



Rural Review

Annual Progress Report on the implementation of the Housing Executive Rural Action Plan



Chairman and Chief Executive's Foreword

Welcome to the 'Rural Homes and People' Annual Report. Last November, we launched our 3-year Rural Action Plan and are pleased to report that already 30 of the 48 planned actions are underway.

While there is much to be pleased about in the past year, nevertheless housing has been hit by the recession and its effects on public finances. It left us with many difficult choices about how to make sure that peoples' most pressing needs were met and it may be that this year will present us with even more difficult decisions.

2009/10 saw the highest level of new build starts in rural areas in the last 7 years. A total of 185 additional properties were provided representing 10% of total starts and a continued growth over the previous two years. This is very encouraging and a success well worth building on as we work towards our 12% target. We will also continue to encourage people to register their housing need through our Rural Housing Need Tests to help ensure that new homes go where they are required.

In the Community Sector, the Rural Residents Forum has been established and has set its agenda for the coming year following the feedback received from the very successful Rural Conference which took place in November. Congratulations to Patricia McQuillan, who was recently elected as Chair of the Forum. We wish her every success.

We are also about to launch our Housing Guide for Young People as part of our Rural Strategy. The Guide has been developed in conjunction with the Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster and we hope it will be a useful tool for young people to guide them as they move away from the family home for the first time.

We are pleased to present a positive report in challenging times and we remain committed to working with our partners across all sectors to build stronger and more sustainable communities.



Paddy McIntyre

**Paddy McIntyre
Chief Executive**



Brian Rowntree

**Brian Rowntree
Chairman**

Cover photograph:
Beech Tree lane, Tempo



What do we mean by 'rural'?

The Rural Action Plan concerns settlements with a population of under 4,500 which accounts for 35% of the overall population. This definition is in line with that used by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

What is 'Rural Homes and People'?

'Rural Homes and People' is the name of the Housing Executive's current rural housing policy. The Housing Executive first adopted a specific rural policy in 1991 recognising that rural housing issues often require different approaches and solutions to those which operate in urban areas. The 'Rural Homes and People' policy runs for five years from 2006/7 to 2012/13. It followed extensive consultation undertaken in late 2006. An Action Plan covering the first two years of the policy was launched in May 2007 and a report on progress made was published earlier this year. This new Action Plan covers the remaining three years of the 'Rural Homes and People' policy.

What are the main topics covered?

There are five main themes in the 'Rural Homes and People' policy:

- **Enabling New Homes**
- **Improving Existing Properties**
- **Building and Serving Communities**
- **Supporting Independent Living**
- **Contributing to Rural Development and Regeneration**

This action plan includes sections on each of these themes explaining them in more detail.

Where can I find out more?

For further information on any aspect of the 'Rural Homes and People' policy, please contact Michael Conway, Rural Housing Co-ordinator at 02890318559 or by e-mail michael.conway@nihe.gov.uk



1. Enabling New Homes concerns:

- how housing need is assessed – this leads to decisions on where new housing is required.
- It also involves ways to help ensure that new social and affordable housing is built in rural areas.

