



CORPORATE STRATEGY 2021-2024



“

The Association does not see its role as merely providing rural housing but rather helping to build strong and sustainable rural communities.”

---

**Neville Armstrong**  
Chairman

#### contents

03	Introduction
05	Vision, Purpose and Values
06	Three Year Financial Forecasts
08	Strategic Objectives

If you, or someone you know would like this Corporate Strategy in large print, in Braille or translated into another language please contact Stephen Fisher on 028 8224 6118 or email [info@ruralhousing.co.uk](mailto:info@ruralhousing.co.uk)



## Introduction

Rural Housing Association was established in 1992. Its mission then was “to provide a supply of readily available and affordable accommodation for rural people in rural areas with a view to helping maintain and regenerate rural communities.”

The Association works throughout Northern Ireland and has a particular interest in working in what are considered to be disadvantaged rural areas. The Association does not see its role as merely providing rural housing but rather helping to build strong and sustainable rural communities. It is a core belief of the Association that the housing requirements of small rural communities are best identified, understood, and solved through close co-operation with local community development groups. To this end the Association works closely with local communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in assessing needs and delivering appropriate housing solutions in what is, predominantly, a niche rural market.

The Association’s housing stock of 528 dwellings are widely dispersed right across Northern Ireland.

Rural Housing Association is governed by a voluntary Board of Management whose members come from a range of professional, commercial, and social backgrounds such as finance, education, not for profit sector, regeneration, and the public sector. Together they forge the strategy of the Association and provide an oversight on the operations of the company. They are supported by two subcommittees: Technical Committee and Audit, Risk and Governance Committee.

This Corporate Strategy was due to be published exactly one year ago. As the Covid-19 pandemic struck the Board of Management postponed their planned away day and enabled Senior Staff and Board members to concentrate on mitigating against the risks to their tenants, the organisation, and staff.

Much has changed for the organisation, its staff and tenants over that year and with hindsight the renewal of the strategy at this point provides a much clearer picture for the organisation going forward in what is hoped will be a post pandemic scenario.

In March 2021 the Board met with Senior staff and external consultants, virtually, to agree how the association would go forward for the next three years and to reconsider its vision, purpose and values. This included an in-depth analysis of the association’s current role, a pestel analysis of the opportunities and threats that might face us, and a review of the association’s capacity to deliver.

This document reflects the outcomes of that meeting.

This strategy explains how Rural Housing Association will implement the mission through the challenges of the next three years. It provides an insight into where we hope to be in three years’ time and provides a guide for our annual business plans in each of those three years.

Those business plans will provide annual operational waypoints, ensuring the Board’s vision for the Association, its purpose and values, all translate into workable operational documents for Senior Management to follow as they guide their departments through the next three years.



## Our Vision

“To see rural Northern Ireland thrive through the provision of high quality, comfortable and affordable homes.”

## Our Purpose

To provide for rent and sale desirable housing in rural communities throughout rural Northern Ireland that meet local needs.

## Our Values

In order to fulfil our purpose we commit to the following values as being essential for our organisation:



### Distinctive

As the only specialist rural association in Northern Ireland we will be at the forefront of new ideas and solutions for the provision of housing in the 6 counties.

### Passionate

Our goals are unique within Northern Ireland and we will work to inspire others to help achieve them.

### Collaborative

Working effectively as a team within our own organisation and with our external stakeholders will provide the desired outcomes.



### Customer Inspired

Our tenants will be at the heart of what we do both at a strategic and operational level.

### Professional

Our staff are highly qualified and experienced and we will meet all relevant governance standards.



## Three Year Financial Forecasts

Rural Housing Association financial projections are central to the delivery of our Corporate Plan. Without a sound, viable financial footing the Association's plans and ambitions would be worthless.

The tables below show the Association's estimates for Income/Expenditure and Balance Sheet for the next three years that will allow this Corporate Strategy's objectives to be met through our annual business plans:

### Income and Expenditure Account

	Budget 2021/22	Budget 2022/23	Budget 2023/24
<b>INCOME</b>			
Rent Recievable	2,889,207	3,397,584	4,005,750
Rates Recievable	420,557	524,212	582,940
Other Income	8,400	12,000	12,000
Amortisation of Grants	514,260	524,546	535,037
Profit on Disposal			
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3,832,424</b>	<b>4,458,342</b>	<b>5,135,727</b>





## Three Year Financial Forecasts

	Budget 2021/22	Budget 2022/23	Budget 2023/24
Property Costs	621,970	676,564	710,287
Insurance	69,036	69,036	79,679
Rates (Net of Discount)	378,501	471,791	524,646
Administration Costs	980,356	1,000,646	1,050,631
Bad Debt	47,981	56,721	66,523
Development Costs	13,000	13,000	13,000
Depreciation - Property	800,645	824,664	869,404
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>2,911,489</b>	<b>3,112,422</b>	<b>3,314,170</b>

