



Sustainable Rural Communities

Rural Strategy & Action Plan

Annual Progress Report

2017-2018





Foreword

We are delighted to present the second Annual Progress Report for our Rural Strategy and Action Plan.

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 launched 'Sustainable Rural Communities' back in 2016, following extensive consultation with partners in other departments and agencies, and with community representatives from around rural Northern Ireland. Perhaps most significantly, the Strategy identifies the challenges associated with the provision of new social housing in rural Northern Ireland and it sets out how we plan to work with rural communities and housing providers in an effort to encourage and facilitate housing schemes where they are most needed.

The Rural Needs Act introduces a duty for all government departments, councils and a number of public authorities, including the Housing Executive, to consider the needs of rural communities when preparing policies, plans and strategies and designing and delivering public services. This new statutory duty presents an opportunity for us, alongside other public policy makers and service providers, to recognise and account for the difference between the needs of our urban and rural communities. It also helps us to ensure that rural areas receive an equitable share of public resources.

We are now mid-way through our Rural Strategy and we are pleased to report that significant work has commenced on all 43 actions, with 5 now completed in full

and encouraging progress made on the remaining actions. All the actions included under the 5 objectives in the strategy were developed to ensure that an equitable share of available resources is directed to rural areas and to contribute to our vision for rural housing, which is:

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

This report summarises our progress to date and highlights our key achievements during 2017/18, which include:

- Approximately £57.3million was invested in our rural communities where just under 18% of our housing stock is located;
- Work commenced on 144 new build social homes in rural areas helping to address social housing need and regenerate communities - see page 4;
- We helped rural communities in 11 locations across NI to examine the need for new social and affordable housing in their areas - see page 4;
- Approximately £23.4million was invested in the maintenance and improvement of our rural housing stock - see page 8;
- Some £6.7million of Supporting People funding was provided for accommodation-based and floating support services in rural areas - see page 10;
- Rural community groups were supported through a total investment of £400,000, which included funding for social enterprise projects, community grants, community cohesion funding and capital funding for regeneration projects - see page 14.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have been involved in the delivery of the second 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 intend to maintain the momentum gained through the delivery of actions during the past two years and to ensure that over the next two years of our Strategy, we continue to improve our services in rural areas.

Professor Peter Roberts
Interim Chair

Clark Bailie
Chief Executive



Introduction

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

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 between 2016 and 2020.

The Rural Strategy also reaffirms the Housing Executive's commitment to consider rural needs in the development and review of all our policies, strategies and plans and in the design and delivery of our public services, in line with our new statutory duty under the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016, which came into effect in June 2018.

At the close of year 2, strong progress has been made against the 43 actions contained within the Rural Strategy. This second Annual Progress Report summarises our activities and successes between April 2017 and March 2018, which continue to 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 2017/18, the Housing Executive invested approximately £57.3million in rural areas. This includes a wide range of housing and support services as well as funding to help to create and maintain vibrant and sustainable communities.

Activity Area	Spend (£m)
Planned Maintenance & Capital Improvement Work*	15
Response Maintenance	8.4
Grounds Maintenance**	1.4
Private Sector Grants*	14.3
Supporting People***	6.7
Community Development (including Social Enterprise and Regeneration funding)	0.4
Investment in New Build	11.1
Total	57.3

*Approximate figure based on (average scheme cost) x (no. of rural completions in 17/18)

