

**KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Comhairle Chondae Chill Dara**



TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME

2000 - 2004

*Adopted by the members of Kildare Co. Co.  
on 28/02/2000*

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## **SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION**

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 came into effect on 10/9/98.

The primary purpose of the Act is to provide a comprehensive legislative framework within which Housing Authorities must meet the accommodation needs of Travellers normally resident within their administrative areas within a reasonable period of time (5 years commencing on 1/1/2000). The Act will ensure implementation nationally of the Governments commitment set out in "An Action Programme for the Millennium" and "Partnership 2000" to promote social inclusion and equality to counter discrimination. The Act will further ensure a comprehensive and planned response by all Housing Authorities in the state to the existing unacceptable situation whereby most members of the travelling community are in need of proper, permanent accommodation, with the whole process underpinned by a comprehensive and thorough consultative process with all interests concerned.

### **Main Purposes of the Act**

- (a) to provide that each major housing authority must prepare and have adopted a five year programme of traveller accommodation in their area;
- (b) to provide that adoption of programmes will be a reserved function but, in the event that the members fail to adopt a programme by 21st April 2000 the manager will be required to adopt the programme, by order, within one calendar month;
- (c) to provide for a public notification and consultation process in respect of the preparation of traveller accommodation programme;
- (d) to require housing authorities to take reasonable steps to secure the implementation of traveller accommodation programmes;
- (e) to provide for the establishment of the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee;

- (f) to provide for the establishment of a local traveller accommodation consultative committee to facilitate consultation with travellers;
- (g) to extend statutory backing for the provision of financial support to housing authorities for the provision and management of traveller accommodation;
- (h) to extend the range of options available to travellers to acquire appropriate accommodation by introducing a statutory framework for housing authority loans for caravans or sites for caravans;
- (i) to enhance the powers available to housing authorities to control unauthorised temporary dwellings;
- (j) to amend the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts, 1963 to 1998, to ensure that county and urban development plans specifically include objectives concerning the provision of traveller accommodation;
- (k) to provide that annual reports prepared by County Councils and County Borough Corporations include details of the steps taken to secure implementation of traveller accommodation programmes and information concerning the proceedings of the relevant local traveller accommodation consultative committee;
- (l) to extend to halting sites the powers available to local authorities under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1997, relating to anti-social behaviour and estate management.

### **Activities to Date**

To date the Council has set up the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee as required by the Act. The composition of the committee is listed in Appendix 3. An assessment of the accommodation needs of traveller families indigenous to the county has been completed as is detailed in Appendix 1.

### **The New Approach**

This latest approach to addressing the task of providing top quality accommodation and living conditions for members of the travelling community who are unable to provide accommodation from their own resources in accordance with the criteria normally applied to the provision of social housing will succeed because :

- (1) Central Government are committed to providing the necessary resources.
- (2) There is, at last, an holistic, comprehensive and most importantly, a national approach with every Housing Authority obliged to prepare and implement accommodation programmes to the same deadlines. This should obviate the old trend where travellers tended to migrate to the Counties with a pro-active approach to the provision of Traveller Accommodation. Now every Housing Authority must act to the same deadlines.

The whole programme will be underpinned by an extensive process of consultation with the community.

In addition to the obligation on the Council as a Housing Authority to adopt a 5 year Traveller Accommodation Programme there is also an obligation to take all necessary steps and use all available means to implement the programme during that 5 year period.

To date Kildare County Council has accommodated travellers families in various accommodation types as set out below :-

1.	<u>Permanent Sites</u>	<u>Families</u>
	Ardrew, Athy	6
	Blacklion, Maynooth	6
	Cloncarlin, Monasterevin	2
	Tankardsgarden, Newbridge	6
	Replacement of the 6 bays at Ardrew, Athy is scheduled to be completed in early 2000.	
2.	<u>Standard Housing</u>	5

### 3. Temporary Unauthorised Sites

Kildare Weighbridge	3
Louisa Bridge, Leixlip	4

It must be acknowledged that the provision of Traveller Accommodation has been extremely difficult in the past mainly caused by the resistance of some sections of the community to such developments. This resistance has been generated by fear and the negative perceptions caused by all of the problems associated with unauthorised encampments- litter, dumping, insanitary conditions, wandering horses and dogs, etc. Travellers fears of intimidation from the settled community has acted as a deterrent in accepting tenancies of council houses.

Where properly developed and managed sites have been provided these problems have been addressed and this is clearly borne out by the evidence of the Council's successful developments.

