



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Correspondence</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	<b>Council Meeting</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>5 April 2022</b>
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	<b>For Decision</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-2025)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership
Outcome	Council operates as one effective and efficient corporate unit with a common purpose and culture
Lead Officer	Director of Corporate Services

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	Nil
Included in Current Year Estimates	N/A
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

## 1.0 **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of the report is to present correspondence for Members' consideration.

2.0 The following are listed:

2.1 **Northern Ireland Housing Council** (correspondence dated 11 March 2022) (copy attached)

The Housing Council January bulletin dated 10 February 2022 and 488<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council minutes.

2.2 **Alison McCullough, Chief Executive Fermanagh and Omagh District Council** (correspondence dated 11 March 2022) (copy attached)

Correspondence received regarding seeking support for a request to the Northern Ireland Executive to introduce a scheme for all school children to receive a free school meal.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council trusts you will give this issue due consideration and looks forward to receiving your response.

2.3 **Grainia Long, Northern Ireland Housing Executive** (correspondence dated 21 March 2022) (copy attached)

Correspondence received to provide a copy of the final report and Action Plan for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's the Housing Executive research project into cavity wall insulation (CWI).

An Action Plan has been developed in response to the research report, with short and long term actions and which place a strategic focus on the need to improve cavity wall insulation across Housing Executive homes.

However, as with all our upgrade programmes, resource availability will impact on the speed and scope of delivery. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive are currently working with the Department for Communities on the revitalisation of our organisation to invest sustainably in our homes and, over time, to add to new supply. This work is essential to providing a long term strategic asset management plan for Housing Executive stock.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive are willing to engage with the council on the issue of CWI and if Council would like to arrange a briefing, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive can be contacted to arrange this.

2.4 **Councillor Ernest Gibson Chair, LGA Coastal SIG** (correspondence dated 15 March 2022) (copy attached)

**Re: Motion for the Ocean – local authorities leading the way for our ocean and coastal communities**

### **Summary extract**

*"I am writing to make you aware of the Motion for the Ocean – a local government-led ocean recovery initiative. A model "Motion for the Ocean" has been developed by the LGA Coastal SIG together with leading marine and coastal experts\*. It is a*

*series of evidence-based pledges to help local authorities play their part in realising a clean, healthy and productive ocean and all of the direct economic, health and wellbeing benefits it will bring.*

*Six councils have passed the motion so far, 5 in England and 1 in Wales. My own council, South Tyneside Council, is one of these. I proposed the motion, which was passed unanimously and with cross-party support. We received some excellent press coverage.*

*Councils like yours are already doing much of this work and the Motion for the Ocean is an opportunity to showcase your leadership and all that you are already doing, as well as your direction of travel in ensuring a healthy ocean is at the heart of your climate, environment and economic policy. I encourage you to consider how the Motion for the Ocean could be adapted to suit your area and the communities you serve”.*

### **3.0 Recommendation**

**It is recommended** that Council consider the correspondence.



**Minutes of the 488<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on  
Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022 at 10 am via Zoom**

**Present:**

Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District (Chair)
Nick Mathison	Ards & North Down Borough
Jim Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
John Finlay	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough
Mickey Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District

**In Attendance:**

David Polley	Department for Communities
Grainia Long	Chief Executive, Housing Executive
Catherine McFarland	Director of Finance, Audit & Assurance
Andrew Barbour	NIHE (For Item on the Agenda)
Gillian Greer	NIHE (For Item on the Agenda)
Kelly Cameron	Secretary (Housing Executive Secretariat)

**Apologies:**

Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough (Vice Chair)
Michelle Kelly	Belfast City
Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City
Tommy Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough
Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough
Paul Price	Department for Communities

1.0	<p><b><u>Welcome</u></b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed David Polley from the Department for Communities, Grainia Long and the Presenters Catherine McFarland, Andrew Barbour and Gillian Greer from the Housing Executive.</p>	
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<p><b>2.0</b></p>	<p><b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b></p> <p>The Presenter, Gillian Greer declared that she was a Councillor in Ards &amp; North Down Council area.</p>	
<p><b>3.0</b></p>	<p><b>To adopt the Minutes of the 487<sup>th</sup> Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b></p> <p>It was proposed by Alderman Speers and seconded by Councillor Mathison and resolved, that the Minutes of the 487<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Housing Council held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
<p><b>4.0</b> <b>4.1</b></p>	<p><b><u>Matters Arising</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Members Queries</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that Members had received responses to their queries, as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alderman Jim Speers – Consultants Assessing Houses</li> <li>• All Members - Housing Associations newbuild guide</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5.0</b></p>	<p><b><u>Forward Workplan</u></b></p> <p>The workplan was noted.</p>	<p><b>Secretary</b></p>
<p><b>6.0</b></p>	<p><b><u>Update by the Department on the Department for Communities Housing Top Issues</u></b></p> <p>Mr David Polley gave an update of changes under the specific headings on the Department for Communities (DfC) Housing Issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Newbuild starts</li> <li>• Co-ownership</li> <li>• Programme for Social Reform</li> <li>• Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy</li> <li>• Reclassification of Northern Ireland Social Housing Providers</li> <li>• Supporting People Delivery Strategy</li> </ul>	

- Homelessness Strategy
- Regulation of the Private Rented Sector

Councillor Mathison's in relation to the Private Tenancy Bill asked on the provision of the 'notice to quit' period are there amendments to provide some protection for private landlords, in particular with tenants who have significant rent arrears.

In response David Polley confirmed that the Consultation Report will be issued in the coming weeks, there is a power in the Bill for different lengths 'notices to quit' and exemptions for individual cases, as it is at the minute 4 weeks for under 12 months; 8 weeks for 1 to 10 years.

- Increasing Housing Supply
- Affordable Warmth Scheme
- NIHE Rent Increase
- ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme 2014 - 2020
- Housing Executive historical debt and exclusion from having to pay Corporation Tax
- Programme for Government (PfG) Outcomes Framework
- Long term rent trajectory
- Affordability of social rents

In response to Councillor Mathison's query, in relation to Intermediate Rent, Mr Polly explained that there was a public consultation on the delivery of Intermediate Rent which was published in October 2021 which the Housing Council received a presentation on the proposals. Following closure of the consultation on 14th of January 2022, officials have begun to analyse the responses received.

	<p>The outcome of the consultation will be published in due course, subject to Ministerial approval, and work is ongoing to develop the detail of the final scheme, and will begin to make preparation for its implementation.</p>	
<p><b>8.0</b></p>	<p><b><u>Presentation on Discretionary Housing Payments</u></b></p> <p>Andrew Barbour and Gillian Greer gave Members a presentation on Discretionary Housing Payments (Copies of the Slides are appended to these Minutes – Appendix A).</p> <p>Members noted that in June 2021, the Department for Communities had commenced a review of the policy intention of the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme and in response, changes were made to the scheme. It was noted that this was a Stage 1 review that didn't require any legislative changes, however the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage recommendations would require a change in legislation and were therefore not currently being progressed.</p> <p>Members were given an overview of outcome of the Stage 1 review, the DHP scheme itself; the recent changes and the ongoing work that the Housing Benefit (HB) units are carrying out.</p> <p>Members welcomed the policy change to remove the two year time limit, for claimants receiving DHP.</p> <p>It was confirmed that from April 2021 to December 2021, there has been 17,877 of awards paid out this year.</p> <p>The Chair requested the number of claimants who have been taken off Discretionary Housing Benefit over the past year.</p> <p>Several Members reiterated the importance of communicating with claimants, keeping them updated of their eligibility and the changes, assurance was given that there are several forums and platforms to deliver the scheme and target those in need.</p> <p>Referring to the LHA Award of the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, Mr Barbour explained that as it is discretionary and each case is accessed on an individual basis subject to their circumstances and there are several factors attributing to what rates they are awarded; ie. household details, location, what the LHA rates for the area and then are accessed individually to award the percentile of the LHA.</p> <p>David Polley commended and thanked the Housing Executive Team on their hard work.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Presenters for a very informative Presentation.</p>	<p>A Barbour/ G Greer</p>

<p><b>9.0</b></p>	<p><b><u>Housing Starts January 2022</u></b></p> <p>Members noted the Report.</p>	
<p><b>10.0</b></p>	<p><b><u>Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Conference 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> June in Manchester</u></b></p> <p>It was agreed that Mark Cooper (Vice Chair) would represent the Housing Council.</p>	<p><b>Secretary</b></p>
<p><b>11.0</b></p>	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p><b>Housing Executive's response to the Department of Finance draft three year budget.</b></p> <p>Ms Long drew Members attention to the Housing Executive's response to the Department of Finance's draft three year budget, which had been circulated to Members for their information. She added that there are a number of significant implications for the housing sector potentially for the Homelessness budget and in particular temporary accommodation and Ms Long offered to discuss further at future Meetings.</p>	<p><b>GL</b></p>
<p><b>12.0</b></p>	<p><b><u>Date and Venue of next Meeting</u></b></p> <p>It was agreed that at the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, 10th March at 10 am via Zoom.</p>	

The Meeting concluded at 11.20 am.

