

**HOUSING,  
SOCIAL  
&  
BUILDING  
SERVICES  
DIRECTORATE**

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**HOUSING, SOCIAL & BUILDING SERVICES DIRECTORATE  
STIÚRTHÓIREACT NA SEIRBHÍÍ TITHÍOCHTA, SÓISIALTA AGUS  
FOIRGNÍOCHTA**

**Draft Budgeted Expenditure: €16,765,900**

**Draft Budgeted Income: €13,960,900**

The following pages set out the above as per each Relevant Programme Group.

**HOUSING AND BUILDING  
TITHÍOCHT AGUS FOIRGNÍOCHT**

**Draft Budgeted Expenditure: €12,683,500**

**Draft Budgeted Income: €13,292,600**

**(Pages 1-3 of Blue Pages)**

**REVENUE ACCOUNT - OPERATIONS**

2007 again witnessed a high level of activity with direct housing assistance having been provided to over one thousand (1,000) individuals/families which represents a significant contribution to the accommodation and well being of the people of Donegal.

The types of assistance provided again ranged from a combination of allocation of tenancies under the Council's own Social Housing Programme, Voluntary Housing Programme and RAS (Rental Accommodation Scheme), the provision of assistance in the form of loans under the reconstruction loans scheme, the purchase/erection, shared ownership, tenant purchase, caravan and affordable housing loans schemes and the provision of assistance under the Disabled Persons and Essential Repairs Grant Schemes.

Other activities during the year included the continuation of the revitalisation/regeneration of Local Authority Housing Estates under the Peace II Programme, the Local Authority Housing Estate Enhancement Scheme in the CLÁR areas and separate refurbishment programmes in a number of local authority estates plus the continued acceleration of the Central Heating Installation Programme in local authority houses.

The Budget now sought will enable the Council to meet the 2008 component of an overall programme of works as set out in the 5 Year Action Plan for Social & Affordable Housing 2004 - 2008.

**ANNUAL MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME**

Donegal County Council has 2,610 rented houses in over 190 individual Housing Estates. There are in addition 661 individual houses provided as specific instance/rural cottages or in some cases individual houses purchased within Estates. The latter cases are generally where the Local Authority bought back houses from its "own" Estates. The age of the stock ranges from 1953 to the present day with many of the Estates being constructed in a number of separate phases.

Provision is made in the Draft Budget of €1,582,000 for housing maintenance, which is a decrease of €161,600 over the 2007 adopted Budget of €1,743,600. However, as under new arrangements the Council will be funding an additional approx. €300,000 for the repair/improvement of vacant houses from capital, making a total available for housing maintenance in 2008 of €1,882,000.

The 2008 housing maintenance provision will be utilised for a combination of emergency repairs, pre-letting repairs of casual vacancies and planned maintenance. Monies are set aside for planned maintenance/upgrading of estates in 2008 and this will be used to complement the 2007/08 allocation for remedial works as set out later in this report. The use of other schemes e.g. Central Heating, Refurbishment etc is greatly assisting in the upkeep of the Council stock.

The table below sets out, by Electoral Area and category, the current housing stock which the Council maintains.

<b>ELECTORAL AREA</b>	<b>SCHEME HOUSES</b>	<b>S.I. HOUSES</b>
INISHOWEN	480	116
DONEGAL	488	119
GLENTIES	431	205
LETTERKENNY	519	66
MILFORD	279	90
STRANORLAR	413	66
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2610</b>	<b>662</b>

As mentioned above and which has been the practice in previous years, €300,000 of the overall total under this heading is to be specifically ring-fenced for the repair of casual vacancies/upgrading of housing stock.

It is believed that in this way, the remainder of the money has and will be safeguarded and facilitates a more planned spending of the money and proper management/control thereof.

### **CENTRAL HEATING PROGRAMME 2004 - 2008**

The Programme of installation of Central Heating in local authority rented dwellings commenced in 2004 when an allocation of €250,000 (i.e. €200,000 Department grant and €50,000 from the Council's own resources) enabled the Council to provide heating/related energy improvement and safety measures in 42 dwellings throughout the county. Further Department grants in the following years (along with revenue provision in the annual budgets) enabled the Council to continue the programme each year since then and by the end of 2007, heating will have been installed in a total of 659 houses (from an initial baseline of 887 dwellings) throughout the county.

The Programme is due to be completed by the end of next year and in 2008 the Council will be dealing with the remaining rented Council stock that presently has no heating installed.

Provision of €318,000 had been made in Budget 2007 to meet the Council's contribution to an anticipated total allocation of €1.68m (i.e. Department grant of €1.344m) in the current year. However, under a new housing management initiative introduced by the Department giving direct control to local authorities over Internal Capital Receipts, the Council will be funding its contribution to the 2008 Central Heating Programme from this source and consequently no revenue provision will be required towards the Programme in 2008. The Draft Budget of 2008 includes €1,200,000 (100% Grant funded) under this heading.

### **E.U. PROGRAMME FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION 2000 - 2006: PEACE II PROGRAMME - REVITALISATION OF PUBLIC HOUSING SCHEMES - PHASE III:**

Total funding of €492,000 had been secured by the Council to the end of 2005 under Measures 3.3 & 3.4 of the E.U. Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2000 - 2006 for the revitalization/regeneration of local authority housing schemes throughout the county. Works were carried out at 12 schemes in 2002/03 under Phase I of the Programme with a further 13 schemes being facilitated in 2004/05 under Phase II of the Programme.