** Figure based on spend between May 2017 and April 2018

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

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 1

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

	Actions	2017/18 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 five rural locations.	In 2017/18, we completed rural housing need tests in Dromara, Trillick, Aghadowey and Swatragh and postal surveys were commenced for Cargan, Derrymacash/Derrytrasna, Annaghmore/Eglis, Erganagh, Moorfields, Ballyhornan and Blackwatertown. All of the tests carried out in 2017/18 had a positive response and, to date, two new housing schemes have already been supported.
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 make choices about which housing option is best for them. We are investigating how this information can be reported upon and used to help to determine where housing shortages may exist in rural areas.
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 2017/18, we used the 2017-2022 Housing Need Assessment figures to ensure that sufficient rural schemes were included on the Social Housing Development Programme and that any rural areas of unmet housing need were highlighted in the Commissioning Prospectus for housing associations. We also continue to work with Councils on the preparation of Local Development Plans in order to promote the inclusion of housing policies which support the needs of rural communities.
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 2017/18 the rural target of the Social Housing Development Programme was 11.4% (199 units). The target was not met, with 144 units starting on site by 31st March. However this was a 71% uplift on delivery compared to 2016/17. 96 of these units were provided in new build schemes and 48 were Existing Satisfactory Purchases/Off The Shelf/Rehabilitations.
5.	Highlight to housing providers in the Housing Executive's Commissioning Prospectus those rural locations where social/affordable housing is required.	The second annual Commissioning Prospectus for the period 2018/19 - 2020/21 was published in February 2018. 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. In 2017/18 studies have been issued to housing associations for Carnlough and Rostrevor.
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. At present the affordable element is likely to involve a private sale, assisted by co-ownership. DfC are currently working on a range of approaches to the definition of affordable housing and affordable housing models. Following the strong response to the housing need test in Swatragh, 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.

Triangle started construction on 5 new social homes at St Brigids Park in Culloville in March 2018. It is currently expected that these new properties will be completed early in 2019/20.



Objective 1

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

In March 2018, rural applicants made up 14% of the total waiting list for social housing and just under 13% of all applicants who are deemed to be in housing stress. This highlights the need to continue to increase social housing stock in rural areas.

The 7 actions which support objective 1 are focused on the delivery of a rural housing enabler service. This involves the Housing Executive both assisting rural communities who wish to examine the need for affordable housing in their area, and also encouraging and supporting housing associations in the delivery of new build schemes to address this need.

In 2017/18 we carried out rural housing need testing in 11 rural locations and invested £11.13m into the provision of new social homes in rural areas. This resulted in 144 new homes, helping to address housing need and sustain our rural communities.

At March 2018, all 7 actions remain on target to be delivered. The key achievements for each action are set out on page 4.

What we do differently for rural areas:

- Housing Need Tests to uncover areas of hidden rural housing need.
- Site identification studies to assist housing associations to find sites in areas of unmet rural housing need.
- Include a % target for new rural social housing in the Social Housing Development Programme.

In March 2018 we carried out a housing need test in Swatragh. There was a very strong response from people in the area and the Housing Executive is now examining the potential for further affordable housing in the village.



Radius completed the development of 24 new social homes at Pottinger Street in Cullybackey in January 2018. This included 18 units of family housing and 6 units of housing for the active elderly.