### TRANSFER TO DISPOSAL PROCEEDS FUND

TRADING SURPLUS / DEFICIT	920,934	1,345,920	1,821,556
Property	1,108,470	1,541,125	2,085,745
Rates	-	-	-
Administration	(187,536)	(195,205)	(264,189)
	<b>920,934</b>	<b>1,345,920</b>	<b>1,821,556</b>

### FIXED ASSETS AND INTREST

Administration Costs Copitalised	187,536	195,205	202,715
Profit / Loss on sale of Fixed Assets	-	-	-
Interest Recieivable	-	6,000	8,400
Interest Payable and other costs	(859,358)	(1,307,336)	(1,469,624)
<b>Surplus / Deficit</b>	<b>249,112</b>	<b>239,789</b>	<b>563,048</b>

Additional Units in the year (social)

50                      122                      50

### TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

Housing Properties at Cost	55,684,858	70,765,746	81,600,776
<b>Less</b>			
Depreciation	(9,770,890)	(10,571,701)	(11,376,349)
<b>Net Book Value of Housing Properties</b>	<b>45,913,968</b>	<b>60,194,045</b>	<b>70,224,427</b>

## Strategic Objectives

Our three year corporate plan is delivered through its operational themes which are directly linked to our committed values as an organisation. These themes will be set out in each of the business plans for the next three years and cascade down into measurable, progressive KPIs for each Manager and staff member.

The progress of these against targets are measured and monitored through weekly internal meetings, Senior Management Team meetings and monthly Board of Management meetings, thus providing effective governance and full accountability.

The Association publishes an annual report which provides information on all our financial and business performance for the previous year, alongside a value for money statement which ensures we are using our money effectively and efficiently.

Below are outlined our strategic objectives:





## Deliver Excellent Customer Service to our Tenants

### We Have...

- Process mapped and improved our customer service and business management processes.
- Introduced a Business Development Manager and provided extra services to our tenants through the pandemic.
- Trained our staff in welfare reform and are able to provide a dedicated advice service to tenants.
- Promoted a network of Tenant Panel Groups throughout Northern Ireland.
- Introduced tenant direct payments and online payments to provide greater choice to tenants.
- Updated our web site to the latest standard including mobile accessibility and social media integration.
- Continued to implement Section 75 duties and Disability action plans.
- Ensured all staff receive regular equality training.
- Monitored our maintenance services through KPIs and provided an efficient and effective emergency service through the pandemic
- Enabled all staff to partake in accredited training in tenant participation.
- Provided a public report annually on the performance of the Association against targets.
- Provided a value for money statement at the end of every year, highlighting how our monies are spent effectively and efficiently.

### In the next 3 years we will...

- Move our call systems to Microsoft Teams to enable an effective, integrated internal and external communication system as part of the Association's hybrid model of operations post pandemic.
- Continue to explore areas where we can provide additional non-housing products to our tenants and local communities.
- Continue to monitor welfare changes and provide training to staff and advice to tenants.
- Establish a permanent role for at least one tenant board member and provide formal consultation on policy through our Tenant Panel Groups and establish engagement sessions between between the Board, Senior Staff and Tenant Panel Groups.
- Introduce and promote an online portal for tenants providing 24 hour payment self service to their rent and property accounts.
- Integrate the tenant online portal to ensure easy access for tenants to their information and payment options.
- Continue to monitor and where necessary put in place positive action to ensure fairness for all our stakeholders.
- Send all new staff on equality training within six months of appointment.
- Reprocurer our main Measured Term Contract based not just on price but emphasis on quality of contractor as well.



- Ensure the core ideology of the Association is centred around our tenants by implementing our tenant participation action plan and providing tenants with digital access to a dedicated tenant portal on our intranet.
- Benchmark our KPI's through Housemark and publish these online through our value for money statement.
- Continue to identify how the association can provide value for money throughout its operations.



## Build and Provide High Quality Homes to meet local needs

### We Have...

- Developed opportunities for provision of mixed tenure housing.
- Established close links with the NIHE and others to enhance latent demand testing.
- Provided a wide range of schemes and properties throughout rural areas of high demand.
- Agreed an £8.5 million revolving credit facility to ensure access to funds for new developments.
- Ensured our properties are safe and secure and comply to all relevant standards.
- Introduced a new programme of rolling stock condition surveys.
- Invested £750,000 in planned maintenance projects over the last 3 years.
- Included energy efficiency in all our new build schemes.

