



TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME 2019-2024

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Being the Relevant Housing Authority under

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998.

Adopted 2nd September 2019

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Introduction

Legislative Background:

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 came into effect on the 10th September 1998. The primary purpose of the Act is to provide a comprehensive legislative framework which requires housing authorities to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers normally resident within their administrative areas.

Under the provisions of the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998, Wicklow County Council is required to prepare, adopt and implement a new Traveller Accommodation Programme¹ (TAP) to meet the accommodation needs of the County's 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 2019-2024 and who are on the Council's list for Social Housing Support.

The existing programme which took effect on the 1st February 2014 will expire on 30th June 2019. The new Traveller Accommodation Programme will cover the period from 01 July 2019 to the 30th June 2024.

The Minister for Housing has issued a number of directions under the Act in relation to the preparation of the new TAP and these are contained in Circular 35/2018 together with a 'Memorandum on the Preparation, Adoption and Implementation of Local Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2019-2024'. The Minister has specified that the latest date for the adoption of TAPs is the 30th September 2019.

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.

Wicklow County Council is required to prepare and adopt a new Traveller Accommodation Programme for the period from 1st July 2019 to 30th June 2024.

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

Policy Statement

Wicklow County Council's Housing Policy states that its aim is 'to facilitate the provision of sustainable, high quality social, affordable and cost effective housing accommodation to meet the existing and likely future needs responsive to the requirements of all categories of persons in the County'.

Wicklow County Council recognises Travellers' identity as an indigenous minority ethnic group and strives to accommodate Travellers in a culturally appropriate way.

It is the policy of Wicklow County Council, within the resources available, to provide group and standard housing options as well as halting sites for the accommodation of Travellers who are on the list for Social Housing Support with Wicklow County Council, in accordance with the Assessment of Need carried out under the Traveller Accommodation Act.

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committeeⁱ (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 Wicklow County Council and Council staff.

County Wicklow Administrative Area

County Wicklow occupies an area of 2,017 square kilometres with, a population of 142,425 (Census 2016).

Wicklow County Council is the Local Authority for Co. Wicklow.

Since the implementation of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. County Wicklow has 5 Municipal Districts which are:

- Arklow
- Baltinglass
- Bray
- Greystones
- Wicklow



Overview

This TAP was adopted by the Members of Wicklow County Council on 1st February 2014. During the 2014 to 2018 period, when lack of supply impacted severely on availability of suitable accommodation in both Social Housing and the Private Rental Sector, 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 numbers of Travellers accommodated both in terms of social housing and in terms of owner occupation, as of November 2018, when the Annual Count of Travellers was conducted.

Details	Co. Wicklow
Number of Traveller families	254
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)	142 (standard or group housing) 13 (Halting Sites) 8 (Basic Serviced Sites) 19 (Sharing Houses) 12 (Sharing Bays) 19 (Unauthorised Sites) 1 (Emergency Accommodation)
Number of Traveller families in private rented / RAS/HAP houses	30
Number of Traveller families in owner occupation	10

A decrease in numbers of families in Private Rented accommodation was noted with the according increase in numbers of Roadside families and those in shared and emergency accommodation. This is indicative, overall, of the current Housing Crisis and lack of supply.

Progress Achieved during the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018

During the lifetime of the Traveller Plan 2014-2018, the following units of accommodation were provided by Wicklow County Council being the relevant local authority as per the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998:

	Standard Housing	Traveller Accommodation built to include Housing, halting sites and once off single site	Specific (specially built to include Group Housing)	Total
Bray Municipal District	5			5
Wicklow Co. Co.	27			27
Total				

Other initiatives undertaken during the lifetime of this plan include:

Silverbridge Halting Site:

It has long been an objective within the TAP 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 during 2018 the scheme progressed to Planning Stage. Due to the proposed N11 upgrade by Transportation Infrastructure Ireland, the scheme is deferred pending the outcome of this.