The Council's vast experience and professionalism over a period of in excess of 20 years of provision, management and maintenance of Traveller Accommodation will be of immense benefit in the implementation of this programme. Professionally designed, managed and maintained traveller accommodation developments will be models of the best practice and should alleviate the worst fears of some sections of the community. The Council has for some time recognised that a strategic approach involving a number of State Agencies is necessary to address the problems of the travelling community. Accordingly the Co-Ordinated Interagency Response to Travellers (CIRT) was established 2 years ago to co-ordinate activities in relation to provision of services to travellers. This committee comprises officials from Kildare County Council, Naas U.D.C., Athy U.D.C., Eastern Health Board, Garda Siochana, Department of Education and Co. Kildare V.E.C. and meets on a regular basis.

The Council has also facilitated the development of educational and cultural facilities for the travellers as follows :-

1. "Play and Learn" Group, Maynooth.  
This is organised through Maynooth Branch Library and involves local traveller children participating in a pre-school group. The group has been in operation for 3 years and great progress has been achieved in that time. The success of the venture is illustrated by the fact that the children involved will now be able to integrate into normal classes in school.

2. Athy Travellers Womens Group.  
This group of adult travellers compiled an exhibition relating to the history and traditional crafts of the travelling community. This exhibition was on display at various venues throughout County Kildare earlier this year and received many positive comments. Through this process the travellers involved in the project were able to meet with various local communities throughout the county. In this way, greater understanding of the needs of travellers was reached.

Working in a real partnership between the Council, the travelling community and the settled community, all will benefit through the provision of proper and decent living conditions for the traveller community while simultaneously eliminating the negative effects of unauthorised encampments. The success of this programme will generate a “win win” outcome for the betterment of all.

## **SECTION 2 - POLICY**

### **Policy**

It is stated as policy in the County Kildare Development Plan 1999 (2.39 Travellers Settlements) that :

*The Council will implement measures, as required by law and National policy, to provide accommodation for members of the travelling community, whether by way of residential caravan sites/halting sites, or by housing, as may be appropriate.*

*It is considered that all such sites, or housing, should be limited in size or extent.*



## **SECTION 3 - STRATEGY**

1. The Accommodation Programme will be based on an assessment of need which is being developed from :
  - (a) 1998 Census of Travellers Families prepared for the Department of the Environment in November 1998.
  - (b) The 1999 Housing Assessment completed in March, 1999.
  - (c) Anticipated family formation.  
It is difficult to predict the number of new families that will be formed during the 5 years from 2000 / 2004 inclusive. Based on the fact that travellers traditionally marry at a young age it is considered that 34 new families will be formed during the period of the plan.
  
2. The Accommodation Programme will encompass a range of measures which will include :  
  
Standard Council Housing  
Group Housing  
Residential Caravan Parks  
Transient Halting Sites  
Temporary Halting Sites  
Loans / Grants for Replacement Mobile Homes /  
House Purchase Loans
  
3. The social housing options will be used to assist travellers to apply for accommodation for themselves where they have the capacity to do so.
  
4. Voluntary Housing Agencies will be encouraged to accommodate traveller families according to the needs identified by the Council. The Council will provide assistance to bodies approved under Section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1992 in respect of the provision of accommodation for travellers.
  
5. Traveller families indigenous to County Kildare will be given priority in the provision of accommodation as long as they are not included in the Accommodation Programme of another Local Authority. Families are regarded as indigenous if they have been in the county continuously for a period of two years.

6. The Act places an obligation on the Council to secure implementation of the Plan within 5 years and requires continuing implementation and monitoring of progress in relation to the Plan. This will be accomplished by regular meetings between interested parties through the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.
7. The Council is committed to a partnership with the travelling community and will liaise with them through the Social Worker and support groups and the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. Notwithstanding the fact that Kildare County Council, Naas Urban District Council and Athy Urban District Council are responsible for the provision and management of traveller accommodation in their respective functional areas travellers will be encouraged to participate fully in a maintenance and management initiative for traveller accommodation.
8. The Council will continue with the work being carried out by Co-Ordinated Interagency Response to Travellers (C.I.R.T) which has established networks with other statutory and voluntary agencies in the area of health care, education, culture and employment. Policies will be developed to provide a strategic focus to service provision and specific joint projects will be undertaken.
9. The Council will work with other agencies both statutory and voluntary with a view to exploring the possibility of developing “traveller specific” enterprise units which could be rented from the Council. It is not proposed that these units will be provided on site but rather in specifically designed industrial units in appropriately zoned locations. The County Council through the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and other agencies will encourage travellers to avail of state supported economic development schemes already in place to facilitate the utilisation and growth of economic potential. It is considered that the most viable opportunity for developing enterprise for travellers lies in their traditional arts and crafts.

