable element is likely to involve a private sale assisted by co-ownership. We are at an early stage of examining methodologies for the assessment of affordable housing demand in order to help determine areas where need for this type of housing exists in order to plan for future affordable/mixed tenure housing schemes.



The seven actions which support this objective are focused on the delivery of a rural housing enabler service, assisting rural communities who wish to examine the provision of affordable housing in their area.

At March 2017, all seven actions were on target to be delivered.

Key achievements for 2016/17 include:

- £5.97 million was invested in the development of 84 new social homes in rural areas;
- Rural housing need testing in Rathlin, Ballyhornan and Seaforde delivered encouraging results and planning for new build schemes is underway;
- Rural areas of housing need have been highlighted to local councils and housing associations through local Housing Investment Plans and the Commissioning Prospectus.

Rathlin

Apex completed the development of 10 new build social houses on Rathlin Island in August 2013. The first new build scheme on Rathlin for over 20 years.

Rathlin is Northern Ireland's only off shore inhabited Island and is both a Special Area of Conservation and a Special Protection Area; an exceptional location where the implementation of robust environmental procedures were demanded to provide protection to the environment without compromise on the timely delivery of this project.

RCDA, in conjunction with the local primary school, named the development 'Gort Beag' which is gaelic for 'Wee Field'.

The Rathlin Island scheme won the 2013 Environmental Sustainability Award at the NI Constructing Excellence awards that celebrates

excellence in the NI construction industry.

After visiting new houses and speaking to residents at the official opening of the scheme on 10 October 2013, Minister McCausland said:

"Rathlin is Northern Ireland's only inhabited offshore island and is a unique asset. These homes will help protect the future of the Island and ensure that it remains a permanent residential community for generations to come".

In October 2016 a housing needs survey identified additional housing needs in Rathlin, which has enabled support to be given for a new build scheme through Rural Housing Association.

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 2:

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

	Outputs - Actions:	Progress at March 2017
8.	Ensure that Housing Executive planned maintenance programmes deliver investment to rural housing stock in accordance with the new Asset Management Strategy.	During 2016/17, planned maintenance was started on 5682 rural homes, representing 16.6% of all starts. This mainly comprised external cyclical maintenance, 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.	During 2016/17 a total of 560 grants were started in rural areas (41.4% of total) and 538 grants were completed (33.5% of total). Rural starts included 404 Disabled Facilities Grants, 45 Home Repairs Assistance Grants, 106 Renovation Grants and 5 Replacement Grants Rural completions included 339 Disabled Facilities Grants, 44 Home Repairs Assistance Grants, 104 Repairs Grants, 48 Renovation Grants and three 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) are promoted at rural events where possible. Available grants have been promoted at housing information events and at the Housing Executive stand at the Balmoral Show in May 2017.
11.	Monitor the uptake of the Affordable Warmth and Boiler Replacement schemes in rural areas.	During 2016/17 a total of 856 rural properties benefitted from the Housing Executive's Boiler Replacement Scheme, 26.7% of the total. 2,640 rural properties benefitted from the Housing Executive/Council led Affordable Warmth Scheme, 47% of the 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.	Our Grants Department continues to contribute to the DfC review of the policy on support for repair and improvement in the private sector.
13.	Register and renew registrations of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) identified in rural areas as required.	There are 163 rural HMOs, 140 of which are registered and 20 are exempt from registration. The highest proportion of rural HMOs is in the Fermanagh/Omagh district (29), the lowest is in the Lisburn/Castlereagh district (four).
14.	Monitor uptake of the Housing Executive/Bryson Energy Oil Buying Clubs scheme in rural areas.	All 27 of the Housing Executive/Bryson Energy Oil buying clubs extend to rural areas, with over 80% located within rural areas. By 2016/17 approximately three million litres of oil were purchased through rural oil buying clubs supported by the Housing Executive and Bryson Energy.
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.	39% of the schools included in the primary school energy programme are located in rural areas.
16.	Target at least 15% of the Housing Executive's Solar Photovoltaic (PV) programme in rural areas.	To date this project is not advertised for tender as other funding options are currently being investigated.
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 led in a recent EU Funding Interreg application for a feasibility study into renewable energy options for district heating in Irvinestown, Fermanagh. Whilst unsuccessful on this occasion, we are scoping the possibility to re submit on the final EU Call in Autumn. The Housing Executive continues to seek innovative solutions to tackle fuel poverty, which is more predominant in rural NI.