In 2006 the Council secured further funding of €228,000 under Measure 3.3 of the Peace II E.U. Programme to commence Phase III of the Revitalisation Programme and by the end of the year works will have been completed at the following schemes:

**Inishowen E.A.:** Craig Pk., Muff & Convent Rd., Carndonagh.

**Donegal E.A.:** St.Patrick's Tce., Pettigo & Termon Villas, Pettigo.

**Letterkenny E.A.:** Ard Baithin, St. Johnston & Glendale Drive, Letterkenny

**Milford E.A.:** Skeog Cottages, Churchill & Chestnut Grove, Ramelton.

**Stranorlar E.A.:** Ard McCool, Stranorlar; Liscooley Villas & Doneyloop H/S.

**Glenties E.A.:** Cois Cuan Housing Estate, Derrybeg

Some works have been carried out at Ard na Rí, Letterkenny and will be completed by the end of March 2008 along with works at the remaining scheme at Birch Hill, Cresslough (Glenties EA).

The Works carried out under the Revitalisation Programme have contributed to the upgrading of the selected estates by the improvement of their amenities and physical appearances. Specific works carried out have included the provision of picnic areas, sand pits, hard surface play/kick about areas, level tarmac areas with kerb surrounds, boundary fences and gates, the tidying-up of schemes including removal of weeds and rubbish, clearing of overgrown areas and landscaping.

Works funded under the Peace II Programme generally complement the Town and Village Renewal Programme. The draft Budget of 2008 includes a provision of €51,000 under this heading.

### **ESTATE MANAGEMENT**

The Council obtained funding in 2004 to appoint 3 no. Tenant Liaison Officers on a pilot basis to a number of specific estates. Further funding was obtained in 2005 to continue the pilot project with the roles of the Tenant Liaison Officers expanded to cover all local authority estates in the county. Building on the success of the scheme, these appointments were made permanent at the beginning of this year and the roles again expanded to include Housing Assessment Officers and the work has been mainstreamed into the electoral area structure with appropriate budget provision made. The view was that it would be beneficial if these officers were also involved in the assessment /allocation stages as this could also lead to better estate management.

In addition to salary provision, a further €103,700 is provided in Draft Budget 2008 for estate management initiatives.

### **HOMELESSNESS**

Provision of €190,000 is again provided in Draft Budget 2008 under this heading - 90% of which is recoupable from the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

### **REGISTRATION OF PRIVATE RENTED DWELLINGS**

Under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2004, the registration of Private Rented Accommodation function including payment of registration fees was transferred to the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2004 rather than with the local authority who had been the registration authority up to then.

Arrangements were also made under the Act, to provide funding to local authorities to take account of registration fee income foregone due to the introduction of the new system of registration with the PRTB under the Act. From 2006 onwards, the PRTB makes an annual contribution to the local authority based on the number of private rented tenancies registered with them and the number of inspections carried out by the local authority.

A 1<sup>st</sup> tranche payment of €36,404 for 2007 funding was received earlier this year from the PRTB and the balance of 2007 funding is to be paid in 2008. Income provision of €72,000 has been made in Draft Budget 2008.

While the Council is cognisant of the need to enforce the Standards and Rent Books Regulations, it is felt that this can best be achieved through the implementation of the Rental Accommodation Scheme and housing assessments carried out by the Housing Assessment/Tenant Liaison Officers.

### **RENTAL ACCOMMODATION SCHEME**

The Rental Accommodation Scheme is an initiative which was introduced to cater for the accommodation needs of persons who are in receipt of Rent Supplement, normally for more than 18 months, and who have a long term housing need. The Scheme is being administered by Local Authorities and is intended to provide an additional source of good quality rented accommodation for eligible persons to enhance the response of Local Authorities to meet the long term housing need.

Donegal County Council have now transferred over 70 persons in voluntary accommodation to the Rental Accommodation Scheme. During 2007 the focus of attention moved to persons who were in private rented accommodation with agreement on approximately 40 such transfers being reached. An increased level of activity is being targeted in 2008 where it is expected that 175 further transfers will be effected.

The implementation of RAS is cost neutral from the point of view of the 2008 Draft Budget. The Draft Budget 2008 includes an expenditure and income figure of €874,600.

### **RENTAL INCOME**

The budget for rental income for 2007 was €6,204,500.

Rents are reviewed annually and in conjunction with buoyancy from increased income from this source as well as new lettings in 2008 will realise an extra rental income which has been estimated at €762,200 bringing the total estimated income to €6,966,700. This increased income is being targeted towards the maintenance of the existing stock as outlined above.

There has been a continued reduction of over €250,000 in rent/tenant purchase arrears over the past 4 years and this will be a major focus again in 2008.

### **TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION**

The Council adopted a new Traveller Accommodation Programme for the period 2005 - 2008 on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2005. 47 families were identified as in need of permanent accommodation during the duration of the said programme. At the end of November 2007, 35 families identified in the Programme have been accommodated. It is also worth noting that all 47 families have opted for housing. Further, a review of the programme was recently completed where it was concluded that the Council's present Traveller Accommodation Programme did not require an overall amendment.

