



Údaráis Áitiúla Longfoirt
Longford Local Authorities

**LONGFORD TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PLAN
2014-2018**

Introduction:

Longford Local Authorities, under the provisions of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, is required to prepare and adopt a new Traveller Accommodation Programme for the five year period 1st January 2014 to 31st December 2018. The new Programme will replace the current programme which will expire on 31st December 2013.

The following statutory obligations have been placed on the local authorities to:

- Prepare and adopt an Accommodation Programme to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in County Longford.
- Allow for public input to the preparation and amendment of the Programme.
- Take appropriate steps to secure implementation of the Programme.
- Include objectives concerning Traveller Accommodation in the County Development Plan.

The Minister for Housing & Planning has directed as follows:

- Latest date for adoption of Programme: **30th April 2014**.
- Review of Programme should be carried out not later than **31st December 2016**.

Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee:

In accordance with the provisions of Sections 21 and 22 of the 1998 Act a Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee has been established. The Consultative Committee plays an important role in the development of the Traveller Accommodation Programme. Implementation of the programme will be monitored by the Committee and issues arising addressed.

This committee has met fourteen times to date during the term of the current programme. There are 16 members on the LTACC. Membership consists of Representatives from the following:

- Longford Town and County Councils
- Traveller Representatives
- Longford Traveller Primary Health Care
- Longford Community Resources Ltd.
- Council officials.

(See Appendix 1 for membership)

POLICY STATEMENT:

The overall aim of Longford Local Authorities Housing Policy is to enable every household to have available to them an affordable dwelling of good quality, in a good environment as far as possible at tenure of their choice. Longford Local Authorities recognises Travellers' identity as an indigenous minority ethnic group.

It is the policy of Longford Local Authorities to directly provide accommodation to Travellers in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998. In addition the council believes in meaningful consultation based on Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government Guidelines with Travellers about their accommodation needs and to provide, where appropriate, Traveller specific accommodation. However, this may not always be available to each applicant and therefore other available options will be explored and offered.

The allocation of properties will be based on the Council's Allocation Scheme of Priorities for Letting of Dwelling Houses.

Permanent Housing:

The council will have regard to the full range of housing options available in the provision of permanent accommodation for Travellers, including:

- Local Authority Housing
- Group Housing
- Voluntary Housing
- Private Housing (Loans)
- Rental Accommodation Scheme
- Long Term Leasing

Voluntary Housing Agencies will be requested to accommodate Travelling families according to needs identified by Longford Local Authorities.

Halting Site Accommodation – Willow Park Halting Site:

It is the policy of Longford Local Authorities to provide Traveller specific accommodation for Travellers on permanent halting sites if so requested by Travellers themselves. Currently there are two families living in Willow Park. The Assessment of Needs did not identify any further need. However, refurbishment of the current bays being occupied is urgently required. No capital funding is available at present but it is hoped that this will change during the time frame of the new plan.

Unauthorised Encampments/Transient Accommodation:

The incidents of unauthorised encampments in the county of Longford would be infrequent and seasonal. Hence there is no immediate requirement for a transient site in the County. Since the adoption of the previous Traveller Accommodation Programme in 2009 the funding available for the housing capital programme has declined significantly which has substantial implications for the Traveller specific

budget and also the general social budget, under which accommodation for Travellers is also provided. It is envisaged that the funding situation will remain under pressure for the foreseeable future; therefore, it is considered that priority should be given to delivering the Traveller specific housing requirements identified in this programme for the families currently residing in the county.

Emergency Accommodation:

Existing procedures for meeting emergency housing needs will continue to be used for emergency Traveller housing needs. This may include sourcing temporary emergency accommodation where a bona fide housing need has been established.

Back up Services and Support:

Longford County Council employs a full time social worker who works with the Travelling Community in relation to all housing issues. In addition, the staff of the Town and County Housing Departments are available on a daily basis to deal with housing related issues.

Longford Community Resources Ltd. has employed a worker who provides a wide range of support to Travellers.

The development of services and supports to the Travelling Community will continue through the Longford Traveller Inter Agency Group under the County Longford Development Board during the period of the programme.

ACCOMMODATION OFFICER – LONGFORD COMMUNITY RESOURCES LTD:

Longford County Council, in consultation with Longford Community Resources Traveller Development worker will endeavour to work together to ensure the housing needs of Travellers are met as far as practically possible, giving due consideration to availability of housing stock and financial constraints. Due consideration has been given to the Irish Traveller Movement submission in regard to the needs of Travellers in Ireland.