# Review of Discretionary Housing Payments

Housing Council Meeting

10 February 2022

# What is a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)?

A Discretionary Housing Payment is financial support towards housing costs

This award can be considered when we are satisfied that a claimant needs more help with housing costs

To be eligible for a Discretionary Housing Payment claimants must:

- Reside in Northern Ireland;
- Privately rent – although some social tenants can apply;
- Receive Universal Credit, which includes the Housing Cost Element or Housing Benefit; and
- Require additional support with the shortfall in their housing costs

# How is the DHP Budget funded?

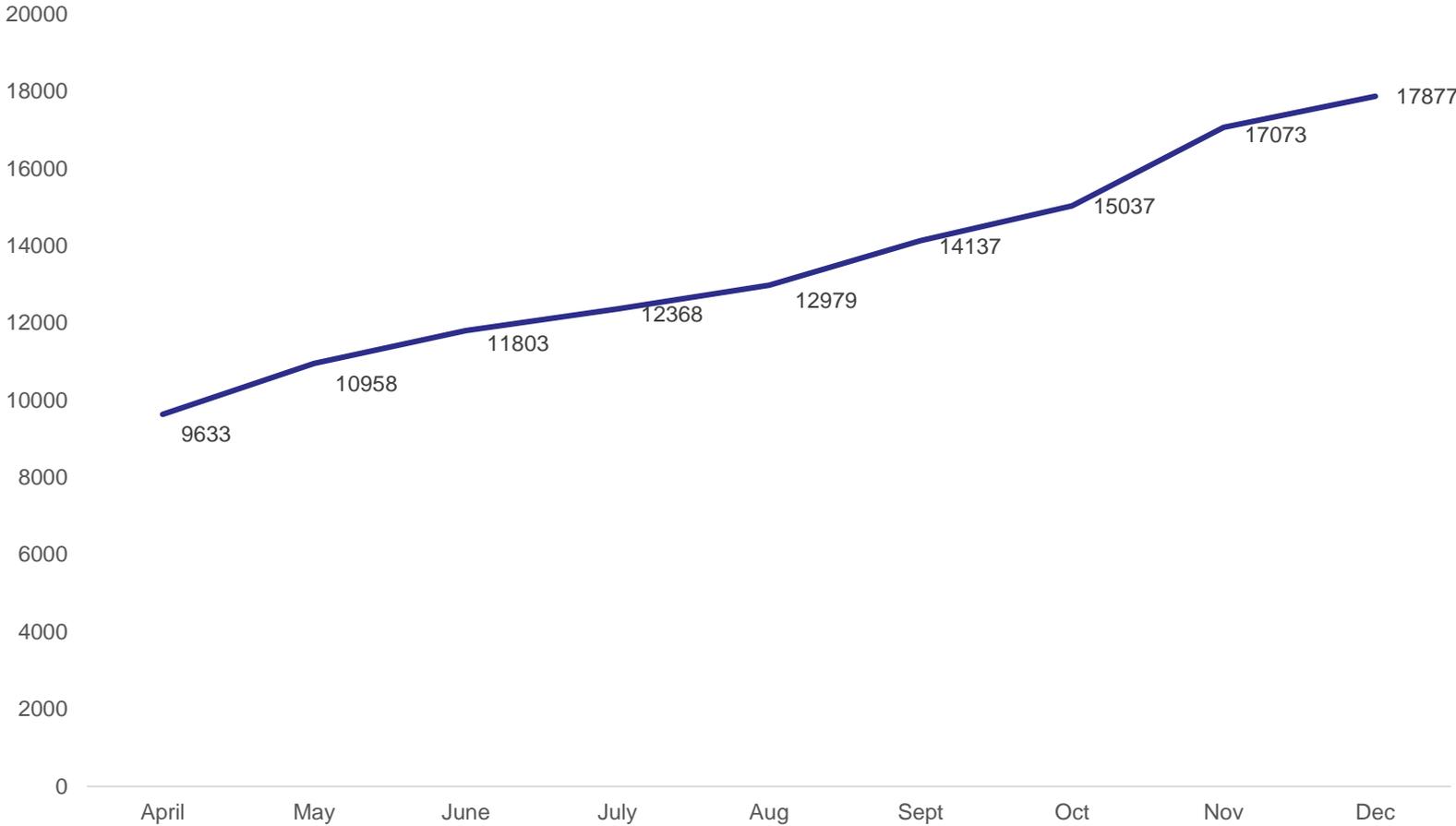
- Discretionary Housing Payments are funded by the Department for Communities (DfC) on an annual basis through the Barnett Consequentials using AME and are therefore cash limited
  - 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 - £6.1 million
- Discretionary Housing Payments are **not** payments of Housing Benefit. They are made in addition to Housing Benefit and Universal Credit housing costs
- The Housing Executive are responsible for making awards of Discretionary Housing Payments to both Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claimants receiving housing costs

# How to Apply for a DHP?

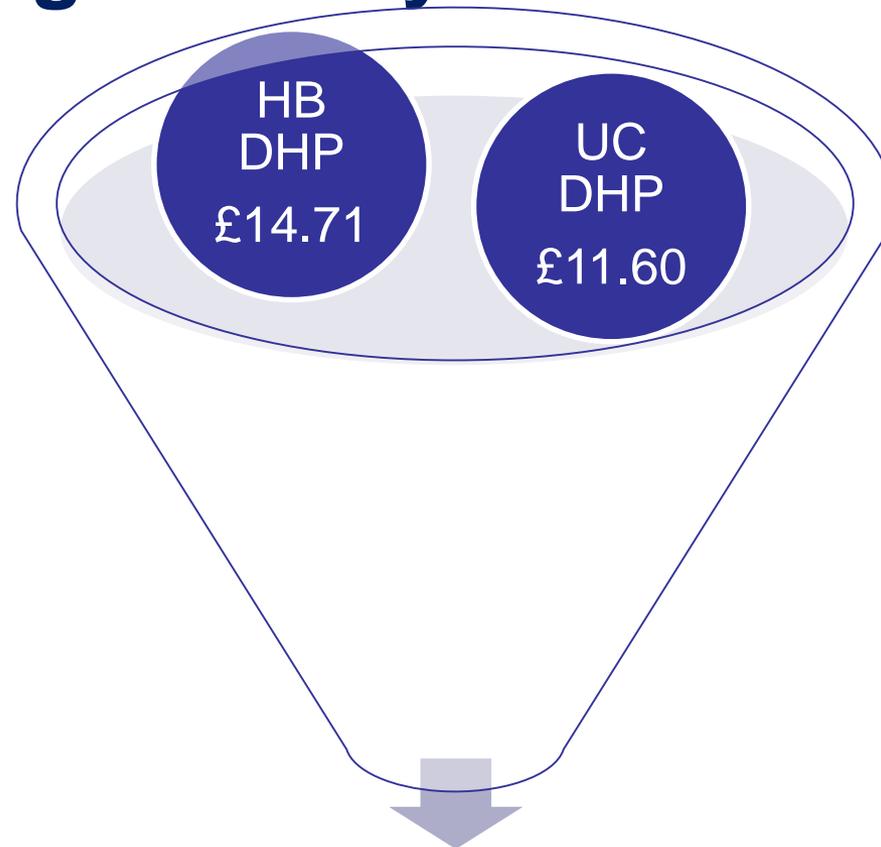
Claimants can apply:

- Online using our quick and simple form. Go to [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk), select '**Apply**' and then select the appropriate form
  - Receive Universal Credit – [UC Discretionary Housing Payment](#)
  - Receive Housing Benefit – [HB Discretionary Housing Payment](#)
- By phoning **03448 920 902** and a DHP form can be posted for completion

# Number of DHP Awards per month



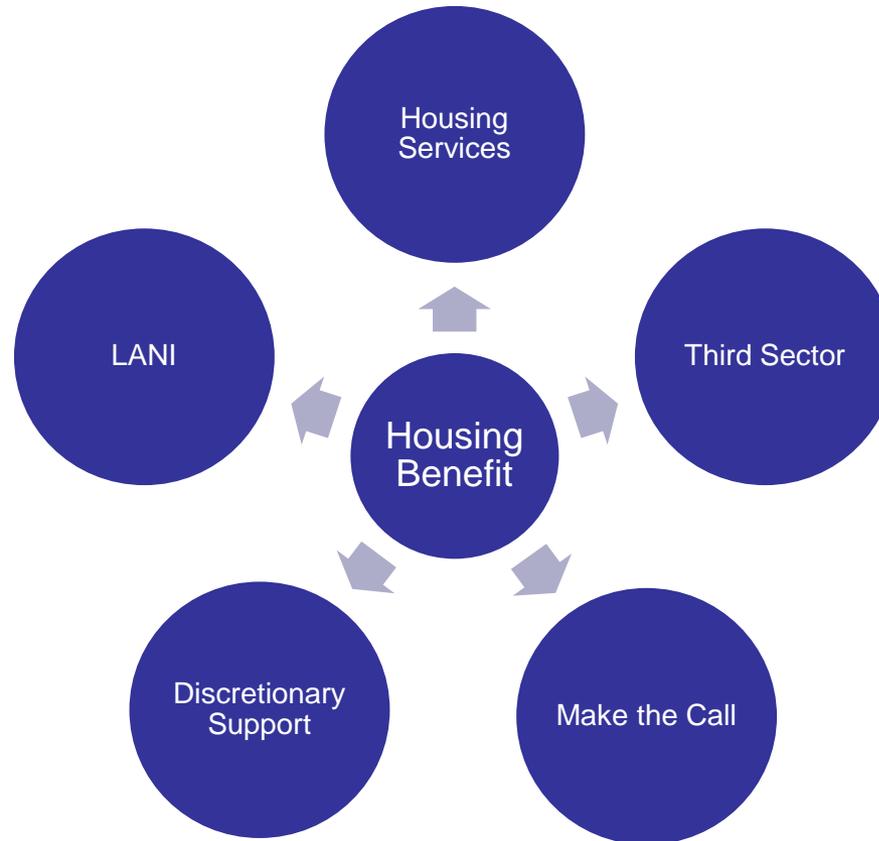
# Average Weekly DHP Award



Spend to date =  
£3,825,466.94\*

\* As at 31 December 21

# Promotion of DHPs



# DfC Review of the Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme

- In June 2021 DfC commenced a review of the Discretionary Payment Scheme
- At the outset, the policy intent of DHPs was updated
- Main policy objective of DHPs is now to sustain tenancies and prevent and alleviate homelessness

# Recent Policy Changes

- Two year time limit removed
- 13 week protection which was introduced during Covid-19 is now policy going forward
- Claimants moving from temporary accommodation and young people leaving care will have the full shortfall between contractual rent and LHA met for a period of 13 weeks
- This will then be reviewed and further awards made in line with available budget without the need for a further DHP application



# Recent Policy Changes

- Claimants receiving UC housing costs who have had a bereavement within their household which resulted in their LHA rate being reduced will have the reduction covered in full by DHP for a period of 9 months (the first 3 months are currently covered by UC)
- All new awards will be paid to a minimum of the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of LHA and if appropriate and applicable to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile\*
- Claimants receiving UC housing costs who have been impacted by the loss of the £20 uplift which was introduced as a temporary measure during Covid-19 can have their DHP award reviewed and increased in line with the new rules
- Any UC claimants in receipt of housing costs who have had a significant change in their income or circumstances can request a review of their DHP award

\* See Appendix 1 (slide 15)

# Ongoing Work

- HB Units have reviewed all awards which ended in the past two months and re-instated (where applicable)
- A review of all DHP awards under £10 per week was recently completed and awards were increased to at least the 50th percentile and if appropriate and applicable to the 75th percentile
- Staff in the HB Units are now reviewing all awards which ended between 1 April and 31 October and they will re-instate where appropriate

# Collaborative Working

- Continuing to promote DHPs across the sector
- Maximising support for customers
- Future policy changes





# Long Term Recommendations of DfC Review

- A number of recommendations have been suggested as part of the DfC review; however, the suggestions would require a change in legislation as well as an increase in the DHP budget which isn't currently possible
- These recommendations include:
  - Tenancy deposits
  - Rent in advance
  - Assistance with arrears
- Further research will be required to consider extending DHPs to provide assistance with tenancy deposits, rent in advance and assisting with arrears.