In relation to the emergency sites which came about as a result of the County Manager invoking his emergency powers in 2001, the present situation is that there are three temporary emergency halting sites occupied and one emergency transient site occupied. Over the years, the Council have permanently closed the majority of the emergency sites having rehoused families from these sites.

In relation to permanent Traveller Accommodation, the Council are actively progressing a permanent transient halting site in the Inishowen Electoral Area. In relation to this development, the Members have recently approved a Part VIII application allowing the site to proceed to tender and construction stage. Proposals for a transient site in the south of the county are also being examined albeit this is not at such an advanced stage as the Inishowen proposal. Other permanent Traveller Accommodation proposals being progressed at present include a small group housing development on an existing site which is scheduled for completion in March 2008. Also, a number of house purchases for Traveller families have been completed successfully during 2007 as has an SI refurbishment.

Provision of €210,000 has been made in Draft Budget 2008 to provide a daily/weekly management and maintenance programme on the current temporary emergency halting sites and for the employment of a caretaker for same. 75% of the caretaker's salary is recoupable from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. A percentage of Management & Maintenance costs is also recoupable.

#### **EMERGENCY REPLACEMENT OF CARAVANS FOR TRAVELLERS**

Provision of €40,000 is being made in Draft Budget 2008 for the emergency replacement of caravans for Travellers, of which 50% is recoupable from the D.O.E.H.L.G. Caravans are replaced following emergency situations.

#### **LOANS FOR THE PURCHASE OF CARAVANS BY TRAVELLERS**

The Council has been able to reduce this provision as a large majority of indigenous Travellers have availed of this scheme to date, and also due to the large number of Traveller families accommodated in standard scheme housing. 10% of the purchase price of the caravan is funded by the Council as a first time buyer's grant, the applicant also pays 10% and a loan of 80% of the purchase price is then provided. The 10% Council contribution is recoupable from the D.O.E.H.L.G.

### **ASYLUM SEEKERS**

Provision of €712,500 was made in Budget 2007 for the accommodation of Asylum Seekers at the remaining centre located in Donegal Town. However, the Council was instructed by the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform in February of this year to cease payments for this centre.

No provision is being made under this heading in Draft Budget 2008 as there is no indication at this stage that any of the centres will be re-opening in 2008. In any case, should any of the centers re-open in 2008, all costs under this heading are 100% recoupable from the Reception and Integration Agency of the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform.

**Programme Group 5**

**ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION  
COSAINN NA TIMPEALLACHTA**

**Draft Budgeted Expenditure: €20,000**

**Draft Budgeted Income: € Nil**

**(Pages 14-16 of Blue Pages)**

**COMPETITION FOR BEST-KEPT HOUSING SCHEMES**

The Draft Budget for 2008 includes provision of €14,000 for the competition for the best kept housing schemes.

## Programme Group 6

### RECREATION & AMENITY CAITHEAMH AIMSIRE AGUS TAINTEAMHACHT

**Draft Budgeted Expenditure:** €6,000  
**Draft Budgeted Income:** € Nil  
**(Pages 17-19 of Blue Pages)**

#### DERELICT SITES/BUILDINGS

Provision of €12,000 in Programme Groups 5 & 6 is again provided in Draft Budget 2008 to deal with the issue of Derelict Buildings /Derelict Sites in line with decisions by the Council to address this issue. A data bank of derelict sites has been assembled and some premises have been registered. In addition some derelict sites/buildings have been acquired and redeveloped for housing e.g. Lifford, Killygordon, Ramelton, Milford etc.

Following a decision by the members to address priority areas including Ballyshannon a comprehensive audit of all derelict sites/buildings in Ballyshannon was carried out during 2005 and an action plan to deal with the premises was formulated between the Housing/Building and Planning Sections with assistance from Community & Enterprise in 2006. Information has been assembled with regard to the status and ownership of each premises with a view to following up with each owner/occupier their intentions for the property and the constraints on the property within the Town Plan/Regulations as well as advice on the removal of dereliction, any assistance under conservation grants etc. The possibility of introducing a levy on derelict property in accordance with the Derelict Sites Legislation can also be considered in the event that our efforts to get agreement are not successful. It is also intended to address towns/villages in each Electoral Area with high levels of dereliction on the basis of processes which will be developed in Ballyshannon.

The Draft Plan for Ballyshannon is currently in preparation and will come before the Council in early 2008. Work is also ongoing between the Housing and Planning Services to acquire a site in Ballyshannon for redevelopment in conjunction with the St Vincent de Paul Society/H.S.E. This transaction can be used as a basis for addressing other Derelict Sites requiring attention.

**MISCELLANEOUS  
ÉAGSÚIL**

**Draft Budgeted Expenditure: €4,056,400**

**Draft Budgeted Income: €668,300**

**(Pages 23-27 of Blue Pages)**

**MAINTENANCE OF COURTHOUSES**

Provision of €57,500 is again being made under this heading in Draft Budget 2008 - the same level as in Budget 2007. There are 5 Courthouses being used in the county at present located at Letterkenny, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Donegal and Glenties while court sittings are also held at a rented venue at Dungloe and at the Courts Service's new courthouse in Ballyshannon.

Although responsibility for the maintenance of Buncrana and Donegal Courthouses has been transferred to the Office of Public Works, the Council is still responsible for payment of Caretakers wages at these locations. Responsibility for the maintenance of Carndonagh and Glenties Courthouses remains with the Council. The only costs incurred by the Council in relation to Letterkenny Courthouse relate to the provision of annual/sick leave cover for the Caretaker.

