

# TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME 2025 - 2029



DONEGAL  
COUNTY  
COUNCIL

*Delivering for the  
Donegal Traveller  
Community*

<b>Contents Page</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Section 1:</b> Legislative Background	3 & 4
1.1 Introduction	
1.2 Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	
1.3 Initiating the process - preparation of new Programme	
<b>Section 2:</b> County Profile	5
<b>Section 3:</b> Summary of Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024	6 - 14
<b>Section 4:</b> Assessment of Accommodation Needs	15 - 22
4.1 Circular 46/23	
4.2 Initiating process to carry of assessment	
4.3 Analysis of accommodation need	
4.4 Estimate of projected need	
4.5 Projected need summary	
4.6 Objectives & Targets 2025 – 2029	
<b>Section 5:</b> Equality and Human Rights	23
<b>Section 6:</b> Implementation of Strategy	24 - 27
<b>Section 7:</b> Policy Statement	28 - 32
<b>Section 8:</b> Fire Safety	33 - 34
8.1 Guide to Fire Safety in Existing Accommodation	
8.2 Donegal Annual Review	
<b>Section 9:</b> Emergency Accommodation	35 - 36
<b>Section 10:</b> Traveller-specific accommodation	37 - 42
10.1 Traveller-specific accommodation overview	
10.2 Transient Accommodation	
10.3 Emergency & Temporary sites	
10.4 Play facilities	
10.5 Energy Efficient Review – Traveller Group Housing	
10.6 Methodology for progressing permanent proposals	
10.7 Tenant Participation – Best Practice Guidelines	
<b>Section 11:</b> Conclusion	43

## **Section 1: Legislative Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Donegal County Council is required by the provisions of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 to prepare and adopt a five-year Traveller Accommodation Programme to meet the existing and projected needs of the Traveller community in its administrative area.

The current Donegal County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme will expire on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 and the new Traveller Accommodation Programme will cover the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2029

On 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023, Mr. Kieran O'Donnell of State for Planning and Local Government directed housing authorities, through Circular Housing 46/2023, to commence preparation of the next Traveller Accommodation Programme, covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2029

The Minister has specified 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 as the latest date by which the sixth Traveller Accommodation Programme must be adopted. The Minister has also directed that a review of this accommodation programme should be carried out no later than 30<sup>th</sup> June 2027.

This programme sets out the actions that Donegal County Council will implement to meet the current and projected accommodation needs of Traveller families in County Donegal over the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2029.

The Traveller Accommodation Unit will strive to continue the good working relationships with all Housing administrative and technical teams in the five Municipal Districts as well as all the relevant statutory agencies, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee as well as fostering and maintaining a good working relationship with Donegal Travellers Project in order to maximise the potential for the provision and allocation of new and improved accommodation options for the Traveller community in County Donegal.

### **1.2 Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee**

Under Section 21 and 22 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACC) were established to facilitate consultation between Housing Authorities and Travellers and to advise on any aspect of accommodation for Travellers, and to advise on the preparation and implementation of any accommodation programme.

The membership of the Donegal LTACC comprises of 12 members; 6 Elected Representatives, 3 Local Authority Officials, 3 Traveller Representatives.

### **1.3 Initiating the process - Preparation of new Programme**

Notification of intention to prepare a Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme issued on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024 to relevant stakeholders including adjoining housing authorities, the HSE, approved housing bodies, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, Donegal Travellers Project and other local representative groups, community and interest groups. The notification invited submissions for consideration in the preparation of the new Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme as well as giving notice of the intention to make an assessment of accommodation existing and projected need and inviting submissions.

Seven submissions to the Draft Programme were received from:

- HSE National Social Inclusion Unit Office
- HSE Social Inclusion Healthcare (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo)
- Irish Traveller Movement
- CENA Culturally Appropriate Homes
- Donegal Travellers Project
- National Traveller Mabs
- Focus Ireland

In accordance with Section 9 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, notice was published in the local press on the week beginning 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024, advising that the Draft Programme has been prepared, that it was available for inspection, and that regard would be had to all submissions received in writing before 30<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

Two submissions were received during the second phase of the consultation process from Donegal Travellers Project and Cena Culturally appropriate Homes.

## **Section 2: County Profile**

Donegal County has five Municipal Districts; Donegal MD, Glenties MD, Inishowen MD, Letterkenny Milford MD, and Lifford Stranorlar MD. The 2022 Census of Population records the population in County Donegal at 167,084

The Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage directs local authorities to complete the Annual Estimate of Accommodation of Traveller families annually.

In accordance with the Annual Traveller Count which took place on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023, there are currently 292 Traveller families residing in County Donegal. These families are accommodated in a varying range of accommodation types from Traveller-specific Group Housing schemes and halting sites to Standard housing, private rented accommodation, Voluntary, Emergency accommodation etc.

A breakdown of the various accommodation types of the 292 families residing in the County at the end of November 2023 is as follows:

<b>Accommodation Type</b>	<b>No of families</b>
Local Authority Housing	170
Traveller Group Housing	11
Halting site	12
Temporary Halt	10
Permanent Halt	4
Unauthorised	8
HAP Accommodation	21
Private Rented	15
Housed Voluntary	9
Sharing with relatives	10
LTL Accommodation	3
Private Accommodation	5
RAS Accommodation	3
Long Term Care	2
Emergency Acc	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>

In comparison to neighbouring Counties (as per most up-to-date information from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage), Donegal has a significantly larger number of Traveller families residing in its functional area; Sligo 152, Leitrim 73, Cavan 170 & Monaghan 180. From a cross border perspective, as per figures included in the Housing Executive Irish Travellers Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2026; 38 Irish Traveller households reside in Derry & Strabane Government District

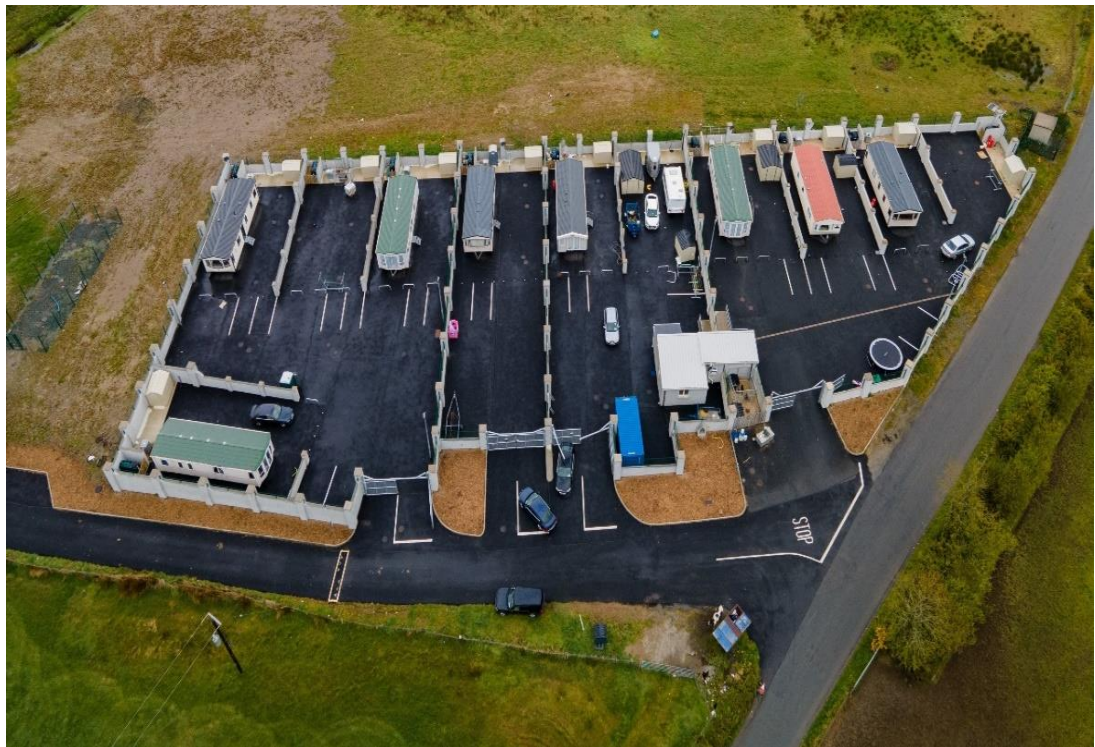
### **Section 3: Summary of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 - 2024**

Donegal County Council has invested heavily to improve and upgrade Traveller accommodation throughout the lifetime of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024. The Council are very proud of the significant improvements especially in the area of Traveller-specific accommodation. Over the course of the 5-year plan, the Council has continued to work closely with the Traveller community, Donegal Travellers Project and a wide range of other stakeholders to identify needs, to invest and improve all areas of Traveller accommodation in County Donegal. An additional and unforeseen challenge during the previous Traveller Accommodation Programme was Covid 19.

