



Topical Digest

Rural housing and homelessness

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Research and
Information
Service



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This Topical Digest provides a reading list on the issues of rural housing and rural homelessness in Northern Ireland. There are quite distinct challenges for rural areas including identifying and addressing ‘hidden’ housing need, access to available and affordable housing including in areas that are popular with second homes and short-term lets, and the generally poorer energy efficiency of homes in rural areas. This Topical Digest provides links to recent departmental strategies and publications, academic and research papers, Northern Ireland Assembly questions and media articles on rural housing, rural homelessness and related policy areas.

Should MLAs or their constituency staff have suggestions for information they would like to see in the guide, or have links to useful sources that they would like to share, please feel free to contact the Research and Information Service at:

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1 Introduction

The ambition of the [Housing Executive's Rural Strategy 2021-25](#) is to address the continuing and emerging needs of rural customers in Northern Ireland. The strategy emphasises that rural housing is interlinked with many other policy areas that are critical to rural areas such as demography, access to employment, and infrastructure such as effective transport networks. Households in rural areas experience many of the housing problems facing their urban counterparts including lengthy social housing waiting lists, homelessness, unaffordable house prices, a shortage of affordable housing and rising private rents.

However, there are also quite distinct challenges for rural areas including, for example, identifying and addressing 'hidden' housing need, access to available and affordable housing in areas that are popular with second homes and short-term lets and the generally poorer energy efficiency of homes in rural areas. The path to net-zero for the rural housing sector will pose both challenges but also potential opportunities in terms of providing employment and developing skills.

This topical digest provides a reading list on the issue of rural housing and related policy areas, including links to recent departmental strategies and publications, academic and research papers, Northern Ireland Assembly questions and media articles.

2 Legislation (Northern Ireland)

- [Rural Needs Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2016](#)

3 Strategies and Reports

- Housing Executive, [Reaching Rural: Rural Strategy 2021-2025](#)
- Housing Executive, [Reaching Rural – Rural Strategy & Action Plan Annual Progress Report 2022-2023](#)
- Housing Executive, [Reaching Rural – Rural Strategy & Action Plan Annual Progress Report 2021-2022](#)
- Housing Executive, [Rural Strategy & Action Plan Annual Progress Report 2018-2019](#)
- Housing Executive, [Rural Strategy & Action Plan – Final Progress Report 2016-20](#)
- Housing Executive, [Housing Investment Plans \(HIPS\)](#)

- Housing Executive, [Strategic Housing Market Analysis: Northern Ireland summary](#) (June 2022)
- Housing Executive, [House Condition Survey](#) (2016)
- Northern Ireland Executive, [Draft Programme for Government 2024-27](#), including Draft Rural Needs Impact (September 2024)
- Department of Finance, [Pause must be lifted immediately for Causeway Coast and Glens and Mid-South West Growth Deals – Archibald](#) (September 2024)
- Chartered Institute of Housing – Northern Ireland, [‘Agenda for change: tackling the housing and homelessness crisis’](#) (August 2024)
- Simon Community, [Under the Radar: Unveiling hidden homelessness across the Island of Ireland](#) (May 2024)
- De Paul, [Review of the Low Threshold, Harm Reduction Service based in the Northwest](#) (August 2024)
- Rural Community Network, [Community Led Housing in Northern Ireland](#) (August 2023)
- Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, [Planning Committee Report: Second Homes](#) (October 2022)
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, [Key Rural Issues, Northern Ireland 2023](#) (April 2022)
- Rural Community Network, [Looking Back to Go Forward: A Review of Rural Development Funding Processes and Delivery](#) (March 2022)
- Department for Communities, [Consultation on the new housing supply strategy](#) (December 2021)
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, [Rural Policy Framework for NI: Report on Public Consultation](#) (July 2021)
- Rural Community Network, [Housing Supply Strategy Call for Evidence](#) (July 2021)
- Chartered Institute of Housing – Northern Ireland, [Rethinking Social Housing: Northern Ireland](#) (November 2018)
- Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, [Local Development Plan 2030 Preferred Options Paper: Initial Settlement Context Appraisal \(including Second Homes Analysis\)](#) (2018)
- Department for Communities, [Community Asset Transfer Policy Framework](#) (May 2014)
- Department for Communities, [Social Housing Development Programme \(SHDP\)](#)