The 10 actions under Objective 2 are aimed at facilitating the improvement of rural housing stock and promoting energy efficiency. At March 2017, nine of the 10 actions were on target to be delivered.

Key achievements for 2016/17 include:

- Approximately £10.3m was invested in the planned maintenance of our rural housing stock including external cyclical maintenance, heating installations and kitchen/bathroom repairs and replacements;
- A further £8.1m was invested in response maintenance and repairs to our rural homes and approximately £840,000 was spent on maintaining Housing Executive land in rural areas;
- A total Private Sector Grants investment of approximately £15.7m in rural areas, contributing to the improvement and increased energy efficiency of rural housing stock.
- A Housing Executive stand at the Balmoral Show in May was supported by Grants, Social Enterprise, Energy Conservation and Homelessness staff;
- By 2016/17 approximately three million litres of oil were purchased through oil buying clubs supported by the Housing Executive and Bryson Energy helping rural households to save on energy costs.

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

Oil Buying Clubs

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

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

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

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

More rural households are wanted to 'join their local oil club'! So contact our partner:

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

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

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 3:

To provide housing support to vulnerable people in rural areas

	Outputs - Actions:	Progress at March 2017
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.	At the end of March 2017, 1,954 of the 16,356 applicants registered as Full Duty Applicants were on the waiting list for a rural area, (12% of the total registered as homeless). The Housing Executive's revised Homelessness Strategy 'Ending Homelessness Together' published in April 2017, provides strategic direction on how homelessness will be addressed from April 2017 to March 2022. Prior to consultation, the strategy was subject to rural proofing and all issues raised were given full consideration in the final report.
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.	In line with guidance from DAERA the Rural Unit will develop a 'Rural Awareness' training package to deliver to frontend staff which should identify the issues which are often specific to rural customers and more importantly what the procedure is when a gap in or lack of service is identified.
20.	Promote the availability of homelessness advice and support services in rural areas.	There is an action within the Homelessness Strategy that relates to a communication strategy to prevent homelessness. In implementing this action appropriate consideration will be given to rural homelessness and specifically the promotion of advice and support services in rural areas. The rural homelessness advice leaflet 'No place of your own' will be updated to reflect changes in frontend services i.e. the local housing solutions and support teams.
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.	The mapping exercise identifying the floating support services across NI is well advanced. This will help us to identify any rural areas where the provision of services should be examined.
22.	Develop Outcomes Framework for all Supporting People services to include an update on rural dwellers where appropriate.	In the context of the policy review of Supporting People, Pilots are now in progress with a number of service provider organisations, several of which are in relation to services with a rural element.
23.	Examine the potential to fund a rural community based service aimed at older people.	During 2016/17 Supporting People have explored opportunities to extend floating support across a range of client groups, that includes older people in rural areas, and this exercise will inform the commissioning priorities for 2017/18.
24.	Monitor assessment and provision of housing for wheelchair needs and provision for complex needs on a rural-urban basis.	At the end of March 2017 there were 96 rural applicants on the waiting list who required wheelchair accommodation (20.25% of total (474)) and 663 rural applicants who have complex needs (16% of total (4148)). Five rural new build social wheelchair accessible units were completed in 2016/17.
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 our Rural Residents Forum also sits on the Disability Forum and ensures that information from both forums is shared.
26.	Monitor the development of pending Welfare changes and mitigations on Housing Executive activities to determine if any changes are required as a consequence.	The full impact of Welfare Reform in rural areas is being closely examined, in particular the Social Sector Size Criteria on Housing Executive and housing association tenants who are under-occupying their properties when mitigation ends in 2020.

