

# Housing and Building

The overall aim of our housing policy, is to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment and, as far as possible, at a tenure of its choice.



1.



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4.

1. Playground facilities for children
2. Scheme Purchase in Loughanure
3. Housing Development, Ramelton
4. Housing Development, Dungloe

The overall aim of our housing policy, is to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment and, as far as possible, at a tenure of its choice.

The reporting period witnessed a high level of activity with direct housing assistance having been provided to over 2300 individuals/families which represents a significant contribution to the accommodation and well being of the people of Donegal.

**The types of assistance included the following;**

- Allocation of tenancies under our own Social Housing Programme and the Voluntary Housing Programme,
- The provision of loans under the reconstruction loans scheme, the affordable housing loans scheme, the shared ownership scheme, the tenant purchase and caravan loans scheme and the provision of grant assistance through the Disabled Persons and Essential Repairs Schemes.
- The improvement to both the internal structure of the Council stock and schemes generally with funding being sourced under the Central Heating Programme and the CLÁR and Peace II Programmes for regeneration of estates.

In 2004, the Council for the first time drew up a 5 year Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing. The Plan set out an ambitious programme of works which involves a broad range of measures that will result in a significant contribution to the accommodation and well being of the people of Donegal. The cost is estimated at €321m and will have a direct impact on the provision of new or improved accommodation to over 6,500 households during the life of the plan. When the broader aspects of preventative maintenance / estate management and improvements are taken into account, a further 3,000 households will benefit.

## MAIN ACTIVITIES

### Provision and management of Rented Council Housing

#### Applications

When the last statutory assessment of housing need was carried out in March 2002, the overall need was 2,281. The number of applicants presently seeking rehousing from Donegal County Council is 3,234 which consists of 159 applicants seeking transfer leaving 3,075 gross need. The net need is 2,152 when the overlap of Town Councils and applicants who may avail of other forms of assistance are taken into account. On average there are 90 new applications received on a monthly basis. This equates to almost, 1,100 new applications on an annual basis, which is twice the average annual number for the period 1996

to 2000. An analysis of the applicants who were housed in 2004 indicated that the average waiting time was 3 years while 60% of the applicants were on the list for less than 3 years. On the overall housing lists, 85% of those seeking rehousing are on the list for less than 5 years.

**The following table sets out by electoral area the gross need in the county:**

Electoral Area	No. seeking rehousing at 31st December, 2004
Inishowen	665
Donegal	376
Glenties	527
Letterkenny	1,105
Milford	256
Stranorlar	305
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3,234</b>

The next statutory assessment must be completed by the 31st March, 2005.

A total of 550 new dwellings were allocated and this included individual rural cottages and scheme dwellings.

All dwellings are let in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Letting Priorities, which was adopted in July 2000. The introduction of the new scheme, which is points based, has streamlined the Council's assessment process for applicants and has resulted in a more efficient and effective allocation procedure.

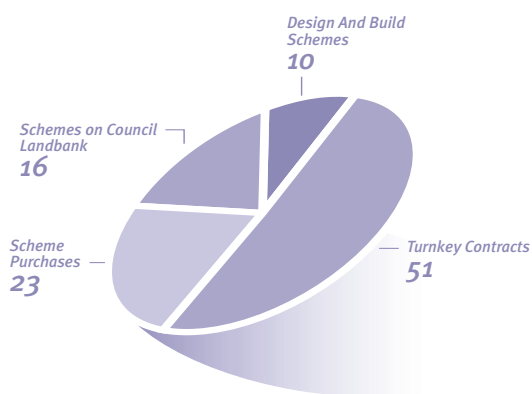
### Provision of New Housing

The Department of the Environment and Local Government introduced a 4-Year multi-annual Construction Programme for the years 2000 - 2003. Donegal County Council was allocated 1,040 starts under the programme and the elected Council agreed to distribute these starts as follows:

**Individual Rural Cottages 170    Scheme Housing 870**

By the end of the programme in 2003 there were 640 completions, 327 houses under construction and 92 approvals to commence in January 2004. The number of starts allocated under the programme was exceeded by 96 not withstanding 43 starts that were converted to Affordable Housing which included 2 schemes in Letterkenny, one in Downings and one in Donegal Town.

The four year programme was delivered through a variety of mechanisms as shown below:



In 2004, the Council prepared a 5 Year Action Plan on Social and Affordable Housing in the context of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government new 5 Year Multi Annual Housing Programme. Among the measures included in the plan is the provision of 1300 new houses over the period 2004 - 2008.

It is envisaged that 40% of the starts will be built on the Council's own landbank with the remainder being delivered through Turnkey Contracts. The Council intends, through its 'in house' design teams, to promote high quality schemes in terms of house design and scheme layout and this should set a useful example to the private sector in developing multiple housing layouts. 2004 also saw the beginning of the delivery of some social and affordable housing through the Part V measure of the 2000 Planning and Development Act. In 2004, 185 new starts were delivered by the Council and it is intended that the numbers will continue to increase throughout the life of the programme.

