

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE DHUN NA nGALL

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

FOGRA CRUINNITHE

A Chara,

Beidh Cruinniú Speisialta den Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall ar siúl Dé Céadaoin 30 Meitheamh, 2025 ag **9.30rn. 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 Laifearthaigh
Riarthóir Cruinnithe

DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

Office of Meetings Administrator
County House
Lifford.
24th June, 2025

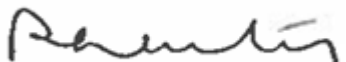
TO EACH MEMBER OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MEETING

Dear Councillor,

A Special Meeting of Donegal County Council will be held on Monday 30th June 2025 at 9.30am 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. **Economic Development**
To approve the Donegal County Council Tourism Strategy 2025 and Beyond.
2. **Housing**
Housing Capital Update

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN
THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON THE 30th JUNE 2025**

C/237/25

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs N Kennedy, Cathaoirleach, J Beard, M Boyle, F Bradley, C Brogan, J Brogan, P Canning, B Carr, D Coyle, T Crossan, T. S Devine, A Doherty, A Farren, M Harley, J Kavanagh, D. M Kelly, M. C. Mac Giolla Easbuig, M Mc Bride, M Mc Dermott, P Mc Gowan, G Mc Monagle, D Meehan, M Naughton, D Nic Mheanman, J S O' Fearraigh and M Scanlon.

Online: Cllrs Blaney, M Farren, N Jordan, Mc Clafferty, P Mc Garvey, D Mc Gee, and M Mc Mahon.

C/238/25

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr John Mc Laughlin, Chief Executive, Patsy Lafferty, Director of Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services, Meetings Administrator, Garry Martin, Director Economic Development, Information Systems and Emergency Services, Anne Marie Conlon, Head of Economic Development, John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital, Donal Walker, A/Senior Engineer, Housing Capital, Eamonn Brown, Divisional Manager, Housing & Corporate, Thomas Melly, Senior Staff Officer, Housing & Corporate, Róise Ní Laifeartaigh, Rannóg na Gaeilge, Clíona Ní Ghallachóir, Rannóg na Gaeilge, William Colvin, Assistant Communications Officer, Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

C/239/25

DONEGAL COUNTY TOURISM STRATEGY 2025 AND BEYOND

Members considered the report circulated with the agenda in relation to the above.

Mr Garry Martin, Director Economic Development, Information Systems and Emergency Services said that the item had been deferred from the May meeting and that a number of the key statistics as requested by the members at that meeting had now been included in the document circulated. It had also been considered and reviewed in detail, he said, at Municipal District level.

He referenced Page 7 of the document and said that the following figures had now been added in respect of the Signature Discovery Points in Donegal:

Attraction	Visitor Numbers
Sliabh Liag	160,000
Fanad Head	101,591
Malin Head	99,073

These, he advised, had not been included on the original table which had been based on Fáilte Ireland validated figures and dashboard. The figures outlined above had, he confirmed, been captured from the Council's own activity data and monitoring equipment. It was intended, he added, to work with Fáilte Ireland to have these included in a similar

fashion going forward. Other items raised at the May meeting in relation to specific towns and locations not referenced in the document were, he said, not included in the strategy for the purposes of distance but would be included in further marketing material.

Cllr Mc Dermott welcomed the fact that Malin Head was now included and expressed disappointment that Fáilte Ireland had not included same in the initial statistics. He said that they should be contacted, and an explanation sought as to why such an important signature point in Donegal and a prime location on the Wild Atlantic Way had not been referenced.

On the proposal of Cllr Mc Dermott, seconded by Cllr Meehan it was resolved to approve the adoption of the Donegal County Council Tourism Strategy 2025 – 2030.

C/240/25

HOUSING CAPITAL UPDATE

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Housing Construction updated members in relation to the Housing Capital Programme. He outlined the status of the various in-house projects at Lifford Common, Mulroy View, Tamney, Cois Abhainn, St Johnston and Stranorlar all of which were now at various stages of the tendering process and which he confirmed would provide 108 units of accommodation. Detail was also provided in respect of in-house projects at planning and detailed design stage. It was acknowledged that a Part 8 application had been granted for 19 units at Doirí Beaga and that the design had been finalised for 18 units at Old Fintra Road, Killybegs with designs also being progressed for schemes at Dunkineely, Ballintra and Ard an Rátha. Planning approval it was noted had been received for 4 No. Schemes at Na Gleanta, Cill Charthaigh, Gleann Cholm Cille and Laghy to provide 16 units of accommodation.