144
UNITS
STARTED

11
Housing
Need Tests
commenced



Rural Strategy Update 2017/18

Rural Social Housing Starts 2017/18

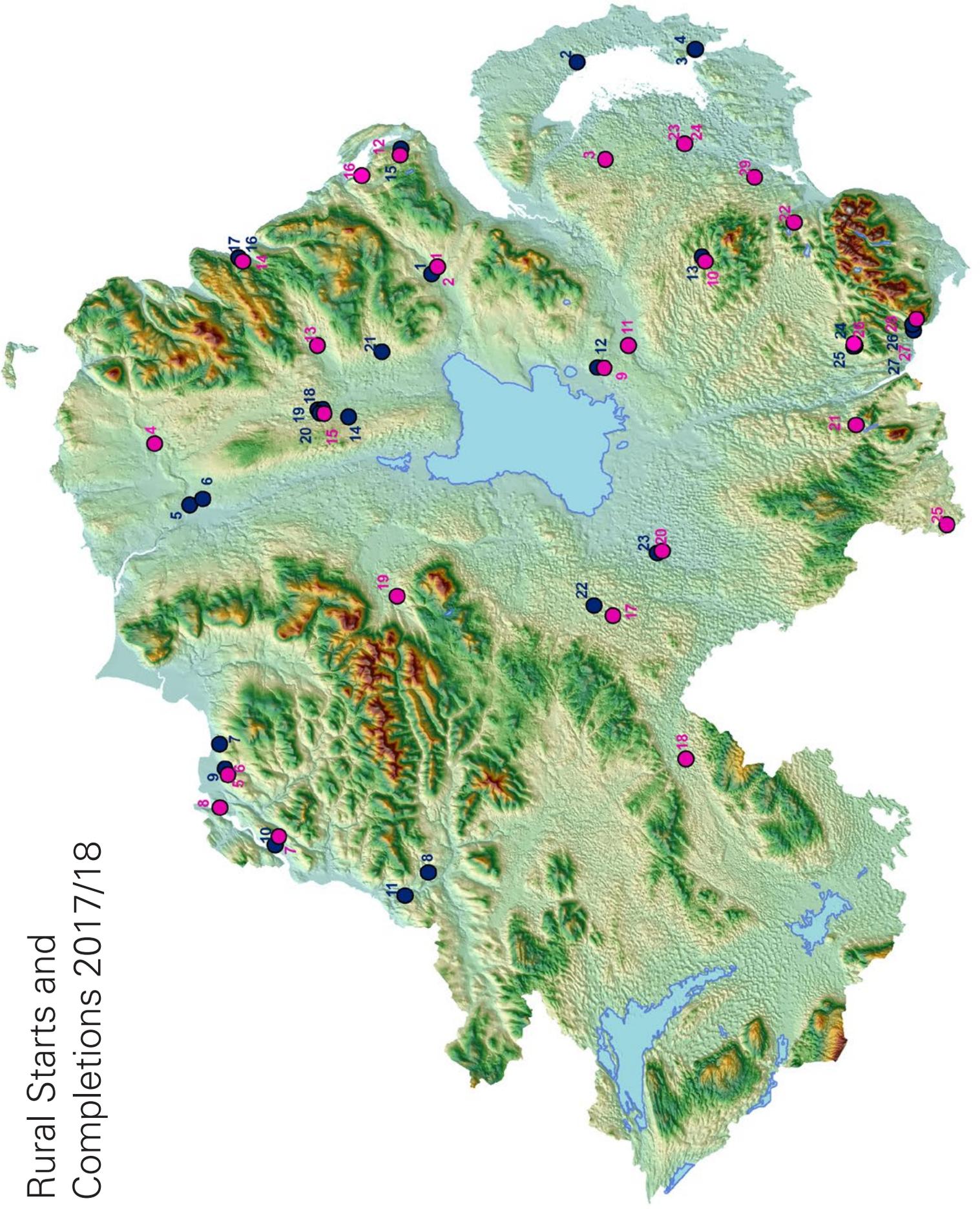
Map ref	Housing Association	Council	Location	Scheme Type	Units
1	Rural	Antrim & Newtownabbey	Doagh	ESP	1
2	Triangle	Antrim & Newtownabbey	Doagh	OTS	4
3	Triangle	Ards & North Down	Ballygowan	Rehab	1
4	Triangle	Causeway Coast & Glens	Stranocum	OTS	6
5	Apex Housing	Derry & Strabane	Eglinton	New Build	14
6	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Eglinton	ESP	9
7	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Newbuildings	ESP	3
8	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Strathfoyle	ESP	1
9	Rural	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Aghalee	ESP	2
10	Connswater	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Dromara	ESP	1
11	Connswater	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Moira	ESP	1
12	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Ballycarry	ESP	1
13	Triangle	Mid & East Antrim	Broughshane	New Build	8
14	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Carnlough	ESP	2
15	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Cullybackey	ESP	2
16	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Glynn	ESP	1
17	Choice	Mid Ulster	Castlecaulfield	New Build	5
18	Choice	Mid Ulster	Clogher	Rehab	1
19	Rural	Mid Ulster	Draperstown	ESP	1
20	Rural	Mid Ulster	Moy	ESP	1
21	Radius	Newry, Mourne & Down	Carnlough	OTS	5
22	Apex Housing	Newry, Mourne & Down	Castlewellan	New Build	34
23	Clanmil	Newry, Mourne & Down	Crossgar	New Build	20
24	Rural	Newry, Mourne & Down	Crossgar	ESP	1
25	Triangle	Newry, Mourne & Down	Culloville	New Build	5
26	Radius	Newry, Mourne & Down	Mayobridge	OTS	2
27	Choice	Newry, Mourne & Down	Rostrevor	ESP	1
28	Radius	Newry, Mourne & Down	Rostrevor	ESP	1
29	Radius	Newry, Mourne & Down	Seaforde	New Build	10
	Total				144