The Programme set out 5 clear objectives and targets

1. Progress Phase 2 and Phase 3 works at Big Isle halting site
2. Prioritise, progress and deliver specific project at Cashel Ardara
3. Continue progression of small-scale Traveller Projects on a case-by-case basis where emergency need arises during the programme
4. Provide 58 units of accommodation through a range of Social Housing measures
5. Prioritise Canal Road Group Housing scheme i.e. unauthorised developments, fire safety, tenant participation, accommodation delivery

#### **1. Progress Phase 2 and Phase 3 works at Big Isle halting site Refurbishment & Extension Project**



**Big Isle halting site – Refurbishment & Extension**

**2. Prioritise, progress and deliver specific project at Cashel Ardara (Dwelling Refurbishment & Modular Home Provision)**

Dwelling refurbishment for single applicant.



**Cashel Ardara Dwelling Refurbishment - Before**



**Cashel Ardara Dwelling Refurbishment - After**

**2. Prioritise, progress and deliver specific project at Cashel Ardara (Dwelling Refurbishment & Modular Home Provision)**

Modular home provision for single applicant.



**Cashel Ardara Single Unit accommodation replacement - Before**



**Cashel Ardara Single Unit accommodation replacement – After**



**3. Continue progression of small-scale Traveller Projects on a case-by-case basis where emergency need arises during the programme**



**Miscellaneous Project Example 1 - Secure and Safe Play Space for child with additional needs**



**Miscellaneous Project Example 2 – Ramp to mobile home**



**Miscellaneous Project Example 3  
Grotto on Group Housing scheme**



**Miscellaneous Project Example 4 – Modular Home Provision**

#### **4. Provide 58 units of accommodation through a range of Social Housing measures**

The overall target was broken down into projected provision over the course of the programme. The delivery of 58 units of accommodation was achieved and exceeded.

#### **5. Prioritise Canal Road Group Housing scheme i.e. unauthorised developments, fire safety, tenant participation, accommodation delivery**

The Canal Road Group Housing scheme continues to present with challenges from family compatibility issues to unauthorised developments, breaches of fire safety guidance and families outgrowing their accommodation i.e. sons / daughters marriage and seeking to remain at the Canal Road scheme. There was however, very significant progress from an accommodation perspective with the delivery of three new permanent halts and the refurbishment of two dwellings as well as a range of additional accommodation related small scale projects.



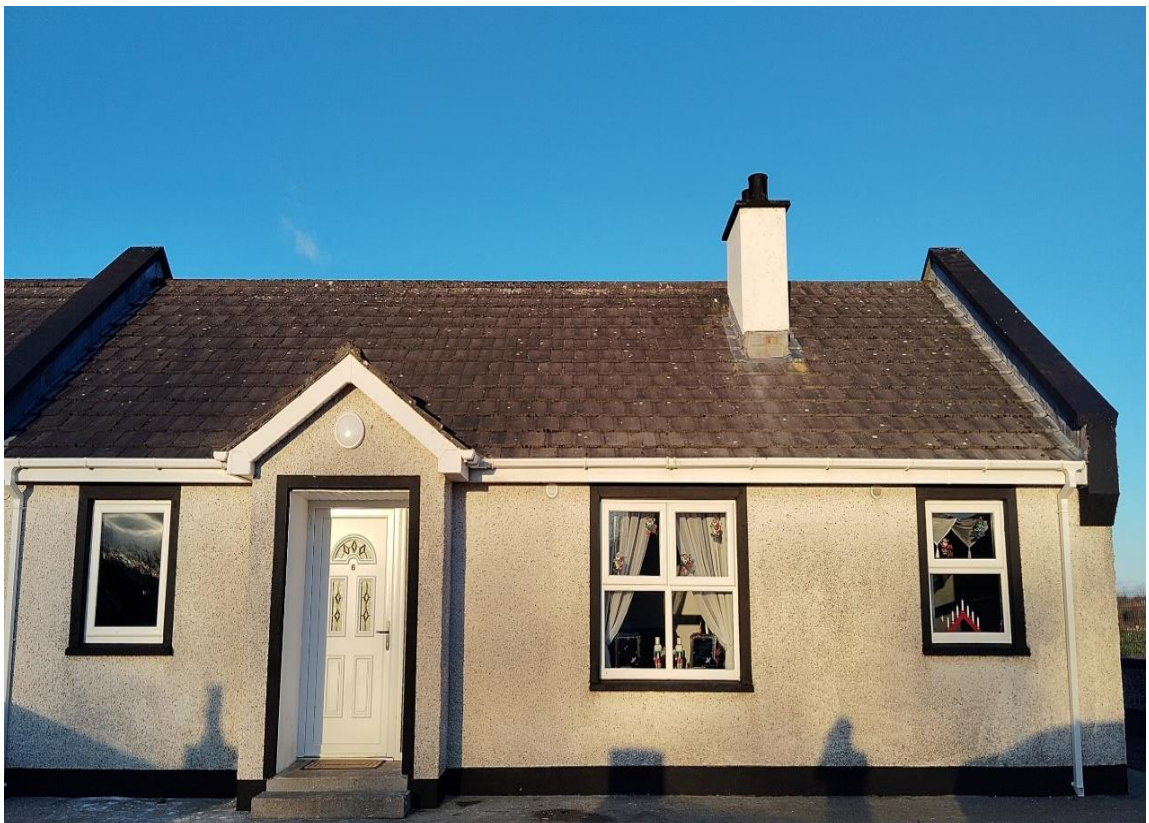
**Canal Road Permanent Bays Construction - Before**



**Canal Road Permanent Bays Construction - After**



**Canal Group Housing Scheme  
Permanent Bay & Mobile Home Provision**



**Canal Road Group Housing  
Dwelling Refurbishment**

## **6. Covid 19 Response**

An additional and unforeseen challenge during the previous Traveller Accommodation Programme was Covid 19. The Covid pandemic brought complex and broad challenges for Donegal County Council in the delivery of essential services in an unprecedented environment. Donegal County Council and the Traveller Accommodation Unit rapidly adapted and demonstrated innovation across a number of areas to ensure the delivery of essential public services.

Contingency plans and a collaborative communications approach with other agencies, particularly the HSE and Donegal Travellers Project were vital to support the initial and ongoing response. The close working relations between Donegal County Council and all local statutory and voluntary bodies was crucial in implementing additional supports.

Covid patrols were implemented in conjunction with An Garda Síochána to support the public health response and ensure compliance with travel restrictions to reduce the number of Covid 19 cases.

Essential services provided by local authorities to the Travelling community throughout Donegal included provision of water services to families on the roadside, sanitation and refuse supports on all sites, generator provision, upgraded caravan provision to families on site and roadside, emergency accommodation provision, sanitation packs delivered to all Traveller families, disinfectant sweeps and washes of sites etc.

Donegal County Council can be proud of its response and effective management during such challenging times which was crucial for the well-being of the Traveller community across County Donegal, particularly elderly and vulnerable members of the community.

The collaboration with other local agencies, healthcare providers, and community organizations in coordinating efforts and maximizing resources was pivotal in the successful implementation of public health responses. Donegal County Council demonstrated leadership, resilience, adaptability and a commitment to serve the Traveller community during a time of crisis and uncertainty.

## **Section 4: Assessment of Accommodation Needs**

### **4.1 Circular 46 / 23**

Circular Housing 46/23 dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 directed Housing Authorities, following consultation, to make an estimate of the current and projected accommodation needs of Traveller families arising over the five-year programme. Housing authorities must identify:

- the estimate of the number of Traveller families for whom accommodation will be required for the duration of the programme
- the existing and projected needs of Travellers over the five-year period of the programme
- accommodation options required including standard and group housing, permanent residential sites for caravans and transient sites

The Circular notes that in conducting the assessment of need for Travellers, housing authorities should have regard to data gathered in the summary of social housing assessments as of 1 November 2023. Housing authorities should also have regard to submissions made during the consultative stages and any other supplementary information available to the authority.