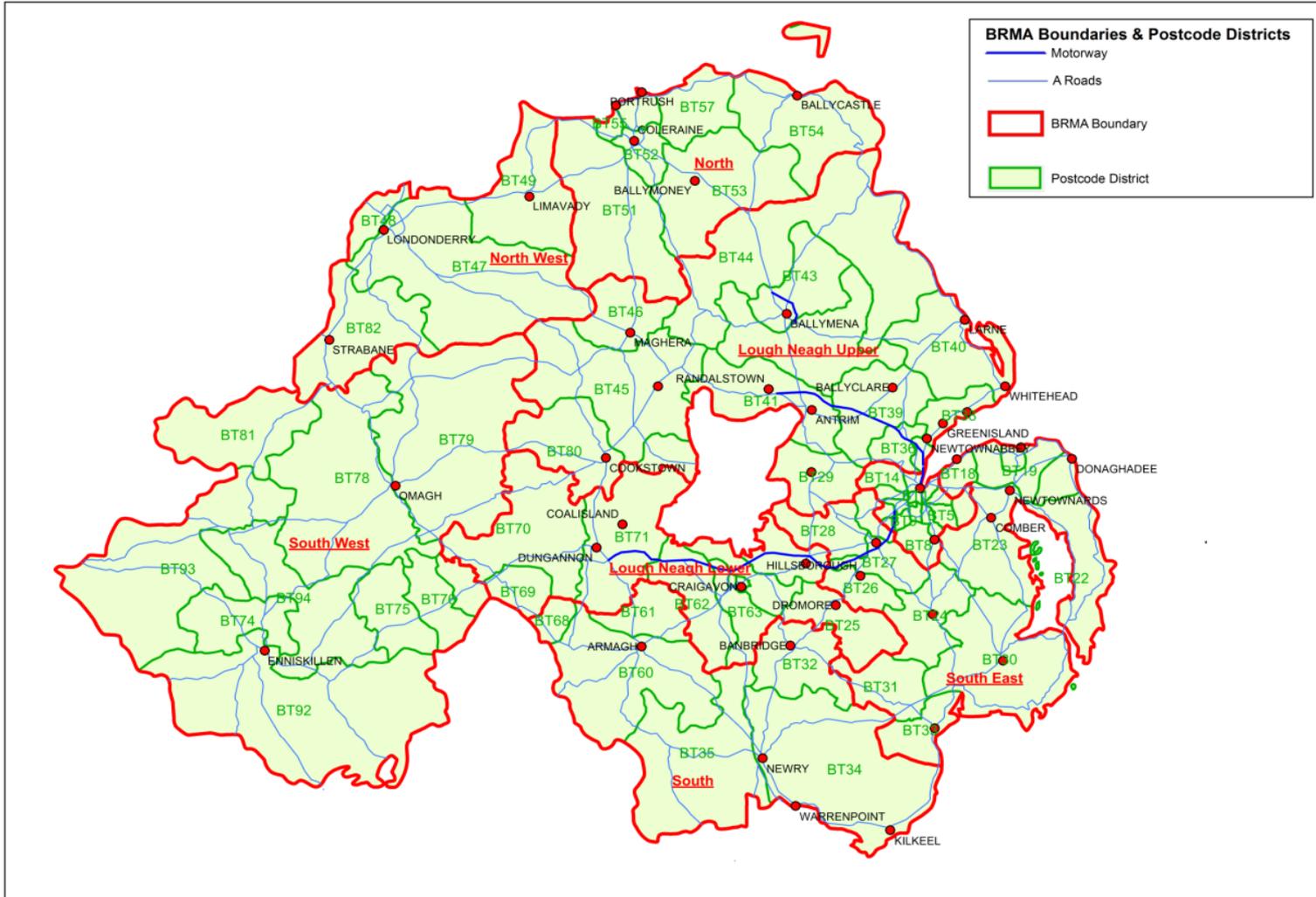
ANY  
QUESTIONS?



# Appendix 1

BRMA	Bedrooms	LHA Rate	50th Percentile	75th Percentile
South	Shared Room Rate	£55.80	£69.65	£76.57
South	1 Bed Rate	£74.22	£90.15	£101.70
South	2 Bed Rate	£94.33	£98.94	£109.96
South	3 Bed Rate	£102.81	£114.62	£125.54
South	4 Bed Rate	£108.94	£128.83	£146.83
North	Shared Room Rate	£38.57	£44.08	£45.92
North	1 Bed Rate	£77.40	£85.80	£92.21
North	2 Bed Rate	£92.07	£98.59	£107.75
North	3 Bed Rate	£100.56	£110.37	£119.99
North	4 Bed Rate	£114.43	£121.92	£132.11
Lough Neagh Lower	Shared Room Rate	£60.80	£67.73	£76.57
Lough Neagh Lower	1 Bed Rate	£77.72	£85.42	£94.36
Lough Neagh Lower	2 Bed Rate	£90.96	£101.23	£113.73
Lough Neagh Lower	3 Bed Rate	£102.00	£115.81	£124.32
Lough Neagh Lower	4 Bed Rate	£120.28	£123.76	£135.26
North West	Shared Room Rate	£70.07	£74.22	£78.24
North West	1 Bed Rate	£83.64	£91.15	£98.30
North West	2 Bed Rate	£100.20	£104.36	£110.00
North West	3 Bed Rate	£107.39	£110.72	£121.19
North West	4 Bed Rate	£116.37	£124.93	£138.52
South West	Shared Room Rate	£53.39	£71.95	£76.57
South West	1 Bed Rate	£67.82	£82.08	£96.77
South West	2 Bed Rate	£85.00	£99.44	£106.18
South West	3 Bed Rate	£95.33	£105.34	£115.98
South West	4 Bed Rate	£107.58	£113.45	£122.99
South East	Shared Room Rate	£59.46	£65.23	£71.41
South East	1 Bed Rate	£83.53	£90.06	£104.81
South East	2 Bed Rate	£101.08	£112.57	£126.90
South East	3 Bed Rate	£114.93	£128.13	£141.13
South East	4 Bed Rate	£136.28	£166.41	£190.39
Lough Neagh Upper	Shared Room Rate	£60.47	£68.35	£76.52
Lough Neagh Upper	1 Bed Rate	£82.10	£85.75	£94.91
Lough Neagh Upper	2 Bed Rate	£93.41	£102.86	£114.91
Lough Neagh Upper	3 Bed Rate	£102.17	£109.60	£121.58
Lough Neagh Upper	4 Bed Rate	£110.52	£127.99	£148.50
Belfast	Shared Room Rate	£53.58	£63.46	£75.00
Belfast	1 Bed Rate	£98.42	£109.71	£134.57
Belfast	2 Bed Rate	£106.48	£119.77	£141.57
Belfast	3 Bed Rate	£120.91	£134.05	£153.01
Belfast	4 Bed Rate	£151.57	£160.16	£197.46

# BRMA Boundaries and Postcode Districts





**CHAIR**  
**Councillor Anne-Marie Fitzgerald**

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## **MARCH HOUSING COUNCIL BULLETIN**

The Northern Ireland Housing Council met on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at 10.00 am via Conference Call.

For Information, a report of the attendance is undernoted:-

### **Present by Video Conferencing**

Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District (Chair)
Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough (Vice Chair)
Nick Mathison	Ards & North Down Borough
Jim Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
Allan Bresland	Derry City & Strabane District
Tommy Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough
Mickey Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District
Michelle Kelly	Belfast City (Left Meeting @ 11 am)
Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City
Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough Council

### **Apologies**

There were no apologies

Discussions on the undernoted matters took place as follows:-

### **Report from Grainia Long, Chief Executive, Housing Executive**

The Report provided the Housing Council with a monthly update summarising a range of strategic, major or routine matters, including any emerging issues. A summary of the current / emerging issues are outlined as follows:-

- NIHE Budget Bid and Budget Uncertainty 2022/23
- Rents
- NIHE Revitalisation Programme - Progress Update
- Supporting People Strategy
- Sustainable Development Strategy
- Derry & Strabane LDP Draft Plan Strategy
- Corporate Strategy
- Low income Rates Relief for Owner Occupiers
- Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan

Continued.....

- Tenant and Customer Services Committee
- Homelessness Strategy 2022-25

Members also received a Presentation from the Housing Executive on how the Housing Executive is addressing Derelict/Void Properties.

Once the minutes of the meeting are ratified at the April Meeting, they can be accessed on the Housing Council website: [www.nihousingcouncil.org](http://www.nihousingcouncil.org)

The next Housing Council Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at 10.00 am via conference call.

Should you require any further information or have any questions regarding the content.

**Contacts**

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Alison McCullagh  
Chief Executive



Fermanagh & Omagh  
District Council  
Comhairle Ceantair  
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Our Ref: Democratic Services

Date: 11 March 2022

Email: [democratic.services@fermanaghomagh.com](mailto:democratic.services@fermanaghomagh.com)

Mr David Jackson  
Chief Executive  
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council  
66 Portstewart Road  
COLERAINE  
BT52 1EY

Dear Mr Jackson,

**Re: Free School Meals**

At the Regeneration and Community meeting held on 8 March, Members asked that I write to all Councils in Northern Ireland to seek their support for its request that the Northern Ireland Executive introduce a scheme for all school children in Northern Ireland to receive a free school meal.