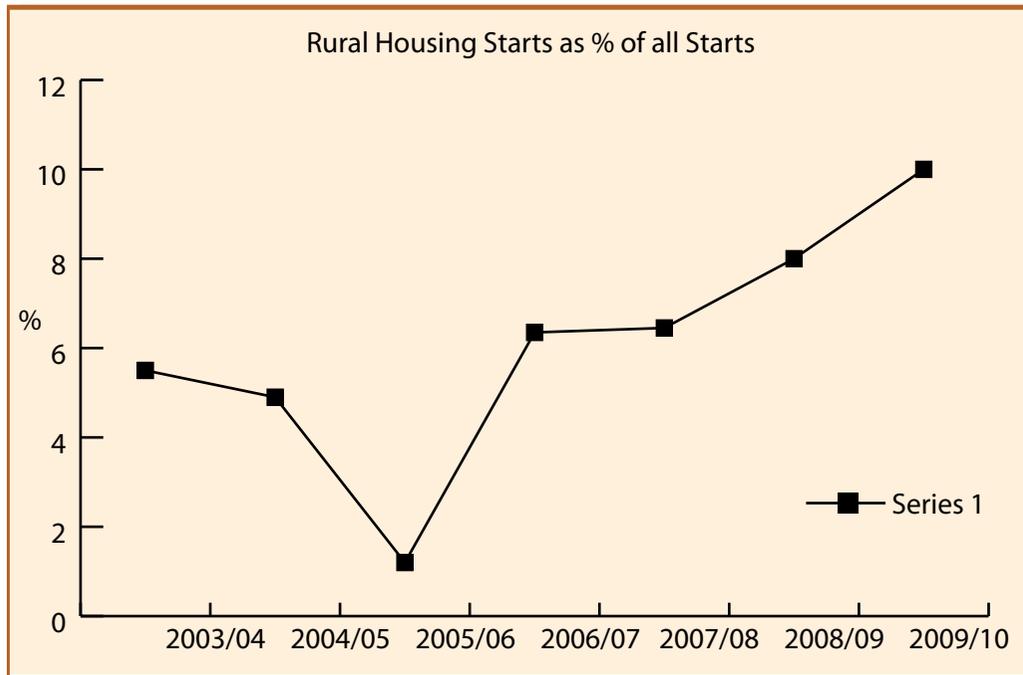


	What we set out to do between 2009/10 and 2012/13?	What's been done to date?
1.1	Identify rural housing need and try out new ways of checking need in rural areas.	<p>At the end of March 2010, there were 5311 households on the Housing Waiting List seeking homes in rural areas. Of these, 2434 were in 'housing stress' representing just over 12% of all those in housing stress on the waiting list; those in housing stress are viewed as being in more pressing need of housing.</p> <p>We are continually trying to make it easier for people to register with us. This year, we have made it simpler for people to apply to us during our rural need exercises (see 1.2) – rather than fill out lengthy forms, those interested can apply by phone; we then arrange visits by appointment to assess their needs.</p>
1.2	Undertake exercises to assess latent or hidden need in at least 30 rural areas (over a three year period) particularly those where development opportunities may exist.	During 2009/10 we have undertaken nine of these 'rural housing needs surveys' and a further 12 are planned for this year. The nine areas targeted were Ballyeaston (Newtownabbey District), Dungiven (Limavady District), Gulladuff, Knockloughrim (both Magherafelt District), Lisnagunogue (Moyle District), Lislea (Newry and Mourne), Loughgall (Armagh District), Swatragh (Limavady District) and Stranocum (Ballymoney District); prior to undertaking these exercises, the Housing Executive was aware of potential sites for social housing development in most of the targeted settlements. From these exercises, housing need was identified in four of the nine locations - Lislea, Dungiven, Gulladuff and Swatragh
1.3	Make sure that the Social Housing Development Programme includes sufficient schemes to allow rural targets to be met	The rural need assessments mentioned above help determine the make-up of the 3-year Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) which was published in April and sets out locations where there is housing need and where sites have been identified for potential development by housing associations. We have ensured that rural housing need is reflected in the SHDP by including over 80 rural sites in the 3 year programme. Housing associations will now be seeking to take these forward ; while issues like funding and site feasibility will inevitably prevent development in a number of instances, the number of sites identified provides the opportunity for housing associations to continue to increase their delivery of rural social new build.