All expenditure incurred under this heading - maintenance costs, caretakers' wages and rental etc is 100% recoupable.

## **BUILDING CONTROL AND FACILITIES MAINTENANCE**

### **Building Control**

The submission of Commencement Notices is available at each Public Service Centre and the administration of Building Control register is centrally located in Letterkenny PSC allowing for the registration of valid commencement notices. Information is readily available through the computerised system for telephone and counter queries.

The DoEHLG recommended targets for inspections are being reached through inspections by engineering staff. To date this year 2,090 valid Commencement Notices have been registered and the annual fees received are estimated to be €153,000. It is estimated that the expenditure outturn under this heading will be €144,200.

The number of valid Commencement Notices for previous years is listed below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Valid notices</b>
2006	2360
2005	2230
2004	2,374
2003	1,979

Enforcement of the Building Control regulations is being advanced. The new Building Control Bill now enacted will allow a more effective method of enforcement once regulations under the Bill are put in place.

### **Facilities Maintenance**

Facilities maintenance continues to strive to maintain a clean, attractive, healthy, and safe environment for all staff, and customers. Facilities Management is designed to support the Donegal Local Authorities public service mission statement by providing quality and cost effective maintenance services in all buildings. Facilities Maintenance provides response and planned maintenance to maintain the effective operation of all services.

The Facilities Maintenance team comprises of a Senior Executive Engineer, a Clerical Officer, a Senior Supervisor and 6 Building Facility Supervisors. Experienced maintenance personnel back this up. The commitment to problem solving is evident through the varied issues and concerns dealt with

successfully throughout the year. The operation of Facilities Maintenance protects physical Council assets within financial constraints.

Facilities Maintenance co-ordinates the resources necessary to purchase, maintain, and protect the systems, equipment and infrastructure of our buildings.

The Public Service Centres at Donegal Town, Dungloe, Milford, Carndonagh and Letterkenny are included in addition to the portfolio of existing buildings in Lifford. Progress is continuing in relation to Fire Safety with the provision of on-site fire safety training and fire drills at all locations.

The improvement of access for people with disabilities is continuing throughout our offices. A new car-park has been constructed at Dungloe PSC with access ramp and lighting which has made substantial changes to accessing the building and also ease of general parking and circulation. A number of projects are ongoing which include an audit on accessibility for our Public Service Centres. This is currently taking place and will form the basis of an implementation plan for access improvements. Further works are ongoing such as the introduction of induction loops at counter and chambers for sensory impaired persons. A provision of €1,975,300 is included in the Draft Budget for the maintenance of all offices in Lifford and the Electoral Areas. €312,600 of this expenditure is recouped from tenants of the various offices.

### **Disposal of Assets**

As part of the Council's strategy to deal with significant Capital debt and financing the completion of the Decentralisation Programme including refurbishment of the County House, Headquarters, Stranorlar Public Services Centre, the Council has agreed to dispose of the following properties and sales have been agreed and conveyance is ongoing:

Lands at Finner/Bundoran  
Former Area Office/Depot, Pearse Road, Letterkenny  
Lands at Kilty, Letterkenny  
Walled Garden at Dungloe

The following properties are on the market or shortly to be put on the market:  
Former County Engineers/Enact building at Bridge Street, Lifford &  
Lands at the Common, Lifford.

Discussions are ongoing with the OPW/Garda in relation to the disposal of the old Fire Station site, Letterkenny.

In order to facilitate the relocation of services from the Pearse Road property, new Depot/Welfare facilities have been provided at Ballyraine, Letterkenny.

Construction of a new Civil Defence Headquarters has commenced in Stranorlar, with completion expected by June 2008.

## CAPITAL ACCOUNT AND ASSET FORMATION

### HOUSING CONSTRUCTION CAPITAL PROGRAMME

#### HOUSING NEED

The following table sets out the Current Makeup of the Housing Waiting List in Co. Donegal (including the Town Council Areas):

<b>AGE</b>	<b>1AD</b>	<b>1AD 1CH</b>	<b>1AD 2+CH</b>	<b>2AD</b>	<b>2AD 1CH</b>	<b>2AD 2+CH</b>	<b>OTHER</b>
18 - 24	200	268	33	20	20	8	0
25 - 30	221	202	74	32	26	34	1
31 - 34	131	58	57	13	15	25	1
35 - 44	278	77	112	39	19	93	21
45 - 54	227	32	24	40	15	22	26
55 +	326	7	1	70	2	3	20
<b>SUB TOTALS</b>	<b>1383</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>69</b>

**OVERALL TOTAL 2893**

As can be noted from the above, there are over 500 persons who are single and under the age of 35 on the waiting list. Furthermore there are over 50 family units made up of two adults under the age of 35.

Under Department Circular N13/2007 it is stated that age is an important consideration when deciding whether short or long term housing support is required.

In essence, the objective is trying to capture the potential for a household to improve their circumstances over time, in conjunction with other considerations. In this context, a younger person might be better served by short term or interim housing supports rather than by a longer term housing

solution that might serve to limit that person's ability to avail of opportunities to improve their own circumstances.