The Council trusts you will give this issue due consideration and looks forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

**Alison McCullagh**  
Chief Executive

**Housing**  
Executive

**CAVITY WALL  
INSULATION  
ACTION PLAN:**

FINAL DOCUMENT

MARCH 2022

## **Contents**

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- A. Summary of the responses to the Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan
- B. Glossary of Terms & Definitions

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan sets out the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's proposals for addressing issues related to Cavity Wall Insulation installations in its stock.
- 1.2 Specifically it is our response to:
- The findings and recommendations of a research project that we commissioned into Cavity Wall Insulation in 2017 and that was published in 2019.
  - The initial consultation exercise that was undertaken on this research project's findings and recommendations with tenants' representatives, elected representatives and members of the insulation industry.
  - The responses to our Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan proposals that was issued for public consultation in December 2020.
- 1.3 A summary of the responses received to the Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan is at **Appendix A**. We wish to thank those who responded for their comments.
- 1.4 We acknowledge that there are a significant number of references and acronyms regarding technical issues, standards, guarantees and accreditation schemes that may not be familiar to those not involved in the construction/insulation industry. Accordingly a Glossary of Terms & Definitions is provided at **Appendix B**.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 Most houses built from the late 1920s have been constructed with cavity walls. The cavity was originally planned to prevent rain that hits the external walls crossing to the internal walls of the dwelling and affecting the internal structure, but was also seen as a form of thermal insulation, though minor in its effectiveness.
- 2.2 Since the 1980s building regulations have required that new cavity wall constructed dwellings are built with insulation in the cavity and, as long as they are well constructed, this insulation should not compromise the structure's resistance to rain penetration.
- 2.3 Cavity wall insulation correctly installed can be an effective long-term investment in keeping the inner wall structure dry and warm, and reducing heat loss, energy use and, consequently, energy running costs.
- 2.4 In the 1980s the Housing Executive began installing cavity wall insulation in its new build schemes and also implemented a major cavity wall insulation retrofit programme in its other cavity wall constructed stock.
- 2.5 Years later, concerns began to be voiced regarding the condition of cavity wall insulation, not just in Northern Ireland but UK wide. In 2012/13 representatives of the insulation industry briefed the (then) Minister for Social Development and the N.I. Assembly that there was evidence emerging that CWI installed in dwellings in the 1980s and early 1990s was no longer performing due to degradation or poor installation. The cavity wall insulation industry was in its infancy in the 1980s and installation techniques, quality control, inspection methods and industry training were not as advanced as today. Inspectors would not have had ease of access to surveying equipment such as borescopes or thermal imaging cameras, and inspections would have been difficult without very costly, time consuming and intrusive measures.
- 2.6 As a consequence of this briefing, the Housing Executive appointed the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) in August 2013 to undertake research into the condition of cavity wall insulation in a sample of its dwellings.
- 2.7 A total of 206 properties were surveyed and SERC's report was published in 2014. The research found that *'the cavity wall insulation had deteriorated in many of these properties for a variety of reasons - ageing processes, stability, slumping, voids and air gaps, settling, weathering processes, disturbance by operatives or biological*

*processes*' and that only 9% were deemed to have sufficient cavity wall insulation installed that was fit for purpose.

- 2.8 The report made a series of recommendations relating to: Quality Control (i.e. that the processes of surveying, design, remediation, installation needed to be formalised and quality assured to ensure best practice); Whole House Solutions; climate and weather consideration for materials; Industry Training; upskilling Housing Executive staff; and remedial action.
- 2.9 In 2014 Savills PLC was commissioned by the then Department for Social Development and the Housing Executive to undertake a Stock Condition Survey Report to determine the long term investment requirements for our stock. Savills report indicated a 30 year funding requirement of some £6.7 billion in order to achieve and maintain the modern standards expected of social housing.
- 2.10 While Savills did not intrusively inspect cavity wall insulation as part of its survey work, it included an estimated investment liability for future replacement of cavity wall insulation in the stock.
- 2.11 Given the SERC research report, continued concerns by tenants, elected representatives and the insulation industry about cavity wall insulation failure, and the need to assess the likely scale and urgency of cavity wall insulation remedial or replacement works against other investment needs that were identified by Savills, it was decided to commission a larger investigation in order to provide the Housing Executive with robust information on the extent, type and reasons for cavity wall insulation failures in the stock.
- 2.12 In August 2017 the Housing Executive commissioned the British Board of Agrément's Consultancy, Investigation and Training (BBA CIT) to undertake a much larger survey in order to inform any future strategy and associated programmes required to address CWI issues.
- 2.13 The BBA is an independent non-profit distributing organisation and is the UK's leading construction certification body, offering approval, certification, audit and test services to manufacturers of products and systems.
- 2.14 CIT was a subsidiary of the BBA that provides technical consultancy, property investigation and technical training services, and works predominantly in partnership with local authorities and housing associations, providing independent and impartial expertise focused on both cavity wall and external wall insulation systems.

### 3.0 BBA Report – Findings and Recommendations

- 3.1 The BBA CIT’s report was published in May 2019 and is available on the Housing Executive’s website<sup>1</sup>. The following sets out a summary of its findings and recommendations.
- 3.2 The primary aims of the Cavity Wall Insulation Research were to establish:
1. The condition of the CWI in the Housing Executive’s housing stock and the private sector, and
  2. The impact that this is having on the stock in terms of thermal efficiency and associated technical defects
- 3.3 A sample of 825 Housing Executive properties (representative of its cavity wall stock) and 100 privately owned homes was surveyed for the research.
- 3.4 The research project was overseen by an Insulation Performance Panel (IPP) comprised of senior staff from the Housing Executive and the Department for Communities, a tenant representative and academics from the two local universities.

#### Findings

- 3.5 BBA CIT and the IIP developed a classification framework - Class Recommendations - as a means of categorising the properties in terms of the condition of the CWI and external fabric and the recommended prioritisation of remedial works. The six categories and the percentage of Housing Executive properties in each are set out in the table below.

Class	Description	%
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building fabric is actively deteriorating.</li><li>• CWI installation is non-compliant with industry standards, with defects such as voids and/or debris in the cavity</li><li>• CWI has been compromised by excessive water ingress caused by the condition of the external façade and has allowed moisture to bridge across to the inner leaf, resulting in damp</li><li>• Remediation works are required to the CWI and the external facade</li></ul>	1.1%
2A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CWI installation is non-compliant with industry standards, with defects such as voids and/or debris in the cavity</li></ul>	24.2%

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/getmedia/492a0403-2cb8-4482-bd7a-8e5df3f37d4b/2019-Cavity-Wall-Insulation-Research-report.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CWI has not been compromised</li> <li>• The building fabric has been compromised by defects and remedial works are required.</li> <li>• There is a high probability that the CWI will become compromised if remedial works are not undertaken</li> </ul>	
2B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CWI installation is compliant with industry standards</li> <li>• CWI has not been compromised</li> <li>• The building fabric has been compromised by defects and remedial works are required.</li> <li>• It is possible that the CWI could become compromised if remedial works are not undertaken</li> </ul>	8.0%
3A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CWI installation is non-compliant with industry standards, with defects such as voids and/or debris in the cavity</li> <li>• CWI has not been compromised</li> <li>• The building fabric is showing signs of minimal stress due to defects</li> <li>• It is possible that the CWI could become compromised if remedial works are not undertaken</li> </ul>	37.6%
3B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CWI installation is compliant with industry standards</li> <li>• CWI has not been compromised</li> <li>• The building fabric is showing signs of minimal stress due to defects</li> </ul>	13.7%
No Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CWI installation is compliant with industry standards</li> <li>• The building fabric is showing no signs of stress</li> </ul>	15.4%

3.6 The key findings were as follows:

- 63% of the properties surveyed had cavity wall insulation installations that were non-compliant with current industry standards, containing voids and/or debris in the cavity.
- A major contributory factor to the condition of cavity wall insulation in the properties was the standard of maintenance of their external façades where defects - for example, deterioration of pointing and door/window seals - have allowed, or would potentially allow, water ingress into the cavity. This issue was identified in just over 84% of the properties.
- In only 1.1% of properties had the condition of the external façade and CWI compromised the internal fabric of the property causing damp (i.e. a Class 1 property)
- Just under 16% of the stock was found to be defect-free in both the CWI and the external fabric.

## Recommendations

- 3.7 BBA CIT made a range of recommendations across a number of issues.
- 3.8 Remediation. BBA CIT recommended that remediation works should be prioritised as follows:
- Class 1 properties should be prioritised for action, with the condition of neighbouring properties also assessed.
  - Remediation for Class 2 & Class 3 properties should be delivered as part of planned cyclical maintenance programmes, with the condition of neighbouring properties also assessed.
- 3.9 Remediation/recompense from Guarantee Provider. BBA CIT recommended that if there is sufficient evidence that an existing CWI installation has not been completed in accordance with industry standards and with the system Agrément Certificate, the Housing Executive should seek remediation or recompense for the costs of the original CWI installation and associated property damage from the installer/ guarantee provider.
- 3.10 Monitoring. A system for monitoring and checking the accurate completion of remediation works arising from the action above should be set up and overseen by an independent monitoring group.
- 3.11 Installation overview. To ensure that remediation and new CWI installation work is carried out to the correct standard, all current and future CWI wall installation programmes should be closely overseen and monitored by the Housing Executive. It should be carried out in the following way:
- All properties proposed to receive new CWI installations must be independently verified through a valid and recognised industry process before installations take place.
  - Quality assurance assessments of CWI installations should be conducted during and after installation.
  - The Housing Executive should conduct appropriate reviews of the performance of organisations responsible for delivering CWI installations with a specific focus on data gathered on the quality assurance and compliance of CWI installations.
- 3.12 Competency and compliance system. To ensure the required CWI installation standards are met the Housing Executive should set up a new competency and compliance system that any entity responsible for delivering CWI installations must adhere to. This regime would make it mandatory for entities delivering CWI

installations to undertake relevant technical training and pass ongoing competency assessments approved by the Housing Executive.

3.13 Contracts and guarantees.

- The Housing Executive should review the suitability of installation guarantees issued for CWI installations to its housing stock. The review should assess the scope of the guarantees and, equally importantly, the full range of obligations they impose on the Housing Executive to maintain their properties to ensure they remain valid. Guarantees should be insurance-backed to ensure good governance and oversight.
- The Housing Executive should maintain an ongoing assessment of its CWI installation contracts to ensure their technical specifications and contractual requirements are in line with industry standards and best practice.
- The Housing Executive should maintain adequate records of all future CWI remediation and installation works undertaken to their housing stock (on a per property basis) on an asset management database that is accessible to all staff members responsible for overseeing housing maintenance programmes

3.14 Regular stock surveys. Housing stock should be inspected at regular intervals to gauge the condition of the external façade and performance of CWI installations. The inspection regime methodology should be modelled on that delivered for the research project.

3.15 Training. Housing Executive employees involved in delivering CWI installations and housing maintenance programmes should receive ongoing training. They should have access to appropriate expertise when assessing the suitability of properties for CWI installations and be able to assess the property fabric and identify defects on the external façade. They should also demonstrate the required competence to assess the compliance and performance of installations and have an understanding of the relevant industry standards and building regulations.

3.16 Advice for residents. Residents who have CWI installed should be given guidance on how to both maintain and manage their properties following installation and also have access to experts who can provide assistance with any matters relevant to this area. Additionally it is recommended that the Housing Executive puts in place a 'residents' voice' scheme that overtly (or in confidence) allows tenants to raise concerns about the condition or effects of CWI in their homes.