Section 6 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 sets out statutory processes under seven sub sections in relation to completing an assessment of accommodation needs.

### **4.2 Initiating the process for carrying out the Assessment**

On 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024, the Council issued notification to the stakeholders including HSE, adjoining housing authorities, approved housing bodies, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, Donegal Travellers Project and other local representative groups, community and interest groups advising of the intention to carry out an assessment of the need for accommodation for Travellers in County Donegal, inviting submissions.

Information gathered from both the summary of social housing assessments which was completed in November 2023 and the Annual Estimate of Traveller families also completed in November 2023 was used as a foundation in the preparation for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers in County Donegal.

The Annual Estimate of Traveller families completed on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023 identified 292 Traveller families residing in County Donegal as follows:

#### Data by Accommodation Type

<b>Accommodation Type</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Local authority housing	170
Traveller Group Housing	11
Halting site	12
Temporary Halt	10
Permanent Halt	4

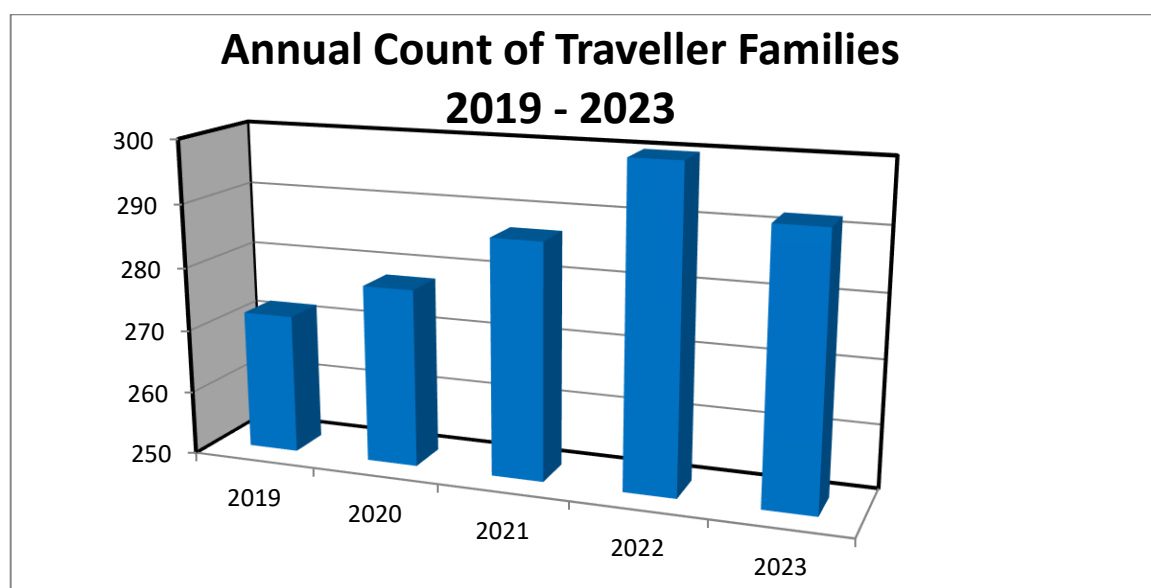
Unauthorised	8
HAP Accommodation	21
Private Rented	15
Housed Voluntary	9
Sharing with relatives	10
LTL Accommodation	3
Private Accommodation	5
RAS Accommodation	3
Long Term Care	2
Emergency Acc	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>

Data by Municipal District

<b>Municipal District</b>	<b>Number of Traveller Families in each MD</b>
Letterkenny Milford	194
Donegal	42
Inishowen	14
Lifford Stranorlar	38
Glenties	4
	<b>292</b>

**Donegal Traveller Population Profile 2019 - 2023**

The chart below outlines the annual population figures of Travellers in County Donegal over the period of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2023.



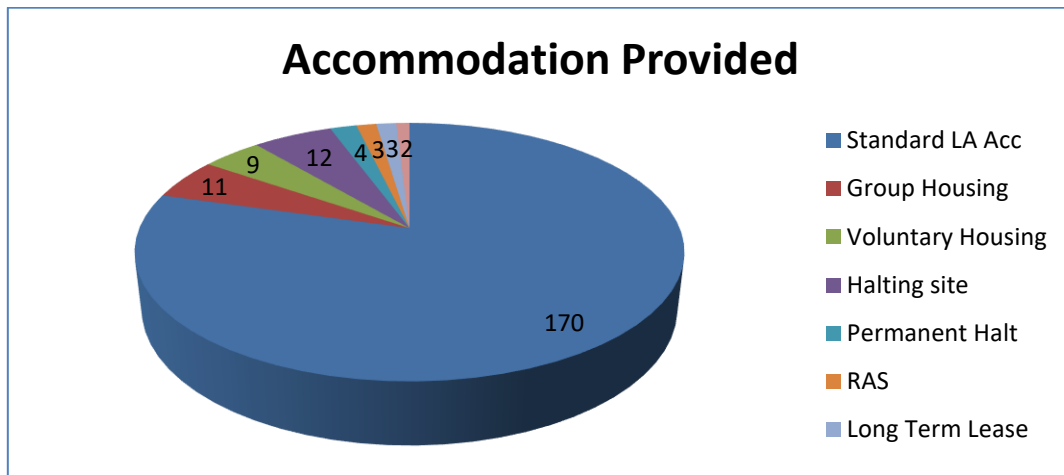


### 4.3 Analysis of Accommodation Need based on November 2023 Annual Estimate Report

Of the 292 families identified in the November 2023 Annual Estimate Assessment, 214 families reside in permanent local authority provided or alternative long-term accommodation

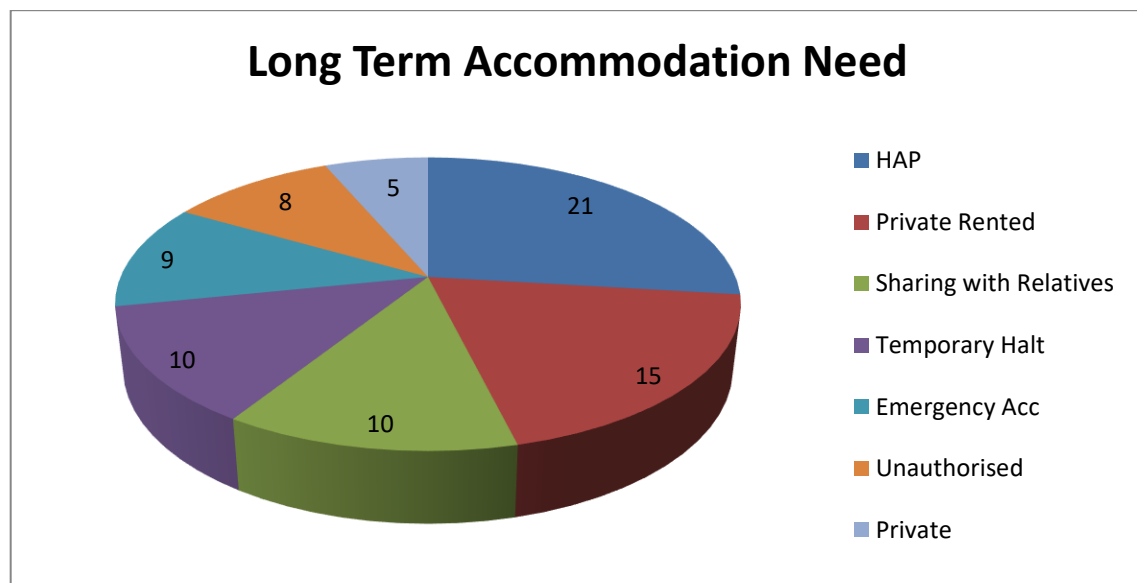
#### Accommodation Provided

The 214 families are accommodation by accommodation type as follows; Local Authority Housing (170), Traveller Group Housing (11), Voluntary Housing (9), Halting sites (12), Permanent halts (4), RAS (3), Long Term Lease (3), Long Term Care (2).