This thinking is much in line with what has already been presented and accepted by the Council's own Housing Strategic Policy Committee. In this regard, at a recent meeting, the Committee noted that approximately 50% of the applicants for scheme housing on the Council's waiting list at 1<sup>st</sup> January this year were single with approximately 56% of these under the age of 35. It was considered that the provision of social housing should be aimed at people who had a clearly identifiable long term housing need. It was considered that applicants under 35 years of age generally have a short term housing need and, while this may eventually become so, their long-term need could not be established at the initial stage of application as their circumstances may change. An exception would be under 35's with disabilities whose long-term need would be for social or voluntary housing. It is important to stress that this is not an "under 35s" issue but must be seen in the context of taking diverse needs into account whereby the local authority provide the most appropriate form of assistance having regard to the particular circumstances of each individual applicant.

The Committee agreed that young single persons under the age of 35 who do not demonstrate a clearly established long term need should be given a low priority for social housing and in most instances should be advised of the fact that they do not qualify at this stage. Obviously there is potential in this context for RAS to cater for persons in such an age grouping.

The Council is statutorily obliged to carry out a statutory assessment of housing needs at least once every three years. As the last assessment was carried out in March 2005 the next Housing Needs assessment is due to be completed by the end of March 2008.

### **HOUSING CAPITAL BUILDING PROGRAMME**

During 2007 the Multi Annual Housing Programmes nationally were refocused in light of the social and affordable housing provisions contained in the new Social Partnership Framework - Towards 2016. The emphasis is now on the first three years of this programme namely 2008 - 2010.

The Housing Directorate has had two meetings with the Housing section of the DoEHLG to review all aspects of the Housing Action Plan and in particular the changing needs profile. It is envisaged that the number of social houses that will be required in this period is 565, which does not include any of the other

programmes that are in place to provide long term housing solutions to applicants e.g. Voluntary Housing, Affordable Housing, RAS, Shared Ownerships etc. 2007 was another year of high activity for the Social Housing Programme with an estimated number of house completions of 288 and at the end of the year there will be 320 social houses under construction. The Capital allocation for the Social Housing Programme from DoEHLG was €30 million and the estimated capital spend on the programme is approx. €31.5 million at the year end.

On the construction side the following Scheme houses were under construction in 2007.

<b>ELECTORAL AREA</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
Inishowen.	Malin (10), Carndonagh (18), Bridgend (10), Carrigans (8), Moville (27), Greencastle (2), Greencastle (8)
Letterkenny	Manorcunninghaam (45) incl. 16 affordable, Letterkenny (32), St. Johnston (28) incl. 4 Affordable
Milford	Rathmullan (18), Ramelton (33) incl. 6 affordable, Milford (28) incl. 6 affordable, Kilmacrennan (41)
Glenties	Dungloe (8), Doochary (5), Burtonport (21), Leitirmacaward (13)
Donegal	Frosses (6), Bruckless (6), Donegal (16), Dunkineely (9), Glencolmcille(6), Killybegs (11)
Stranorlar	Ballybofey (47 - including 8 affordable), Stranorlar (39)

Among the schemes that were completed in 2007 were: Ballybofey TK (45 incl. 8 affordable), Stranorlar (39), Rathmullan (18), Letterkenny (32), Dungloe (8), Doochary(5), Carrick (10), Bruckles (6), Dunkineely (9), Frosses (6), Carndonagh (18), Malin (10), Carrigans (8), Bridgend (10).

It is anticipated that the current high levels of activity in Housing Construction will continue in 2008 with the following schemes scheduled to begin or continue under construction:

<b>ELECTORAL AREA</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
Inishowen	Greencastle (2), Moville (27), Greencastle (8), Carrowmeena (4), Gleneely (6), Carndonagh (4) Buncrana (20), Newtowncunningham(18)
Glenties	Lettermacaward (13), Burtonport (21), Gweedore (17), Ardara (20), Creeslough(19), Loughanure (12)
Donegal	Killybegs (11), Glencolmcille (6), Kilcar (6), Ballyshannon (20).
Letterkenny	Manorcunningham (37 incl. 8 affordable), St. Johnston (22), Lifford (20).
Milford	Milford (28), Ramelton (32), Kilmacrennan (41), Carrigart (20)
Stranorlar	Castlefinn (18), Ballybofey (20).

There were 37 SI's completed in 2007 and it is intended to progress another 40 SI's to tender and construction in 2008

A large portion of the current capital programme is being designed 'in house' by the Council's own architects and utilising the Council's own landbank. In this regard the Council is continually seeking suitable landbank throughout the county for housing development and in 2006 landbank was acquired in Ballybofey and Gleneely with negotiations advancing in several other towns. It is anticipated that more landbank will be acquired in 2008 in the areas of highest need. The current programme represents a significant challenge to the Council's Housing Construction Section to meet the targets set out. 2007 also saw the introduction of the new forms of Public Works Contracts and the implementation of the new Safety & Health at Work Construction Regulations. It has been acknowledged by all the stakeholders in the construction industry that these new forms of contract will take a considerable time to bed in and from the Council's viewpoint the lead in time for projects from design to construction stage will be considerably longer. The DoEHLG have signalled that the funding for the Multi Annual Capital Programme is likely to change from a fixed annual allocation to a rolling multiannual (possibly 3 years) capital envelope provision. This will recognise the revised project approval procedures in the DoEHLG and will allow for more certainty of availability of funding over a defined period to enhance programme delivery.