	What we set out to do between 2009/10 and 2012/13?	What's been done to date?
1.4	Publish details of rural schemes in the Social Housing Development Programme and highlight any areas where a need for rural housing has been identified.	In addition for the first time, a 'Prospectus of Unmet Need' has also been published alongside the SHDP. This specifically identifies rural locations where we know there is a need but where sites have not been forthcoming – its intention is to encourage housing associations to target their activities towards these priority areas. Full details of both the SHDP and the 'Prospectus of Unmet Need' can be found on the Housing Executive website: www.nihe.gov.uk .
1.5	Continue to monitor the rural share of the new build programme and highlight to housing associations the importance of providing rural housing and where possible assist them to deliver rural schemes.	<p>During 2009/10, we linked with the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and carried out a series of events to raise the profile of rural housing issues. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A joint seminar in September focusing on rural housing delivery • Inclusion of a rural housing workshop at NIFHA's Annual Conference • Features on rural housing in NIFHA and Housing Executive publications • Liaison between housing associations and rural community groups at the Housing Executive's Rural Community Conference in November <p>In addition, we have continued to monitor the delivery of the social new build programme in rural areas. During 2009/10, there were 185 new build starts in rural areas; this represents 10.1% of the total social new build programme which is the highest rural return in over 7 years (see Appendix 1). We aim to work towards 12% of the programme being delivered in rural areas and this is year is a sign of continued progress towards meeting that goal.</p>
1.6	Investigate places where Planning Policy Statement 21 (PPS21) might allow social and affordable housing	Work has started on this. In certain circumstances, PPS21 will allow social and affordable housing to be built outside designated settlements. We have been meeting with Planning Service to agree how we would jointly administer these applications for social and affordable housing under PPS21. We have also drawn up a list of locations where the Housing Executive owns land outside settlements and will be looking at some of these in the year ahead to see if any might meet the criteria for development set out in PPS21. In addition, we have supported a housing association application for PPS21 development in Mullaghban (Newry and Mourne) and are currently considering a similar application in Swatragh (Limavady)
1.7	In selected pilot areas where sites become available that are slightly bigger than required, support development of the whole site to allow for likely hidden need	Pilot new build schemes have been identified in Aghacommon/Derrymacash (Craigavon), Carnlough (Larne) and Broughshane (Ballymena). In these areas, we have supported larger schemes to make best use of the available sites – we will continue to check on the number of people applying for these schemes as they are developed by housing associations in the year ahead.
1.8	<p>Examine the potential for new rural housing initiatives including:</p> <p>a) Exploring the possibilities for Community Self Build in rural areas including links to Habitat for Humanity</p>	The Gulladuff and Knockloughrim rural housing need exercises (see 1.2) specifically sought to identify interest in community self build involving Habitat for Humanity. Public meetings are currently being planned in both locations to provide feedback and further explore the potential for self-build in one or both locations.

	What we set out to do between 2009/10 and 2012/13?	What's been done to date?
1.8 contd	<p>b) Considering whether to promote rural mixed tenure schemes in light of the changing housing market</p> <p>c) Checking progress on Community Land Trust initiatives elsewhere in U.K.</p> <p>d) Monitoring progress of the existing urban – based 'Private Partnering' initiative (which links those in housing need with private sector lets) to decide if viable in a rural area.</p> <p>e) Possible development of a Rural Housing Enabler service subject to funding being identified</p>	<p>We had previously been working on some rural schemes which could have provided social housing for rent together with some housing for sale. We are no longer actively pursuing this approach due to the changes in the home ownership market; we will however keep this situation under review particularly in relation to any PPS21 and self-build initiatives (see above).</p> <p>Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are organisations that seek to provide affordable homes by securing land and building houses that are partly owned, in perpetuity, by the local community. In practice there are currently only a small number of examples of rural community land trust developments elsewhere in the UK and Government has provided funding to Carnegie UK for a three year project to further develop the community land trust sector. We will be keeping an eye on how this CLT initiative develops and how feasible such a model could be here in Northern Ireland</p> <p>This private partnering initiative is currently being rolled out in urban areas and it is therefore too early to determine its viability in a rural setting.</p> <p>Funding has not allowed the development of this service at present.</p>
1.9	<p>Research and gather information on rural issues including:</p> <p>a) Examining trends concerning the social housing requirements of wheelchair users in rural areas</p> <p>b) Undertaking studies of the housing market in particular rural areas</p>	<p>A pilot study has taken place in Ballymena District. This demonstrated that in order to assess need for wheelchair housing in a rural location, it was necessary to widen the need assessment to neighbouring areas. When/If a site becomes available in a rural location the best use needs to be made of the opportunity as it may be some time before another opportunity presents itself. It is now intended to carry out a similar study in a further rural location preferably where there is a site and the likelihood of housing provision.</p> <p>We have completed a 'Housing Market Profile' of Rathlin Island and during 2009/10 have met the Rathlin Island Development and Community Association to discuss how the housing concerns of islanders might be addressed – this work will continue in the year ahead.</p>