STRATEGY/IMPLEMENTATION STATEMENT:

Longford County Council and Longford Town Council are the implementing Authorities for the Accommodation Programme. The councils co-operates and co-ordinates with other agencies and adjoining authorities to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers. In particular, a number of groups have an important role to play in securing the implementation of the programme including:

- The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Housing SPC
- Health Service Executive
- Longford Community Resources Limited
- Longford Traveller Inter Agency Group

- MABS
- Garda Siochana
- Department of Education and Science
- Voluntary Housing Groups
- Department of Social Protection.

It will be the responsibility of Longford Local Authorities to seek the co-operation of the above groups to ensure the implementation of the Programme. Progress in relation to the Plan will be monitored by the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.

REVIEW OF PROGRESS 2009-2013:

The overall targets for delivery under the Longford Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013 were as follows:

Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013

Longford Local Authorities aimed to provide the following during the period of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013:

	Year 1: 2009	Year 2: 2010	Year 3: 2011	Year 4: 2012	Year 5: 2013	TOTAL
Transient	0	4	0	0	0	4
Permanent (three Tenants Living at Willow Park.	3	7	0	0	0	10
Standard Local Authority & One off Housing	8	8	8	8	8	40

Group Houses	0	0	0	0	0	0
RAS	6	6	6	6	6	30

Since the commencement of the plan the following was provided:

	Year 1: 2009	Year 2: 2010	Year 3: 2011	Year 4: 2012	Year 5: 2013 (to date)	TOTAL
Transient	0	0	0	0	0	0
Permanent (three Tenants Living at Willow Park.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Standard Local Authority & One off Housing	8	8	8	8	12	44
Group Houses	0	0	0	0	0	0
RAS/Leases/ Rent Allowance	13	13	13	24	25	88

The transient and permanent sites were not provided. Tenders were obtained in 2009 and contractor was selected to commence the works. However, the site was flooded in late 2009.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS

Longford Local Authorities, in accordance with Section 8 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 gave public notice of its intention to prepare a Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme for the period 2014-2018 and to carry out an assessment of existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers.

Consultation has taken place with local Travellers, Primary Health Care, Public Health Nurse for Travellers and the Local Traveller Consultative Committee.

Submissions were received from the following:

- Irish Traveller Movement
- Longford Community Resources Ltd.

The contents of these submissions have been noted and taken into consideration in the preparation of the Draft Traveller Accommodation Plan 2014-2018

ASSESSMENT TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION NEEDS/PROJECTED NEED:

The 2011 Census has indicated that Longford is the county with the highest number of Travellers per head of population with 19.1% for every thousand people – which is approximately 5% of the overall population of Longford. There are 744 Travellers living in Longford. This has risen from 542 in the 2006 Census.

Taking into account the information that has been gathered from the recent census, there are a number of changes which will affect the type of accommodation that travellers will require in the future

In accordance with Section 9 of the Housing Act 1988, as amended, and Section 6 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, Longford Local Authorities assessed and identified the accommodation needs of Traveller families to be met during the period of this Programme, from 1st January, 2014 to 31st December, 2018 including the needs for sites.

The assessment relates to the existing accommodation need and the projected need estimated to arise. The following housing options will be utilised:

- Standard Local Authority House
- Group Housing
- Long Term Leasing
- Rental Accommodation Scheme
- Proposed new Housing Assistance Payment Scheme
- Existing two residential sites for caravans

VOLUNTARY HOUSING, RENTAL ACCOMMODATION SCHEME AND OTHER ACCOMMODATION NEEDS.

Within County Longford, due to some Travellers being employed or involved in economic activity, there are a number of Traveller families who have been able to purchase accommodation from their own resources. In 2013 there was approximately two such purchases. It is envisaged that house purchases will continue if the finances are available without Local Authority assistance.

There are many circumstances where Travellers need many different types of housing options.

Longford Local Authorities provide standard Local Authority Housing for Traveller families and in 2013, 12 Traveller families were housed in standard Local Authority housing in the Town and County. This exceeded the target set out in the 2004-2009 Traveller Accommodation Plan – the target number being 8.

The Housing Needs Assessment of May 2013 indicated that there are approximately 44 Travellers on the Housing List – which represents 4.4% of all Approved Housing Applicants. In 2013 there were 128 Housing Allocations throughout the Town and County and Traveller allocations represented 9.4% of all these allocations.

Travellers who are not accommodated in standard Local Authority Housing are housed as follows:

Private Rented Accommodation:

There will be approximately 63 Traveller families in receipt of rent allowance by the end of the current Plan. The total number of people currently in receipt of this allowance in Longford is 509. Some travellers prefer to be accommodated this way due to family size, feuding, schools and family support.