If developed, the traveller economy could play a significant role in increasing the numbers of the traveller community moving towards self-employment and financial independence. The traveller culture and way of life values enterprise. Traditionally the activities included :-

1. roadside trading, door to door selling of goods and services, or market trading from stalls,
2. dealing in scrap metal, etc.,
3. horse trading, as the buyers of horses for cultural pastime and as breeders, users and traders of horses as a specific economic activity.

These activities have proven to be major issues of contention between travellers and the settled community and cause great friction and disapproval in gaining acceptance for new sites. This Council therefore does not allow scrap, trading or horses on any of the facilities provided for traveller families as activities of this nature have proved detrimental not only to the immediate environment and health of the families but also to progressing the implementation of the accommodation programme. In any event it is the experience of this Council that the numbers of traveller families engaged in some of these traditional economic activities particularly horses and scrap has dwindled significantly.

10. The Council will endeavour to meet the health and safety needs of transient families in a number of short stay residential caravan parks around the county in a manner which will facilitate continued mobility.
11. Unauthorised encampments will be dealt with as appropriate in accordance with the following legislation :-
  - Roads Act, 1993
  - Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998
  - Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 1963
  - Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1948
  - Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1997

## **SECTION 4 - IMPLEMENTATION**

### **1. IMPLEMENTING AUTHORITIES:**

Under the provisions of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, Kildare County Council is responsible for the adoption of a Traveller Accommodation Programme for all of County Kildare. The Urban District Councils of Naas and Athy will have responsibility for the implementation of the Programme within their functional areas.

### **2. PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION:**

It is estimated that 63 units of accommodation will be required during the period of the plan. This figure has been extracted from the Assessment of Housing Needs of families as per the Assessment and the projected family formation in indigenous families over the life of the Plan. 87 units will be provided as follows :-

- 2 Rural houses,
- 23 Standard houses,
- 35 Group houses,
- 27 Residential caravan places (Kildare Town 6, Newbridge 6, Leixlip 6, Maynooth 3 and Naas UDC 6).

Where a vacancy occurs on a Residential Caravan Park, the existing residents will be consulted by the Council in relation to any proposed filling of those vacancies. However the final decision as regards the allocation of a bay will remain with the County Manager.

In addition three transient residential caravan parks will be provided as follows :-

- (1) North County
- (2) Mid County
- (3) South County

It is not possible to be site specific within the general areas identified in this Plan because the provision of accommodation depends on :-

- (1) Availability of suitable land in the Council's possession.
- (2) Availability of suitable land to purchase and build on.
- (3) Availability of rural dwellings to purchase in the area required to meet individual family needs.
- (4) Individual family requirements.

### **3. SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION PROPOSALS :**

#### 2000

- Allocate standard house – Athy urban area.
- Allocate standard house – Suncroft area.
- Accommodate one family in anticipated vacant bay at Ardrew, Athy.
- Provide Residential Caravan Park site for six families in Kildare area.
- Provide standard houses for two families in Kildare area.
- Provide Standard Housing for two families in Naas urban area.
- Provide Standard Housing for five families in Leixlip area.
- Accommodate one family on vacant bay at Maynooth.

#### 2001

- Complete construction of 8 houses at Blacklion, Maynooth for families on residential caravan park.
- Refurbish existing bays at Blacklion, Maynooth to provide 3 fully serviced bays.
- Purchase/Construct rural house – Athy area.
- Provide one rural house for family in Kildare area.
- Provide Group Housing for ten families in Newbridge area.
- Provide one six bay residential caravan park in Leixlip area.
- Provide one transient caravan park in north county area.
- Provide Group Housing Scheme for 6 families in Leixlip area.

#### 2002

- Provide Standard Housing for 2 families - Kildare area.
- Provide Group Housing Scheme for 5 families - Maynooth area.
- Provide Standard Housing for 2 families - Naas urban area.
- Provide 6 bay Residential Caravan Park in Newbridge area.
- Provide 6 bay Residential Caravan Park in Naas urban area.
- Provide 1 Transient Caravan Park in mid county area.

#### 2003

- Provide Group Housing Scheme of 6 - Athy urban area.
- Provide Standard Housing for 1 family - Kildare area.
- Provide Standard Housing for 1 family - Athy urban area.
- Provide Standard Housing for 1 family - Suncroft area.
- Provide Standard Housing for 1 family - Naas urban area.
- Provide Standard Housing for 1 family - Maynooth area.
- Provide one transient caravan park in south county area.

