

**Galway City Council**  
**Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024**  
**Year Two Progress Report**  
**September 2021**

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 - 2024 was adopted by Galway City Council on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

This report highlights the progress to date since its adoption in line with the requirements of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998. The report also outlines the achievement of accommodation targets for the period July 2020 to June 2021.

Section 10(2)(e) of the Act requires that the Programme must include specific measures or proposals for each implementing authority or other party concerned. It is considered that such measures should cover:

- The provision of the range of accommodation required,
- Assistance to Travellers to provide accommodation for their own use,
- Assistance to approved housing bodies in respect of the provision or management of accommodation for Travellers, and
- Arrangements for the proper management, including assistance towards the management, of the above accommodation.

Section 10(2) of the 1998 Act, sets out that annual targets shall be included in the Programme, in respect of implementation of the Programme. The targets should include details of the numbers of units of accommodation proposed to be delivered for each of the five years of the programme for Traveller specific accommodation (including group housing, bays on halting sites, including transient sites) both new and refurbished and for standard housing.

Section 17(1)(a) of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, provides that a relevant housing authority shall review its Accommodation Programme at least once in each three-year period, or at such time as directed by the Minister. Any amendment to the Accommodation Programme proposed following any such review must be made within seven months and is subject to the same procedures and requirements, including public consultation. The Minister has, under section 17(1) of the 1998 Act, directed that a review of the Accommodation Programme should be carried out no later than 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

This report will also include the COVID-19 Response, as it has been a significant piece of work from all stakeholders since March 2020. The report is broken down under the following headings:

- Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Annual Targets Analysis
- Capital Programme
- COVID 19 Response and Funding
- Sub-Committees

## Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee:

In August 2019, Galway City Council in partnership with the GTM held elections in each electoral area for the position of Traveller Reps to sit on the LTACC. Reps and deputy reps from each area were successfully elected. Equality & Diversity Training was delivered to LTACC members on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019 & 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 by Mr. Niall Crowley and Ms. Maria Joyce.

On 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020, the first meeting of the newly constituted LTACC convened. An Independent Chair, Mr. Niall Crowley, was appointed by agreement of all members. This appointment was agreed initially for a year and was extended by agreement for a further one year period. The LTACC held three meetings in 2020, 29<sup>th</sup> January, 1<sup>st</sup> July and 28<sup>th</sup> October. The meeting scheduled for the 8<sup>th</sup> April was cancelled due to the ongoing COVID 19 emergency situation. Two sub groups were proposed and appointed by the LTACC – an Estate management Sub Group and an Operational Sub Group. Both groups comprise of elected members, officials & Traveller Reps.

In 2021, to date, two meetings have been held, 3<sup>rd</sup> February and 7<sup>th</sup> April. The meeting scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> July was deferred to September 2021. The Galway Traveller Movement representative resigned in January 2021 and the Westside representative has now assumed that position on the committee. The deputy Westside representative as elected in August, 2019 has agreed to take up the vacant position on the Committee.

## Annual Target Analysis:

Section 6 (as amended of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act) 2009 requires housing authorities, for the purposes of preparing a programme, in respect of their functional area, to make an assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers who are assessed under Section 20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 as being qualified for social housing support, including the need for sites. In making an assessment, a housing authority is required to have regard to: The estimate of the number of Travellers for whom accommodation will be required during the course of the programme, The summary of social housing assessments prepared under section 21 (c) of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 as it relates to Traveller, The need for transient sites and Consideration by the housing authority of the views of the LTACC.

### Year 1: The targets below refer to the period from July 2019 to June 2020

Accommodation Type	2020 Target	Total Achieved to date
Standard Local Authority (incl Transfers)	<b>10</b>	14 & 2 transfers from July 2019 – Dec 2019 11 & 4 transfers in 2020
AHB standard housing	<b>10</b>	10 (1 is a Housing First supported tenancy)
Extensions to Standard Local Authority	<b>1</b>	(3 completed in 2019 relating to the previous plan)
Group Housing Scheme (LA and AHB)	<b>0</b>	0
Culturally Specific Traveller Accommodation	<b>5</b> <b>(1 scheme)</b>	0
Permanent Residential Halting Site	<b>2</b>	5
Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)	<b>1</b>	0
Long-Term Leasing Scheme	<b>1</b>	0
Housing Assistance Payment	<b>20</b>	4 Homeless HAP from July 2019 – Dec 2019 10 Homeless HAP in 2020
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>61</b>

**Year 2: The targets below refer to the period from July 2020 to June 2021**

Accommodation Type	2021 Target	Total Achieved
Standard Local Authority (incl Transfers)	10	17
AHB standard housing	10	14
Extensions to Standard Local Authority	1	0
Group Housing Scheme (LA and AHB)	10 (2 schemes)	0
Culturally Specific Traveller Accommodation	20 (3 schemes)	0
Permanent Residential Halting Site	1	2
Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)*	1	0
Long-Term Leasing Scheme	1	0
Housing Assistance Payment	20	11 (includes 5 Homeless HAP)
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>44</b>