Members were updated on the progress of 6 No S.I. Projects at various locations in the county together with the 40 Design and Build Projects at construction stage, and the 100 units at design stage.

Reference was also made to the status of the ongoing turnkey acquisition projects, which it was noted would provide 130 units of accommodation. An update on the progress of the Letterkenny Flagship projects at Ballymacool and High Road, was provided.

A summary was then provided in relation to the 511 social housing units under construction in County Donegal.

Concluding Mr Gallagher acknowledged the hard work and dedication shown by the Housing team and said that the priority was to get projects to advanced design stage and ultimately on site.

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services acknowledged the efforts of the Housing team and said that 511 units

on site was a positive development with a significant number of additional houses at various stages of planning. Several issues, he advised, were outside the control of the Council. He said that there would be continued engagement with the various utilities and agencies to get projects over the line.

Members welcomed the presentation, and the meeting was opened to the floor during which the following issues were raised:

- Serious investment was needed in Donegal to speed up the delivery of housing and to ensure that same is concentrated also in smaller towns and villages and in rural areas.
- Acknowledged that timber framed housing was the way forward taking into consideration the concrete block crisis.
- Need to look at independent living options in Buncrana and Inishowen generally. Suggested that general template based on the Ballymacool model could be used in developments throughout the county.
- No indication had been given of the plans for Carrigart, Ramelton and Kerrykeel where over there was a demand for over 100 units.
- Housing delivery is too slow with reference made to the slow pace of progress at Windy Hall.
- Solution needed as soon as possible in relation to the houses at Ard na Greine..
- Additional Homeless Shelters needed in Donegal and further liaison with the HSE is needed.
- Two Homeless Shelters are not sufficient and whilst very welcome do not work for a county the size of Donegal. With rising rents and costs the numbers presenting as homeless are increasing.
- HAP needs to increase in line with rising rents.
- Availability of water and sewerage service one of the key issues and whilst the ambition is excellent there are problems with the overall capacity for same.
- Contractors need to be given confirmation at an early stage as to what price they will be paid.
- €2m allocation for the second hand acquisition programme is insufficient.
- Concern that houses in Fintra, Glencolmcille, Cill Carthaigh will not start this year.
- The housing need in the Donegal MD is for 500 units yet only 42 identified in Ballyshannon and 35 turnkey units in Donegal Town
- Cognisance needs to be taken of the comments made by the C.I.F representatives at the meeting on the 28th May.
- Abnormal costs will be different on every site.
- Noted that the income thresholds for Social Housing had not been increased thus isolating many applicants who were not in

receipt of social welfare payments and who had no other means of securing accommodation.

- Series of Workshops needed at MD level to discuss and assess the recent communication from the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage, Mr James Browne T.D. urging greater speed in housing activation.
- County Development Plan needs to be revisited to see where the opportunities are for further development. Rezoning issues in Buncrana highlighted where a shovel ready site is now going to be redesignated as “agricultural”
- Part V developments are not progressing, and reasons needed as to why this is happening.
- Anomaly in terms of the 7 Year Strategic Plan for Carndonagh which details provision for 200 housing units yet Uisce Éireann have indicated that there is not sufficient capacity.
- New innovative and quick building methods need to be utilised given the extent of the current housing crisis and the uncertainty surrounding building materials.
- Suggested that decisions are being made on the abnormal costs with no professional input.
- Provision needs to be made for the development of housing in Carrick.
- Housing Supply in Carndonagh required.

Queries

- What is the timeline for the completion of the houses in Tamney and when will the contractor be appointed?
- Is the end of 2026 the expected completion date for the units in Tamney, Milford and Kilmacrennan areas?
- What plans are there to progress the Repair & Lease Scheme as this could be utilised more as an intermediate method for housing delivery.
- Why is there a reluctance to engage with developers in relation to potential developments under the Part V process? How long does it take to acquire same, what is a viable Part V and how is developer funding impacted?
- Is the electricity supply sufficient to meet current and future demands?
- How many houses have been built by Donegal County Council and how many provided by the Approved Housing Bodies?
- How many houses will the Council build in 2025?
- What tax are we paying in respect of the 511 units currently underway.
- Are we building enough three bedroom houses?
- Suggested that Council should where needed bypass Uisce Éireann and go the Department directly for funding for the construction of water and sewerage facilities.
- Update requested in relation to the provision of units in Falcarragh.