Rural Social Housing Completions 2017/18

Map ref	Housing Association	Council	Location	Scheme Type	Units
1	Rural	Antrim & Newtownabbey	Doagh	ESP	1
2	Clanmil	Ards & North Down	Greyabbey	New Build	10
3	Ark	Ards & North Down	Portaferry	New Build	4
4	Connswater	Ards & North Down	Portaferry	New Build	23
5	Triangle	Causeway Coast & Glens	Balnmore	ESP	1
6	Triangle	Causeway Coast & Glens	Bendooragh	ESP	2
7	Triangle	Causeway Coast & Glens	Greysteel	ESP	2
8	Triangle	Derry & Strabane	Douglas Bridge	OTS	4
9	Triangle	Derry & Strabane	Eglinton	ESP	2
10	Rural	Derry & Strabane	Newbuildings	ESP	1
11	Triangle	Derry & Strabane	Sion Mills	ESP	2
12	Rural	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Aghalee	ESP	1
13	Connswater	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Dromara	OTS	2
14	Triangle	Mid & East Antrim	Ahoghill	ESP	1
15	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Ballycarry	ESP	1
16	Triangle	Mid & East Antrim	Carnlough	ESP	2
17	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Carnlough	ESP	1
18	Rural	Mid & East Antrim	Cullybackey	ESP	3
19	Triangle	Mid & East Antrim	Cullybackey	ESP	1
20	Fold	Mid & East Antrim	Cullybackey	New Build	24
21	Ark	Mid & East Antrim	Kells	New Build	9
22	Rural	Mid Ulster	Donaghmore	ESP	1
23	Triangle	Mid Ulster	Moy	ESP	1
24	Helm Housing	Newry, Mourne & Down	Mayobridge	OTS	2
25	Radius	Newry, Mourne & Down	Mayobridge	OTS	4
26	Choice	Newry, Mourne & Down	Rostrevor	ESP	1
27	Radius	Newry, Mourne & Down	Rostrevor	ESP	1
	Total				107

ESP - Existing Satisfactory Purchase. OTS - Off-the-Shelf

Rural Starts and Completions 2017/18



STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 2:

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

	Actions	2017/18 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 2017/18, we had commenced planned maintenance on 5,521 rural homes, representing 17% of all our planned maintenance starts (32,450). 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.	In 2017/18, a total of 531 private sector grants were approved in rural areas (42% of total) and 524 grants were completed (34% of total). This included 391 Disabled Facilities Grant approvals, 43 Home Repairs Assistance Grant approvals, 93 Renovation Grant approvals and 4 Replacement Grant approvals.
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 on Rathlin Island, in Ballyhornan and in Trillick. Grants staff were also available 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 2017/18 a total of 673 rural properties benefitted from the Housing Executive's Boiler Replacement Scheme, 22% of the total. 1,908 rural properties benefitted from the Housing Executive/Council led Affordable Warmth Scheme, 46% 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.	We continue to contribute to the DfC review of the policy on support for repair and improvement in the private sector. It is expected that a public consultation will be the next step in the review process.
13.	Register and renew registrations of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) identified in rural areas as required.	There are 135 registered rural Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The highest proportion of registered rural HMOs is in the Fermanagh/Omagh district (25), the lowest is in the Antrim and Newtownabbey borough (3).
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 4000 members. Over 80% of these serve rural areas, for example Bannvale, which serves Ahoghill, Bellaghy, Lavy and Portglenone, and Mournederg Partnership which serves Castledearg, Churchtown and Killiter. At the end of March 2018, over 7.4 million litres of oil have been delivered, at savings of approximately 8.7%.
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 2017/18 the primary school energy programme visited 160 schools across NI. 72% of these schools were in rural areas. 16 schools entered the Sustainable Development Unit's Schools Energy Competition launched in February 2018. Of these, 12 were 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 continues to seek innovative solutions to tackle fuel poverty, which is more predominant in rural NI. We have made an application for EU funding to investigate renewable energy solutions for rural households across NI. If successful, this award will be used to fund a pilot project which will include rural Housing Executive properties in Fermanagh.