#### 2004

- Provide Standard Housing for 1 family - Suncroft area.
- Provide Standard Housing for 1 family - Kildare area.
- Provide Standard Housing for 1 family - Maynooth area.

## APPENDIX 1

### SUMMARY OF ACCOMMODATION PROVISION

#### **TOTAL BY YEAR**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Standard Housing</b>	<b>Rural Housing</b>	<b>Group Housing</b>	<b>Residential Caravan Park</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
2000	11	0	0	6	<b>17</b>
2001	0	2	24	9	<b>35</b>
2002	4	0	5	12	<b>21</b>
2003	5	0	6	0	<b>11</b>
2004	3	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>87</b>

#### **TOTAL BY AREA**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Standard Housing</b>	<b>Rural Housing</b>	<b>Group Housing</b>	<b>Residential Caravan Park</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Athy	2	1	6	0	<b>9</b>
Suncroft	3	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
Kildare	6	1	0	6	<b>13</b>
Naas Urban	5	0	0	6	<b>11</b>
Leixlip	5	0	6	6	<b>17</b>
Maynooth	2	0	13	3	<b>18</b>
Newbridge	0	0	10	6	<b>16</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>87</b>

## APPENDIX 2

**Results of the 31st March, 1999 Housing Assessment compiled for the D.O.E. as far as it deals with the needs of traveller families.**

RCP = Bays on Residential Caravan Parks

GH = Group Housing

Surveyed need by area and each year to 2005

	Present Need	Present Need	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total
	Houses	RCP's						
<b>1. South Area</b>								
Athy	2	1	6			1		10
Monasterevin								
Suncroft	1					1	1	3
<i>Sub-Total</i>	3	1	6			2	1	13
<b>2. Mid-County</b>								
Kildare	3	4	4		1		1	13
Newbridge		4	1		1	1		7
Naas	2		1	1		1		5
<i>Sub-Total</i>	5	8	6	1	2	2	1	25
<b>3. North Area</b>								
Leixlip	1	3	2	1		1		8
Maynooth	8 (GH)	1	5			2	1	17
<i>Sub-Total</i>	9	4	7	1		3	1	25
<b>Totals :-</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>63</b>

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Mobile Home Loan Scheme for Traveller Families**

1. Existing accommodation has to be judged seriously inadequate in social workers report to the Council.
2. A person has to be in the county for a year before applying.
3. A person applying has to live on a halting site.
4. A person applying has to submit details of their circumstances on an application form. This will include the sources of their income and documents to prove this.
5. The person applying agrees to leave the mobile home on the halting site and in his/her bay area until the loan is paid off.
6. The old mobile home is to be removed from the halting site at the same time as the replacement unit is brought onto the site. If time is needed to move belongings from the old to the replacement accommodation then a bond can be placed with the Council which will be refunded when the old unit has left the halting site.
7. A maximum of £4,000 plus V.A.T. will be provided for the use of a person who qualifies. This will be made up of 50% loan paid by the person applying and a 50% grant paid by the Council. The person applying will choose a replacement mobile home from a V.A.T. registered dealer. The unit will be inspected by the Council. If it is found to be suitable the mobile home will be bought and moved to the halting site by the Council.
8. The applicants contribution to the payment for the mobile home will be by means of his written agreement to a £10 (maximum) a week deduction from his social welfare cheque by the Household Budget Scheme until the loan is paid out.
9. A second loan will not be considered until the first one has been paid out.
10. Unless there are exceptional circumstances only one loan per family will be made every four years.



## APPENDIX 4

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

#### Chairman

Councillor E. Stagg, T.D.

#### Ordinary Members :-

##### Kildare Co. Co.

Councillors: J. Mc Ginley, S. O'Fearghail, M. Glennon,  
T. Mc Evoy and Councillor J. Wall, T.D.

R. T. O'Niadh

P. Hickey

##### Naas U.D.C.

Councillor S. Moore, U.D.C.

##### Athy U.D.C.

Councillor S. Cunnane, U.D.C.

##### Traveller Representatives

Mrs. R. Mc Inerney,

Mr. P. Mc Donagh,

Mr. C. Stokes,

Mrs. E. Mc Donagh.

##### Traveller Support Group Representatives

Col. D. O'Carroll,

Sr. Rosarii,

Mrs. Elizabeth Trappe,

Mrs. Anne Kelly.