- How can we be sure of the capacity of the water and sewerage services in Clochan Liath?
- Residents Association must be contacted in relation to the provision of the additional units at Ballymacool.
- Have the Approved Housing Bodies or St Vincent De Paul accommodation on hold throughout the county at present?
- Further to the stipulation in the County Development Plan, is the 85% ruling in favour of Irish speaking tenants being implemented in Gaeltacht areas?
- Has the response issued in relation to the Revised National Planning Framework and has any correspondence issued from the Housing Activation Office in relation to the county's housing need?
- Have we a calculation on what €2m allocated under the Second Hand Acquisition Programme will deliver for Donegal and what areas will benefit?
- Query as to whether interest was shown by an Approved Housing Body in relation to the Cloondara Estate in Carndonagh. Request for briefing and rationale as to what is happening with these units.
- What plans are there for Ballyshannon where there is a need for 140 houses?
- What is the cost of building two and three bedroom housing in Donegal on Council owned sites?
- Has there been any further interaction with the C.I.F in relation to the issues that they raised at the last meeting?
- What is being done to further the acquisition of vacant properties in Letterkenny?
- What is happening in relation to the design of the schemes in Dunkineely, Ballintra, Ardara and Fintown and why has Fintown been dropped from the list?
- Are we using tools for staged payments and recognising financial costs for developers as permitted by the Department to help contractors move forward?
- Is there any update in relation to the utilisation of modular homes and what is being put in place for those families who will be impacted by the Social Housing Remediation Scheme?
- Why is there no mention of Manorcunningham and does the Council have land at this location?
- Do Uisce Éireann have any plans to increase the capacity of the reservoir at Rahan in light of the Ballymacool development?
- What is happening in relation to land acquisition in Bundoran and when can this be finalised?
- Can a breakdown be provided detailing the costs for the building of housing units and outlining the costs applicable to Donegal County Council and those incurred by Approved Housing Bodies for similar accommodation.

Follow-Up

- Cllr J Brogan asked if a response had been received from the Department in relation to his motion on social housing income limits as submitted to the January 2025 Plenary Meeting.
- Request that dates be agreed for a series of MD Workshops to identify areas in our towns and villages that could be utilised for housing development.
- Update requested in relation to the 9 houses in Ballymacool which the Council has been asked to purchase.
- Cllr Mc Dermott proposed, seconded by Cllr Naughton that the incoming Cathaoirleach together with a cross-section of members and Council officials meet with senior personnel in the Department of Housing to look at the best way forward for housing development in the county and to facilitate the delivery of additional housing units in Donegal.

C/241/25

ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING

It was unanimously resolved to adjourn the meeting for a brief period to facilitate the commencement of the 2025 Annual General Meeting.

C/242/25

HOUSING CAPITAL UPDATE

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services informed members that there were a number of factors outside the Council's control that impacted on housing provision including utility services. He noted that the focus of the new Housing Activation Office would be to address the barriers in specific locations to housing provision and that this would align and co-ordinate with the focus and the investment of the different utility providers. There would, he added, be ongoing liaison with this office when operational.

Regarding a number of queries on costs, he referenced the fact that the Council delivered housing in a number of different ways and that the Approved Bodies utilised similar delivery methods. With regard to provision on Council owned land, he said, that a competitive tendering process was operated which allowed the market to set the price based on competition.

Developments on private owned sites (turnkeys), he noted, also operated with a competitive dialogue tendering process which allowed the Council to consider submissions based on certain criteria aligned with market prices. He noted that the C.I.F had raised issues in relation to abnormal costs. This, he advised, was being looked at in terms of ensuring flexibility whilst maintaining a level playing field for all contractors and complying with the public spending code. The Council, he noted, are discussing the matter with the Department and with other local authorities facing similar challenges. It was hoped, he added, to come up with a method which would provide more flexibility whilst maintaining a level playing field.

There were, he advised, challenges with some Approved Housing Body/Turnkey Projects and generally in such instances prices were

higher which created problems for the local authority. It was noted that further engagement was to take place with the AHBs in relation to a number of sites and that there would be engagement with the Department in relation to the issue. He urged all stakeholders involved to maintain a focus and find the necessary solutions, noting that the solutions did not rest with the Local Authority alone.