4 Statistical sources

- Department for Communities, [Northern Ireland Housing Statistics](#)
- Department for Communities, [Northern Ireland Housing Bulletin](#)
- Department for Communities, [Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin](#)
- Housing Executive, [House Conditions Survey](#)
- Ulster University, [Northern Ireland Quarterly House Price Index](#)

5 Great Britain

- Financial Fairness Trust, [Low-use homes in rural and coastal areas of the UK: Geography, impact and response](#) (May 2024)
- Office for National Statistics, [Private rent and house prices, UK](#) (May 2024)
- House of Commons Library, [Constituency Casework: Can access to housing be restricted to local people?](#) (November 2023)
- Gov.UK – Homes England, ['Rural Housing Statement'](#) (October 2023)
- Scottish Government, [Rural and islands housing: action plan](#) (October 2023)
- Royal Town Planning Institute, [Rural Planning in the 2020s](#) (July 2022)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [Official Statistics – Rural Housing](#) (July 2022)
- House of Commons Library, [Research Briefing – Second homes and holiday-lets in rural communities](#) (January 2022)
- House of Commons Library, [Rural housing: A reading list](#) (September 2021)
- Chartered Institute of Housing, [Reaching Rural: Draft Rural Strategy 2021-2025](#) (September 2021)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [Rural Proofing in England 2021: Delivering Policy in a rural context](#) (March 2021)
- Welsh Government, [Second homes: Developing new policies in Wales](#) (2021)
- Rural England, [Housing and Employment: A Survey of Rural Residents' Experiences and Opinions](#) (2018)
- House of Commons Library, [Research Briefing - Comparison of the planning systems in the four UK countries: 2016 update](#) (January 2016)

6 Republic of Ireland

- Houses of the Oireachtas, [Housing Policy – Dáil Éireann Debate](#) (April 2024)
- Houses of the Oireachtas, [Housing for All – a New Housing Plan for Ireland](#) (September 2021)
- Houses of the Oireachtas, [Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025](#) (March 2021)
- Houses of the Oireachtas, [Realising Our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development](#) (November 2018)
- Government of Ireland, [Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework](#) (2018)
- Tourism Ireland, [Planning and building control](#)

7 Academic research papers

- Dr Tom Moore, Professor Nick Gallent, Dr Phoebe Stirling and Dr Andrew Purves, [Delivering New Social and Affordable Housing in Rural Areas: A Review of Barriers and Opportunities](#) The Bartlett School of Planning, University College London (April 2024)
- Elaine Desmond and Siobhan O’Sullivan, [Housing and the West Cork islands: a national crisis in microcosm](#) Administration: Journal of the Institute of Public Administration of Ireland (2024) Vol. 72 (2), pp29-52
- Nick Gallent, [Pandemic mobility, second homes and housing market change in a rural amenity area during COVID-19 – The Brecon Beacons National Park, Wales](#) Progress in Planning (2023) 172: 100731
- Nick Gallent, [The contribution of affordable housing to quality of life in rural England](#) Rural Quality of Life (2023) Chapter 11, pp198-214
- Hamdollah Sojasi Qeidari, Alireza Moeini, Hamid Shayan and Mostafa Mohammadi Abdevand, [Exploring the perceived conflicts by rural residents in relation to the expansion of the second-homes](#) Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change (2022) Vol. 21, pp534-552
- Ruth McAreevey and David Kemmett, [Rural housing: challenges, opportunities and Solutions](#) National Innovation Centre Rural Enterprise/Newcastle University (2022)
- Bailey Ashton Adie, Cecilia de Bernardi and Alberto Amore, [Reframing rurality: the impact of Airbnb on second home communities in Wales and Sweden](#) Peer-to-Peer Accommodation and Community Resilience (2022) Chapter 7
- Dr Siobhan O’Sullivan and Dr Elaine Desmond, [Housing and Sustaining Communities on the West Cork Islands](#) School of Applied Social Studies and Institute for Social Science in the 21st Century, University College Cork (2022)