The outcome of the Housing Needs Assessment in March 2005 indicated an overall decrease in the numbers on the housing waiting lists and also a significant change in the demographics of same. The next Housing Needs Assessment in March 2008 may again significantly change the housing need profile and present renewed challenges to the Council in tailoring its capital programme to respond to these changing need profiles.

### **CLÁR LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING ESTATE ENHANCEMENT SCHEME**

In 2005 the Council secured further funding of €710,000 to continue the CLÁR Local Authority Housing Estate Enhancement Scheme which had commenced in 2004.

The second phase of the Scheme ran from September 2005 to August 2007 and the allocation consisted of a contribution of €337,250 by Donegal County Council (funded from Internal Capital receipts); a contribution of €337,250 by CLÁR and a 5% local contribution of €35,500 and has funded eligible works at the remaining 27 housing schemes for which funding was originally sought in 2003.

The type of projects covered under the scheme include landscaping, paving, play/amenity areas, development of open spaces, seating areas, lighting, boundary walls etc.

A small number of schemes originally approved were dropped from the 2005 - 2007 CLÁR Programme - either because the works were funded from an alternative source or the residents were unwilling to contribute towards the cost - and were replaced by other schemes with CLÁR approval. All approved works are due to be completed by the end of 2007.

### **REMEDIAL WORKS/REGENERATION OF RUNDOWN ESTATES**

In the Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing 2004-2008, the Council indicated that remedial works would form an important aspect of the programme.

In November 2005, approval was received from the Department to carry out a remedial works programme to the value of €642,935 to be funded from the Council's surplus internal capital receipts and this programme was substantially completed in 2006 with works being carried out to approx. 74 dwellings.

Earlier this year the Council obtained the Department's approval to extend the programme to cover a further 221 units in 2007/08 at a cost of €1.7m and again funded from the Council's surplus internal capital receipts. Work has commenced on this extended programme and will continue during 2008.

### **ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS HOUSING THEMSELVES**

#### **Loans:**

The following table sets out details of the number of applications received in respect of loans in 2002-2007:

	<b>Purchase / Construction</b>	<b>Shared Ownership</b>
2002	38	36
2003	67	67
2004	66	85
2005	77	68
2006	68	55
2007 (to 30/11/2007)	88	40

The Council will continue to promote the various loan schemes that are available.

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The Council recognises the importance of the Affordable Housing Scheme as a mechanism to enable lower income families who would not necessarily qualify for social housing but who would be unable to obtain a dwelling in the open market, to acquire their own homes.

To date, over 70 Affordable Units plus 17 Social Units have been constructed under Part V. A further 59 Affordable Units have been constructed under the 1999 Affordable Housing Scheme.

Almost €400,000 has been accepted in lieu of houses in 15 different schemes. The Department have approved the Council's submission to use these monies to improve the general affordability of Part V units and units provided under the 1999 Affordable Scheme by subsidising the sale price of units.

The Council has reached agreement with 4 major lending institutions to enable them to allocate mortgages to clients who have been approved for Affordable Housing. The Council have also reached agreement with a number of developers with a view to direct sales of Affordable Units by the developers to nominated persons as opposed to the Council purchasing the units and then disposing of them. To-date 10 units have been disposed of under the direct sale approach.

The Draft Budget provision for 2008 provides for the delivery of a further 45 no. units.

### **HOUSING GRANTS - REPLACEMENT OF DISABLED PERSONS/ ESSENTIAL REPAIRS GRANTS**

Earlier this year, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government completed its review of the Disabled Persons Grant, Essential Repairs Grant and the Special Housing Aid for the Elderly Schemes. A revised framework of grant aid has now been put in place in order to provide a more seamless set of responses to the housing needs of older people and people with disabilities.

In effect the Disabled Persons' Grant Scheme has been replaced by two new schemes:

- i) **the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, and**
- ii) **the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme**

while the Essential Repairs Grant scheme and the Special Housing Aid for the Elderly scheme - previously administered by the Health Service Executive - have been amalgamated and replaced by:

- iii) **the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme**

The revised schemes came into operation with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2007 and all three new schemes are administered by local authorities who have thus taken over responsibility from HSE for the Special Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme (although this scheme will continue to be operated by the HSE until 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2008).

The main purposes and features of each of the new schemes are as follows:

**i) Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability:**

The Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability Scheme provides grant aid to applicants to assist in the carrying out of works that are reasonably necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for the accommodation needs of a person with a disability.

The effective maximum grant in respect of a privately owned house is €30,000, which may cover 95% of the approved cost of works. The local authority can grant aid the full cost of the works in the case of a local authority house.

**Main Features-**

- For adaption of accommodation, extensions, downstairs toilets, accessible showers, etc.
- Max Grant - €30,000. (€14,500 for new houses).
- Covers between 30% and 95% of cost of work, depending on means, and standard costings.
- 95% applied where income is less than €30,000. No grant allowable where income exceeds €65,000.
- Potential clawback provision.
- 2 written quotations to be submitted by applicants.

**ii) Mobility Aids Grant Scheme:**

The Mobility Aids Grant Scheme is available to fast track grant aid to cover a basic suite of works to address mobility problems, primarily, but not exclusively, associated with ageing. The effective maximum grant under the Mobility Aids Housing Grant Scheme is €6,000, which may cover 100% of the cost of works.