The RAS Scheme/ Lease Agreements:

Currently 25 Traveller families are accommodated under the Rental Assistance Scheme. This represents 12.5% of the total being accommodated under RAS. In addition 2 families are accommodated under the leasing programme.

Hence 88 Traveller families are currently accommodated under Rent Allowance/RAS Scheme/Lease Agreements. Rent Allowance is to be replaced by the Housing Assistance Payment. It is envisaged that these housing options will continue to play a major role in housing Travellers in Longford.

House Purchases:

During the term of the current Traveller Accommodation Programme no houses were purchased to accommodate travellers. Due to the current financial constraints no funding is currently available to buy dwellings.

Traveller Specific Accommodation – Willow Park Halting Site.

Over the period of the 2009-2013 Traveller Accommodation Plan, a number of Travellers have left the Halting Site due to medical and anti-social behaviour reasons. There are currently two families living on Willow Park Halting Site who wish to remain there. At present, no other housing applicants have indicated that they wish to be housed at this location. Hence it is proposed to refurbish Willow Park Halting Site to accommodate the needs of the two families currently living at this location. Should the need for further units arise later, consideration will be give to it at that time.

Group Housing:

There is currently no need or demand for Group Housing Schemes in Longford for Traveller families.

Transient Accommodation

There is currently no need for transient sites in Longford. There are no Travellers living on the roadside in Longford and while Longford is a corridor to the West, travellers do not tend to stay for long periods of time in Longford if they are not connected to the County. Travellers normally stop over with relatives, however, they do not require any Transient Bay services.

Emergency Accommodation:

There is currently provision for homeless female and male Travellers in Longford in St. Martha's Hostel and Bethany House. The Hostels are staffed 24 hours a day and provide an essential service in Longford. Homeless Travellers must present to the Local Authority in Longford and they can then be registered on PASS (Pathway Accommodation and Support Systems) to ensure that they receive the best possible outcomes.

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PLAN 2014 – 2018.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Group Housing	0	0	0	0	0
Permanent Halting Site	2	0	0	0	2
Transient Halting Sites	0	0	0	0	0
Standard Housing	9	9	9	9	36
Rent Supplement/HAP	19	19	19	19	76

RAS	12	12	12	12	48
Leases	1	1	1	1	4
Total	43	41	41	41	166

There are approximately 176 Traveller children aged between 10 – 19 in Longford, 93 of these will be eighteen and over by the end of the 2014-2018 Traveller Accommodation Plan.

County Development Plan 2009-2015

Longford Local Authorities have stated in HS 15 p.42 of the current County Development Plan, regard shall be had in the assessment of new developments to the social inclusion of all sectors of society, including the needs of the Travelling and ethnic minorities. Appropriate provisions will also be incorporated into the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 which is currently at pre-Draft stage.

CONCLUSION:

Longford County Council has exceeded its targets in regard to provision of standard Local Authority Housing in the 2009-2013 plan. However, the aim to refurbish Willow Park did not come to fruition. No capital funding is available at present but it is hoped that this will change during the currency of the new plan.

Ongoing support will be provided by Longford County and Town Council Housing Departments and the Social Work Service to ensure that Longford Travellers can secure the best possible housing outcomes to meet their needs. Longford Local Authorities will be responsible for the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Plan in close consultation with Traveller Groups Representatives, HSE, Social Protection, The Department of Environment, Community & Local Government, An Garda Siochana and all other appropriate agencies. Progress in relation to the development of the 2014-2018 Plan will be monitored by the LTACC.

APPENDIX 1

LTACC MEMBERS.

Ms. Peggy Nolan, M.C.C., 43 Demesne, Longford.

Mr. Thomas Victory, M.C.C., Cranleymore, Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford

Mr. Pdraig Loughrey, M.C.C. Clonee, Killoe, Co. Longford.

Mr. Frank Kilbride, M.C.C. Aughakilmore, Ballinalee, Co. Longford.

Mr. Victor Kiernan, M.C.C. Carriglass, Longford.

Mr. Michael Carrigy, Ballinalee P.O., Ballinalee, Co. Longford.

Mr. Gerry Brady, M.C.C. Creenagh, Longford.

Ms. Caroline Stokes, 1, Willow Park, Longford.

Ms. Leanne Keely, c/o LCRL, Ballinalee Road, Longford.

Mr. Dan Rooney, Town Clerk, Longford Town Council.

Mr. Frank Horne, RAPID Co-Ordinator, c/o Longford Town Council

Mr. Terry Rooney, SEO, Longford County Council.

Ms. Anne Glancy, Administrative Officer, Longford County Council.

Ms. Theresa Duffy, Social Worker, Longford County Council.

Mr. Brian McNeela, Longford Town Council.