£15m

RURAL PLANNED MAINTENANCE



Rural schools included in the Primary School Energy Programme

70%

£8.4m

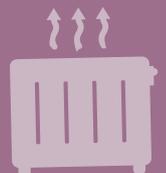
RURAL RESPONSE MAINTENANCE



AFFORDABLE WARMTH SCHEME

£7.8m

1,908 grants



Objective 2

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

The most recent House Condition Survey (2016) states that approximately two-thirds (68%) of all unfit dwellings are located in rural locations (an increase from 59% in 2011).

The 10 actions which support objective 2 are aimed at facilitating the improvement of rural housing stock and promoting energy efficiency. This includes planned and response maintenance of our own housing stock and also the promotion and provision of home improvement grants and energy saving advice for private sector home owners and landlords in rural areas.

During 2017/18, approximately £23m was invested in the maintenance of our rural housing stock. A further £14.3m was invested in Private Sector Grant funding, contributing to the improvement and increased energy efficiency of rural homes.

At March 2018, 1 action has been completed and 8 of the 9 remaining actions are on target to be delivered by 2020. The key achievements for each action are set out on page 8.

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.
- Investigate the use of innovative technologies to improve the energy efficiency of rural housing stock.



As part of our energy efficiency promotional activities the Housing Executive, in partnership with the Education Authority, ran a competition for P7 classes to create a poster which showcased how people could save energy in their home. The winners were Hazelbank Primary School, Aughafatten.



Rural Housing Executive properties in Maquresbridge that received new double glazing as part of our 2017/18 Planned Maintenance Programme.



STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 3:

To provide housing support to vulnerable people in rural areas

	Actions	2017/18 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 revised Homelessness Strategy 'Ending Homelessness Together' which was published in April 2017 provides strategic direction on how homelessness will be addressed from April 2017 to March 2022. Rural homelessness will feature in Area Action Plans which are currently under development and will shape the ongoing strategic planning of services. At the end of March 2018, 2,056 of the 17,520 applicants registered as FDA were on the waiting list for a rural area, (11.7% 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.	Training is under preparation for our front end Housing Services staff which will highlight our new duty under the Rural Needs Act. Training will focus on how the needs of our rural customers can differ from our urban customers and will emphasize the role of housing services staff in determining rural areas where there may be housing shortages during housing options discussions.
20.	Promote the availability of homelessness advice and support services in rural areas.	In line with our Homelessness Strategy we are currently examining how we can raise awareness of the causes and early warning signs of homelessness. E-learning will be rolled out across the Housing Executive, partner agencies and online and will be supplemented by face to face presentations to local representatives, interest groups and community groups. Our Rural Residents Forum was one of the first groups to receive this presentation on homelessness. During 2017/18, homelessness information and advice was provided and discussed at events associated with our rural housing need surveys.
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.	A recently completed mapping exercise highlights that 97 of our Supporting People funded accommodation based services are located in rural areas and 1,036 people in rural areas currently receive floating support. This will inform gaps/overlaps in support provision, including in rural areas.
22.	Develop Outcomes Framework for all Supporting People services to include an update on rural dwellers where appropriate.	The outcomes framework has now been completed. Outcome collection will focus on customer's experience of all long/short term services including how accessible the service was, how the service addressed their needs and any skills developed as a result. These experiences will be captured on a regional basis and so will 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.	During 2017/18 our Supporting People unit have been exploring opportunities to extend floating support across a range of client groups, which includes older people in rural areas. It is envisaged that these will inform 18/19 commissioning decisions.
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. The Housing Executive, in conjunction with NIFHA, is currently developing an Accessible Housing Register (AHR) for social housing stock in NI. We aim to implement this within 2018/19. At the end of March 2018 there were 89 rural applicants on the waiting list who required wheelchair accommodation (18.5% of total (480)) and 7,856 rural applicants who have complex needs (16.4% of total (4,794)). 6 rural social new build wheelchair standard units were completed in 2017/18.
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 specific 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 in many parts of 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 the Ballymena, Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Belfast, Coleraine, Derry (Richmond Chambers, Collon Terrace, Waterside and Waterloo Place), Limavady, Newry, Armagh, Dungannon, Enniskillen, Magherafelt, Omagh and Strabane offices to give customers internet access to allow them to manage their UC claim. Work is underway on researching customer experiences of Universal Credit and developing organisational responses to issues, where appropriate. This includes looking at the experiences of rural customers and identifying any rural specific issues.