#### Long Term Accommodation Need

The balance 78 families are accommodated through HAP (21), Private Rented (15), Sharing with Relatives (10), Temporary Halt (10), Emergency Accommodation (9), Private Accommodation (5), Unauthorised (8)



### **4.3 Analysis of Accommodation Need based on November 2023 Annual Estimate Report**

While 21 of the 78 remaining families are supported through Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) which is a form of Social Housing Support, for the purposes of the assessment of need, these families are included in the assessment analysis.

50 of the 78 families are qualified applicants for Social Housing Support. 13 families are not qualified applicants / do not have an active application for Social Housing Support. 10 families have been provided a form of permanent accommodation i.e. local authority housing, voluntary housing, Traveller-specific accommodation etc. and 5 families have left the area.

Having specific regard to the directions of the Minister, **50 families are identified as in need of Social Housing Support.** 46 of the 50 families indicated a preference for Standard Local Authority Housing. An additional 4 families also indicated a preference for Standard Local Authority Housing but within existing Traveller Group Housing schemes.

For the purpose of clarification and transparency, the Ministerial direction regarding assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers details as follows:

*"The Minister has, under Section 6(1) of the 1998 Act, relevant housing authorities for the purposes of preparing a Traveller Accommodation Programme in the functional area concerned, make an assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers who are assessed under S.20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 as being qualified for social support"*

### **4.4 Estimate of the Projected Accommodation Needs of Traveller families**

It is difficult to predict with any degree of certainty the projected need, the level of Traveller family formation in the County etc. over the course of the next five years. However, an assessment of the figures outlines that of the families referred in the previous section as having a long-term accommodation need, there is 8 adult children (over 18 years) residing with families in this category, 7 children will reach the age of 18 during the lifetime of the Programme and 57 children are aged 0-14 years.

In the category of families that currently reside in local authority accommodation (170), it is estimated that 60 adult children reside with families and an additional 60 children in this category will reach the age of 18 during the lifetime of the programme.

## Projected Accommodation Needs – Traveller-specific sites

### Canal Road

No of families	Tenants families	Temp Acc / Sharing	No of Adults	No of Children
17	12	5	29	27

24 of the children range in age from 1 – 12 years. 3 children will reach the age of 18 during the programme and 1 of these children will be seeking accommodation at the Canal Road as this programme progresses.

### Big Isle

No of families	Tenants families	Temp Acc / Sharing	No of Adults	No of Children
11	10	1	22	12

12 children range in age from 1 – 14 years. 4 adult family members reside with parents and have a preference to assume their parents tenancy.

### Ballintra

No of families	Tenants families	Temp Acc / Sharing	No of Adults	No of Children
3	3	0	5	3

3 children range in age from 1 – 5 years. One new tenancy rectification required for 1 family member.

### Cullion Road

No of families	Tenants families	Temp Acc / Sharing	No of Adults	No of Children
8	4	4	14	7

7 children range in age from 1 – 15 years. 6 of the children are part of a family unit where an alternative accommodation solution is ongoing for delivery in the first quarter of the incoming TAP.

## 4.5 Projected Need Summary

In line with the Minister's direction that housing authorities make an estimate of the projected accommodation needs of Traveller families arising over the five-year period of the programme, following completion of the November 2023 annual count, an in-depth analysis of family units, figures etc, research of family profiles, Traveller-specific accommodation family units, marriage trends and in particular an examination of age profiles, it is estimated that a projected increase of 25 Traveller families is a reasonable and realistic projected figure of families. The annual count trends (page 16) is particularly relevant in that the Traveller population in Donegal over the five-year period of the previous programme ranges from 270 – 300 families.

The increase in Traveller population and number of units and range of accommodation required will be kept under review on an ongoing basis throughout the duration of the Traveller Accommodation Programme in close consultation with all the relevant agencies and in particular Donegal Travellers Project and the HSE. The Mid-Term Review in 2027 is a further mechanism of review in relation to projected accommodation needs as referred by the Minister.

#### 4.6 Objectives & Targets 2025 - 2029

	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Dates / Timeframes</b>	<b>Progress / Status Report</b>
<b>1</b>	Continue to prioritise Fire Safety in Traveller accommodation including annual reviews and standing item on all LTACC agendas	2025 2026 2027 2028 2029	Annual Review
<b>2</b>	Progress SI refurbishment at Trentaghmucklagh, St. Johnston	2025	At design stage, in preparation for tender
<b>3</b>	Progress SI refurbishment at Bomany, Letterkenny	2025	At design stage, in preparation for tender
<b>4</b>	Continue with the progression of small-scale projects for Traveller families on a case-by-case basis where emergency need arises during the course of the Programme i.e. Older Travellers, Travellers with a disability, Traveller children with additional needs etc.	2025 - 2029	Review annually on case-by-case basis as per of annual TAP review
<b>5</b>	Provide 56 units of accommodation through a range of Social Housing measures over the duration of the TAP	2025 - 12 2026 - 12 2027 - 10 2028 - 10 2029 - 12	Ongoing annual provision
<b>6</b>	<u>Canal Road Group Housing</u> Overall assessment of issues, challenges and concerns through Multi-Disciplinary Group	2024 / 2025	Multi- Disciplinary Group established in 2024 to address significant challenges, conflict issues, fire safety and unauthorised occupation of the scheme
	Review feasibility / delivery of two additional accommodation units	2025 / 2026	

#### 4.6 Objectives & Targets 2025 – 2029

	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Dates / Timeframes</b>	<b>Progress / Status Report</b>
<b>7</b>	Review need for Transient accommodation in Donegal	2025	Initiate review Q2 2025
<b>8</b>	Review need for additional bays and or sites	2025	Initiate review Q3 2025
<b>9</b>	Energy Efficiency Review of Traveller Group Housing scheme dwellings	2025 - 2029	Include Traveller Group Housing schemes in Council's Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme
<b>10</b>	<u>Ballintra halting site</u> Accommodation units upgrade	2025 / 2026	Residents consultation ongoing
<b>11</b>	<u>Playground Facilities</u> Provision of playground facilities @ Canal Road Group Housing scheme  Upgrade playground facilities @Ballintra halting site	2026  2026	Action 61 National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy
<b>12</b>	<u>Stables Project</u> Pilot provision of stables unit @Ballintra halting site  Review pilot initiative with a view to delivery on other Traveller-specific accommodation	Q1 2025  2026 / 2027	Scoping exercise and design completed by Council
<b>13</b>	Council to examine staff resources requirement in relation to Traveller Accommodation Unit	2025	Initiate by Senior Management – for conclusion by Q2 2025

## **Section 5: Equality and Human Rights**

### Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 provides that all public bodies shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to – a) eliminate discrimination, b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services and c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services

### Who are the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is an independent public body, appointed by the President and directly accountable to the Oireachtas. The Commission has a statutory remit set out under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland and build a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the state. The IHREC is Ireland's national human rights institution and is recognized as such by the United Nations.

### Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty ('the Duty') is a statutory obligation for public bodies in Section 42 of the *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014*. Section 42(1) requires public bodies, in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights of staff and people availing of their services.

### Equality Action Plan

In 2023, following invitation from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), pursuant to Section 32 (1) (b) of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, Donegal County Council prepared an Equality Action Plan. The Action Plan is a programme of actions categorised in accordance with three specific categories as recommended by the Commission:

1. Promote Equality of Opportunity
2. Address Organizational Equality Arrangements including Equality Policy and Training
3. The Public Sector and Human Rights Duty

The Action Plan is an opportunity to develop best practice in the area of provision of Traveller-specific services, to provide learning for the future, to promote equality of opportunity for members of the Traveller community regarding their access to, and the delivery of, Traveller-specific accommodation services.

## **Section 6: Implementation of Strategy**

### Accommodation Type

The provision of Traveller Accommodation throughout the previous Traveller Accommodation Programme includes:

- Standard Local Authority Housing
- Group Housing Schemes
- Halting Sites
- Individual Halts
- Voluntary Housing
- Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)
- Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)
- Long Term Leasing (LTL)

The Standard Local Authority housing approach provides for the inclusion of Travellers in mainstream housing programmes. The Council's policy of considering qualifying Traveller households in the allocation of local authorities tenancies will continue in accordance with Donegal County Council's Allocation Scheme. The Council also nominates applicants from Council waiting list for the tenancies of Approved Housing Bodies.

