



**DRAFT TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME
2014-2018**

WICKLOW LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Wicklow County Council

And

Bray Town Council

**Being the Relevant Housing Authorities under
The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998.**

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Introduction

Under the provisions of the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998, Wicklow County Council and Bray Town Council are required to prepare, adopt and implement a new Traveller Accommodation Programme¹ (TAP) to meet the accommodation needs of the county's indigenous Traveller community, i.e. those families who have been resident in the county for at least three years prior to the adoption of this proposed plan for 2014-2018.

The existing programme which took effect on the 01st January 2009 will expire on 31 Dec 2013. The new Traveller Accommodation Programme will cover the period from 01 January 2014 to the 31st December 2018.

The Minister for Housing & Planning has issued a number of directions under the Act in relation to the preparation of the new TAP and these are contained in Circular 26/2013 together with a 'Memorandum on the Preparation, Adoption and Implementation of Local Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2014-2018'. The Minister has specified that the latest date for the adoption of TAPs is the 30th April 2014.

Attached to this memorandum, for the purpose of guidance to housing authorities, is a schedule, which incorporates indicative timescales for the various stages of the preparation and adoption process.

In summary, the Memorandum covers the various provisions of the 1998 Act which govern the housing authorities' duties in relation to preparation, adoption and implementation of accommodation programmes and related matters. These provisions: -

- require relevant housing authorities, in consultation with Travellers, to prepare and adopt by a date to be specified, accommodation programmes to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in their areas;
- allow for public input to the preparation and amendment of such programmes;
- oblige relevant housing authorities to take appropriate steps to secure implementation of programmes; and
- require planning authorities to include objectives concerning Traveller accommodation in their county/city development plans.

The Circular, Memorandum and Schedule are set out in full in Appendix 1.

Although Wicklow County Council and Bray Town Council are Relevant Authorities for the purposes of the Act, Wicklow County Council's functional area includes the functional areas of Wicklow, Arklow and Greystones Town Councils and therefore this programme covers those authorities' areas.

¹ Throughout this document, reference to be made to LTACC i.e. Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

Statistics

County Wicklow occupies an area of 2,017 square kilometres with as per Census 2011, has a population of 136,640. The following table details specific Traveller details:

Traveller Statistics as per Annual Traveller Count November 2012

Details	Wicklow	National
Number of Traveller families	231 (2% of total Traveller population)	9,911
Number of Traveller families accommodated by or with assistance from Local Authority: (Includes standard housing, halting sites both temporary and permanent, group housing, tenant purchase, voluntary housing)	169 (73% of Wicklow families)	5,568 (56%)
Number of Traveller families in private rented / RAS houses	Wicklow = 51 (22% of Wicklow families)	Ireland = 2,829 (25.8%)

Policy Statement

It is the policy of Wicklow Local Authorities (namely Wicklow County Council, Wicklow, Arklow and Bray Town Councils) to provide group and standard housing options as well as halting sites, temporary/emergency sites and one off rural houses for the accommodation of Travellers who are indigenous to Co. Wicklow, in accordance with the Assessment of Need carried out under the Act.

These housing options are provided in recognition of Travellers' cultural identity as a minority group, some of whom travel, and strives to accommodate Travellers in a culturally appropriate way.

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee² (LTACC)

The role of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee is to provide a forum where Traveller Accommodation issues can be addressed in a timely and co-ordinated manner and where decisions are reached in as far as possible on the basis of mutual consensus. Membership of the LTACC consists of Traveller, Traveller Development Groups, Elected Members of the Council and Council staff.

For the purpose of this plan, a working group was established to develop this TAP for the 2014 to 2018 period.

Progress Achieved During Current TAP 2009 to 2013-10-14

This TAP was adopted by the Members of Wicklow County Council on 02nd February 2009 and by the Members of Bray Town Council on the 03rd February 2009. During the 2009 to 2013 period, significant progress was made in Co. Wicklow in terms of both meeting Traveller Accommodation demand as well as dealing with a number of Traveller Accommodation issues. The table below gives an overview of total nos. of Travellers accommodated both in terms of social housing and in terms of owner occupier as of November 2012 when the Annual Count of Travellers was conducted.