The Halting Site is being refurbished in the interim period and it is hoped to have full occupation in 2019.

Fire Safety

The Committee during the review noted the Carrickmines Fire Tragedy and the subsequent Fire Audits and improvement works carried out by Wicklow County Council.

Additional inspections were carried out in January 2019 and as a result additional funds for Fire Safety Improvements, including additional electrical inspections, fire safety alarms, structural improvements etc were requested of the Department. Letters will issue to every resident requesting that they move caravans that are too close and to check their alarms and request new alarms, fire blankets, etc , if necessary.

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.

Basic Serviced Sites

Rocky Valley, Kilmacanogue – Consideration to provision of modular home at this site.

Windgates, Greystones – Electricity supply approved.

Vale Road, Arklow (2) – Extensive refurbishment undertaken in 2018

St. Clare's, Vale Road, Arklow



Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024

This Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 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 2019-2024

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 County Council. The Housing Needs Assessment process of 2018 has formed a central part of this assessment. .

Those involved in this assessment of need include:

- Wicklow County Council's Social Worker
- Traveller families
- Bray Traveller Community Development Group
- Wicklow Travellers Group

Current need reflecting the accommodation preference of the Travellers concerned was found to be c. 80 units of accommodation. This was spread throughout the Municipal Districts as follows:

Assessment of Demand for Accommodation for Travellers 2019-2024

	Standard Housing	Traveller Specific Accommodation (specially built to include Group Housing, halting sites and once off single site)	Total Units of Accommodation Required
Arklow MD	7	11	18
Baltinglass MD	7		7
Bray MD	18	3	21
Greystones MD	8		8
Wicklow MD	19	7	26
Total			80

The concept of Housing demand and the actual need of applicants was discussed and it was noted that the above figures include applicants who are in private rented with social housing supports and their current housing need is deemed to have been met.

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:

- The quota system in terms of Traveller accommodation allocation policy is 1;16 ratio
- The non designation of Traveller houses was agreed during the last plan and confirmed at the Mid Term Review in 2016. Therefore, there will be no further designation of Traveller

specific social houses across the social housing stock coming on stream – the current designated stock is to be retained as such but transfers will be considered which may result in changing the designated house. It is noted that this cannot apply where the Traveller Accommodation Unit has funded a refurbishment or an extension to the property.

In light of the above, the following targets for Wicklow’s five-year **Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024** have been identified:

Proposed New Developments

	No. of Units	Proposal	Timeline
Arklow MD	4	Develop Group Housing Scheme	2022
Countywide		Consider Group Housing developments in MDs where land is available	2019-2024

Proposed Redevelopments

Existing Development	No. of Units	Proposal	Timeline
Ballintreskin Halting Site	6	Consideration of proposal to extend day units to include bedrooms	2022
Silverbridge	5	Major refurbishment of the units together with provision of pedestrian access route to Herbert Rd Interim refurbishment of all units in 2019	Deferred pending outcome of TII N11 design Q4 2019
St. Clares	1	Upgrade to accommodation for disability	2020

Proposed Improvements

Existing Development	Proposal	Timeline
Temporary halting site with emergency services at the Chippings Depot, Rocky Valley, Kilmacanogue	Consideration of replacement of accommodation units Installation of septic tank	2019
Temporary halting site with emergency services at Windgates, (Bray/Greystones Coastal Rd)	Provision of electricity supply Provision of sanitary facilities Consider of replacement of accommodation units	2019 2020

Other

Existing Development	Proposal	Timeline
All	Fire Safety Works	ongoing

As the Council’s building programme will continue to deliver Social Housing over the lifetime of this plan, the suite of accommodation options that can be provided by Wicklow County Council includes:

- **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**

The delivery of this Plan is contingent upon the availability of resources to the local authority, both staffing and financial, over the 2019-2024 period.