Objective 3

To provide housing support to vulnerable people in rural areas

For people who need additional support or have specific care needs, living in a rural area may lead to increased isolation and reduced access to key services.

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

During 2017/18, 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 2018, 1 action has been completed and the remaining 8 are on target to be delivered by 2020. The key achievements for each action are set out on page 10.

Funded through the Supporting People Program, the Radius Floating Support Service provides Housing Support for up to 560 Older People. The service reaches rural areas throughout the Northern Health and Social Trust. It aims to promote and sustain greater independence, helping older people feel part of the community and access other services to help them stay in their own homes for longer, with the help of the support provided.

An existing service user (aged 83) living in Kells, a rural area of Co. Antrim, has benefited from the floating support service by attending regular day trips and social events in Ballymena. The service user, who suffers from arthritis, has had referrals made for Physiotherapy, to Rural Transport Services and Arthritis Care. Home Accident Prevention and Fire Safety referrals have also been made to increase security and safety in their home. Occupational Therapy have installed hand rails in the home as result of help from the service.

What we do differently for rural areas:

- 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 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 rural customer experiences of Universal Credit to identify rural specific issues.
- Provide homelessness advice and support at rural housing information events.



1,001

RURAL ALLOCATIONS



Radius
HOUSING



supportingpeople

Year one implementation of The Homelessness Strategy 2017–22: Ending Homelessness Together saw the formation of Homelessness Local Area Groups in all areas across Northern Ireland. The ethos of the groups is to look at homelessness service provision within their locality and seek ways to work together to improve the customer journey for homeless clients. Each group is tasked with developing Homelessness Local Action Plans with actions under 3 objectives:

1. Homelessness Prevention
2. Finding sustainable solutions for homeless clients
3. Improving services for chronic or long term homeless clients with complex needs

The Homelessness Local Action Plans are dynamic documents which will be kept under review by the Local Area Groups with new actions being added as the plan progresses and new issues emerge.

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 4:

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

	Actions	2017/18 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. During 2017/18 the Forum aimed 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.	In 2017/18, the Rural Community Network and our Rural Residents Forum focused specifically on the shortage of rural new build schemes and prepared a paper highlighting the key issues which they raised 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 are 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 (YC4CP).
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 BRIC 2 programme includes 6 rural areas in phase 1 and 4 in phase 2. Phase 3 areas have been identified and some of these are in rural areas for example, Trillick Community Group, Trillick village and Bellaghy Community Group, Bellaghy Village. A total of 18 rural areas are on the community cohesion funding programme. including 2 in Derry/Strabane, 2 in Causeway C&G, 4 in Mid-Ulster, 1 in Ards & North Down, 2 in Fermanagh/Omagh, 1 in Mid & East Antrim and 1 in Belfast (Hannahstown). This programme is coming to a close and is expected to end around June 18. However, we will revisit all our communities that have been involved in previous programmes, i.e. shared neighbourhood programme, shared communities programme, BRIC 1 and BRIC 2 to ensure we continue to support the groups involved, along with working with all our areas to take a community led approach to support good relations.
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. The BRIC programme is recognised as an important intervention initiative in rural Housing Executive estates.
32.	Ensure that rural housing schemes are considered for the TBUC shared new build programme, subject to eligibility criteria.	2 of the 10 schemes included in the Together Building United Communities shared new build programme are located in rural areas. Choice HA 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 are currently onsite with a scheme at Main Street, Dundrum. Shared new build has now been renamed Housing for All. 8 schemes are currently being progressed as Housing for All. 3 of these are in rural areas. These are Garvaghy Road, Portglenone (10 units), Coolnafinney, Eglinton (14 units) and Downpatrick Street, Crossgar (20 units).
33.	Promote the availability of advice and support services which deal with community safety in rural areas.	In 2017/18 Community Safety projects were funded in Antrim & Newtownabbey, Down, Mid & East Antrim, Causeway Coast and Glens and Mid Ulster council areas. These included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Morning Down, a telephone befriending and support service for older people across the former Down Council area; • Antrim & Newtownabbey 4 Tier Home Security Scheme, a flexible tailored approach to meet the specific crime prevention and community safety needs of individuals and situations; • Mid and East Antrim Ageing well Partnership; • Mid Ulster Ageing Well Partnership; and • Loughgiel Community Association Healthy Living Centre lighting project. 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.
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 continuing with the D4C pilot project to carry on the momentum and to ensure connectivity with each other. Phase 2 has begun in the Omagh area and focuses on working with community groups. We are currently establishing connections with community groups and have begun roll out with one community group. Mobile devices will help community representatives to have online access and will also help with the introduction of Universal Credit and Welfare Reform.

Objective 4

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

The Housing Executive is dedicated to working with our social housing communities in order to offer them the tools they need to create safe and inclusive neighbourhoods and to improve quality of life.

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 2018, 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 on page 12.

An intergenerational art project supported by the Housing Executive's Community Cohesion programme has been completed in Cullnady. The Housing Executive supported Cullnady Rural Development Group and local artist Fiona Stewart to bring people of all ages together to reimagine an area that had been blighted by antisocial graffiti and create pieces of art that really capture the spirit of the village.



A community cohesion project has brought people of different backgrounds and ages together to reimagine a mural in the Peace and Memorial Garden in Ballywalter.

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 and strategies.
- 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.

18

rural areas funded by Community Cohesion



3

Housing for All schemes located in rural areas



Loughgiel Community Centre has been selected to be the first "Healthy Living Centre" in the Northern Trust Area. The Housing Executive's Community Safety Team provided funding for Loughgiel Community Association to install new lighting along the path around the Centre, so that residents from the surrounding areas could feel safe and confident when accessing the Centre.

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 5:

To work in partnership with others to assist in rural development

	Actions	2017/18 Update
35.	Ensure that the issues facing rural communities are raised to local councils through the Community Planning process.	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"> • Community Grants; • Social Enterprise Funding; • Social Enterprise Agreements. 	To date we have engaged with a wide range of rural communities through our Housing Community Network, our Rural Residents Forum, Social Enterprise Hubs, area managers, local offices, and individual visits. In 2017/18 99 Community Grants were awarded. 18 of these were to groups in rural areas.
37.	Develop and implement a match funding programme to support the delivery of the 2014-2020 NI Rural Development Programme (RDP).	We launched an RDP match funding initiative in May 2017, through which we support the delivery of Basic Services and Village Renewal projects across rural NI. In 2017/18, a total of £202,000 was invested in 18 capital projects ranging from community hubs to village environmental improvement schemes.
38.	Monitor the delivery of the 'Heritage in Housing' initiative in rural areas.	The final year of the 'Heritage in Housing' Scheme (2017/18) has now been completed. The aim of the 3 year scheme was to restore 15 empty properties and at the end of March 2018 we have exceeded that target, contributing to the restoration of 17 properties. The scheme included 4 rural properties in Portaferry and Richhill.
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 2017 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 November 2017.
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 206 community lets and 45 NIHE commercial properties let to community groups across Northern Ireland. 14 of these units are located in rural areas.