## Consultation

- 3.17 Following the publication of the report the Housing Executive held briefings for its Central Housing Forum<sup>2</sup>, elected representatives, and the insulation industry.
- 3.18 The key issues emerging from consultation with tenant, community and elected representatives were:
- The varying performance of CWI across the Housing Executive's stock.
  - Past practices of installation and the need for the Housing Executive to ensure that future remedial/replacement works were undertaken to a standard that would be specified and quality assured by the Housing Executive.
  - The impact that cavity wall insulation is having on the stock in terms of thermal efficiency and associated technical defects was raised as not been properly addressed in the BBA research.
- 3.19 A briefing event for the local insulation industry was held on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2019 and was well attended. In early 2020, individual meetings were undertaken with a number of system designers who operate in Northern Ireland.
- 3.20 In lieu of a formal agenda, questions were drafted to provide a structure to the meetings; however, from the discussions other queries and topics arose that were useful in terms of informing future direction and gauging the current status of the cavity wall insulation industry. The questions were to ascertain the companies' views and experiences, explore the findings of the BBA CIT research project and seek views in how to best move forward in a positive way to actively inform this CWI action plan.
- 3.21 The key issues that emerged from the meetings were as follows:
- Adherence to standards and specifications for the installation of energy efficiency works to existing dwellings such as PAS 2030:2017 and PAS 2035:2019 was discussed. The majority of the designers already adhere to PAS 2030 (or NZEB/ SEAI in ROI) but generally were not planning on attaining PAS 2035 accreditation in the near future due mainly to concerns such as increased costs to do so and the current lack of skillset within the workforce in order to achieve this (i.e. the low availability of qualified retrofit co-ordinators). It was noted that none of the organisations that provide the accreditation/oversight of PAS have a current presence in Northern Ireland and that adherence to PAS 2035 is not currently mandatory here.

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<sup>2</sup> The Central Housing Forum is the top level of the Housing Executive's tenant and community consultation framework.

- The Designers' current cavity wall surveillance scheme methodology was requested with detail to be provided regarding 3<sup>rd</sup> party validation and if inspections are carried out in accordance with a UKAS accredited inspection body. Two of the Designers were KIWA accredited and the other two BBA. Two of the Designers have CIGA covering the regime of warranty, one has their guarantees provided by GDGC and one Designer has the system holder providing a 10 year guarantee based on the product and the contractor can provide up to 15 years. Two of the Designers either have Trustmark or are in the process of attaining it. With regards to cavity extraction/cleaning and associated guarantee, the majority of the Designers do not have a guarantee in place for this but one provided a copy of its own methodology.
- The Designers' knowledge and opinions on the BBA CIT Research was discussed along with how they would advise the Housing Executive with regards to addressing the BBA recommendations. One of the companies had already issued a detailed response, confirmed that there was very little content they would disagree with, but noted their concern that the report appeared to attribute the 63% non-compliant CWI installations to installation practices.
- They advised that the Housing Executive should specifically address the following points in our response:
  - The formation of a Housing Executive team specifically to roll out the CWI programme of works. It was agreed that the Housing Executive should be carrying out inspections before, during and after installation, and should set its own standard for fabric performance.
  - The Housing Executive should consider the period of time to be covered by guarantees.
  - That accreditation to KIWA or BBA should be specified as a requirement.
  - That a holistic approach is taken to improving the Housing Executive's properties that would cover fabric (including cavity wall insulation), heating and ventilating.
  - It was recommended that funding should be obtained to implement 'entire street' upgrading and not just the Housing Executive stock in the street.
  - Future survey schemes should be carried out to estimate how many Housing Executive properties have cavity wall construction and the nature of the CWI in them (i.e. have no insulation, have insulation installed that is beyond its lifespan, have been filled/topped up post construction).

3.22 In addition, a submission was received in April 2020 from the National Insulation Association of Ireland. This submission - *Cavity Wall Insulation Proposal for the*

*Northern Ireland Housing Executive* - noted many of the issues that had been discussed at the meetings with the system designers, and also proposed that the Housing Executive should prepare a planned CWI replacement programme for its stock.

## 4.0 Action Plan

- 4.1 This Action Plan builds on the proposals presented in the Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan and the responses from the consultation exercise. A summary of the actions and their timescales is in section 5.
- 4.2 We have structured our actions around the following issues:
- Remediation/Replacement programme
  - External Cyclical Maintenance
  - CWI Extraction/Installation Process
  - Stock Surveys and Data
  - Housing Executive Staffing and Training
  - Residents' Advice and Information
  - Research

### Remediation/Replacement Programme

- 4.3 The findings of BBA CIT's research on the condition of CWI in our stock are obviously concerning. Although BBA CIT found that in only just over 1% of the properties it surveyed was the condition of the CWI having a detrimental impact on the internal structure and, for example, causing damp, the level of non-compliance with modern CWI installation standards was high and found in stock across all locations. We have also noted the findings of other research that have highlighted issues with CWI installations<sup>3</sup>.
- 4.4 Given the age of the CWI in our properties and the findings of both the SERC and BBA CIT research projects, it is clear that a CWI remediation/replacement programme will be required at some point for all of our cavity wall stock. Even setting aside some of the issues already noted that would lead to deterioration, CWI like other building components has a lifecycle at which point it will need to be replaced.
- 4.5 Addressing CWI aligns with the 'Fabric First' approach that the Housing Executive - as the Home Energy Conservation Authority (HECA) for Northern Ireland - promotes across all residential sectors for enhancing the energy efficiency and reducing the carbon footprint of dwellings i.e. first of all improve the external envelope's performance in heat retention, air tightness and ventilation in order to prepare the property for decarbonised services and renewable technologies.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, BRE's 2016 report for Constructing Excellence in Wales on the installation of retrofit wall insulation - *Post Installation Performance of Cavity Wall and External Wall Insulation*

- 4.6 A CWI remediation/replacement programme would, therefore, be an integral part of the Energy Efficiency Strategy/Programme that we will be preparing to improve the thermal performance of our stock in order to reduce heat loss and energy use in our properties. Not only will this strategy/programme help to address Fuel Poverty and improve our tenants' comfort, but it would also be a major part of our effort to contribute to decarbonisation and reducing carbon emissions to help meet the UK's 2050 Net Zero Carbon target.
- 4.7 However, such an Energy Efficiency Strategy/Programme will require very significant investment. Some 70,000 of our stock of 85,000 dwellings are of cavity wall construction. Applying average replacement costs for different types of properties suggests a CWI replacement programme funding requirement of some £150 million to £175 million.
- 4.8 In addition to cavity wall properties we would also have to address our 'single skin' properties<sup>4</sup>, almost all of which have no external wall insulation at all and whose energy ratings tend to be lower.
- 4.9 Unfortunately the level of investment that would be required for this Energy Strategy/Programme is currently not available to the Housing Executive. Our stock investment funding dilemma is well known. In summary, given our low rents, the level of funding available for investment in the stock from our income is not sufficient to meet its maintenance and improvement needs, and we are currently projecting a £1 billion shortfall over the next 10 years alone.
- 4.10 The Minister for Communities' statement to the NI Assembly on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 provides a clear direction of travel to put the Housing Executive in a position to obtain the funding necessary to deliver the investment programme that would be required to achieve and maintain the standard of accommodation expected of modern social housing.
- 4.11 However, this will likely take a number of years to put in place and, therefore, securing the investment that would be needed for our Energy Efficiency Strategy's programme will only be possible in the medium-to-long term.
- 4.12 The Housing Executive and the Department for Communities have agreed a strategic stock investment approach for the interim short term period that is aimed at ensuring the best use of the funding that will be available to us in order to optimise

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<sup>4</sup> For example, properties with solid walls, Orlits, No Fines etc.

the provision of properties to meet growing housing need. This strategic approach focuses on our core landlord obligations i.e. Response Maintenance, Cyclical Maintenance and health & safety activities, Adaptations, External Cyclical Maintenance (ECMs) and addressing the significant backlogs in component replacements that were confirmed by Savills' stock condition survey in 2014/15.

- 4.13 The consequence of this is that in the absence of an injection of external funding to specifically address CWI - that we do not anticipate at present - we are not currently in a financial position, and will not be in such a position for a number of years, to deliver a province-wide CWI replacement programme for all of our cavity wall stock.
- 4.14 That does not mean that we will not take action on CWI until then, but it does mean that any action that we can or do take must be of sufficient priority compared to other investment imperatives and within our means to deliver. Although the BBA CIT report indicated that the condition of CWI in our properties is not having a widespread detrimental impact on their internal structures, both the SERC and BBA CIT research and our own experience demonstrate that there are already instances in which it is. These clearly need to be addressed.
- 4.15 Therefore, we will adopt the short term and medium-to-long term approaches as set out below.

## **Proposals**

### Short Term

Until our stock investment funding position is resolved and we are in a position to implement a full CWI replacement programme we will address CWI remediation/ replacement as follows.

- The Class 1 properties identified by BBA will be investigated and addressed (this is already underway).
- Instances of suspected CWI failure will be investigated and addressed on a case-by-case basis. They will be referred to a new specialist central Insulation Team (see below) if more detailed investigation is required. If there is a CWI failure and it is confirmed by investigation that this failure is having a detrimental impact on the property's structure - i.e. as per the BBA's Class 1 designation - then the issue will be addressed through remediation or replacement.
  - If only a single property or a small number of properties are affected this will be addressed through our Response Maintenance service.
  - If, however, further investigation suggests a local pattern of CWI failure then a planned scheme will be developed.

- We will implement a small annual programme of schemes to test the approach that we propose to take with the full replacement programme in the medium-to-long term.

### Medium-to-Long term

We will develop and deliver a CWI replacement programme for our cavity wall properties as part of our future Energy Efficiency Strategy/Programme for our stock when the necessary funding to be able to do so is available.

An analysis of the BBA's report's findings did not suggest any particular pattern of non-compliance that would indicate targeted spatial action at this time. Therefore, we propose that the CWI replacement schemes will be programmed to follow the cycle of our External Cyclical Maintenance (ECM) schemes in order to ensure that any fabric defects in a property are remedied first to secure the external structure.

Consequently, in following the ECM cycle, we would anticipate that the full CWI programme would take some 7-8 years to complete at 9,000 to 10,000 properties per annum, requiring annual funding of £20 million to £25 million.