It is also government policy to promote the provision of accommodation through other forms of accommodation such as Voluntary Housing, Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), Long Term Lease (LTL) etc. Donegal County Council will continue to utilise these schemes in the provision of accommodation for Traveller households.

### Housing Challenges

The delivery of accommodation targets and objectives in the programme are set against the backdrop of the current housing challenges and should be reflected and considered in the implementation of the TAP i.e. mismatch between housing supply and demand, numbers in emergency accommodation, demand on housing and social stock, Travellers challenges seeking to access private rented accommodation (as per submission by the Irish Traveller Movement to the programme)

Dwellings impacted by defective blocks challenges in Donegal revolves around the use of defective concrete blocks containing high levels of deleterious materials, which causes structural damage to homes is a further consideration in relation to housing provision and delivery (Submission to the programme from Donegal Travellers Project refers to 'mica in Traveller homes leading to poor living conditions')

### Caravan Loan Scheme

The Caravan Loan scheme has been re-introduced by the Department and Donegal County Council are accepting applications from families on Traveller-specific sites seeking to upgrade or replace existing accommodation units.



### Estate Management

The Council will be attentive to estate management issues to ensure that the continued integration of Traveller households into standard housing throughout the County continues to be successful.

### Department Funding

Successful implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme will require the provision of adequate funding to achieve the objectives of the Programme. The Council will continue with current practices and procedures in relation to accessing funding for Traveller-specific projects through the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in line with annual funding Circular in relation to availability of funding from the Department.

### Approved Housing Bodies – Capital Assistance Scheme

Donegal County Council will consider any applications by Approved Housing Bodies to provide housing for Travellers under the Capital Assistance Scheme.

### Cena Culturally Appropriate Homes (Approved Housing Body)

In a submission to the programme, Cena refers to “creating a county wide template for the needs analysis process”, a project undertaken by Cena in partnership with Clare County Council. Based on the results from County Clare, Cena intend to organise seminars on a regional or provincial basis. The learning and outcomes from this project and the joint working group model will be shared through the proposed seminars.

In consultation with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, the Council will explore and avail of an engagement by Approved Housing Bodies in the provision of Traveller accommodation, with particular regard to CENA, the Traveller-led AHB.

### Interagency Consultation and Collaboration

The Council will continue to work with stakeholders concerned in the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme including Voluntary Housing Associations, Donegal Travellers Project, Health Service Executive, Tusla, An Garda Síochána, Education Services, Social Welfare Services, CENA Culturally Appropriate Homes Ltd., MABS, North West Simon, adjoining local authorities including cross border and any other agency identified as the need arises.

The HSE National Inclusion Office submission to the Programme outlines that the National Traveller Health Action Plan (2022 – 2027) is underpinned by partnership working, including HSE Public Health, regional Traveller health structures, HSE social inclusion staff working alongside local authorities and government departments to address the social determinants of Traveller health

The requirement for establishing Multi-Disciplinary Groups in emergency accommodation situations has been utilised through previous programmes and has proved a valuable and worthwhile resource.

#### Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC)

The role, expertise and experience of the LTACC membership is recognised in relation to the successful implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme. The positive working relationships within the committee has led to successful delivery of projects and programmes as well as delivery of the TAP in an overall capacity. In cases of specific urgent or crisis situations arising and where deemed necessary, the Chairperson (or any committee member) of the LTACC may convene emergency meetings in such situations.

The development of accommodation proposals are presented, reviewed and implemented through the mechanism of the LTACC. Regular updates are provided throughout the varying project phases.

#### Cross Border Relationship

Given County Donegal's proximity to Derry and Strabane, active working relationships with the Housing Executive are important having regard to the cross-over of families between both jurisdictions

The Housing Executive Irish Travellers Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2026 aims to provide safe and sustainable accommodation that meets the housing and cultural needs of the Irish Traveller community in Northern Ireland. It is important that Donegal County Council in preparing an accommodation programme takes cognisance of the Housing Executive Strategy

#### General Consultation

The working relationships developed between Donegal County Council, Donegal Travellers Project, the HSE and all the statutory agencies over the course of the previous programmes has led to extremely healthy and positive relations. During the Covid 19 pandemic, the effective interagency practices and communication played a crucial role in coordinating a unified response.

A submission to the programme from HSE Social Inclusion Community Healthcare (CDLMS) supports building on relationships established during COVID between local authorities and HSE Public Health to support and enable the provision of Traveller accommodation that supports and maintains positive physical and mental health for Travellers

The Council will continue to work with, support and liaise with all the relevant agencies and stakeholders in the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme. This collaborative and transparent consultation processes was a critical factor in the successful implementation of previous Traveller Accommodation Programmes.

The elected members play a pivotal role in the implementation of the Programme and discussions are ongoing throughout the duration of Programme with the members through the mechanism of the LTACC, various other committees as well as on an individual basis.

#### Performance, Monitoring and Measurement

Ireland has experienced significant challenges in housing over the past number of years, including shortages, affordability issues, homelessness etc. and national housing policy has been shaped and influenced by the increased demand for housing and lack of availability of housing, particularly in the private sector. The performance at local level is dependent on the availability of national funding and the changing landscape of the social housing sector impacts on the delivery at local level and this must be considered by all stakeholders.

The Housing Agency guide to housing options through local authorities notes in relation to Traveller Accommodation:

*"A range of options are available for Travellers. These include standard local authority housing, private rented or private housing assisted by a local authority or voluntary organisations. Traveller specific accommodation which receives 100% capital funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is also available, including group housing schemes and halting sites".*

The accommodation targets proposed in the current programme reflect the current economic and accommodation climate and the delivery of these targets will be dependent on supply, available resources, statutory requirements and the co-operation of applicants.

The Housing Directorate in direct consultation with the Traveller Accommodation Unit will be responsible for the strategic delivery of the programme including implementation of targets and the development of capital works related to the programme. Monitoring returns will be submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage as required.

Reports on the delivery of the programme will be submitted to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee on an annual basis. A summary of the activities in relation to Traveller accommodation will also be included in the Annual Report of the Council.

In accordance with a submission to the programme from the Irish Travellers Movement, the delivery of the sixth Traveller Accommodation Programme will be bound by SMART principles, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound.

## **Section 7: Policy Statement**

1. The policy of Donegal County Council will be to provide suitable accommodation for Traveller families in its administrative area, in consultation with Travellers, Donegal Travellers Project, Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, Public Representatives, the wider community and other statutory & voluntary bodies.
2. Donegal County Council will continue to consult with Travellers, Donegal Travellers Project, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and other statutory & voluntary bodies on issues relating to Traveller Accommodation. This will include the type of accommodation provided, halting sites, group housing schemes, management and maintenance of Traveller-specific accommodation.
3. Donegal County Council recognises Travellers identity as an indigenous minority ethnic group. Regulation S.I. 73 of 2022, allowing for the inclusion of a Traveller identifier on the statutory Social Housing Support application form came into operation on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (*Traveller Accommodation Expert Review – Programme Board Update Jan. 2023*).
4. It will be the policy of Donegal County Council, within the resources available, to provide accommodation to Travellers in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998.
5. Donegal County Council will not provide accommodation for Traveller families who continue to avail of accommodation in the functional area of another local authority.
6. Donegal County Council will promote:
  - (a) the involvement of tenants in the development of participation programmes on Traveller-specific accommodation
  - (b) anti-discrimination policies to ensure that Traveller tenants are not excluded, purely because they are Travellers.
7. Donegal County Council shall, in the interests of good estate management, use all legislative powers at their disposal to control anti-social behaviour on the part of all its tenants and/or housing applicants.
8. Donegal County Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy sets out the Councils approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour which includes provision that where it is considered that a person has been engaged in anti-social behaviour, or that a letting to that person would not be in the interest of good estate management, offers of accommodation may be refused or deferred in the first instance, and in the case of existing tenants, proceedings will be initiated for termination of tenancy, eviction of the tenant, and repossession of the accommodation.