Nos. of families Accommodated as per Annual Count 2012 for Co. Wicklow

Accommodation Type	No. of Families
<i>Standard housing</i>	115
<i>Group Housing</i>	15
<i>Owned housing</i>	8
<i>Private Rented</i>	43
<i>RAS</i>	8
<i>Halting Sites</i>	17
<i>Total</i>	206

During the lifetime of the Traveller Plan 2009-2013, the following units of accommodation were provided by Wicklow County Council and Bray Town Council, being the relevant local authorities as per the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998:

	Standard Housing	Traveller Specific Accommodation (specially built to include Group Housing, halting sites and once off single site)	Total
Bray TC	3		3
Wicklow Co. Co.	19	3	22
Total			

Other initiatives undertaken during the lifetime of this plan include:

Silverbridge Halting Site:

The residents from the existing 5 bays in Silverbridge were rehoused in 2009 – one family in standard housing in Bray and the other four families housed by Wicklow County Council. Upgrade works were then undertaken by Wicklow County Council's direct labour crew to these units prior to their occupation by the four families from the unauthorized encampment at Jamesons Corner. On the advice of Social Worker for Wicklow County Council, the Halting Site now houses four families who are all members of one extended family.

It has long been an objective within the plan to carry out a major refurbishment and upgrade of Silverbridge Halting Site. A preliminary submission for funding for both the refurbishment and pedestrian access route was made to the DOECLG during 2013 and more detailed drawings and costings will be submitted as requested by the Department. It is acknowledged that there is a good working partnership between the residents of Silverbridge, the Bray Traveller Community Development Group and Council staff with all parties seeking to prioritise the proposed works.

Unauthorised Encampment at Jameson's Corner, Kilmacanogue :

The four families from this encampment were moved to the Silverbridge Halting Site in December 2009.

Kilcoole Group Housing Schemes

Funding was secured for the refurbishment of Cooldross Close Kilcoole - all six houses are now refurbished and tenanted.



Ballyhenry Group Housing Scheme

Development of a group housing scheme consisting of two three-bed bungalows, and one bay and serviced unit, near Ashford, Co. Wicklow.



One off Rural House

Development of a one off rural house in South Wicklow for a Traveller family, designed specifically to meet the needs of a child with a disability

Significant Refurbishments of Individual Traveller Houses

Funding was secured from the Traveller Accommodation Unit to address a number of refurbishments of Traveller designated houses throughout the county. These included the addition of extensions to alleviate severe overcrowding/address medical/disability as well as general refurbishments. In all cases, this funding was granted on the basis that these houses remain Traveller designated houses going forward.

Ballintekin Halting Site

An innovative permaculture sewerage treatment system was installed at this eight bay halting site outside Wicklow town to address capacity issues – funded by the Traveller Accommodation Unit. In addition, the front doors on all eight units were replaced and upgraded from wooden doors to PVC low maintenance, high energy performance doors.

Roadside Encampments

All roadside encampments in the county received a basic caretaking service throughout the 2009 to 2013 period which included the provision of:

- Water
- Electricity
- Refuse collection

Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018

This Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018 aims to meet the level of need identified within this programme whilst also recognising the resource constraints that currently exist nationally. Additionally, this Programme recognises that as with the previous TAP for Co. Wicklow, the general trend in terms of accommodation need, is for standard social housing. Whilst Traveller specific accommodation will be provided where possible, the main source of accommodation units over the lifetime of this plan will be standard social housing.

Assessment of Traveller Accommodation Need 2014-2018

Under Section 6 of the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998 and as amended by Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, an Assessment of Needs has been conducted by Wicklow Local Authorities. The Housing Needs Assessment process of 2013 has formed a central part of this assessment. It is important to note that however that it is not always possible to identify Traveller applicants as part of this process.

