

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE DHUN NA nGALL

Oifig Riarthóir na gCruinnithe
Aras an Chontae
Leifear
24 Samhain, 2025

FOGRA CRUINNITHE

A Chara,

Beidh Cruinniú Speisialta den Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall ar siúl Dé hAoine 28 Samhain, 2025 ag **11.00rn. in Áras an Chontae, Leifear.** Tá Clár an chruinnithe leis seo. Seolfar nasc leictreonach chuig an chruinniú i gcomhfhreagras eile.

Mise, le meas



Pádraig Ó Laifearaigh
Riarthóir Cruinnithe

DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

Office of Meetings Administrator
County House
Lifford.

24th November 2025

TO EACH MEMBER OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MEETING

Dear Councillor,

A Special Meeting of Donegal County Council will be held on Friday 28th November 2025 at 11.00am in the County House, Lifford. The agenda for the meeting is attached. An online link to join the meeting will issue separately.

Yours sincerely



Patsy Lafferty
Meetings Administrator

AGENDA

1. **Housing**
Housing Capital Update.
2. **Community Development & Planning**
 - a. Regeneration Division Update.
 - b. Capital Projects Delivery Division Update.

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON THE 28TH NOVEMBER 2025
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C/444/25 **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Cllrs P Canning, Cathaoirleach, F Bradley, D Coyle, T Crossan, A Doherty, P Mc Gowan, M Mc Mahon, G McMonagle.

Online: Cllrs J Beard, L Blaney, M Boyle, C Brogan, J Brogan, B Carr, T.S. Devine, A Farren, M Farren, M Harley, J Kavanagh, D M Kelly, M C Mac Giolla Easbuig, M Mc Bride, M Mc Clafferty, M Mc Dermott, P Mc Garvey, A Molloy, J Murray, M Naughton and M Scanlon.

C/445/25 **OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE**

Garry Martin, Director Economic Development, Information Systems and Emergency Services, Patsy Lafferty, Director of Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services/Meetings Administrator, John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital Donna Mc Groarty, Divisional Manager, Housing & Corporate, Claire Burke, Senior Executive Architect, Housing Design/Construction, Paddy Doherty, Divisional Manager, Community Development & Planning Services, Patricia Mc Intyre, Town Regeneration Officer, Sinead Mc Clafferty, Executive Planner, Paddy Mullen, A/Senior Engineer, Capital Projects Delivery Unit, Shane Sweeney, A/Senior Executive Engineer Capital Projects Delivery Unit, Ardal Mc Dermott, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Capital Projects Delivery Unit, Róise Ní Laifeartaigh, Rannóg na Gaeilge, Clíona Ni Ghallachóir, Rannóg na Gaeilge, William Colvin, Assistant Communications Officer, Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

C/446/25 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Kennedy who was unable to attend the meeting.

C/447/25 **HOUSING CAPITAL UPDATE**

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer provided an update in relation to planning approvals, the status of projects at tender stage and the range of departmental submissions and approvals since the 31st October 2025. This included an overview of projects completed in the period 2022 to 2025, projects currently on site and those at tender stage.

Ms Claire Burke, Senior Executive Architect, updated members on the various projects at planning and detailed design stage together with those at pre-planning stage.

An analysis of the various Competitive Dialogue Projects was presented by the Senior Engineer together with pictorial representation on a range of projects at construction stage. He concluded the presentation with a summary of the planned actions for December 2025 and a breakdown of the overall social housing delivery programme.

Members welcomed the presentation and complemented the Housing team on their efforts to date. They raised the following issues:

Issues Raised

- Delay in Approved Housing Bodies receiving approval and confirmation from Donegal County Council. How can this be remedied, and pressure put on the Department to give the overall sanction?
- Reference made to Ard na Greine and Ardrawer in Letterkenny.
- General welcome for the movement on S.I. Housing with agreement that more developments of this nature were needed.
- Tenant-in-Situ Scheme is not working.
- Tenants want to buy their own homes, but blanket refusals in some estates arising from the defective concrete blocks' crisis are having a severe impact on these requests.
- 24 unit housing development in Ballyshannon needs to be finalised.
- Welcome for the works carried out at Ard na Guala Duibhe.
- Chronic shortage of contractors, tradespeople and skilled workers.
- Noted that the impending Social Housing Remedial Scheme when operational would create a whole new layer of demand for skilled labour.
- Scheme needs to be put in place to attract and retain tradespeople together with a dedicated apprenticeship model as the new national Housing Plan is not working for Donegal.
- Campaign needed to encourage construction workers to return home.
- More development needed in Letterkenny which has the highest housing waiting list in the county.
- Special dispensation should be sought for Donegal to facilitate the purchase of second homes.
- Housing need is very high in the Ramelton area and Uisce Éireann needs to be encouraged to address infrastructural deficits in the area.
- Land needs to be acquired, and expressions of interest sought to facilitate housing development in our rural towns and villages.
- Housing need in Dunfanaghy, Creeslough, Gweedore and Glenties highlighted.
- Engagement with Uisce Éireann is essential if development is to proceed in Falcarragh.
- Ongoing commitment needed from Uisce Éireann to address infrastructural deficits county-wide so that the building of housing can proceed.
- Treatment Plants needed in the Gweedore and Creeslough areas.
- Access issues in relation to the N56 need to be addressed.
- Planning objections hindering development and the overall objection fee needs to be raised.
- Homelessness continues to be a major problem.