APPENDIX 1A: RURAL STARTS

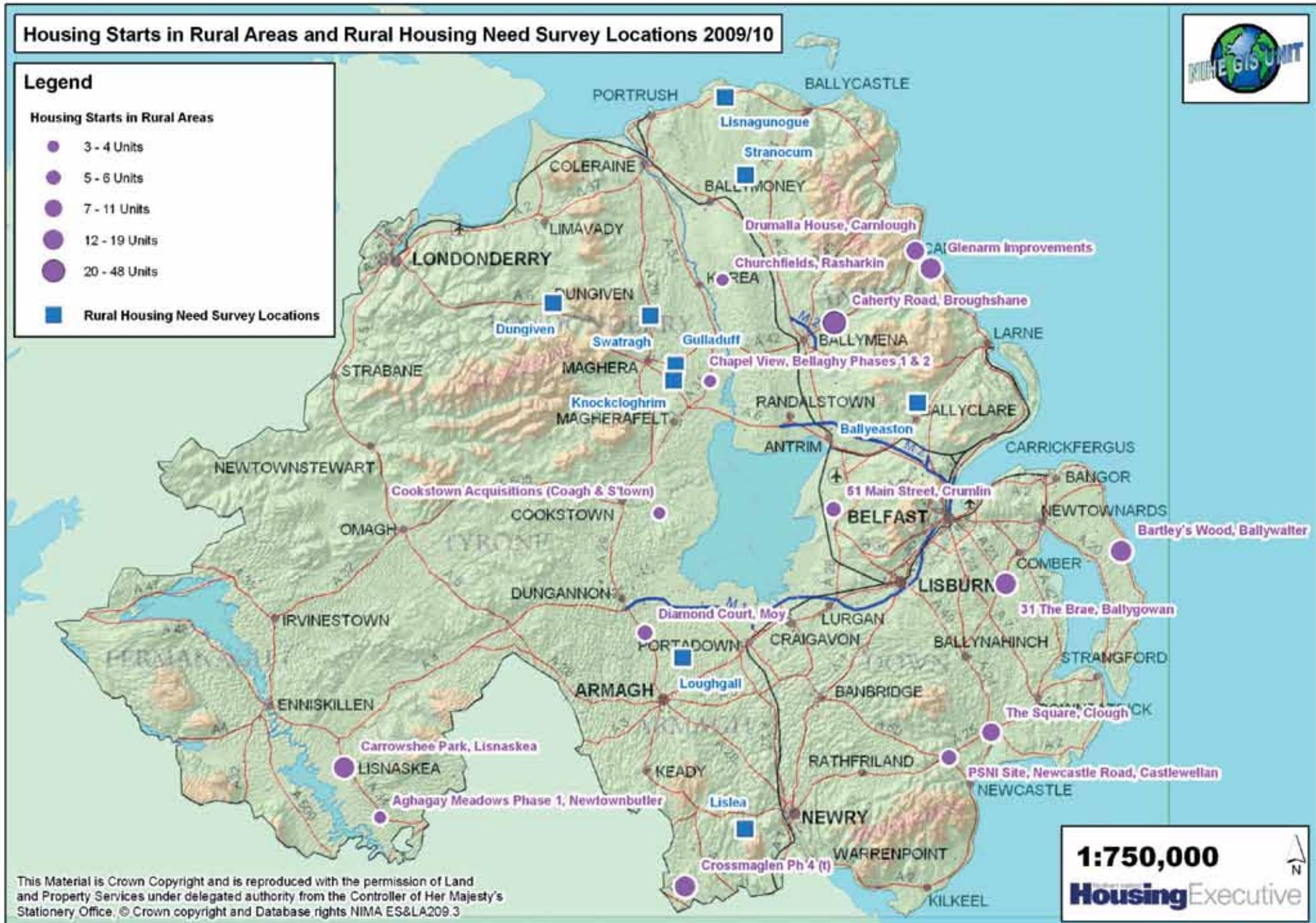


Location of 2009/10 Rural Starts

Agency	Scheme Name	Dwellings
Hearth	Glenarm Reimprovement	13
Rural	Millvale Close, Annaclone	6
Helm Housing	51 Main Street, Crumlin	5
Fold	Crossmaglen Ph 4 (t)	18
Dungannon	Cookstown Acquisitions (Coagh & S'town)	4
Dungannon	Diamond Court, Moy	5
Fold	The Square, Clough	8
Habinteg	31 The Brae, Ballygowan	14
Helm Housing	Bartley's Wood, Ballywalter	14
Oaklee	Drumalla House, Carnlough	11
Oaklee	Carrowshee Park, Lisnaskea	19
Oaklee	PSNI Site, Newcastle Road, Castlewellan	6
Rural	Aghagay Meadows Phase 1, Newtownbutler	4
Triangle	Caherty Road, Broughshane	48
Triangle	Churchfields, Rasharkin	4
Triangle	Chapel View, Bellaghy Phase 2	3
Triangle	Chapel View, Bellaghy Phase 1	3

**Total Rural Starts 1 April 2009 - 31 Mar 2010
17 Schemes 185 Units**

APPENDIX 1B



2.0 Improving Existing Properties covers actions involving:

- the improvement of housing conditions for example through the grants system
- the promotion of energy efficiency in rural areas.



	What we set out to do between 2009/10 and 2012/13?	What's been done to date?
2.1	As part of the overall Housing Executive Grants Strategy, review Replacement Grant policy	Our Rural Action Plan was developed at a time when our home improvement grant activities had been curtailed due to funding shortfalls. In the Plan, we therefore made it clear that some of the planned actions could only be undertaken if appropriate funding becomes available during the three year timescale of the Action Plan. These actions (2.1-2.3) have been affected as Rural Priority Areas are not in operation at present while LOTS schemes were also suspended during 2009/10. Replacement grants are no longer widely available although we are currently assisting DSD with an overall review of future assistance to private sector home owners.
2.2	Evaluate the Living Over The Shops (LOTS) scheme in four pilot rural areas	
2.3	Target home improvement measures in identified Rural Priority Areas	
2.4	Continue to participate in and support the Western Investing for Health (IFH) project on 'Maximising Access to Services for Older People'	The Western IFH project has now been taken forward into a regional programme targeting 88 'super output areas' across Northern Ireland. This aims to increase access to benefits, grants and local services to support rural dwellers living in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion. It is being led out by the Public Health Agency, funded by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The Housing Executive sits on the Advisory/Steering groups overseeing this project.