18 groups received a total of **£202k** RDP MATCH FUNDING

4 HISTORIC RURAL PROPERTIES RESTORED

The Rural Community Awards aim to reward those rural communities who go above and beyond to protect and enhance their built and natural environment and to provide support and services which help make life better for all residents. There are 6 awards in total and, in 2017, one of the worthy winners was Sion Mills. (Community Spirit Award, Large Village) for their work providing classes and activities in their community.



Objective 5

To work in partnership with others to assist in rural development

The six actions included to support objective 5 set out our commitment to work in partnership with other government departments, local councils and other funding bodies to assist in rural development. Our contribution to regeneration extends beyond the provision of housing to funding and support aimed at empowering rural communities to invest in their future.

During 2017/18 approximately £400,000 was invested in our rural communities, this included social enterprise, community grants and capital funding.

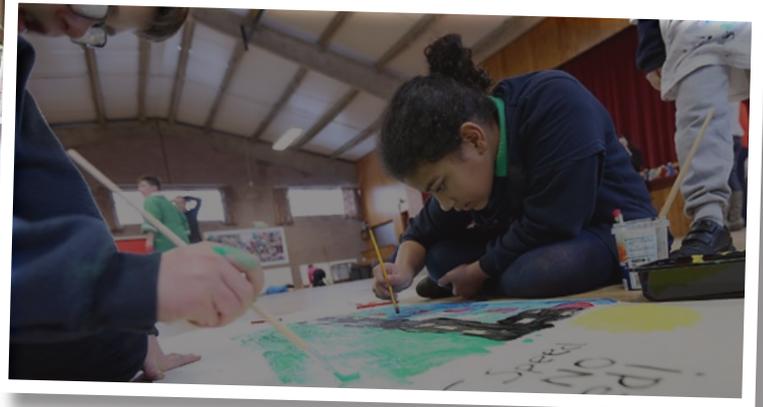
At March 2018, 2 actions have been completed and the remaining 4 are on target to be delivered by 2020. The key achievements for each action are set out on page 14.

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.



Pupils from Mary Queen of Peace Primary School, Glenravel designed posters to go on permanent display outside their school warning motorists to 'slow down'. Organised by Glenravel and District Community and Residents Association and funded by a Community Grant from the Housing Executive, the 'Safer Life Campaign' aims to educate drivers and schoolchildren about being road aware.



As part of the 'Heritage in Housing' scheme, The Housing Executive partnered with Portaferry Regeneration Ltd, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Ards and North Down Borough Council to deliver a Townscape Heritage Initiative project which was completed in March 2018. This included a Housing Executive investment of over £40,000 for the restoration of two late 18th century vacant buildings on Ferry Street, within the historic conservation area.



MONITORING & COMMUNICATION

	Actions	2017/18 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 spring edition of Rural Matters was circulated at the Balmoral Show in May 2017 and the first Rural Strategy annual progress report was published in November 2017. Both publications are available on our website www.nihe.gov.uk .
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 91% compared to 88% 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 Summer 2019. During 2017/18 we have prepared a policy and procedure for how the Housing Executive will fulfil its duties under the Act and have developed an e-learning package which has been made available across the organisation to raise awareness of our duties. We are also developing a bespoke face to face training package which will be targeted to staff involved in policy writing and service development. A central database has been designed to ensure all policies, strategies and services which have been rural needs impact assessed are recorded and monitored on an on-going basis.

Monitoring & Communication To work in partnership with others to assist in rural development

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 2018, all three of the actions are on target to be delivered by 2020. The key achievements for each action are set out above.



The Housing Executive funded a stand at the annual Royal Ulster Agricultural Society Balmoral Show in May 2018. This gave us the opportunity to demonstrate the range of ways in which the Housing Executive is working to address the needs of rural communities. It also allowed us to connect with our rural customers who wished to avail of the services and support we offer. Advice was provided on a variety of topics including housing needs tests in rural areas, home energy efficiency, grants, the rural community awards, social enterprise and rural planning issues.



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