The nine actions included to support Objective 3 are focused on identifying rural homelessness and housing support needs and promoting available support services in rural areas. At March 2017, all nine of the actions are on target to be delivered.

Key achievements during 2016/17 include:

- The Housing Executive's revised Homelessness Strategy 'Ending Homelessness Together' published in April 2017 was subject to rural

proofing and all rural issues raised were given full consideration in the final report;

- During 2016/17, approximately £5.5m of Supporting People funding was invested in accommodation based services in rural areas and a further £1.5m¹ was invested in Floating Support services;
- A mapping exercise to identify the customer base of Housing Executive funded floating support services has been well advanced

which will help to identify rural areas where the provision of services should be examined;

- The full impact of Welfare Reform in rural areas is being closely examined, in particular the Social Sector Size Criteria on Housing Executive and housing association tenants who are under-occupying their properties when mitigation ends in 2020.

1. Approximate figure as these services also cover urban areas.



Ending Homelessness Together

Published in April 2017, and with a vision of 'Ending Homelessness Together', the new Strategy seeks to build upon the work of previous Strategies while promoting innovative responses to tackle new and innovative challenges.

The Strategy was subject to a public consultation in December 2016 and January 2017 and numerous voluntary and statutory partners, including the Rural Community Network, were involved in the development of the Strategy.

The Strategy acknowledges the unique circumstances that rural communities face in terms of homelessness and, in keeping with the vision of 'Ending Homelessness Together'; we will work with all relevant partners to address issues facing rural households. While the Strategy contains actions that are focused on accommodation based issues, it will be supported by an inter-departmental action plan that will focus on addressing gaps in those non-accommodation services that have the potential to impact on those who are homeless or most at risk of homelessness.

Issues that are potentially more prevalent in rural areas are hidden homelessness, where households are homeless but have not asked for advice or assistance, or chronic homelessness that manifests itself in a different way to the rough sleeping that is sometimes associated with urban areas. Actions to address these specific concerns include:

- A communication strategy that will ensure households, including those in rural communities, can access the right support quickly;
- The identification of pre-crisis homeless indicators and a training package for relevant key front line workers;
- The identification of chronic homeless need outside Belfast and Derry/Londonderry with appropriate action plans where necessary;
- The formation of Local Area Groups (based on Housing Executive areas) that will ensure the Strategy is implemented at a local level. These groups will ensure rural concerns are identified and addressed at a local level.

The Strategy contains a further 13 actions that will ensure issues facing rural communities are addressed. A copy of the Strategy can be found on the Housing Executive website or by emailing: homelessness.strategy@nihe.gov.uk

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 4:

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

	Outputs - Actions:	Progress at March 2017
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 Housing Executive policies/strategies which are out for consultation and compile a response where appropriate. The Forum has prepared and agreed their work plan for 2017/18. They hope to support the delivery of future rural housing needs tests by preparing a consultation leaflet for rural communities who wish to examine the potential for new homes in their area.
28.	Undertake at least one rural research project a year with the Rural Residents' Forum and Rural Community Network.	Research completed during 2015/16 into the effectiveness of the latent demand testing process fed into the review of this procedure during 2016/17. This year, Rural Community Network & RRF are focusing specifically on the shortage of rural new build schemes and have prepared a paper highlighting the key issues which they hope to raise with housing associations, government departments and elected representatives.
29.	Ensure that at least one young person from a rural area is included in the shadow housing forum.	NI Youth Forum currently scoping and meeting with Area Managers, youth groups and Community Groups to identify potential young people to get involved in the Young Champions for Change Project
30.	Ensure that rural areas are considered for funding/support programmes stemming from the Housing Executive's Community Cohesion Strategy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least four rural estates in the BRIC2 programme; At least 10 rural projects funded as part of an Estate Based Strategy. 	The BRIC2 programme includes six rural areas in Phase 1 and four in Phase 2. A total of 18 rural areas are on the community cohesion funding programme including two in Derry/Strabane, two in Causeway C&G, four in Mid-Ulster, one in Ards & North Down, two in Fermanagh/Omagh, one in Mid & East Antrim and one 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 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.	Two of the 10 schemes included in the TBUC shared new build programme are located in rural areas. Choice Housing Association completed a 12 unit scheme at Crossgar Road, Saintfield in Jan 2016 which has been fully allocated and has met the criteria required for shared status. Clanmil Housing Association has a 17 unit scheme onsite at Main Street, Dundrum.
33.	Promote the availability of advice and support services which deal with community safety in rural areas.	Community Safety projects are currently being funded in Strathfoyle and Donemana and rural areas are also included in Community Safety Warden Schemes supported by the Housing Executive in Newry, Mourne & Down, Antrim/Newtownabbey, Mid & East Antrim, Derry/Strabane and Fermanagh/Omagh councils.
34.	Ensure that at least one rural community is included in the pilot demonstration project aimed at increasing digital inclusion.	Several tenants in Fermanagh/Enniskillen are going to continue with the D4C pilot project to carry on with momentum and to ensure connectivity with each other.