2.5	Continue to roll out the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) registration scheme particularly targeting those District Councils with significant rural areas	At 31 March 2010, there were 448 rural HMOs on the NIHE's HMO database; these represent potential HMOs that may require registration. We will be targeting and visiting these properties in the coming months with a view to having those that are HMOs registered under the Statutory Registration Scheme; 50 HMOs in rural areas have already been registered under the Scheme and dates have been set by which owners of other HMOs are required to register; those that have not done so by the required date may be subject to legal action (see Table 1).
2.6	Implement a rural-urban monitor in the new Warm Homes Scheme and similar energy programmes	This monitor of the 'Warm Homes' programme is in place and helps to ensure that rural areas get a reasonable share of Warm Homes installations. Warm Homes offers a range of insulation measures to home owners and private tenants (receiving certain 'qualifying benefits') and is designed to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. During 2009/10, 6,443 'Warm Homes' installations were undertaken of which 2,556 (almost 40%) were in rural areas; this is in line with targets and the proportion of the Northern Ireland population living in rural areas.

	What we set out to do between 2009/10 and 2012/13?	What's been done to date?
2.7	Where appropriate, test new and emerging energy technologies in rural areas	We are currently considering two rural projects involving new technologies - one would examine the use of vegetable oil to produce domestic heating while the other involves the development of a biomass Combined Heat and Power scheme in a rural area. Both of these projects are at an early stage and further feasibility work is required before their viability can be determined.
2.8	Promote the use of biomass heating and in particular, projects involving wood fuels produced locally in N. Ireland	
2.9	Consider any new and cost effective solutions to solid wall insulation as these affect rural areas in particular	No new solid wall insulation products have emerged in the past year but we will continue to review and if necessary test any cost effective solutions that may come onto the market.
2.10	Continue to provide insulation and heating programmes where required in Housing Executive stock	Work is continuing to upgrade the energy efficiency of Housing Executive properties as part of ongoing maintenance.