### In the next 3 years we will...



- Establish a five-year £15 million revolving development loan to ensure all development goals can be met over the next 5 years.
  - Continue to use stock condition surveys as the basis for our cyclical and planned maintenance programmes as well as identifying any risk of non-compliance along with regular maintenance inspections.
  - Continue to use stock condition surveys as the basis for our cyclical and planned maintenance programmes.
  - Spend over £1.2 million on planned and cyclical maintenance, improving and maintaining our tenants' homes and external environment.
  - Investigate potential partnerships and funding for the retrofit of new energy efficient technology for our existing homes.
- Establish a subsidiary company for the provision of intermediate housing in mixed tenure schemes.
  - Continue to identify areas of hidden demand through close contact with community groups and other interested stakeholders.
  - Provide new build housing at an average of 35 units per year and augment this with at least 15 properties bought from the open market.

## Be an Excellent Employer

### We Have...

- Provided our staff with internal and external training in all aspects of housing, finance, maintenance and welfare reform.
- Moved our staff to home working in response to the Pandemic and provided essential equipment and support to ensure their health and safety and well being.
- Provided accredited governance training for all Senior Staff within one year of their appointment.
- Identified and provided accredited training for board members in finance, governance and housing.
- Provided opportunities for tenants to join the board.
- Through personal training plans provided our Senior Management Team with accredited training in leadership, governance and financial systems to enable high quality, qualified staff.
- Invested in lone working and wellbeing training for our staff.

### In the next 3 years we will...



- Provide opportunities for all staff to further their academic and professional qualifications.
- In a post pandemic scenario provide a hybrid working system for staff to ensure their health and safety and well-being and offer flexibility through the use of our digital systems.
- Continue to identify new courses that will benefit Senior Staff.
- Identify course and conferences for Board members to expand their knowledge of the housing sector.
- Provide targeted training to new tenant board members to assure them of their role and provide confidence in being a board member.
- Identify leadership, governance and financial training for Senior Management to ensure continued excellence throughout our management structure.
- Prepare and implement a new wellbeing strategy for staff including policies on stress in the workplace and homeworking.

## Be a Key Influencer in Rural Housing Policy

### We Have...

- Successfully proposed our Business Development Manager for membership of the Rural Community Network Board.
- Been represented on the NIFHA Business Committee by our CEO.
- Promoted the organisation's work in addressing social housing provision in rural locations. Engagement platforms have included industry awards, press coverage, webinars, conferences and seminars.
- Provided media coverage for our Design Guide and new schemes.
- Been shortlisted and won major awards for our schemes.

### In the next 3 years we will...



- Encourage senior Staff and Board members to make new links with relevant stakeholders throughout Northern Ireland and beyond and increase partnerships with rural community groups to support the expansion of community initiatives to other rural locations in Northern Ireland.
- Encourage a member of the Board or Senior Staff to represent the association on the NIFHA board.
- Continue to promote the activities of the organisation through a variety of engagement platforms with industry professionals.
- Continue to explore new media opportunities to highlight the associations achievements and enhance our reputation.
- Continue to present award winning designs and projects that raise the profile of the association.

## Support and Sustain our Rural Communities

### We Have...

- Implemented a Housing for All at Old Mill Court Sion Mills including a successful implementation of a five-year good relations plan for the Sion Mills area.
- Carried out Covid-19 Support Initiatives: During the COVID-19 pandemic Rural Housing Association has successfully secured funding to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on isolated rural tenants from low-income households. Initiatives have included the distribution of emergency food hampers to those tenants at-risk of food poverty and the distribution of wellbeing packs to those from at-risk households.
- Increased access to digital devices for tenants.
- Carried out community projects in rural locations focused on addressing social isolation and loneliness in rural locations.
- Been proactive in the identification of latent demand for social housing in rural communities.

- Been an advocate for sensitive rural design when developing social housing schemes in rural communities through our promotion of RHA's Rural Design Guide for Social Housing.



### In the next 3 years we will...

- Identify additional Housing for All Neighbourhoods in rural locations across Northern Ireland.
- Continue to access funding to ensure we can continue to deliver support initiatives to our most at-risk tenants both during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Increase the use of digital technology as a platform for tenant engagement, including supporting rural residents to increase their digital skills.
- Extend delivery of community projects focused on addressing social isolation and loneliness to include a wider range of geographical areas.
- Continue to work in partnership with the NIHE, elected representatives and community groups to conduct latent demand tests in rural locations where there is a potential hidden need for social housing.
- Continue to promote the activities of the organisation through a variety of engagement platforms with industry professionals.



RHA: 2 Killyclogher Road, Omagh  
Co Tyrone, BT79 0AX

Tel: 028 8224 6118

E-mail: [info@ruralhousing.co.uk](mailto:info@ruralhousing.co.uk)

Web: [www.ruralhousing.co.uk](http://www.ruralhousing.co.uk)



Find us on:

**facebook**

[Facebook.com/ruralhousing](https://Facebook.com/ruralhousing)

**twitter**

[twitter.com/ruralhousing.ni](https://twitter.com/ruralhousing.ni)