In the case of existing tenants identified by Donegal County Council as responsible for anti-social behaviour, vandalising a facility or interfering with other tenants or residents of the facility, a speedy and effective

response will be taken. A process incorporating the following elements is proposed:

- (a) warning notice
- (b) interview
- (c) rehabilitation programme, where appropriate
- (d) if (a), (b), and (c) do not produce the desired result, then the ultimate sanction of eviction would be pursued.

The provision of the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour strategy also applies to halting sites.

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997 as amended by the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, defines anti-social behaviour as either or both of the following:

- (a) the manufacture, production, preparation, importation, exportation, sale, supply, possession for the purposes of sale or supply, or distribution of a controlled drug (within the meaning of the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 and 1984)
- (b) any behaviour that causes or is likely to cause any significant or persistent danger, injury, damage, alarm, loss or fear to any person living, working or otherwise lawfully in or in the vicinity of a house provided by a housing authority, or a housing estate in which the house is situated, and includes:
  - (i) violence, threats, intimidation, coercion, harassment or serious obstruction of any person,
  - (ii) behaviour which causes any significant or persistent impairment of a person's use or enjoyment of his or her home, or
  - (iii) damage to or defacement by writing or other marks of any property, including a person's home.

9. Donegal County Council shall review the Accommodation Programme at least once in every four-year period, or at such times as the Minister may specify. In this regard, the Minister has directed that the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025 – 2029 should be reviewed no later than 30<sup>th</sup> June 2027.

10. Donegal County Council will endeavour to provide, where possible and appropriate, Traveller specific accommodation, which has regard to Traveller culture.

11. In cases where Traveller families so wish and where the Housing Authority consider it appropriate, from good estate management and social point of view, efforts will be made to re-house such families in the mainstream Housing Programme in accordance with the Allocation Scheme.

12. Donegal County Council, when allocating accommodation, will have regard to the provisions of the Allocation Scheme, estate management issues, an appropriate social mix within areas, compatibility of families, anti-social behaviour, house size requirement, families circumstances including health, family size, length of time in district, family history in an area, integration into that area etc.
13. Donegal County Council will continue to provide routine maintenance services on Traveller-specific sites including sanitation services (where required), maintenance & repair programme, refuse service (where required) etc. Protocols are in place for the reporting and carrying out of maintenance and repairs and these procedures will continue into the new Traveller Accommodation Programme
14. Donegal County Council will actively encourage the increased participation and involvement of Travellers in maintenance programmes on Traveller-specific sites, encouraging tenant pride, ownership in their accommodation schemes and incorporating stables project where practicable
15. Donegal County Council will continue to provide assistance to Travellers to provide accommodation for themselves, with the aid of the fiscal incentives available including Local Authority Loans for Purchase, Mortgage Allowance, House Improvement Loan, Improvement Works in lieu of Local Authority Housing, Housing Adaptation Grants for older people and people with a disability, Caravan Loan (subject to terms of new Department Scheme)
16. Donegal County Council, in co-operation with Donegal Travellers Project and the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee will deliver appropriate back up, tenancy support and training programmes for Traveller families, prior to and after the allocation of accommodation.
17. The aim of "Children First" is to promote the safety and well-being of children with parents and guardians having the main responsibility for the care and protection of children. Donegal County Council supports a collaborative interagency approach in dealing with specific accommodation cases particularly relating to children.
18. The Chair of the LTACC or any member of the committee may call a meeting of the committee in the event of an extraordinary event or crisis situation.
19. Donegal County Council recognises the pivotal role of the LTACC in the implementation of the TAP. The following core principles are fundamental in the delivery of the TAP; Equality, Non-discrimination, Self-determination, Collective outcomes, Empowerment, Inclusivity in decision making, Commitment to anti-poverty and high standards, Human Rights including Children's Human Rights.

The Council commits to the provision of appropriate Cultural Diversity & Awareness training for LTACC members and staff.

Shared values shared across the LTACC in motivating and shaping the working relationships on the LTACC include Mutual Respect, Shared Understanding, Participation and Collaboration.

20. Donegal County Council will work with Donegal Travellers Project in providing information to the Travelling Community, including LGBT Travellers about Housing and other policies.
21. It is the Council's policy to implement its Illegal Encampment Strategy to deal with the removal of temporary dwellings where and when appropriate (any tent, caravan, mobile home, vehicle, other structure or thing, which is capable of being moved from one place to another and is or was used for human habitation). The Council will also work closely with the Gardai in the implementation of Section 24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 where appropriate. The enforcement of legislation will protect residents in existing Traveller-specific accommodation as well as the general public, landowners etc.
22. On all Donegal County Council's Travellers-specific accommodation, regard will be had to guidance documentation issued through Circular by the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management entitled *Guide to Fire Safety in Existing Traveller Accommodation*. A review of Fire Safety on Traveller-specific accommodation will be completed annually including maintenance and service of Fire Points on sites.
23. The TAP will take cognisance of the first National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP) 2022 – 2027 developed by the HSE and supported by the Department of Health
24. Interculturalism  
*"A local authority committed to interculturalism is one that promotes interaction, understanding, and respect between people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds; that ensures that cultural diversity is acknowledged and catered for; that includes people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds in the design and planning of services; that acknowledges that people from all cultures should have the freedom to keep their cultural heritage alive and share it with others; that sees differences between people as something positive that can enrich society; and that recognizes racism as an issue that needs to be tackled in order to create a more inclusive society".*
25. Black & Minority Ethnic Inclusion – A Strategy for Donegal 2021 – 2026. The strategy presents a vision and practical actions for the further inclusion of Black and minority ethnic communities in County Donegal. The actions set out in the strategy are aligned with and draw from national policy strategies including the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) – the findings, actions, monitoring and evaluation processes will inform the TAP on an ongoing basis

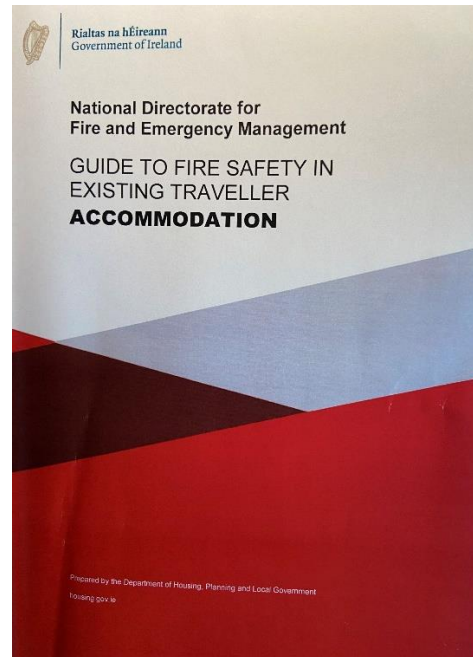
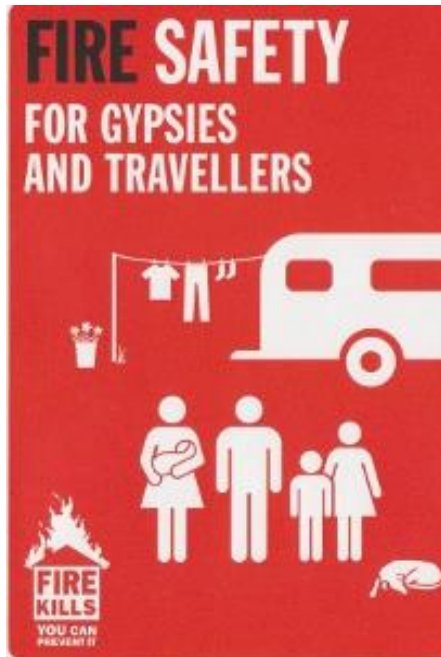
26. Donegal County Council has an Equality and Diversity Management Policy and is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity in their employment practices that meets the needs of a diverse customer



## **Section 8 Fire Safety**

### **8.1 Guide to Fire Safety in existing Traveller Accommodation**

This Guide to Fire Safety in existing Traveller Accommodation is a document prepared by the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management and brings together relevant Fire Safety information, advice, guidance and fire safety standards applicable to existing Traveller accommodation into a single reference document.



The document was provided to assist Local Authorities in conducting a National Review of Fire Safety in Traveller Accommodation. This National Review was announced in the aftermath of a fire at a halting site on the Glenamuck Road, Carrickmines, Dublin in October 2015 which killed 10 people. This tragic loss of life highlights the critical importance of fire safety in Traveller accommodation.