Those involved in this assessment of need include:

- Wicklow County Council's Social Worker
- Housing Authorities in Co. Wicklow
- Traveller families
- Bray Traveller Community Development Group
- Wicklow Travellers Group

Current need relevant to each housing authority area and reflecting the accommodation preference of the Travellers concerned was found to be 80 units of accommodation. This was spread throughout the administrative areas of the county as follows:

Assessment of Demand for Accommodation for Travellers 2014-2018

	Standard Housing	Traveller Specific Accommodation (specially built to include Group Housing, halting sites and once off single site)	Total Units of Accommodation Required
Bray TC	16	0	
Arklow TC	5	0	
Wicklow TC	5	0	
Wicklow Co. Co.	43	11	
Total	69	11	80

Additionally, a number of proposals in terms of Traveller Accommodation policy in Co. Wicklow have been considered for inclusion in this TAP. These proposals include:

- Gradual phasing out of the quota system in terms of Traveller accommodation allocation policy
- The non designation of Traveller houses going forward. All social houses designated as Traveller houses to remain as is up to 31 Dec 2013. As of 01st January 2014, no further designation of Traveller specific social houses across the social housing stock

Additionally, the impact of the impending realignment of local authorities at a county level in 2014 will need to be considered in terms of this TAP for the 2014-2018 period.

In light of the above, the following targets for Wicklow's five-year **Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018** have been identified:

Proposed Redevelopments

Development	No. of Units	Type	Timeline
Ballintreskin Halting Site	4	Either expansion of existing site or development of group housing scheme off site to meet needs of four families – most likely to be developed as per a Part VIII Planning Process	2017
Silverbridge	4	Major refurbishment of the units together with provision of pedestrian access route to Herbert Rd	2016

Proposed New Initiatives

Development	No. of Units	Type	Delivery Mechanism	Timeline
Temporary halting site with emergency services at the Chippings Depot, Rocky Valley, Kilmacanogue	3	Relocation of eligible families to agreed alternative location	Purchase of rural property to accommodate three families	2015
Temporary halting site with emergency services at Windgates, (Bray/Greystones Coastal Rd)	2	Eligible families to be offered alternative social housing accommodation	To be determined	2016

In line with current Government policy re. the provision of social housing, no large scale social housing construction projects are planned for the 2014-2018 period. As such, the suite of accommodation options that can be provided by the relevant housing authorities over the lifetime of this TAP include:

- **Traveller Specific Accommodation**
- **Standard Social Housing – allocation of Casual Vacancies as they arise**
- **Voluntary Housing options**
- **RAS/Leasing options**
- **Assistance in sourcing Private Rented Accommodation**
- **Transient /Transitional Accommodation – the priority of the relevant local authorities is to meet the needs of families seeking permanent accommodation before meeting the seasonal/transitional needs of Travellers**

The delivery of this Plan is contingent upon the availability of resources to the local authority, both staffing and financial, over the 2014-2018 period. The impact of the move towards sub county/municipal reorganization in 2014 will also need to be considered during the lifetime of this Plan.

Consultation Process

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 requires that an extensive consultation process underpins the preparation and implementation of the TAP. All TAPs are required to be prepared and implemented in consultation with other local public bodies, Travellers directly and via Traveller Support Groups, the LTACC and the public in general.

Notice of the intention to carry out the Assessment of Need and to prepare a Draft TAP was given to:

- The members of the LTACC
- Elected Members of Wicklow County Council and Bray Town Council
- TDs for Co. Wicklow
- The Housing SPC of WCC
- The Wicklow Traveller Interagency Group
- Neighbouring Counties

Notice was also advertised in the local press. The closing date for receipt of submissions prior to the publication of the draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018 was the 27th Sept 2013. Submissions were received from the following;

1. Irish Traveller Movement

A summary of this submission is as follows:

- Concern that the State has changed approach from supplying social housing for Travellers through Traveller specific accommodation to 'almost exclusively providing only private rented accommodation'. ITM fears that this has a particularly damaging impact on many Travellers as they find it difficult to access social housing through private rented housing.
- ITM recommends a single allocations system for social housing and argues against the use of a separate 'Traveller waiting list' for standard housing or quota systems.
- ITM recommends that transient site provision should be an integral part of all local authorities' accommodation plan.
- ITM advocate identification of spaces for emergency use to accommodate Travellers who leave permanent accommodation due to violence and intimidation.
- ITM states that tenant participation in the Traveller community is central to building and sustaining a successful Traveller accommodation strategy.
- ITM recommends that use of Section 24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004 should only be used in exceptional circumstances and that families moved under this legislation should not affect their place on accommodation waiting lists except where housed by other housing providers.