Table 1 Rural HMO and Registered Rural HMO 31st March 2010¹

COUNCIL AREA	DATE BY WHICH REGISTRATION REQUIRED	POTENTIAL HMOs	REGISTERED HMOs
Antrim	01/11/2010	26	0
Ards	31/07/2010	24	1
Armagh	31/07/2010	43	0
Ballymena	01/04/2010	21	6
Ballymoney	01/11/2010	8	0
Banbridge	31/01/2011	12	0
Belfast	01/04/2013	2	1
Carrickfergus	01/07/2009	7	3
Castlereagh	01/04/2013	8	0
Coleraine	01/07/2009	20	8
Cookstown	31/12/2007	10	2
Craigavon	31/03/2010	11	1
Derry	01/06/2010	3	2
Down	31/01/2011	41	0
Dungannon	31/12/2007	45	9
Fermanagh	01/11/2010	22	1
Larne	01/06/2011	12	0
Limavady	01/04/2010	9	2
Lisburn	31/07/2010	16	0
Magherafelt	01/07/2009	15	7
Moyle	01/11/2010	28	1
Newry	31/03/2010	14	1
Newtownabbey	01/04/2010	1	1
North Down	01/11/2011	0	0
Omagh	01/06/2011	35	1
Strabane	01/04/2010	15	3
Total		448	50

¹ not all HMOs are required to register as some are exempt from registration. The exemptions include Residential Homes, Childrens' Homes, Health Trust Premises and Crown properties. Also exempted is any HMO which is occupied by no more than 2 families and any HMO which is occupied by the owner and/or his family and up to two other persons

3.0 Building and Serving Communities covers issues relating to:

- Rural Residents Involvement and Community Associations
- Community safety and Shared Future Housing



	What we set out to do between 2009/10 and 2012/13?	What's been done to date?
3.1	Work with the Rural Residents Forum whose role is to highlight housing issues and concerns affecting rural communities	The Rural Residents Forum met for the first time in June 2009 and is administered through the Rural Community Network. It currently comprises 12 residents from across rural Northern Ireland. It meets quarterly and to date has provided feedback on the Housing Executive's Rural Action Plan and also assisted with the Rural Community Conference which the Housing Executive organised in November 2009. Around 100 delegates attended this conference and helped set the agenda for future Rural Residents' Forum meetings. Topics identified for future discussion by the Forum include housing need in rural areas, neighbourhood wardens and rural homelessness. Two representatives of the Rural Residents Forum sit on the Central Housing Community Network which is the central panel advising on Housing Executive policies and procedures.
3.2	Roll out the "Village Voice" initiative to encourage the representation of small rural estates with no community groups	Two pilots are underway in Upperlands, Magherafelt and Newtownbutler, Fermanagh. Both are organized in conjunction with Supporting Communities (Northern Ireland) and have been working successfully - as a result, three representatives now attend their local District Housing Community Network and report back to their communities on relevant housing issues.
3.3	Work with Supporting Communities (NI) to monitor and report on the involvement of rural community groups in the Housing Community Network	The Housing Community Network is the main means by which residents and their local community associations are involved in discussing and developing their local services and addressing housing issues generally. It is therefore important that the 'rural voice' is represented. Around 15% of Housing Executive properties are in rural areas and the most recent monitor shows that 22% of Housing Community Network members represent rural areas.
3.4	Develop and Implement Housing and Education initiatives including a Social Enterprise Award in rural locations	During 2009/10, a Community & Education Partnership Award has been developed; this is offered to those applicants who demonstrate a commitment to fostering social enterprise through collaborative partnership between schools/ colleges and individuals/groups in a Housing Executive estate. This is now being rolled out with expressions of interest now being sought (with a closing date of June 2010).