Queries

- How many approvals are needed to get a contractor on site in respect of any individual S.I. dwelling?
- What is preventing the Council from buying houses from landlords, and where are the blockages and does departmental criteria impact on this generally?
- How many units are to be delivered in the High Road development in Letterkenny?
- Are there live applications at present with regard to the Capital Advance Leasing Scheme?
- Has there been any progress with the Department in terms of securing funding for the acquisition of second homes?
- In relation to the site at Hughie Joes in Gweedore can the Council look at providing the sewerage facilities so as to deliver 26 units rather than the designated 12 units?
- Have we looked at increasing the independent living options in our new housing developments?
- Why does the Council rely on the Approved Housing Bodies to provide accommodation when it could enhance its own building programme?
- Is there any update from Respond on the eight houses in An Clochán Liath?

The Cathaoirleach said that it was important that the message went out that housing development was ongoing and proceeding at a considerable pace across the county. He welcomed the design aspect in place for the building of S.I. houses and called for unused green areas in existing housing estates to be utilised for the accommodation of additional units.

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services advised that it was important to note that AHB Housing Schemes were not Donegal County Council direct build projects and that the contract was in the first instance between the AHB and the developer. He advised that the funder is primarily the Department of Housing, and the Council does not have a decision making role, but as part of the funding process the Council is required to provide a letter of support for the AHB's application to the Department primarily to confirm that there is sufficient housing need for a development in the location, and that it is within a reasonable level from a value for money aspect. Then it is a matter for the AHB to make application to the Department. The Department and the Housing Agency then assess the application in detail and make a determination on whether it is approved and the level of approval. He advised that the normal practice for schemes is to obtain Department approval before going on to site, and that the same applied to AHB Schemes. He added that challenges have arisen in some instances where projects are already on site and even completed before an application comes to the Council or to the Department outside of the expected practice. Plans were afoot, it was noted, to phase out these cases which are termed as 'late stage' turnkeys. He

confirmed that an update would be provided to each Municipal District on specific projects in their own MD.

In relation to the Tenant Purchase Scheme, he drew attention to the policy agreed by the Corporate Policy Group and Plenary Council and the fact that the Council was obliged not to sell any property where there was a concern about the condition. He said if there were specific cases where it was felt that this interpretation was too stringent then these specific examples could be brought to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee for further consideration.

Acquisitions, were, he advised significantly curtailed under the present housing programme with the focus now on new build. The annual allocation was, he advised, restrictive and there was engagement with the Department to get an increase and avail of other more flexible options.

The Tenant-In Situ Scheme, he advised, should be one of the priorities for acquisition but that had not materialised. He informed Cllr Mc Monagle that if there were specific examples that warranted further examination, then he would be willing to look at the rationale involved.

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, confirmed that the number of units for the High Road Scheme would be in the region of 140 to 150 and that further clarity would be provided in due course.

Donegal County Council, he stated, met regularly with Uisce Éireann with the aim of synchronising Uisce Éireann's own capital programme and the ambitious housing capital programme.

He said that the connection issues in relation to the Turnkey in Moville had been resolved and every effort made to deal with the ongoing challenges. There had also been, he added, interaction with the Department in relation to progressing the Churchill site.

He said that comments in relation to the red tape involved with progressing an S.I application are noted and would be taken on board.

Cllr Mc Gowan referenced lands in Stranorlar which had been zoned in the last three County Development Plans and were inaccessible for development with planning permissions being refused in respect because of the access issue. He asked that the matter be reviewed.

Clarity was also requested in relation to the policy on the tarring of Back Lanes and confirmation as to which section of the Council was ultimately responsible for same. The Senior Engineer agreed to follow up on the query.

REGENERATION DIVISION UPDATE

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the Regeneration Team and acknowledged the work carried out by that division. Ms Patricia McIntyre, Divisional Manager briefed members on the work being carried out by the division together with an overview of the staffing complement in the Regeneration Section. She proceeded to give an update on the Urban Regeneration Programme in Letterkenny.

Ms Sinead McClafferty, Executive Planner gave a breakdown and general overview of the URDF Call 3 funding which had aimed to tackle vacancy and dereliction whilst activating housing supply. She then updated members in relation to Priority Programme outside of Letterkenny.

Ms McIntyre proceeded to provide information on the communication role undertaken by the Regeneration Section.