Appendix 1 – Relevant Department Circular and Memorandum

Appendix 2 – Operational Issues in terms of the provision of Traveller Accommodation

Management and Maintenance of Traveller Accommodation.

In order to ensure that the accommodation and its surrounding area are maintained in good condition and that the Traveller families successfully and peacefully co-exist with other families both from the Traveller and the settled communities it is essential that satisfactory arrangements are put in place for the management and maintenance of Traveller accommodation. Caretakers have been appointed to manage and maintain the existing Group Schemes and Halting Sites in the county.

Measures such as pre-tenancy training and the development of Estate Management services will be implemented.

Unauthorised Encampments:

There are a number of unauthorised Traveller encampments throughout the county with numbers generally increasing during the summer months, as movement by transient Travellers becomes more frequent. These encampments can lead to friction between the local Travellers and visiting Travellers and between Travellers and the settled community. The elimination of unauthorised encampments will depend on the provision of a varied and adequate number of accommodation units.

In the meantime the Council reserves the right to take effective legal action under appropriate legislation available to it at the time in relation to illegal encampments.

Where Travellers take up residence on unofficial sites in close proximity to accommodation provided for Traveller families, the Council will take appropriate action in accordance with the provisions of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

Allocation of Accommodation:

Allocation of Traveller Accommodation will take place in consultation with the Councils Social Worker having regard to the criteria outlined in the current Scheme of Letting Priorities. In the case of bays on Halting Sites or units in a Group Housing Scheme, the compatibility of families will be taken into account and consultation on this issue will take place with other families in the development. The Council will also have regard to Estate Management issues, however in all instances the Council reserves the right to allocate the unit as it sees fit.

Transfers applications will be considered from the following:

- Mutual transfers between agreeing parties with the approval of the Housing Officer
- Mutual transfers between agreeing parties who satisfy the Local Authority guidelines for transfers
- Mutual Transfer applications are also be accepted between Travellers and members of the settled community
- For persons with disabilities in respect of accommodation which would be more suitable to their needs

- To make better use of housing stock
- To overcome overcrowding
- In exceptional circumstances where the Local Authority deems it the most appropriate course of action

Applications for transfers will not be considered from tenants who are in arrears of rent or who have failed to keep to the terms of the tenancy agreement in relation to anti-social behaviour or the upkeep and maintenance of the dwelling occupied by them. This is in accordance with the relevant local authority scheme of letting priorities adopted by the Council.

It is recognised that many families on halting sites will want to move to more permanent accommodation. Such families who apply for transfers will be considered for any suitable vacancy that arises.

Unless there are pressing reasons accepted by the Councils Housing Officer a refusal of a reasonable offer of a house in an area of their choice will result in no other offer being made for a period of one year.

Qualification for and inclusion on the Housing List.

Standard conditions will apply and each individual applicant or family must complete an application form for accommodation.

Each Local Authority, in consultation with the social worker, will assess each application and decide on qualification for inclusion in the housing list.

When a family leaves accommodation for reasons other than a family bereavement they will be dealt with on a case by case basis by the Housing Section. Priority will be given however to meeting the needs of Traveller family applicants on the Housing List who have never been accommodated by the local authority.

Traveller families will not be removed from the housing list unless there is prior consultation with the social worker. This is to prevent the erroneous removal of a family from the list.

Tenancy Agreements.

A Standard Tenancy Agreement will apply for all accommodation types.

The conditions of the Tenancy Agreement are fully enforced. As part of pre-tenancy training each tenant will be made fully and comprehensively aware of the conditions.

Appendix 3

Glossary

Group Accommodation scheme: A scheme of two or more houses specifically built for members of the Travelling Community.

Transient Site: A transient halting site is a site providing basic facilities for short-term use by families pursuing a nomadic way of life or visiting relatives.

Transitional Site: A site providing basic facilities for families awaiting permanent accommodation.

Halting Site: A permanent halting site is a site with individual bays, with a full range of services provided in a small structure on each bay.

Single Site: House or site on its own grounds

RAS: Rental Accommodation Scheme

LTACC: Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

Traveller Interagency Group: established in Wicklow in 2006 - part of a national initiative to ensure co-ordinated service delivery across a broad range of sectoral areas to local Traveller communities