The eight actions included to support Objective 4 are focused on working with and empowering our rural housing communities to develop and maintain safe and cohesive neighbourhoods. At March 2017, all eight of the actions are on target to be delivered.

Key achievements for 2016/17 include:

- The target for rural community funding programmes has been exceeded in 2016/17. An investment of £101,000 has enabled the inclusion of six rural areas in Phase 1 and four in Phase 2 of the BRIC 2 programme and the support of 18 rural community cohesion projects;
- Two of the 10 schemes included in the Together Building United Communities shared new build programme are located in rural areas. A 12 unit scheme in Saintfield is complete and fully allocated and a 17 unit scheme in Dundrum is currently on site;
- The Housing Executive are working with local councils and communities to deliver rural community safety projects which are being monitored and publicised where possible.



Community Safety Wardens for the district

A new community safety initiative, has seen Community Safety Wardens operating across the Fermanagh and Omagh district. The scheme was launched at the end of November 2016 with five part time Community Safety Wardens operating throughout the District. They are supported by one full time warden who has strong links with local communities.

The role of the Community Safety Warden Scheme is to engage, support and listen to the needs of local communities and in doing so act as a deterrent and help reduce low level crime and anti-social behaviour. The Warden is often the first point of contact in dealing with minor incidents of anti-social behaviour and neighbour disputes and is a key link between the community, PSNI, Housing Executive, Council and other agencies, to help reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

The Community Safety Warden programme, is delivered by Fermanagh and Omagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) and is part funded by the Housing Executive.

Traditional policing methods are not always effective in certain situations and the wardens offer a different approach to community safety while at the same time providing the statutory agencies with the support they need to implement a community based policing

approach. The Community Safety Wardens work closely with local communities and agencies such as the PSNI, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and the Housing Executive, to provide a coordinated response to community safety issues and reduce the fear of crime.

The uniformed Community Safety Wardens undertake high visibility patrols on foot and in a liveried vehicle across the district. Patrols take place throughout the week and at weekends, in the evenings and into the night. Patrols target areas which are prioritised by our partners in the project so that resources can be used as effectively as possible. The wardens act as a deterrent and provide a reassuring presence to residents throughout the district.



STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 5:

To work in partnership with others to assist in rural development

	Outputs - Actions:	Progress at March 2017
35.	Ensure that the issues facing rural communities are raised to local councils through the Community Planning process.	We are working closely with local councils to ensure rural housing needs and issues are considered in each community plan and also that our land asset is identified as a potential opportunity for services which will benefit the community.
36.	Promote and monitor the uptake in rural areas of Housing Executive community funding initiatives including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Grants; • Social Enterprise Funding; • Social Enterprise Agreements. 	To date the Social Enterprise Team has engaged with a wide range of rural communities through the HCN, Rural Forum, Social Enterprise Hubs, area managers, local offices, and individual visits. Out of 34 social enterprises/projects funded in 2016/17, 12 were from rural constituencies.
37.	Develop and implement a match funding programme to support the delivery of the 2014-2020 NI Rural Development Programme (RDP).	The Housing Executive launched an RDP match funding initiative in May 2017 and received a high volume of applications for support of Basic Services and Village Renewal projects across rural NI. Following assessment, £137,000 of funding has been offered to 10 community groups.
38.	Monitor the delivery of the 'Heritage in Housing' initiative in rural areas.	In 2015/16 the refurbishment of three properties in Richhill was facilitated with Heritage in Housing funding. All three properties have now been privately let. At the end of Year 2, two properties in Portaferry are close to completion and one further property in Richhill was completed.
39.	Promote and administer the annual 'Rural Community Awards' competition.	The 2017 Rural Community Awards competition was launched at the Balmoral Show in May. This year the Rural & Sustainable Development Units worked together to run a joint competition with a new award – 'Sustainable Village of the Year'.
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.	There have been no rural community land transfers to report so far during 2016/17. Housing Services' Community Lettings policy will continue to facilitate rural housing communities' development and local initiatives, where practicable.



The six actions included under this objective set out our commitment to work in partnership with other government depts, local councils and other funding bodies to assist in rural development. At March 2017, all six of the actions are on target to be delivered.

Key achievements during 2016/17 include:

- Rural social housing need is highlighted to local councils in the draft Community Plan consultation responses;
- Approximately £240k was invested in 12 social enterprise projects in rural areas;
- The Housing Executive launched a Rural Development Programme match funding initiative through which

£137,000 of funding has been offered to 10 community groups for projects to bring basic services to their rural areas;

- At the end of Year 2 of the Heritage in Housing funding programme, the Housing Executive has facilitated the refurbishment of four properties in Richhill and another two are close to completion in Portaferry;
- The 2016 Rural Community Awards were presented at the launch of the Strategy in November. This new award 'Sustainable Village of the Year' was introduced to celebrate and reward those community groups who take steps to promote environmental sustainability within their area.

Richhill Heritage in Housing scheme

The Housing Executive, alongside the Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage scheme, launched a pilot scheme called 'Heritage in Housing' in 2015/16.

Central to the delivery of a Townscape Heritage scheme is a joint funding pot, made up of the HLF grant (between £100,000 and £2million), together with funds from the grantees and any other partners, from which grants are made to private owners (third-party grants). Properties that have been empty, above or close to business premises will receive funding for repairs and improvements which will provide additional housing options in areas of need.

In total, 15 properties were selected to receive funding located within the 6 designated conservation areas (Portaferry, Richhill, Derry/Londonderry, Ballymoney, Donaghadee and Carrickfergus). Almost £100,000 was invested into properties in 2015/16 and a further £105,000 in 2016/17 on a three year programme aiming to complete in 2017/18.

The Housing Executive's Director for Regional Services Siobhan McCauley said:

"The aim of the Heritage in Housing' initiative is to reinstate empty properties, addressing blight and promoting affordable housing within town centres.

"A list of 65 potentially suitable properties across Northern Ireland were shortlisted, with 15 properties selected for refurbishment. By investing in empty properties in

urban areas, this will stimulate economic activity with areas populated after business hours.

"The Housing Executive is committed to fostering vibrant communities and the Heritage in Housing scheme will make a difference to homes and neighbourhoods through investment. The re-use of existing vacant space is a cost-effective means of creating additional housing accommodation which ultimately benefits the social life and economic vitality of the area."

Angela Lavin, Casework Manager of Heritage Lottery Fund NI said "Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) invests a huge amount of National Lottery players' money to make communities better places to live and work. An area's culture and heritage is important not just for its own sake, but it can also boost jobs and local economies, improve education and life chances and promote community cohesion and wellbeing.

"Our grant programmes including Townscape Heritage and Heritage Enterprise have been important tools for bringing out the distinctiveness of our towns and cities. We were delighted that the Housing Executive has been able to work alongside us with their Heritage in Housing programme. The complementary funding has enabled a wider range of historic properties to be brought back into use and the funding has helped to regenerate and transform towns and conservation areas into attractive and vibrant places. We look forward to work in partnership with the Housing Executive in future initiatives".