This would be a considerable undertaking and will, of course, be subject not only to the required funding being in place, but also to procurement and the necessary capacity being available in the insulation industry and supply chain. We are currently considering delivery options for this programme.

If there are any CWI schemes that need to be delivered in advance of the ECM cycle due to the urgency of the works that are required then such schemes will also include any works necessary to address any fabric defects in the relevant properties.

One of the suggestions raised in the discussions with the system designers was that CWI schemes should be carried out on a 'whole street' basis, not just for the Housing Executive properties in them. We are currently not able to fund such works to privately-owned properties. Given the extent of properties in our estates that have been sold under our House Sales Scheme the required investment funding implications would be significant. However, we will consider a proposal for a mixed tenure pilot project.

## External Cyclical Maintenance

- 4.16 The report's findings in respect of the condition of the external facades of properties reflect our own concerns regarding the impact of our External Cyclical Maintenance (ECM) programme.
- 4.17 Originally undertaken on a 5-year cycle, the frequency in which we have been able to deliver schemes has reduced over recent years due to a combination of funding and delivery issues and consequently the average cycle has been around 10-11 years for much of the stock.

### Proposal

We will increase our annual ECM programme in order to bring the cycle down to 8 years in the short term, and will aim to restore a 5 year cycle in the medium-to-long term when sufficient funding becomes available.

We will review our ECM Standards & Procedures to ensure that all of the types of external fabric issues highlighted by BBA CIT are addressed in our ECM schemes.

## CWI Extraction/Installation Process

- 4.18 As noted in Section 3, BBA CIT made a number of recommendations regarding CWI installations concerning competency, compliance, guarantees and monitoring. Under this section the Housing Executive sets out its current position regarding the installation process generally, including the specification, surveying, guarantees and accreditations and overarching quality assurance systems in place from extracting and cleaning (if required) and refilling/new installations. Also included will be the proposals and recommendations regarding standards to be adhered to so as to enable the insulation industry to be able to provide a considered response.
- 4.19 Specification

Within the current CPI Specification, it is stated under Section P11 that the system is to be *"Installed in accordance with the BBA or comparable Surveillance Scheme. Insulation company to hold a current BBA or other comparable certificate approved by the Employer."* This is consistent with the M3 Specification that we use for our Response Maintenance contracts. However, our specification will be reviewed to reflect the current industry standards and include the scope to future proof which is specifically considered through the implementation of PAS 2035. It is, therefore,

intended that new cavity wall installations are to be carried out to PAS 2035 standard.

#### 4.20 PAS 2030/ PAS 2035

In order to establish and uphold best practice in energy efficiency retrofit work, the UK government introduced a Retrofit Standards Framework that seeks to avoid piecemeal implementation of energy efficiency measures by requiring the characteristics of each property to be carefully assessed, and a medium term action plan created, before any measures are introduced. Central to this framework is PAS 2035, which clearly identifies the process of assessing a property, how energy efficiency measures should be chosen in response and outlines how long term monitoring can be carried out. It also clarifies the responsibilities and qualifications for individuals involved in the retrofit process.

This specification dovetails with an updated version of PAS 2030:2019, which now solely focuses on the installation, commissioning and handover of energy efficiency measures. Previously, the M3 had stipulated that *'The installation must be undertaken by persons with appropriate skill and experience, approved by the manufacturer and in accordance with PAS 2030.'* It is now the requirement to adhere to the PAS 2035 standard regarding retrofitting dwellings for improved energy efficiency in order to future proof any energy efficiency measures, taking account of all measures over the next 30 years to ensure what we do now will not have a detrimental impact on works we may do over the incoming years, prior to this standard becoming mandatory (NB. from 30 June 2021, it will become compulsory for all certification bodies and registered businesses under the TrustMark scheme to comply with it<sup>5</sup>) and also to provide a fabric first and whole house approach.

#### 4.21 Pre-installation Survey and Suitability for CWI

Prior to any works, the Employer must receive evidence from the contractor/ installer that the building has been inspected in accordance with, and independently verified by, the BBA Cavity Assessment Surveillance Scheme (CASS), CIGA–ISA or another UKAS accredited inspection body equal and approved by the Employer.

When considering the suitability of a property to be insulated it is important that the physical condition, form of construction and exposure to wind driven rain is assessed properly at the point of survey see *'BRE Good Building Guide 44: part 2: Insulating masonry cavity walls - principal risks and guidance'* and also should be in accordance

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<sup>5</sup> <https://cpd.building.co.uk/courses/cpd-2-2020-understanding-pas-2035-and-pas-20302019/>

with the following from *'BRE Report 262 Thermal insulation: avoiding risks'* regarding quality control checks for masonry cavity walls.

#### 4.22 Guarantees and Accreditations

Similar to the current M3 specification, a 25 year third party, insurance-backed guarantee to cover the cavity wall assessment, insulation materials, system and installation is to be provided. According to BRE the cavity wall insulation systems have a standard lifetime of 42 years where an installation is accompanied by an appropriate guarantee. An appropriate guarantee is one which meets all of the following four criteria listed on page 55 of the ECO2 Guidance<sup>6</sup>:

- Financial assurance: there must be a mechanism that gives assurance that funds will be available to honour the guarantee
- Duration: lasts for 25 years or longer
- Coverage: results in the failed measure being replaced and covers costs of remedial and replacement works plus materials, and
- Quality Assurance Framework: there must be an assurance framework for the quality of the installation and the product used in the installation. We will assess the suitability of this framework and we may require verification through independent assessment by an independent UKAS-accredited organisation or other appropriate body.

The insulation company should be signed up to a code of professional practice and that the installation is guaranteed for 25 years by CIGA, GDGC or through an independent insurance-backed guarantee from a UKAS recognised body.

There should also be evidence of a quality assurance framework in place whereby the quality of the system and its installation are independently assessed by a UKAS accredited body.

#### 4.23 Cavity Wall Extraction/ Cleaning

Cleaning of cavity walls may only be carried out by a contractor currently registered with the BBA Cavity Cleaning Company Scheme, CIGA , or other UKAS accredited body equal and approved by the Employer, that includes for clearing rubble and other material from the cavity in addition to the extraction of insulation.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/volume\\_1.1\\_guidance\\_update\\_delivery\\_final.pdf](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/volume_1.1_guidance_update_delivery_final.pdf)

## **Proposal**

We will undertake a review of the currently utilised specifications, agreed systems and guarantees regarding the CWI installation process for our stock in order to ensure contractor competency and the required performance standard. Guarantees, accreditations and cavity extraction/cleaning works should be in keeping with the requirements of UKAS accredited inspections bodies only.

We will introduce an installation process methodology that will include, inter alia, the cavity wall surveillance scheme, pre and post inspection photographs, the agreed accreditation requirements, PAS 2035 and the complete digital records within a Health & Safety File to be handed over post completion.

## **Stock Surveys and Data**

- 4.24 BBA recommended that our housing stock should be inspected at regular intervals to gauge the condition of the external façade and performance of CWI installations, and that the inspection regime methodology should be modelled on that delivered for the research project.
- 4.25 The Housing Executive already undertakes a rolling stock condition survey programme with the aim of inspecting all of our properties every five years. The construction type of a property is assessed and recorded as part of the survey. These surveys also inspect the external façade of a property.
- 4.26 However, our stock condition survey does not currently include a detailed investigation of the condition of cavity wall insulation. The logistics and cost implications of replicating the BBA CIT's CWI inspection methodology and programme on a regular basis would be considerable.

## **Proposal**

We will undertake a small random sample of CWI investigations each year involving an invasive review using borescope and thermal imaging technology in order to provide the most complete picture of the dwelling as possible.

We will introduce a CWI mapping database to our GIS system in order to aid our monitoring of patterns of failure and remediation works across our stock, and better inform future programmes.

## Housing Executive Staffing and Training

- 4.27 BBA recommended that, in summary, the Housing Executive should develop its relevant staff's expertise and competence in respect of CWI.
- 4.28 The Housing Executive has already a core of expertise in its Asset Management Division with staff trained in CWI issues and two qualified Retrofit Coordinators. A number of staff were trained in CWI issues as part of BBA CIT's commission.

### Proposal

We will establish a specialist team in our Asset Management Division that will have responsibility for quality assurance, inspection, compliance and monitoring activities for all insulation types.

As already noted, the team will carry out detailed investigations where these are deemed necessary by local Maintenance staff, and will assist and advise staff responsible for Response Maintenance and Planned Maintenance on CWI matters.

We will consider which staff will require specific CWI training and what that training needs to be.

## Residents' Advice and Information

- 4.29 BBA advised that residents who have CWI installed should be given guidance on how to both maintain and manage their properties following installation and have access to experts who can provide assistance with any matters relevant to this area, and that the Housing Executive puts in place a 'residents' voice' scheme that allows tenants to raise concerns about the condition or effects of CWI in their homes.
- 4.30 We have a range of guidance leaflets for our tenants on the use and maintenance of their homes, but we do not have any that specifically deals with cavity wall insulation.
- 4.31 The Housing Executive is not of the view that a 'residents' voice' scheme specifically for CWI issues is required. Our preference would be that tenants should continue to report any suspected CWI issues that arise via our Response Maintenance service.
- 4.32 The Housing Executive's Housing Community Network enables issues to be raised with managers at all levels. Following the publication of BBA CIT's report a CWI Forum was established with the assistance of SCNI with the aim of retaining the

‘tenants’ voice’ that had been represented on the Insulation Performance Panel by one of the members of the Central Housing Forum. The CWO Forum comprises representatives of the Central Housing Forum, SCNI and the Housing Executive. Although it has not met since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic it is our intention to retain it as our Action Plan is developed.

### **Proposal**

We will develop guidance for tenants on how to maintain their homes following CWI installations.

We will consider with our HCN’s Central Housing Forum how best to obtain and reflect tenants’ views and concerns regarding CWI going forward.

## **Research**

- 4.34 We believe that further research needs may arise as our Action Plan and future programme develops and are open to discussion with the insulation industry and other interested parties on what these might be. We will also continue to engage with research bodies on CWI issues.
- 4.35 We have already initiated a small project to complement the findings of BBA CIT’s research. This is aimed at determining the impact that current Cavity Wall Insulation (CWI) is having on stock in terms of thermal fabric performance of the dwelling and associated heat loss and thermal transmittance to determine the U Value at the following stages:
- Of existing cavity wall insulation
  - After removing the insulation and cleaning the cavity
  - After refilling cavity with grey bead to industry standards
- Ulster University is to independently verify the results and disseminate as research.