With regard to allocations in the Gaeltacht areas, he said, that these could be facilitated for Irish speaking tenants and that the current allocation process provided for the setting aside of a percentage of allocations for certain categories of applicants,

Mr Eamonn Brown, Divisional Manager, Housing & Corporate responding to a number of queries confirmed that the Repair and Lease Scheme was operational, but that the level of interest had dropped due to the success of the Vacant Property Grant Scheme. He alluded to the fact that members had endorsed the Homeless Action Plan which was now in its early stages. There were, he advised challenges ahead and an obligation to adhere to national criteria.

There was now, he said a renewed emphasis on homeless prevention, and this was being progressed in each Municipal District so that a roadmap could be developed to meet the needs of those who found themselves in this position going forward. Expressions of interest, he said, had been received in respect of hostel facilities but many were not of a suitable standard. It was confirmed that the facilities currently operated by the Council had onsite supervision from 9pm until 9am and clients had access to the accommodation during the day. It was hoped, he advised, to increase the number of hostels and to develop viable exist strategies for those who used the facilities.

It was intended, he said, to deliver a presentation and give an overview of the work and role of the Approved Housing Bodies sector at a future meeting as they presently operated over a thousand units in the county.

Mr Brown alluded to a number of queries raised in relation to the social housing list and associated income thresholds. It was noted that in January 2023 the income limits baseline had increased by €5000 thus increasing the income threshold to €30k for single applicants in Donegal and depending on household size up to €37,500 - €38,000 for family units. He said that it would be possible to follow up on Cllr J. Brogan's query in relation to a departmental response.

Concluding, he confirmed that there was no general Housing Acquisition Programme open at present but that the Council did have access to €2m under the Social Housing Second-Hand acquisitions Programme.

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital informed members of the following:

- That the Council was looking at new technology in relation to housing construction and that the timber frame option was being utilised at present.
- There was ongoing engagement with the HSE in relation to independent living options.
- Acknowledgement of the need to review the social housing need in each town and village. Focus to be kept on the smaller towns and villages as well as the larger towns.
- Department approval was awaited in respect of the project at Tamney and that subject to department approval it was anticipated that works would start in the Autumn.
- Members would be updated at local level on the Windy Hall project.
- Donegal County Council was willing to engage with contractors in relation to Part V applications.
- Uisce Éireann had given permission for the development in Dungloe to connect to the main sewer.
- Budget availability for housing acquisition was an issue and that this had been raised with the Department.
- An independent quantity surveyor was employed to review and assess costs in terms of in-house design and turnkey projects.
- Cognisance had been taken of the points raised by the Construction Industry Federation and that there was ongoing liaison with the Department, the Housing Agency, and other Local Authorities etc regarding the issues.
- Cllr Coyle to be advised directly in relation to the options for social housing in Manorcunningham.
- Has been ongoing collaboration with Uisce Éireann regarding the Ballymacool development.
- Land acquisition issue in Bundoran to be followed up.
- Options for housing development in Carrick would be looked at.

The Chief Executive noted that the target was to have 879 units in place by the end of 2026 and that 511 of these were currently under construction in addition to those already completed. He acknowledged that more units were needed but that progress was being made, nonetheless. The Housing Team, he said, were doing their best to meet all relevant targets.

Alluding to recent correspondence from the C.I.F, he said that the Council could not settle financial matters at the plenary meeting process and that the Local Authority had a responsibility to ensure that the value for money aspect was adhered to. He cited the need for clear negotiation and a focused pricing mechanism in place at the earliest possible stage. He stressed the point that the Council did avail of the services of a quantity surveyor when acquiring housing units.

He referred to the call from the Minister's office for each Local Authority to review and enhance their housing provision. Donegal had, he noted,

recently completed their County Development Plan and had been knocked back at departmental level with regards to a number of zoning issues. In terms of the Ministerial direction, he noted that this would have to be worked through and in adherence to the planning process if additional housing was to be provided. He said that it was intended to develop a matrix of questions in relation to all the issues raised and that this would indicate who was responsible for the various elements of housing delivery.

Cllr Mc Monagle said that as far as he was aware the Council were aware of the increased costs in respect of the development in Letterkenny before these houses were built. A solution was urgently needed, he added, and the matter looked at again as a matter of urgency.

The Director of Service in response said that Council had already shared the average contract price in respect of its tender competitions and could look again at sharing the average contract price for building a house.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Cathaoirleach:_____

Dated:_____