	What we set out to do between 2009/10 and 2012/13?	What's been done to date?
3.5	Produce information and advice on housing options for young people	The Rural Residents Forum (see 3.1) highlighted the need to inform young people on housing matters and produce targeted information to create awareness of housing options for young people. We have established links with the Northern Ireland Youth Forum and are producing an information booklet, "A Foot in the Door", in partnership with the Youth Forum. We have also established links with Young Farmers Clubs and are developing an advice pack for distribution to YFCU membership.
3.6	Explore and develop further opportunities for rural groups involved with the HCN to develop their understanding of media literacy through digital inclusion training.	Websites have been provided for 202 community groups currently involved in the Housing Community Network; this includes 42 rural groups. I.T. Refresher training has also commenced for the groups so that best use can be made of these websites.
3.7	Examine further opportunities in rural areas to develop Shared Future Housing Schemes	The first rural 'Shared Future' new build housing scheme was officially opened at Ballyfatton Close, Sion Mills in June 2009. The 'Shared Neighbourhood' programme is also currently being delivered in Claudy, Castledawson, Sion Mills, Armoy, Fivemiletown and Killyleagh and has been warmly welcomed by local communities in these areas. Support is provided in these areas to assist communities in their desire to live together.
3.8	Explore with District Councils opportunities for partnering arrangements for wardens in rural areas	This has not started yet. A review of the existing warden service is currently underway this action will be considered further following completion of this review.
3.9	Undertake an exercise in selected Districts to examine the type of anti social behaviour reported in rural locations	Work has commenced on this. The study will examine and compare the nature of anti-social behaviour reported on Housing Executive urban and rural estates; this will determine whether a different approach is required in rural areas. This study will be completed during 2010.
3.10	Continue to monitor the views of rural tenants on the services provided to them by the Housing Executive	We carryout a regular survey of tenants to monitor views on the services provided by the Housing Executive. Latest results show that in terms of overall satisfaction, 92% of rural tenants were satisfied with these services compared to 84% of tenants living in urban areas.

4.0 Supporting Independent Living includes:

- The 'Supporting People' programme which assists with the support needs of vulnerable people
- Dealing with rural homelessness



	What we set out to do between 2009/10 and 2012/13?	What's been done to date?
4.1	In selected rural area(s), develop community – based housing support services (possibly linked to domiciliary care) to assist older people to remain in their homes	Work has begun in the West area to examine the scope to remodel a number of services for older people; this will be taken forward during 2010/11 subject to funding being available.
4.2	Create greater awareness of housing support services amongst the rural community and voluntary sector to assist in identifying capacity and options for delivering services	Presentations on Supporting People took place at the Housing Executive Rural Community Conference in November 2009 and at the Rural Residents Forum. Work has commenced on the Supporting People Communications Strategy for 2010/11 and it is planned to include a specific rural stakeholder event in order to help increase awareness further.
4.6	Map and monitor single-let accommodation used for homeless temporary accommodation with a view to providing appropriate support services to occupants	Research is underway to map and analyse the range of homelessness services including single lets and the first results are expected in early 2010/11.
<p>The following 'Supporting Independent Living' actions have yet to get underway and are scheduled to take place during the remaining two years of the Action Plan:</p>		
4.3	Review the work of Home Improvement Agencies who provide 'care and repair' services in rural areas	
4.4	Investigate possibilities for remodelling some existing rural sheltered accommodation	
4.5	Take account of rural temporary accommodation needs in reviewing our Area Homelessness Action Plans on an annual basis	
4.7	Review District Information Packs (for those homeless or threatened with homelessness in rural locations)	

5.0 Rural Development and Regeneration includes:

- Partnership working to link housing and rural development issues including work which may arise from the Rural Development Programme
- The Housing Executive input into the Rural White Paper and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development’s Rural Champion proposals