### **Proposal**

We will engage with the insulation industry, research bodies and other interested parties on potential future research needs regarding CWI and bring forward projects as necessary.

## Reporting and Review

4.36 We will report annually on the implementation of the Action Plan.

4.37 We will review the Action Plan in 2026/27 (or earlier if required).

## 5.0 Summary of Actions

ITEM	ACTION	TIMESCALE
<b>1. Remediation/Replacement</b>		
1a	We will complete the investigation and resolution of the Class 1 properties.	To be completed by end of 2021/22.
1b	We will investigate and address any instances of cavity wall insulation failure that have a detrimental impact on the structure of a property.	Already commenced. To be actioned as required.
1c	We will develop and deliver a small annual programme of schemes to test the new extraction/installation process to be developed.	From 2022/23
1d	In the medium to long term we will develop and deliver a CWI replacement programme for our cavity wall properties.	To be confirmed when sufficient funding is available.
1e	We will consider the development of a pilot project to consider a mixed tenure approach.	2022/23
<b>2. External Cyclical Maintenance</b>		
2a	We will increase our annual ECM programme in order to bring the cycle down to 8 years in the short term.	By 2024/25.
2b	We will bring the ECM cycle further down to 5 years in the medium-to-long term.	To be confirmed when sufficient funding is available
2c	We will review our ECM Standards & Procedures to ensure that all of the types of external fabric issues highlighted by BBA CIT are addressed in our ECM schemes.	By the end of 2021/22.
<b>3. CWI Extraction/Installation Process</b>		
3a	We will undertake a review of the currently utilised specifications, agreed systems and guarantees regarding the CWI installation process for our stock in order to ensure contractor competency and the required performance standard.	2022/23
3b	We will introduce a new extraction/installation process methodology.	By the end of 2022/23
<b>4. Stock Surveys and Data</b>		
4a	We will undertake a small random sample of CWI investigations each year.	From April 2022

4b	We will introduce a CWI mapping database to our GIS system.	From April 2022
<b>5. Housing Executive Staffing and Training</b>		
5a	We will establish a specialist team in our Asset Management Division that will have responsibility for quality assurance, inspection, compliance and monitoring activities for all insulation types.	2022/23
5b	We will consider which staff will require specific CWI training and what that training needs to be.	By the end of 2021/22.
<b>6. Residents' Advice and Information</b>		
6a	We will develop guidance for tenants on how to maintain their homes following CWI installations.	2022/23
6b	We will consider with our HCN's Central Housing Forum how best to obtain and reflect tenants' views and concerns regarding CWI going forward.	Ongoing – to be completed in 2022/23
<b>7. Research</b>		
7a	We will undertake a project to determine the thermal fabric performance of the existing insulation in the dwelling and associated heat loss.	Completed by the end of 2021/22.
7b	We will engage with the insulation industry, research bodies and other interested parties on potential future research needs regarding CWI and bring forward projects as necessary.	Ongoing

### Summary of the responses to the Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan

Subject	Summary of Responses
Remediation/ Replacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was overwhelming support for a Cavity Wall Insulation remediation /replacement programme.</li> <li>• There was recognition that very little has been spent on insulation as stated in the HECA Report 2019 so hence the need for a major retrofitting campaign to make homes energy efficient and contribute to meeting environmental commitments.</li> <li>• There was a call for Government to invest in a programme of retrofitting in order to address housing quality, fuel poverty and climate commitments.</li> <li>• It was noted that although replacing cavity wall insulation would be in compliance with Building Regulations, these replaced insulated cavity walls would have an insulation standard that is markedly below what a modern newly constructed cavity wall would achieve.</li> <li>• A failure to carry out cavity wall insulation would likely result in not achieving climate related goals and should be done in the context of an integrated investment approach in improving and climate-proofing existing housing stock.</li> </ul>
External Cyclical Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intention of the Housing Executive to get the External Cyclical Maintenance cycle to every 8 years in the interim period while moving towards every 5 years is welcomed.</li> <li>• The need to address poor maintenance in the Housing Executive’s housing stock and its relevance to tackling fuel poverty and delivering sustainable housing is key.</li> </ul>
CWI Extraction and Installation Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report sets out credible recommendations to positively influence successful installation of cavity wall insulation.</li> <li>• It is probable to assume that the action plan proposed by the Housing Executive will have the dual benefits of tackling fuel poverty and mitigation of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions beyond the influence of their building stock.</li> <li>• The Housing Executive needs to invest more in cavity wall insulation as part of these efforts.</li> <li>• The Housing Executive’s ambition to adopt the PAS 2035:2019 approach was seen as representing the gold standard in terms of work quality</li> <li>• PAS 2035 takes a ‘whole house’ risk-based approach - as opposed to a fabric first approach - as part of ongoing commitments to raising standards and promoting best practice in quality management in the construction industry.</li> <li>• PAS certification must be mainstreamed into the construction industry. With this there needs to be Government support to encourage the uptake of PAS. This could be in the form of subsidised training for existing installers and dedicated training programmes in FE colleges.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration should be given to reviewing what percentage of properties have had built-in cavity wall insulation as carrying out effective remedial work and upgrade to this type of cavity wall would be much more difficult to achieve.</li> <li>• There was also strong support that the UKAS accreditation body should be suitably qualified, respected and independent as it would give confidence to consumers and certainty to installers.</li> <li>• There was general consensus that the issues around quality and compliance is important.</li> <li>• There needs to be the proper testing and certification of the cavity wall product that is being manufactured and consideration given to Fire Retardant Additives (FRA) being used.</li> </ul>
Stock Surveys & Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was support from the responses around the BBA recommendations that the housing stock be inspected at regular intervals to gauge the condition of the external façade and performance of CWI installations.</li> </ul>
Housing Executive Staffing & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was strong consideration given in relation to the inspection and verification process.</li> <li>• There was also recognition of the importance of well-trained staff to identify the potential problems and dangers caused by defects including heat loss, condensation, damaged external façade and particularly internal damp and mould.</li> <li>• It was noted there was potential benefit of a specialist insulation team in the Housing Executive.</li> <li>• The construction sector needs to continue to increase in skills and the quality of its work to avoid a repeat of the past failings.</li> <li>• Setting out the requirement for PAS certification would align trades people working in this sector in Northern Ireland with the requirements made by a range of GB programmes including ECO and the Warm Homes grant scheme.</li> </ul>
Residents' Advice and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenants should be made aware of their rights to request an inspection of their properties, particularly if they have noticed any of the issues outlined in the BBA research and be advised of the dedicated next steps they can follow to seek support in terms of remediation/recompense.</li> <li>• There was welcomed consideration given by the Housing Community Network's Central Housing Forum on how best to obtain and reflect tenants' views and concerns regarding CWI going forward.</li> <li>• The consultees who commented agreed with the calls for the inclusion of a tenants' voice element to the work of the CWI Forum as a matter of priority, in order to enable tenants to raise their concerns and report any suspected CWI issues.</li> <li>• The recommendations and suggestions made by residents who know their properties should be acted upon and taken seriously.</li> <li>• Any additional engagement and communication between residents and the Housing Executive is welcome.</li> </ul>
Recompense/ remediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst there was general support in principle of the idea of accessing guarantees for previously installed cavity wall insulation, it was</li> </ul>

regarding past installations	recognised that the lifetime of these guarantees may have elapsed and that the Housing Executive will likely have to look at other options.
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a positive response to the proposal for continued engagement between the Housing Executive, the insulation industry, academics, research bodies and other interested parties on potential future research needs regarding CWI.</li> </ul>

### Glossary of Terms & Definitions

Term	Definition
BBA	British Board of Agrément.
CIT	Consultancy, Investigation and Training, a subsidiary of the British Board of Agrément (BBA).
CASS	BBA's Cavity Assessment Surveillance Scheme.
CIGA	Cavity Insulation Guarantee Agency. It provides independent 25 year guarantees for Cavity Wall Insulation fitted by registered installers in the UK and Channel islands.
CIGA – ISA	CIGA's Independent Surveillance of Assessment Scheme.
CPI	Co-ordinated Project Information specification.
CWI	Cavity Wall Insulation.
Designers' CW Surveillance Scheme Methodology	The method by which insulation companies that are classed as system designers propose to carry out the insulation design, installation and monitoring process in a pre-approved system, in line with existing standards. This would include how the surveys are carried out, the method of pre-installation checks, the inclusion of other factors that affect the whole house such as ventilation and heating system, equipment used to survey (e.g. borescopes, thermal imaging cameras), inspections during installation (e.g. machine calibration, actual volume of product installed etc.) and post completion monitoring.
ECM	External Cyclical Maintenance.
EWI	External Wall Insulation.
GDGC	This is a specialist deposit protection and insurance backed guarantee provider for the home improvement sector.
IPP	Insulation Performance Panel
KIWA	European institution for testing, inspection and certification
NZEB	Net zero or nearly zero energy. Buildings designed to this standard are highly efficient with extremely low energy demand. Such buildings produce as much energy as they consume, accounted for annually.
PAS 2030:2017	Publicly Available Specification for the installation of energy efficiency measures in existing buildings. <i>The 2017 updated PAS () specifies requirements for the installation of energy efficiency measures (EEM) in an existing building, applicable whether the building is used for commercial or residential purposes.</i>
PAS 2035:2019	Publicly Available Specification for Retrofitting dwellings for improved energy efficiency.

	<p>PAS 2035 essentially provides a specification for the energy retrofit of domestic buildings, and details best practice guidance for domestic retrofit projects. This PAS embraces quality retrofit work eliminating problems associated with defects, shallow retrofit, accountability, poor design and performance gap. PAS 2035 delivers a whole building approach to the retrofit process, considering the home, environment, occupancy and the householders' improvement objectives when determining the most suitable measures to install. This eliminates the issue of retrofit work being considered in isolation which can unintentionally damage the overall building performance. Moreover, five new retrofit roles have also been introduced within the PAS 2035 process, with clear responsibilities and accountabilities established to ensure that individuals deliver quality throughout. Elmhurst currently runs training and schemes for two of these new roles, including the Retrofit Assessor and Retrofit Coordinator.</p>
TrustMark	<p>This is the Government Endorsed Quality Scheme covering work a consumer chooses to have carried out in or around their home. It has been established as the new quality mark within the retrofit standards framework. TrustMark and PAS 2035 is supported by an Industry Code of Conduct, a Consumer Charter and a framework of technical standards for retrofit. Users of the TrustMark Government endorsed quality scheme will be required to comply with PAS 2035 when undertaking any domestic retrofit work. Those who hold the TrustMark can demonstrate to consumers that they have the skills and knowledge to deliver the best practice standards and trading practices in the sector.</p>
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland.
SERC	South Eastern Regional College.
UKAS	UK Accreditation Service. This is the body responsible for determining, in the public interest, the technical competence and integrity of organisations such as those offering testing, calibration and certification services.