The material detailed in the guidance document aims to provide information and guidance to organisations such as the Local Authority and the Fire Service who interface with the Traveller Community in developing a consistent and effective approach regarding Fire Safety. The objective of this Guide is "Life Safety" where it provides practical and appropriate fire safety information and standards regarding Traveller accommodation. This information can contribute to preventing loss of life and serious injury.

Prevention is at the heart of any Fire Safety campaign involving education and information on how to reduce the occurrence of fire. Through these measures it is intended to inform and assist the Traveller Community in protecting themselves and their families from the dangers of fire by setting out best practice regarding fire safety in Traveller dwellings and halting sites.

## 8.2 Donegal Annual Fire Safety Review

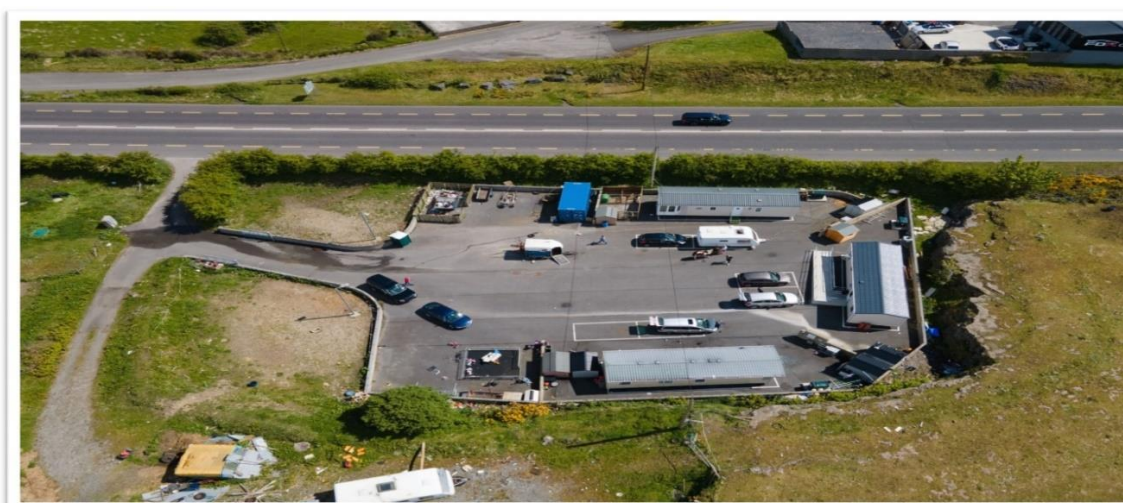
Donegal County Council commits to completing an annual review of Fire Safety on all Traveller-specific accommodation. The review includes the following actions:

- Quarterly service / maintenance of Fire Points on all sites
- Half yearly fire safety audit and assessment by the Fire Service
- Annual leaflet drop to all residents on Traveller-specific accommodation (halting sites & group housing schemes)
- Community Fire Safety Initiatives

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) has Fire Safety as a standing item on every agenda. The National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) also requests an annual report from local authorities on maintaining / enhancing Fire Safety in Traveller accommodation.



**Revised site layout (Fire safety compliance)  
Big Isle Park, Manorcunningham (TAP 2019 - 2024)**



**Revised site layout (Fire safety compliance)  
Ballintra halting site (TAP 2019 - 2024)**

## **Section 9: Emergency Accommodation**

There are several options available to Travellers who find themselves in crisis accommodation situations or homeless. On initial presentation to the Council, the family are directed to attend a Housing Clinic held twice weekly and provided with interim support via hostel or B&B voucher (review initiated in 2024 in relation to the current voucher system and alternative type accommodation for homeless provision). Following completion of application and assessment through the Housing Clinic by the Housing Officer, eligibility for varying types of support is established and approved which may include:

- Referral to Colmcille Hostel (St. Vincent De Paul)
- Provide B&B Support
- Referral to Women's Refuge
- Referral to Homeless Prevention Team
- Referral to Tenancy Sustainment Support
- Referral to Hap PlaceFinder Service
- Referral to Homeless Action Team
- Referral to Housing First Programme

If the applicant is not qualified for social housing support temporary HAP approval for 6 weeks may be considered. The Council has occasionally provided emergency caravans on Traveller-specific accommodation where unforeseen homeless issues arise. Homeless HAP deposit is also available to individuals or families who exit emergency accommodation into private rented accommodation with the assistance of HAP.

All of the above options has been utilised for Travellers in Donegal. Emergency accommodation situations have arisen for a variety of reasons including families unable to acquire private rented accommodation, family conflict, parental separation, evictions from rented accommodation, non-payment of rent, receivership issues, families arriving in the County from another jurisdiction, domestic violence etc.

An interagency approach has been utilised in a significant number of Traveller homeless cases over the duration of the previous programme. Cases have been referred through the Homeless Action Team (HAT) comprising of representatives from a range of statutory services and other agencies.

It is the Council's experience, that the provision of accommodation on its own is not the solution to acute, complex homeless cases. Provision of accommodation should be seen as the start of a process to assist and support a family as opposed to the conclusion. Families present with varying needs whether medical, financial, personal issues etc. and interagency intervention has yielded a significant number of positive outcomes for homeless families.

There is an ongoing partnership approach in crisis homeless situations between Donegal County Council and Donegal Travellers Project. The Council also works closely with other agencies including St. Colmcille Hostel,

Letterkenny and Donegal Domestic Violence Services in dealing with complex homeless situations.

Emergency caravan replacement for families was also utilised over the course of the previous programme with the support of the Traveller Accommodation Unit in the Department. The predominant reasons for emergency replacement were fire, storm, water damage, maintenance and health reasons.

### **North West Homeless Action Plan 2023-2028**

The Homeless Action Plan North West Region was approved by the County Councils of Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim in March 2023 in line with guidance issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The 2023-28 Action Plan was developed by the North-West Joint Homelessness Forum and Management Groups. Sligo County Council is lead authority for the North-West, comprising Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal County Councils.

The Department guidance called for Regional Homelessness Action Plans to "reflect the policy positions and actions contained in Housing For All", which was published in September 2021. Amongst the pathways contained in 'Housing for All' is the Pathway to Eradicating Homelessness, increasing Social Housing Delivery and Supporting Social Inclusion. This pathway is underpinned by a range of actions to address homelessness with an ultimate goal of working to end homelessness by 2030

### **Homeless Prevention Coordinator**

In accordance with Actions for the Region contained within the Homeless Action Plan, Donegal County Council has recently appointed a Homeless Prevention Officer. This new appointment which will play a pivotal role in addressing homelessness and providing support to individuals and families at risk of losing their housing as well as streamlining an effective coordinated response within the local authority for individuals or families presenting as homeless / those at risk of homelessness.

### **Traveller Homeless Research – Traveller Accommodation Expert Review Report (2019)**

A submission to the programme from the Irish Traveller Movement notes consideration of a specific recommendation regarding Traveller homelessness research contained in the Traveller Accommodation Expert Review Report (2019). The update report provided by the Expert Group in January 2023 notes *"the Department's Traveller Accommodation Support Unit has established regular liaison internally with Homelessness Unit, including having regard to Pavee Point Research Report, to inform and actively address Traveller homelessness. Areas relating to Traveller homelessness are currently being explored through this liaison"*.

### **Irish Coalition to end youth homelessness**

A submission to the programme from the Irish Coalition to end youth homelessness recommends working with the LTACC's to consider and put in place any additional supports that are required at a local level to assist young Travellers who are at risk of experiencing homelessness.

## **Section 10: Traveller-specific Accommodation**

### **10.1 Traveller-specific Accommodation Overview**

Donegal County Council currently operates and manages four Traveller-specific schemes. Two halting sites at Ballintra (Ballintra) and Manorcunningham (Big Isle Park) and two Group Housing schemes in Letterkenny (Cullion Road & Canal Road).

#### **Ballintra halting site, Ballintra**

Significant redevelopment and refurbishment works were completed during the previous Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP). The site comprises of three bays and is occupied by three families. In the final year of the TAP, a modular home unit was provided to a family on the site on medical grounds.