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
- Wicklow County Council’s Housing & Corporate Estate Strategic Policy Committee
- The Wicklow Traveller Interagency Group
- Neighbouring Counties

Notice was also advertised in the local press. The closing date for receipt of submissions was 28th September 2018. Submissions were received from the following;

1. Bray Traveller’s Community Development Group & Wicklow Traveller’s Group

The submission centred around a demonstration of commitment from all members and officials within the period of the plan. Concern was expressed about the significant health issues experienced within the Travelling Community, and the substandard accommodation in which some of them reside.

It was proposed that the provision of a transient site for Travellers be a commitment in this TAP.

Response - It was agreed by the LTACC that the provision of a transient site for Travellers is not a priority in the current Programme, and the priority of Wicklow County Council is to meet the needs of families seeking permanent accommodation before meeting the seasonal/transitional needs of Travellers.

2. CENA – Culturally Appropriate Homes

The focus of the submission was on the provision of culturally appropriate housing for and with Travellers. This will be enhanced by engagement by CENA with Wicklow County Council and Travellers to ensure understanding of the processes involved and to encourage self representation by Travellers during the planning of new developments.

Response – This partnership approach is welcomed by the LTACC and Wicklow County Council wishes to develop an effective working relationship with CENA.

Wicklow County Council proposes to partner with CENA to advance plans for a Group Housing Scheme during the period of this programme.

3. Minceir Whiden

A comprehensive overview of issues affecting Traveller families nationally was submitted, highlighting the health and accommodation needs.

Recommendations included:

- The adequate provision of accessible, suitable and culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers, delivery of which is underpinned by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework.
- That the budget for Traveller Accommodation be drawn down fully and an annual progress report be submitted to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.
- That Chief Executive participate at LTACC and present annual TAPs to the Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government.
- The provision of Transient Halting Sites as part of the Plan
- Increase in the budget for Caravan Loans to represent current prices
- Review of the HAP scheme in relation to the Traveller Community

Response – It was noted by the LTACC that some of the issues raised were being dealt with at a national level.

- It was noted that budgets are drawn down annually, whereas capital works and commitments can span a number of years.
- The Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council sits on the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and actively seeks updates on meetings of the LTACC and progress on the current plan.
- It was agreed by the LTACC that the provision of a transient site for Travellers is not a priority in the current Programme, and the priority of Wicklow County Council is to meet the needs of families seeking permanent accommodation before meeting the seasonal/transitional needs of Travellers
- It was agreed by the LTACC that the Department should review an increase in the Caravan Loan Scheme, subject to affordability.
- It was noted that issues relating to HAP and family size were being raised at a national level.

Public Consultation on Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme

In accordance with Section 9 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, Wicklow County Council advertised its proposal to adopt, amend and replace the Accommodation Programme with regard to submissions received in writing in relation to the Draft Programme. The Draft Traveller Accommodation was made available for inspection in accordance with statutory requirements by all appropriate bodies, Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and the general public. Submissions were invited in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 by 31st May 2019.

No submissions were received by 31st May 2019 in relation to the Draft Programme.

Appendix 1 – Relevant Department Circular and Memorandum

Circular 35/2018, issued on 19th July 2018 by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, together with the 'Memorandum on the Preparation, Adoption and Implementation of Local Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2019-2024'.

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. 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 by Wicklow County Council 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.

Transfer applications will be considered from the following:

- Mutual transfers between agreeing parties with the approval of Wicklow County Council
- 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
- Persons with disabilities in respect of accommodation which would be more suitable to their needs
- To make better use of housing stock and maximise options for families. There are occasions where a family is over accommodated in a dwelling – ie a couple may reside in a 5 bed tenancy where a one/two bed unit would now meet their needs as the adult children have left the family home. It was agreed that the a Downsizing Programme will be included in this programme to ensure that the larger units can be reallocated to larger families in need of housing.
- 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 Wicklow County 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.

Qualification for and inclusion on the Housing List.

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

Wicklow County Council, 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

LTACC: Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

Group Housing 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.

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

HAP: Housing Assistance Payment