	What we set out to do between 2009/10 and 2012/13?	What’s been done to date?
5.1	Contribute to the Development of a Rural White Paper 	During 2009/10, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) set up five ‘Stakeholder Groups’ looking at different issues that might be included in a Rural White Paper for Northern Ireland; the Housing Executive was represented on three of these. The groups concluded their discussions at the end of January when their proposals were presented to DARD for further inter departmental discussion. It is anticipated that public consultation on Rural White Paper proposals will take place later this year.
5.2	Where appropriate, assist in the roll-out of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) for example by publicising funding opportunities to rural groups involved in the Housing Community Network. 	The Rural Development Programme (RDP) provides funding opportunities for rural areas. Through our Rural Community Conference (see 3.1) and inclusion of articles in our ‘Rural Matters’ magazine, we have highlighted funding possibilities for community groups, particularly those rural groups involved in the Housing Community Network. In addition, the Housing Executive participates in the Down Rural Area Partnership which administers RDP funding in the Down, North Down, Banbridge and Ards Council areas.

	What we set out to do between 2009/10 and 2012/13?	What's been done to date?
5.3	Develop a database of local rural regeneration initiatives	This will be prepared in the incoming year as details (particularly of RDP regeneration projects) become available.
5.4	Continue to support Areas at Risk Programme in 3 Rural Areas	'Areas at Risk' is a DSD programme targeting areas potentially at risk of decline. There are three rural areas in the programme – Fintona, Gilford and Lettershandoney. The Housing Executive is particularly closely involved in the Fintona project where we participate as a member of the project steering group.
5.5	Examine potential for land transfers to Councils for play areas in rural areas	During 2009/10, the Housing Executive transferred under lease three rural sites to Councils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A site at Mullenakill Park was transferred to Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council for use as a play area • Small sites at Stranocum and Dervock have been leased for two years to Ballymoney Borough Council for locating recycling banks.
5.6	Seek to support DARD's Village Renewal programme	This action will be considered further following selection of those villages which receive 'Village Renewal' funding under Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme. This funding is being administered by seven Local Action Groups representing clusters of rural Councils; it is expected that villages will be known later this year.
5.7	Continue to monitor physical and social conditions in our rural estates and responding as required through our estate-based strategy programme	Estate strategies are designed to regenerate those housing estates which show signs of decline. While there are no rural estate strategies at present, we will continue to review the need for these in conjunction with our local District Managers.
5.8	Continue to promote and participate in inter-agency partnerships in rural areas	Our District managers and staff continue to be involved in a wide range of partnerships at local level; these include various inter-agency initiatives covering housing-related issues such as community safety, health and the Supporting People programme.

6.0 Other Issues involve:

- **Actions which cut across all the other five themes including how we communicate and monitor our activities in rural areas**



	What we set out to do between 2009/10 and 2012/13?	What's been done to date?
6.1	Review our approach to 'rural proofing' to take account of new thinking and training currently being developed by DARD as part of 'Rural Champion' proposals agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive	Rural Proofing' is a way of ensuring that rural issues are taken into account when new policies are being developed. In many ways, the Housing Executive's Rural Action Plan is an example of 'rural proofing' – as we have examined rural housing issues from a rural perspective and drawn up specific actions to tackle them. We are however committed to making improvements where we can and therefore look forward to DARD's roll-out of a revised 'rural proofing' process to help determine how we can further improve on our activities in rural areas.
6.2	Provide analysis of information split on a rural urban basis	You will already have read in this report of some of the statistics we produce on rural areas – for example on housing waiting lists (1.1), social new build (1.5), HMOs (2.5), Warm Homes (2.6), community group involvement (3.3) Tenant Satisfaction (3.10). Information like this provides a focus on rural activities and allows us to see where further work is required to tackle rural issues.
6.3	Create awareness in rural areas of the activities and services provided by the Housing Executive (and where appropriate housing associations) to rural residents	During 2009/10, we publicised our work through articles in local press and rural publications; we have also attended various events during the year ranging from attendance at the Balmoral Show to smaller, more local information events across Northern Ireland. We have also produced two editions of our 'Rural Matters' newsletter, which was circulated to over 600 community groups and public representatives in May 2009 and January 2010.
6.4	Ensure that at least one Housing Executive research project each year has a specific rural focus	Having concluded our research on the Rathlin island housing market (see 1.9) last year, we now propose to undertake research during 2010/11 into the cost of providing social new build housing in rural areas.



**Housing
Executive**

June 2010
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