**Main Features-**

- For grab rails, access ramps, level access showers, stair lifts, etc.
- Max Grant €6,000
- Covers 100% of cost, subject to standard costings
- No grant allowable where income exceeds €30,000.

**iii) Housing Aid for Older People Scheme:**

The Scheme of Housing Aid for Older People is available to assist older people living in poor housing conditions to have necessary repairs or improvements carried out. The effective maximum grant under the scheme of Housing Aid for Older People is €10,500 which may cover up to 100% of the cost of works.

### **Main Features-**

- To assist older people living in poor housing conditions.
- Recommended at those aged 60+. Flexibility in hardship cases.
- Similar works to ERG plus other works such as provision of water/sanitary facilities, contract cleaning, painting, radon remediation, etc. if deemed necessary.
- Smoke alarms to be installed subject to applicants agreement.
- Max Grant - €10,500.
- Covers between 30% and 100% of cost of work, depending on means, and standard costings.
- 100% applied where income is less than €30,000. No grant where income exceeds €65,000.

The Council have recently agreed costings for the various elements of works under the 3 new schemes.

Since 2004, the Council has met its local contribution for DPGs/ERGs through a combination of direct revenue provision and proceeds from the sale of its LA stock under the Tenant Purchase Scheme. However, the proceeds of sale from LA stock are now all required to fund a range of various improvement schemes (including the Central Heating Programme and repair/improvement of vacant houses as mentioned above) with the result that in 2008 the Council will have to make full provision for its local contribution for grants in its revenue account.

Revenue provision of €1,204,100 is included in the 2008 Draft Budget for the Council's contribution towards the new grant schemes - an increase of €515,200 over 2007's provision of €688,900. While there are increased recoupment levels to local authorities under the new schemes (i.e. 80% recoupable as opposed to 2/3rds in respect of DPGs/ERGs), the increased provision is required in 2008 for a combination of the following reasons:

- Internal Capital Receipts no longer available to part-fund grants
- Increased maximum grant levels
- The absorption of the Special Housing Aid for the Elderly scheme into the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme
- Increased number of grants approved under the "Fast-Track Assessment" policy and which will be due for payment in 2008.

In addition to making a direct revenue provision to fund the Council's contribution on the grants to be paid in 2008, provision is also made in Draft Budget 2008 for loan charges of €856,800 to repay loans of €10m raised prior to 2004 to fund the DPGs/ERGs scheme.

### **VOLUNTARY HOUSING**

Significant progress has been made in the promotion of voluntary housing and in particular, in relation to the provision of general needs housing under the Loan Subsidy Scheme. Accommodation has been provided at 39 Centres with a total of 664 units of accommodation provided.

There are presently some 209 no. units under construction and 155 no. units are at an advanced stage of planning as follows:

#### **(i) Schemes in Construction**

<b>Location</b>	<b>No. of Units</b>
Arranmore	21
Letterkenny (Fortwell)	30
Falcarragh	14
Letterkenny (Cheshire Homes)	6
Lifford	52
Carndonagh	56
Moville	30
<b>Total:</b>	<b>209</b>

#### **(ii) Schemes in Planning (Advanced Stage):**

<b>Location</b>	<b>No. of Units</b>
Ardara	29
Dungloe	37
Letterkenny (Simon)	3
Letterkenny (Oldtown)	24
Muff	30
Newtowncunningham	32
<b>Total:</b>	<b>155</b>

A number of the units provided for the elderly/homeless/people with disabilities would have been provided in the context of the Capital Assistance Programme and would, therefore, be units of accommodation within an overall building.

The Council is continuing to vigorously pursue the promotion of voluntary housing under both Capital Assistance and the Loan Subsidy Scheme to help address the gap between Housing Need and Housing Provision with a further 90 units targeted for 2008.

## THREE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2008 - 2010 FOR HOUSING

### 1.1 LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING

#### House Construction/Acquisition:

**2007:** In 2007 it was estimated that the Housing Construction Capital Spend would be in the order of €30.5 million. The capital allocation received from DoEHLG was €30 million and the estimated out turn at the end of 2007 is €31.5million.

**2008:** Between projects already under construction in 2007 that will carry over into 2008 and the projects scheduled to start as shown in the table in the previous section of this report there will be approx 525 units at various stages of construction throughout 2008. It is estimated that the capital spend on these units will be €28.5 million. The capital spend on Rural Cottages for 2007 is estimated at €2,000,000. This amounts to an estimated total capital spend of €30,500,000

**2009:** It is estimated that there will be 150 starts programmed for 2009 and it is likely that these will start on site in the second half of the year. At an average cost of €150,000 per unit this gives a capital cost of €22.5 million and given the time of year of the projected commencement on site this element of the programme will attract a capital spend in 2008 of €12 million. The carryover from the 2007 programme will be the order of €12.40 million. The capital spend on rural cottages for 2008 is estimated to be €2.0 million. This amounts to an estimated capital spend in 2007 of €26.40m

**2010:** There will be a carry over in construction activity from schemes already started in 2008 and as shown above this will be of the order of €8.0 million. Given the scale of the previous multi-annual programmes and the decrease in the numbers on the waiting list from the last housing needs assessment it would be prudent to budget for some 170 starts in 2010. At an estimated cost of €150,000 per unit at that time this would give a cost of €25.50 million with just over half of this being incurred in 2009. This would give an estimated capital spend on scheme housing in 2009 of approx. €21 million. The spend on rural cottages is again estimated to be €1.5 million, giving a total estimated spend of €22.5 million.