*By email*

15 March 2022

Dear David,

**Motion for the Ocean – local authorities leading the way for our ocean and coastal communities**

I write to you today as Chair of England's Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group (LGA Coastal SIG). We have a membership of 57 coastal local authorities across England, together serving 60% of England's coast and 16 million people.

I am writing to make you aware of the Motion for the Ocean – a local government-led ocean recovery initiative. A model "Motion for the Ocean" has been developed by the LGA Coastal SIG together with leading marine and coastal experts\*. It is a series of evidence-based pledges to help local authorities play their part in realising a clean, healthy and productive ocean and all of the direct economic, health and wellbeing benefits it will bring.

Six councils have passed the motion so far, 5 in England and 1 in Wales. My own council, South Tyneside Council, is one of these. I proposed the motion, which was passed unanimously and with cross-party support. We received some excellent press coverage, which you can see [here](#) and [here](#).

In the UK, the ocean is at the heart of our heritage, our economy and the health, wellbeing and prosperity of our communities. The UK government's recent Marine Strategy assessment states that our marine environment is not healthy; which is bad news for our climate, our visitor economy, our fishing industry and the health and wellbeing of our residents. Delivering the pledges set out in the Motion for the Ocean could yield new jobs and opportunities, more resilient coastal economies, and happier, healthier people; as well as a cleaner, healthier and more productive natural environment. A healthy ocean is an essential ally in our fight against climate change and blue carbon could play an integral role in helping us meet our net zero targets.

Councils like yours are already doing much of this work and the Motion for the Ocean is an opportunity to showcase your leadership and all that you are already doing, as well as your direction of travel in ensuring a healthy ocean is at the heart of your climate, environment and economic policy. I encourage you to consider how the Motion for the Ocean could be adapted to suit your area and the communities you serve.

We are happy to provide any support you might need. Please contact the Secretariat on [lgacoastalsig@southtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:lgacoastalsig@southtyneside.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ernest Gibson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Cllr Ernest Gibson  
Chair, LGA Coastal SIG

*\*Developed by Cllr Dr Pamela Buchan, a marine social scientist and Plymouth City Councillor, Emily Cunningham, a marine and coastal specialist and Lead Officer of the LGA Coastal Special Interest Group and Nicola Bridge, an ocean literacy specialist and Head of Advocacy and Engagement at the Ocean Conservation Trust.*

# Model 'Motion for the Ocean' for Local Authorities

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## This Council declares an urgent need for Ocean Recovery.

We recognise that we need ocean recovery to meet our net zero carbon targets, and we need net zero carbon to recover our ocean.

This Council pledges to:

1. Report to Full Council within 12 months on the actions and projects that will begin an ocean recovery in [COUNCIL AREA].
2. Embed ocean recovery in all strategic decisions, plans, budgets, procurement and approaches to decisions by the Council (particularly in planning, regeneration, skills and economic policy), aligning with climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements, and considering ocean-based solutions in our journey towards a carbon neutral and climate resilient future.
3. Ensure that local planning supports ocean recovery, working closely with the Marine Management Organisation to embed strong links between the Local Plan and the [area] Marine Plan to support ocean recovery.
4. Ensure that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy strives to support ocean recovery.
5. Work with partners locally and nationally to deliver increased sustainability in marine industries and develop a sustainable and equitable blue economy that delivers ocean recovery and local prosperity; including the local fishing industry and the vital work of [local] IFCA.
6. Grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship in [COUNCIL AREA], including ensuring all pupils are given the opportunity to experience the ocean first-hand before leaving primary school - striving to include home-schooled children - and promote sustainable and equitable access to the ocean through physical and digital experiences for all residents.
7. Create an online portal of the Council website to update on ocean recovery progress, signpost to ocean literacy development opportunities, and marine citizenship pledges.
8. Write to the Government asking them to put the ocean into net recovery by 2030 by
  - a) Ensuring Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities have the resources they need to effectively research and monitor our growing number of marine protected areas, and to set and enforce appropriate fishing levels that support local economies and deliver environmental sustainability.
  - b) Work with coastal communities to co-develop marine policy to ensure it delivers equitable and sustainable outcomes in local placemaking.
  - c) Appoint a dedicated Minister for Coastal Communities.
  - d) Stop plastic pollution at source by strengthening the regulations around single-use plastics and set standards for microfibre-catching filters to ensure that all new domestic and commercial washing machines are fitted with a filter that captures a high percentage of microfibres produced in the wash cycle.

- e) And by listening to marine and social scientific advice to update the Marine Policy Statement and produce a national Ocean Recovery Strategy which will:
  - i. Enable the recovery of marine ecosystems rather than managing degraded or altered habitats in their reduced state.
  - ii. Consider levelling up, marine conservation, energy, industrial growth, flood and coastal erosion risk management, climate adaptation and fisheries policy holistically rather than as competing interests.
  - iii. Develop a smarter approach to managing the health of the entire ocean that moves beyond Marine Protected Areas and enables links to be made across sectors towards sustainability.
  - iv. Establish improved processes for understanding the benefits of ocean recovery, leaving no doubt the links between this and human lives, livelihoods, and wellbeing.

## **Glossary**

A “Blue Economy” is one which uses ocean resources sustainably or even regeneratively whilst improving community wellbeing and social equity. It is not simply marine or maritime economic activity, or “blue growth”.

“Ocean literacy” is where a person understands the ocean's influence on them and their influence on the ocean. For example, an understanding that the ocean stores carbon and an understanding that what they put down the drain can impact on ocean health. It can also include learning how to be an active marine citizen.

“Marine citizenship” is exercising the right to participate in the transformation of the human-ocean relationship for sustainability. This means taking individual and collective responsibility to consider one’s own and society’s impacts on the ocean; and exercising rights as a marine citizen, e.g. writing to a local Councillor to ask them to take action for ocean recovery; or promoting or making local, national or international policy changes.

## **Example from South Tyneside Council for guidance**

### ***Why is this declaration needed now?***

The health of our ocean is inextricably linked with our climate and with human health, wellbeing and prosperity. A healthy ocean is fundamental in regulating the global climate system and is an essential ally in our fight against climate change. The ocean absorbs more than 90% of the excess heat in the climate system as well as absorbing around 20% of annual carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions generated by human activity.

However, decades of irresponsible marine exploitation and pollution have led to significant levels of degradation, and this together with the detrimental impacts of our changing climate on marine ecosystems has led to national and global recognition that the world ocean is in crisis. An unhealthy ocean does not absorb or store carbon as effectively as a healthy one, further worsening the impacts of the climate crisis.

The UK government’s recent Marine Strategy assessment confirms that our marine environment is not healthy. An ocean in crisis is not only bad news for our climate, but also for our local fishing and tourism industries and for the health, wellbeing and prosperity of our coastal communities.

In [COUNCIL AREA], like the rest of planet, we are witnessing the ocean crisis first-hand. Fish stocks continue to collapse from permitted and illegal overfishing and poor water quality is impacting seafood and safe bathing. Our beaches are covered in litter with each tide, much of it plastic, though this is just the tip of the iceberg of the amount of litter in our oceans. Marine microplastics have been found in all marine environments and in the bodies of many species, including humans and the species of fish we regularly eat.

Our residents are on the frontline of climate change and are being disproportionately impacted relative to inland communities. The impact of the climate crisis on the ocean is profound, from rising water temperatures and changes in ocean chemistry, to sea level rise and increased storminess, including in our local waters. This is changing what seafood is caught locally, accelerating the erosion of our coastline - increasing the risk to infrastructure and properties, and increasing the risk of flooding and storm damage.

Urgent action is needed to halt these devastating changes and recover the health of our ocean to enable it to deliver the full range of benefits, including climate regulation, carbon storage in coastal and marine habitats, coastal protection, a thriving local economy, clean safe recreation and happy, healthy coastal communities. We must play our part in recovering the health of the ocean.

In [COUNCIL AREA], the ocean is at the heart of our heritage and economy. From the maritime and marine expertise around the [Name of] Port, to the millions of visitors who come to the [COUNCIL AREA] to experience the sight, sound and feel of the ocean. The ocean can play a vital role in our economic recovery and we must strive to develop a sustainable and equitable blue economy that delivers both ocean recovery and local prosperity. We must ensure that ocean recovery is embedded in our relevant strategic decision-making, policymaking and budget-setting; as well as being considered in future strategies and plans, including those seeking to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.

At present, not everyone has the opportunity or means to access and enjoy the ocean. Even within [COUNCIL AREA], there are people of all ages who have never experienced the joy of our ocean. First-hand experience of the ocean is essential if people are to be motivated to play their part in protecting it, whether that is through disposing of their litter responsibly, recycling what they can or volunteering in ocean conservation with local organisations. Helping individuals develop their ocean literacy (understanding of the relationship between people and the ocean) is an essential part of this motion, as is individual and collective marine citizenship (promoting and demanding an ocean recovery through local, national and international policy changes). Local authorities cannot solve the ocean crisis alone, but we can – and must – play our part.

#### **EXAMPLE Local Context, for guidance**

South Tyneside Council is leading the way in tackling the climate emergency and has recognised the value of the ocean in both helping us meet our commitment to being carbon neutral by 2030 and in protecting our beautiful coastline. We are lead partners on the Stronger Shores project, which is pioneering the use of nature-based solutions for coastal protection and carbon storage, restoring marine habitats in order to protect the coast and communities of the North East.

We are founding partners of the SeaScapes scheme, the first of its kind in the UK, which is better connecting local communities with our maritime heritage, improving ocean literacy (understanding of the relationship between people and the ocean) and inspiring people and businesses to play their part in protecting it. We work towards more sustainable fisheries management as members of the North Eastern IFCA.

Our Economic Recovery Plan places the environment and green growth front and centre of our plans to create an inclusive, sustainable economy. We are active in the Tyne Estuary Partnership which has already delivered one project to extend carbon-storing saltmarsh habitats within the Borough, with other nature-based solutions in the pipeline.

South Tyneside Council is leading the way nationally too. We are lead authority for the Local Government Association's Coastal Special Interest Group and are championing better coastal policy and funding for the benefit of all England's coast and its communities.

It is natural that we would be one of the first local authorities in the country to declare an urgent need for ocean recovery.