Reference was made also to the Rural Regeneration Programme and the range of projects being undertaken under the Town Centre First Initiative. She noted that €47m had been secured in funding from the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund to facilitate projects to the value of €56.76m. Concluding, she confirmed that 1,423 applications had been received under the Croi Conaithe Vacant Property Refurbishment Scheme with 1,042 approved to date and 355 grants paid amounting to €20m. Donegal, she said, had the highest uptake in the country and that the value of the approved applications to the Donegal Economy was €65m.

Mr Paddy Mullen, A/ Senior Engineer introduced the Capital Projects Team, and informed members that updated would be provided by Mr Shane Sweeney, A/Senior Executive Engineer and Ardal McDermott, A/Senior Executive Engineer.

Mr Sweeney updated members on the status of the following projects: Fort Dunree, Letterkenny SURS Phase 1, Lifford Common, Riverine Community Park, Repowering Buncrana, and the Creeslough Regeneration Programme.

Mr McDermott, outlined the status of the following projects:

Arranmore Foreshore, Burtonport Harbour Redevelopment Phase 1, LK Connect- Linear Park Phase 1, Burtonport Harbour Redevelopment Phase 2, Killybegs 2040, Carndonagh Tús Nua, Ballybofey/Stranorlar SEED Project, Ramelton Re-Imagined, Letterkenny 2040 - Market Square, and the Letterkenny Courthouse.

The Senior Engineer, concluding the presentation gave an overview of the staffing complement within the Capital Projects Team.

The meeting was then opened to the floor with members raising the following:

- Given that the derelict housing grant is not available in some of our Municipal Towns what are the long-term implications expected to be?
- Is there any indication as to how many will tender for the Tús Nua project?
- Concern regarding the next steps for the Fort Dunree Project and the timeline for same in light of the recent planning refusal. Funding aspect of the project needs to be looked at, as additional costs are anticipated and further information sought. Query as to when the new planning application will be submitted and the funding shortfall addressed.
- Welcome for the Repowering Buncrana Project.
- Important that the costs, design aspect etc for the SEED Project are not changed and that members will have an opportunity for further input.
- Ballybofey/ Stranorlar needs to be at the fore in terms of town regeneration given that GeoDirectory reports Ballybofey as having one of the highest commercial vacancy/dereliction rates in the country.
- General welcome for the Creeslough Project.
- Additional staffing complement needed to deal with the regeneration aspect outside of Letterkenny.
- Disappointment with the slow progress of the Alpha and Beta Buildings. What is the hold up and does the design need to be altered to accommodate a smaller development and within a reasonable budget?
- Push needed to progress the LK-Green Connect – Linear Park-Phase 1.

The Cathaoirleach on behalf of all the members thanked the Regeneration and the Capital Design team for the comprehensive presentations.

Ms Patricia Mc Intyre thanked members for their engagement and ongoing courtesy and respect. She said that the revolving fund was in place to address dereliction and vacancy in Letterkenny, but that there was no fund outside of Letterkenny for rural areas. She said that this had been broached with the Department and a similar scheme sought for these areas as it was not possible acquire properties or initiate CPOs in these locations. It was possible, she added, to register derelict properties in rural areas on the derelict sites register so that they attracted an annual levy of 7%.

Generally, she confirmed, that a Compulsory Purchase Order was the last approach in dealing with dereliction.

Back in 2023, it was noted that the Department had given the Council access to the GeoDirectory and as a result had been asked to carry out a survey of derelict properties and subsequently to engage with the owners and encourage them to activate the properties. 40% of this work, she said, had been undertaken and it was hoped to recommence the survey and associated work in early 2026.

There was acknowledgement of the excellent engagement from the Town Teams which were now well established.

Staffing it was noted was always an issue and that works were subject to the availability of associated funding streams.

In relation to the Rural Programme, it was confirmed, that the focus was on the Service and Support Towns and that the Community Development division supported the remaining towns. She said that there was good interaction and co-operation within these two divisions that enabled maximum funding to be sought.

Concluding she said that it was hoped to have public drop in events in 2026 and build on the success of such interactions in 2026.

Mr Paddy Mullen, Senior Engineer advised that that an extension had been issued in respect of the Tús Nua Project in Carndonagh and that tenders were now due in the first week of January 2026. It was encouraging, he added, that a number of expressions of interest had already been submitted.

He said that a workshop would take place with the Elected Members in the New Year following the Fort Dunree Project Board Meeting on the 15th December . This, he said would pave the way forward in light of the recent planning refusal.

Alluding to the SEED Project, he said, that a decision was awaited on the CPO and that after that there would be an opportunity for members to discuss any future development.

The Donegal 2040 Board, he said, had met and reviewed all of the decisions in relation to the Port Road development.

Mr Garry Martin, Director Economic Development, Information Systems and Emergency Services said that the Beta building was an ambitious project and on the site of an iconic building. The business basis, he said, remained the same but that one final element remained and that was the absence of co-funding. Meetings were ongoing, it was noted, in relation to this aspect. A final decision, he said, was in the pipeline and this was expected shortly which would reflect the ambition for the site. Failure to acquire the relevant funding, would, he confirmed, necessitate going back to the drawing board.

This concluded the business of the meeting.