### **Remedial Works/Regeneration:**

**2007:** In 2007 it was estimated that 215 units @ €1.7m would benefit from a remedial works/regeneration programme. This is a 2 year programme with works on 221 units presently underway and these will be completed in 2008. In addition to the Remedial Works Programme, works under the Central Heating Programme were carried out on 180 units at a total cost €1.09m.

2008 - 215 units @ €1.7m

2009 - 100 units @ €1m

2010 - 100 units @ €1m

### **Traveller Accommodation:**

**2007:** In 2007, it was estimated that 5 bays + 4 units would be provided. The 5 bays relate to a permanent transient site in Inishowen which recently received Part 8 planning approval and will be tendered in early 2008.

6 Traveller families were provided with accommodation in 2007.

2008: 5 bays + 2 units - €0.6m

2009: 5 units - €0.75m

2010: 5 units - €0.75m

The Capital cost of providing standard accommodation for travellers is included in the routine Construction Programme.

### **Voluntary Housing:**

**2007:** In 2007 it was estimated that 50 units under CAS + 40 units under LSS would be provided. While only 16 units have been completed, over 100 other units are at the latter stages of completion.

2008: 50 units under CAS + 40 units under LSS - €11.5m

2009: 50 units under CAS + 40 units under LSS - €11.5m

2010: 35 units under CAS + 20 units under LSS - €7m

## **1.2 ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS HOUSING THEMSELVES**

**2007:** It was estimated that 115 loans (Standard, Shared Ownership & Affordable Loans) would be advanced in 2007. While 146 such loans have been advanced to-date, there has been a slowdown in the tenant purchase loans in particular over the past number of months.

2008: 115 standard loans/Shared Ownership/Affordable Loans - €16m

2009: 115 standard loans/Shared Ownership/Affordable Loans - €16.5m

2010: 115 standard loans/Shared Ownership/Affordable Loans - €16.5m

## **1.3 ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS IMPROVING HOUSES**

**2007:** It was estimated that 650 grants would be paid in 2007. Almost 700 grants have been paid to end of November 2007 and the likely expenditure is €4.5m at end of the year.

2008: 750 grants - €8m

2009: 750 grants - €8.2m

2010: 750 grants - €8.4m

(from November 2007 80% of this is recoupable)

## DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

The National Disability Strategy Funding was introduced in 2005 to assist Local Authorities in Implementing the Disability Act 2005 into their respective Areas.

To date Donegal Local Authorities have received:

2005 - €878,920

2006 - €1,000,000

2007 - €615,000(€230,000 to be accounted for in Revenue Account - see outturn in Programme 8).from this Fund.

Donegal Local Authorities have used this funding to improve accessibility which has been spent on improvements and remedial works to:

**Local Authority buildings' including: -**

- Public Service Centres
- Cultural Services Buildings
- Leisure Centres

**Some of the works carried out include:**

- Installation of Automatic Doors
- Lowered counters at reception areas
- Accessible computer screens at reception desks
- Improvements to lifts
- Placing of EVAC chairs in public buildings
- Management and frontline staff have received training on disability equality issues, disability awareness issues and disability etiquette.
- Various roads and streets in Towns and Villages have had their access for the mobility impaired, wheelchair users and visually impaired improved, works carried out include: -
  - Installing dished kerbs
  - Installing traffic control lights
  - Creating better pedestrian facilities
- Access for wheelchair users and the mobility impaired was improved at a number of beaches throughout the county.
- Assistive technology for the visually impaired was installed on the County Council website.
- Access for children and young people with disabilities was improved at various playgrounds.

- In 2007 Donegal Local Authorities employed consultants to carry out Access Audits where services and facilities were assessed for people with disabilities, the scope of the access audits was broad and included: Public Buildings, Libraries, Heritage Sites, Public Parks, Playgrounds, Picnic areas, Car parks, Civic Amenity Sites, Public toilets and Towns and Villages. These Access Audits will highlight remedial works Donegal Local Authorities have to carry out. The report findings will be made available and thereafter an Implementation Plan will be drawn up from these reports, this will then form a programme of works for the next three years. The Implementation Plan will go to public consultation early in 2008 where the public will get an opportunity to comment on the proposed remedial works.

In 2007 also Donegal Local Authorities secured additional services for people with disabilities such as: -

- Sign Language Interpreter services
- Translation into Braille
- Translation into Easy to Read format
- Translation into Plain English format

The funding for 2008 is envisaged to be similar to that received in 2007 and this money will go towards: -

- Advancing the audits to Implementation stage.
- Carrying out remedial actions as per the Access Audit Reports.
- Improving infrastructure and facilities.
- Carrying out new works to universal access standards.
- Continuing staff training, which will focus on changing design practises and will aim to raise awareness.
- Sourcing of additional assistive software systems.

The response by the Council to the issue of disability has been positive and has involved fully the views and inputs from all the relevant agencies who deal with the disabled, both directly and through the Disability Strategy Group. All of these agencies will be involved alongside the relevant Council staff and elected members in the implementation of the Action Plan which will be rolled out in 2008.