### Maintenance

Over the past six years we have undertaken a major maintenance programme where a loan of €3.8 million was raised to enable essential works to be carried out on our housing stock.

We initiated, and funded internally, a further programme for the upgrading of Senior Citizen houses in 2003 to the value of €342,000. Approval was also obtained for a House Improvement/Upgrading Programme. This work mainly included upgrading electrical wiring and the installation of smoke detectors.

In 2004 an allocation of €250,000 enabled us to commence a Central Heating Installation Programme and heating was provided in 42 dwellings during the year. The programme will continue in succeeding years and it is anticipated that provision of central heating to all rented houses will be achieved in 5/7 years subject to funding availability.

### Estate Management/Tenant participation

Funding was secured under the Housing Management Initiative Grant Scheme 2004 for the employment of 3 Tenant Liaison Officers serving the following locations:

- 3 housing estates at Glencar, Letterkenny,
- Emmett Park, Castlefin,
- Lawne Park, Ballyshannon, and
- Ballina Housing Estate, Falcarragh.

The main purpose of the Housing Management Initiative Scheme, introduced in 1995, is to provide assistance to local authorities for new projects, other than routine maintenance, which allows them to improve the quality of their housing management service. The terms of the scheme provide that up to 90% of the cost of approved staffing projects and up to 50% in the case of approved general housing management initiatives, of the expenditure incurred by authorities on approved projects is recouped by the Department.

All 3 Tenant Liaison Officers took up duty with effect from 1 October, 2004 and are employed on a 1 year contract.

### Promotion of Home Ownership

The Council continued to promote home ownership through the Tenant Purchase, Annuity, Reconstruction and Shared Ownership Loan Schemes.

Lending Scheme	No. approved
Tenant Purchase Loans	14
House Purchase/Construction /Reconstruction Loans	7
Shared Ownership Loans	30

### Disabled Persons Grants and Essential Repair Grants

A total of 734 applications under the Essential Repair Grant Scheme and 591 applications under the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme were approved.

### Travellers Accommodation

At the end of 2004, there were 18 families left to accommodate of the 60 families identified in March 2002. Specific Instance cottages have been approved for three of these families. Of the remaining 15 families, 3 require group housing and 12 scheme housing. Several of these families would have, in the past, requested either permanent halting sites or Group Housing, but have now changed their preference to Scheme housing. The three families on the

roadside all have temporary sites available to them with access to basic services but choose to live on the roadside for various reasons. Although there are three indigenous Traveller families residing on the roadside, all families, including transients, now have access to at the very least, basic facilities & services, pending the provision of permanent accommodation.

In the last two years expenditure of €175,000 per year was incurred on the maintenance of these sites including caretaking costs.

### Voluntary Housing

Accommodation provided under this programme is in addition to the Council's own Construction Programme.

Under the Capital Assistance Scheme, accommodation can be provided for the elderly and people in special need whereas the Rental Subsidy Scheme is more geared towards the provision of family accommodation. In addition to these schemes, communal facilities can be provided where they are of direct benefit to the occupants of the dwellings/accommodation provided.

Significant progress has been made in the promotion of voluntary housing and, in particular, in relation to the provision of general housing needs under the Rental Subsidy Scheme. To date, accommodation has been provided at 33 Centres with a total of 534 units of accommodation provided.

The completion of schemes at Raphoe, Kilmacrennan, Clonmany, Malin, Ballyshannon and Milford were some of the most notable achievements under the voluntary housing programme.

### 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. 4 Affordable schemes (43 units) were delivered in the last two years at Downings, Donegal Town and Letterkenny (2 schemes).

## Housing/Social SPC - Activites

The Housing/Social SPC continued its activities including review, where applicable, of policies and procedures in relation to the following topics:

- Differential Rents Scheme
- Action Plan for Social & Affordable Housing 2004 - 2008
- Emergency and Permanent Traveller Accommodation Programmes
- Tenant Purchase Scheme for Local Authority Houses
- Voluntary Housing
- Housing Estate Management
- Disabled Persons Grant Scheme
- Essential Repairs Grant Scheme
- Housing maintenance/improvement
- Voluntary Housing
- Scheme of Letting Priorities for Affordable Housing
- Returning Emigrants
- Bill-Pay Services

## Membership

### Councillor

Cllr. Francis Conaghan  
 Cllr. Bernard McGuinness  
 Cllr. Pádraig O'Dochartaigh  
 Cllr. Thomas Pringle  
 Cllr. Alice Bonnar  
 Cllr. Noel McGinley  
 Cllr. Niall Blaney – replaced by Cllr. Liam Blaney  
 Cllr. Joe Doherty, Buncrana Town Council

### Sectoral

Mr. Clement MacSuibhne  
 Mr. Denis McGonagle  
 Ms. Ann Wilkinson  
 Mr. Edward McGettigan