**Ballintra Halting site**



**Modular Home Provision at Ballintra (2024)**

Big Isle Park, Manorcunningham

Fully occupied 10 bay site. A complete refurbishment and extension programme was completed at the site during the previous Traveller Accommodation Programme.



**Big Isle Park, Manorcunningham**

Canal Road Group Housing Scheme, Letterkenny

Canal Road comprises of 8 dwellings and 5 halts and is located off the Neil T. Blaney Road in Letterkenny. Three individual halts were constructed during the previous Traveller Accommodation Programme



**Canal Road Group Housing Scheme**

### Cullion Road Group Housing Scheme (Letterkenny)

The Cullion Road scheme is a 4 dwelling scheme located on the Cullion Road just off the Port Road near the Polestar roundabout.



**Cullion Road Group Housing scheme, Letterkenny**

### **10.2 Transient Accommodation**

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018 included as a specific objective of the Programme undertaking to complete an overall review of the position in terms of Transient accommodation. Over a period of two years, information was collated and a report was presented to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee in November 2016. The report concluded that *"evidence indicates that there has not been a demonstrated need for Transient families to be catered for by means of Transient sites. In light of the findings of the review, it is concluded that there is no identified requirement for a Transient site in Co. Donegal"*

HSE and Donegal Travellers Project submissions to the Programme refer to the need to develop culturally appropriate Traveller-specific accommodation for nomadic Travellers through provision of Transient sites.

The Council has undertaken to initiate a further review of the need for Transient facilities in County Donegal. The review will be initiated within the first year of the Programme in consultation with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.

### **10.3 Provision of Emergency & Temporary sites in South Donegal & Letterkenny**

Donegal Travellers Project submission to the programme includes the need for the development of permanent and temporary sites in South Donegal & Letterkenny during the lifetime of the programme. Further recommends

that 2 permanent emergency sites should be developed in the first 2.5 years of the TAP.

While the need for Traveller-specific sites is not reflected in the assessment of needs and Traveller-specific accommodation is not a preference for families as per analysis of approved Social Housing applications, the Council are open to a review of additional Traveller-specific sites / bays utilising the mechanism of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. The review process will be commenced in tandem with the review of Transient accommodation.

#### **10.4 Play Facilities – Traveller-specific sites**

HSE & Donegal Travellers Project submissions to the programme references play facilities provision on Traveller-specific accommodation. Play facilities were considered in the upgrade of two Traveller-specific sites during the previous programme. A safe play space was provided on one site and residents declined the option of a play facility on a second site. The Council has committed to a review in relation to play facility provision on Traveller-specific accommodation in this programme.

The Irish Traveller Movement submission of the programme notes that play facilities should be provided on Traveller-specific sites in line with Action 61 of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS)

#### **10.5 Energy Efficient Review – Traveller Group Housing**

HSE submission to the programme notes "Traveller Accommodation should be prioritised for energy retrofits". This programme will include Traveller Group Housing schemes in the Council's Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme.

#### **10.6 Methodology for progressing permanent Traveller-specific accommodation proposals**

The methodology set out in this section for progressing permanent Traveller-specific accommodation proposals was included in previous Traveller Accommodation Programmes. This process and strategy is an essential part of progressing sites from that of a potential site to a developed site and allows for openness and transparency at all stages for all parties.

The five-point methodology details as follows:

1. The sites to be examined from a planning/technical view point to ascertain if there are any fatal flaws, which would rule the site out
2. Arising from the output of this review, details of the site to be presented to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, the Housing Strategic Policy Committee, followed by the Municipal District Area Committee
3. Sites then to be included in the Draft Local Area Plan/County Development Plan for publication as part of that process. Public meetings to be held in areas where sites are proposed



4. Following completion of detailed plans of proposed development, normal public consultation process under existing planning regulations to take place
5. Report on consultation to be presented to elected members in the context of making a decision as regards whether or not the proposed development should take place

Development of any land to be acquired will be subject to agreement under Part VIII of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 2000. Public consultation in relation to such sites will be conducted in accordance with procedures set out under the above regulations. Wherever possible, suitable sites will be acquired by agreement, however, if necessary, the acquisition of suitable sites by Compulsory Purchase Order is not ruled out.

Office of the Planning Regulator Case Study Paper CSP 03 – Traveller Accommodation and the Local Authority Development Plan was prepared during the previous TAP following engagement between the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), the County and City Management Association (CCMA), the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and the Traveller Accommodation Expert Group. Best practice guidelines contained in the report will be considered in the context of any current or future proposed Traveller-specific accommodation developments.

#### Criteria to identify sites suitable for Traveller-specific accommodation

- Must comply with Planning and Development Regulations
- Location to take account of Traveller tradition / history of an area
- Location to have regard to individual family needs/requirements in particular safety, health and education
- Consultation with Travellers, Travellers Representatives and Organisations, Elected Members, General Public and other agencies.
- Take cognisance of the needs and compatibility of extended family groupings
- To contribute to improve relations between Travellers and Settled communities
- To include proper landscaping to ensure the site is not only functional but also pleasant to live on and aesthetically pleasing. This should include not only the site itself but also the outer boundary
- To have adequate public lighting for security and safety purposes
- To ensure an appropriate balance between personal privacy and communal needs compatible with the requirements of the Fire Officer
- To include facilities for play space
- Where possible cater for changing family structures;
- To be accessible and appropriate for Traveller tenants with a disability
- That all Health & Safety regulations will be taken into account
- Accommodation to comply with current guidelines issued by the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government, Department of Health and Children as well as Department of Fire and Emergency Management

## **10.7 Tenant Participation – Best Practice Guidelines**

### Consultation and Participation

Best practice guidelines for tenant participation emphasise the importance of involving tenants in decision-making processes related to their accommodation. Effective consultation with Travellers on management is vital for building relationships and future involvement. Consultation is important on issues such as:

- conditions of tenancy / licence agreements / proposed changes in relation to the agreement
- proposed changes to rent levels
- upcoming building / improvement works
- anti-social behaviour
- plans to introduce CCTV
- problems/complaints of tenants

### Effective Management and Maintenance Services

- Methods for this consultation may include site meetings, workshops, surveys, feed-back cards. It would also be beneficial to conduct one-to-one meetings with tenants, especially if there are family tensions in the Traveller-specific accommodation.
- Following consultation, it is important to provide feedback and progress on the topics raised during the consultation.
- Good practice in tenant participation requires that the service is adequately and appropriately staffed. Where possible, staff should be designated specifically to Traveller tenant participation initiatives. These staff should have excellent communication and decision-making skills.
- In Traveller-specific accommodation where there are specific challenges, local authorities may be required to have regular direct contact and visits with Traveller families. This will allow local authorities to gain control and act immediately on issues such as waste management, animal control, unauthorised occupations and anti-social behaviour. This contact should be used as an opportunity to build relationships and confidence in the local authority. During these visits a fair and friendly but firm approach should be adopted. Gradually local authorities should move away from this approach and Traveller families should be encouraged to have greater participation in the management of their accommodation.

Traveller tenants should be encouraged to appoint a representative / delegate which would involve liaison and consultation with the local authority on accommodation management issues.

## **Section 11: Conclusion and Review**

This programme outlines the existing and projected need for Traveller accommodation and proposed measures to improve the accommodation circumstances for Traveller families in County Donegal for the period 2025 – 2029. In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 and Ministerial direction as per Circular 46 / 2023 dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023, the Programme outlines policy and strategy for implementation and targets.

Donegal County Council welcomes and acknowledges the support of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and all agencies in supporting the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

The Council recognises that the provision of accommodation requires appropriate associated supports to ensure successful accommodation solutions are delivered. The Council will strive to continue the positive and constructive working relationships with Travellers, Donegal Travellers Project, Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, elected representatives, local communities, HSE and all other stakeholders to deliver the programme to maintain, enhance and provide quality accommodation for members of the Traveller community in Donegal. The programme is based on consultation, recognition of the needs of the Traveller Community and statutory provisions pertaining to accommodation, human rights and equality.

The successful implementation of the programme requires a commitment from all the relevant stakeholders to continue to work together in partnership. The guidance and direction of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee to review and monitor the delivery of the programme is also key to implementation.

The Minister of State for Planning and Local Government has directed that a review of the programme should be carried out no later than 30<sup>th</sup> June 2027.