Chairperson of Richhill Buildings Preservation Trust Jim Speers says, "The grant contributions made by the Housing Executive and HLF have benefited the village in many ways. It has allowed the restoration of buildings within the conservation area preserving them for future generations and has brought vacant floor space back into use by providing homes."



MONITORING & COMMUNICATION

	Outputs - Actions:	Progress at March 2017
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.	An edition of Rural Matters was prepared for circulation at the Balmoral Show in May 2017 and the Annual Progress Report outlines our achievements for 2016/17. We continue to engage with internal and external stakeholders in order to promote any ongoing schemes/initiatives.
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 Housing Executive in rural areas is 89% 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.	DAERA has published guidance notes and templates to help government departments make provisions for the introduction of the Rural Needs Act. The statutory duty will be introduced for the Housing Executive in June 2018 with the first monitoring report due in Summer 2019. We are currently looking at adopting a bespoke training package to be delivered throughout the organisation as well as designing and implementing measures which will ensure all policies, strategies and services are rural proofed and this is recorded and monitored on an on-going basis.

The three actions included under this theme have been identified as being necessary to support the monitoring and communication of the Rural Strategy. At March 2017, all three of the actions are on target to be delivered.

Key achievements during 2016/17 include:

- The Continuous Tenants Omnibus Survey indicates that overall tenant satisfaction is 89% in rural areas compared to 86% in urban areas;
- Work is underway to design and implement measures to ensure that from June 2018, the Housing Executive will pay due regard to the needs of rural communities as set out in the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.



Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

On 1 June 2017, the Rural Needs Act came in to operation for district councils and government departments. The Act is due to come into operation for a number of public authorities, including the Housing Executive, on 1 June 2018.

The Rural Needs Act places a duty on public authorities 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 also requires public authorities to provide information to DAERA on how they have fulfilled this duty. This information will be summarised in an annual report to be laid before the Assembly.



New build completions

Housing Association	Parliamentary Constituency	Location	Need Group	Units
Apex Housing	East Antrim	Larne	General Needs	1
Apex Housing	East Londonderry	Dungiven	General Needs	17
Apex Housing	East Londonderry	Dungiven	Physical Disabilities	2
Apex Housing	East Londonderry	Castlerock	General Needs	5
Apex Housing	East Londonderry	Castlerock	Physical Disabilities	1
Triangle	East Londonderry	Claudy	General Needs	3
Apex Housing	Fermanagh & South Tyrone	Brookeborough	Physical Disabilities	1
Rural	Foyle	Eglinton	General Needs	1
Rural	Foyle	Eglinton	General Needs	1
Connswater	Lagan Valley	Dromara	General Needs	2
Helm Housing	Mid Ulster	Maghera	General Needs	1
Triangle	Mid Ulster	Ballinderry	General Needs	5
Choice	Newry & Armagh	Middletown	General Needs	6
Choice	Newry & Armagh	Newry	Physical Disabilities	1
South Ulster	Newry & Armagh	Bessbrook	General Needs	1
Triangle	North Antrim	Cargan	General Needs	6
Clanmil	North Down	Millisle	General Needs	2
Helm Housing	North Down	Millisle	General Needs	6
Fold	South Down	Ardglass	General Needs	18
Habinteg	South Down	Rostrevor	General Needs	5
Helm Housing	South Down	Mayobridge	General Needs	2
South Ulster	South Down	Rostrevor	General Needs	1
Rural	Strangford	Killyleagh	General Needs	1
Rural	Strangford	Killyleagh	General Needs	1
Rural	Strangford	Saintfield	General Needs	1
Clanmil	Strangford	Kircubbin	General Needs	6
Helm Housing	Strangford	Cloughey	General Needs	4
South Ulster	Strangford	Ballygowan	General Needs	2
Rural	West Tyrone	Sion Mills	General Needs	1

Embracing all our neighbours



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MANDARIN

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

CANTONESE

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

POLISH

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

PORTUGUESE

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

LITHUANIAN

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

RUSSIAN

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

SLOVAK

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

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