8 Selection of local media and other articles

- [‘Call to establish NI commission to examine housing policy’](#), RTÉ, 25 September 2024.
- [‘APG on homelessness hears from the CEO of the Housing Executive’](#), 24 September 2024.
- [‘Forum for Better Homes NI turns spotlight on decarbonisation’](#), Business Eye, 19 September 2024.
- [‘Housing Executive chief warns budget cuts means building targets in Mid & East Antrim won’t be met’](#), Belfast Telegraph, 11 September 2024.
- [‘Housing bodies welcome Programme for Government in Northern Ireland but warn affordable homes must be funded’](#), Inside Housing, 10 September 2024.
- [‘Extra £20m for social housing in Northern Ireland welcomed, but CIH says “significant gaps” remain’](#), Housing Today, 4 July 2024.
- [‘Service cuts within months, warns Housing Executive’](#), BBC News NI, 22 July 2024.
- [‘Housing bodies urge next Prime Minister to end fuel poverty’](#), Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations, 2 July 2024.
- [‘Housing and homelessness sector leaders outline ‘grave concerns’ at social housing new start figures for 2024/5’](#), Housing Rights, 7 June 2024.
- [‘Housing and homelessness sector leaders outline ‘grave concerns’ at social housing new starts figure for 2024/5’](#), Homeless Connect, June 2024.
- [‘Strategic action needed now to halt housing crisis says Housing Association representative body’](#), Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations, 2024.
- [‘Minister outlines vision for housing ahead of opening new £100m development’](#), Department for Communities News Release, 20 March 2024.
- [High rural house prices force more locals into renting](#), BBC News, March 2024.
- [The dark side of Ireland’s holiday home boom](#), The Irish Independent, March 2024.
- [‘A ‘just transition’ to net zero in Northern Ireland: the role that the housing sector can play in mitigating against climate change’](#), Housing Rights, 12 February 2024.
- [Rural Housing Association to invest in 300 new homes after securing £25m funding](#), Belfast Telegraph, December 2023.

9 Assembly Questions

Assembly Questions on the topic of rural housing for Mandate 2017-22 can be accessed via this [link](#) and for Mandate 2022-27 at this [link](#), or by navigating to the [AIMS Portal](#) on the Assembly website.

10 Useful websites

- [All Party Group on Housing](#)
- [All Party Group on Homelessness](#)
- [Chartered Institute of Housing Northern Ireland](#)
- [Co-Ownership](#)
- [Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)
- [Department for Communities](#)
- [Housing Associations in Northern Ireland](#)
- [Homeless Connect](#)
- [Housing Rights](#)
- [Northern Ireland Housing Executive](#)
- [Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations](#)
- [Northern Ireland Housing Council](#)
- [Northern Rural Women's Network](#)
- [Rural Community Network](#)
- [Rural Housing Association](#)
- [Rural Support](#)
- [Supporting Communities NI](#)
- [See also Rural Support Networks](#)

This information is provided to MLAs in support of their Assembly duties and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual or organisation. Inclusion of a resource does not imply endorsement of any particular viewpoint. Whilst we strive to ensure that the information provided here is up to date, the information on external websites referred to may change frequently. This leaflet should not be relied upon as providing legal or professional advice, nor as a substitute for it. A suitably qualified professional should be consulted if specific advice or information is required.

The Research and Information Service is available to discuss the content of this briefing with Members and their staff, but not with the general public.

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