**Capital Programme:**

The table below provides an overview of progress in relation to the capital schemes noted in TAP 2019 – 2024:

Scheme	Location	Update	Housing Body
8 Culturally Specific Traveller Units	Keeraun	Stage 2 funding approval received, design developed to planning stage. Part X planning process commenced on 2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2021. Decision anticipated Q1 2022 with works on site projected for mid-2022 commencement.	GCC €3,692,699 approved at Stage 2
4 Culturally Specific Traveller Units	<u>Doughiska</u>	CAS/CALF Funding approved. Contract to remove Japanese Knotweed from the site to commence before end 2021. Part 8 publication by year end 2021. Works on site to commence later in 2022 dependant on knotweed removal progress.	Respond €1,278,376 approved at Stage 1
5 Culturally Specific Traveller Units	Circular Road (redesign of existing halting site)	Stage 2 funding application submitted in September 2021. Pending approval Part 8 publication to follow in November with works onsite projected to commence in mid-2022.	GCC in partnership with CENA €1,340,000 approved at Stage 1
4 Culturally Specific Traveller Units	Headford Road	Stage 2 funding application to be submitted by end September 2021. Pending approval Part 8 publication to follow in December with works onsite projected to commence in mid-2022.	GCC

8 Culturally Specific Traveller Units	Merlin Lands	Prelim design stage. Stage 1 funding application pending.	GCC
8 Unit Group Scheme	Fana Glas	No progress. Wider housing proposal for the area being considered.	GCC

## Operational and Maintenance works

### Carrowbrowne Halting Sites

General and specific improvement and estate management works at Carrowbrowne halting sites over the 2 year period of TAP 2019 – 2024 amounted to €970,000.

Works to upgrade heating and hot water systems at the Carrowbrowne Halting site commenced in April and will be fully complete in September 2021. The works include the provision of the mechanical, electrical services installation and works to upgrade the existing district heating system by carrying out modifications and remedial works to the existing heating systems and water systems. This work is part of an overall programme of works intended to improve the system efficiency while assisting in reducing operational costs. The existing site in Carrowbrowne consists of a main community building and 20 no. welfare units (10 semi-detached blocks of 2). Heating is generated in the main plant room in the community building by gas fired boilers and is then distributed to plant rooms in the Welfare Units.



Installation of water mains & Telemetry duct



Plantroom Boiler & pipe works

Welfare units in Carrowbrowne 13 Bay Site replaced in 2020 – funding of €280,515 received from the TAU of the Department of Housing.

### Group Housing Upgrades

A programme of works is being developed to upgrade the existing stock of Traveller group housing. Funding provision will be made to commence a cycle of such planned works over the next 3 years.

### Traveller Specific Housing - Upgrade of smoke / heat carbon alarms and fire blankets

A contractor was appointed in April 2021 to carry out a review of all lifesaving equipment i.e. smoke, heat and carbon alarms, fire blankets installed in Traveller specific accommodation including halting sites and Traveller group housing schemes. The works will also include a Safe Electric Periodic Certificate issued for each installation. Works commenced in early May and it is anticipated that works will be concluded by August 2021.

2 property acquisitions funded through the TAU - €689,066

On the basis of detailed assessment it was confirmed that demolition and rebuild of the fire damaged property at Kiltullagh, Oranmore was required. The appointed project team have completed the pre planning engagement, surveys, and design. The design has been reviewed in consultation with the intended occupant family with revisions incorporated based on feedback received.

A planning application for the rebuild will be lodged with Galway County Council by the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Potentially this would allow for works to commence on site in early 2022 with completion in mid-2023. However these dates are subject to revision depending on potential appeals at planning stage. There is ongoing engagement with the family to advise on progress and timelines.

Three mobile homes were acquired for families on an emergency basis - €62,000. 50% recouped from TAU

### **COVID 19 Response and Funding:**

A Galway City COVID 19 Traveller Response Forum was established in March 2020. This interagency working group comprises Public Health, HSE Traveller Health Unit, GCC and GTM. This group has met weekly and developed robust collaborative working relationships in order to effectively support an appropriate response to the needs of Traveller households during COVID.

GCC and the Traveller Health Unit both have mitigation plans in the context of COVID 19.

Enhanced working relationship with GTM and GCC to problem solve particular cases occurred as well as the provision of circa €6,000 funding to the GTM from GCC's COVID Community Response for wrap around supports, where needed, for families. Galway City Council has fed into the National Traveller Covid 19 Accommodation Preparedness checklist which issued in July 2021.

Targeted interventions have taken place to support families in caravans with no access to facilities – access to emergency accommodation and specifically 4 GCC voids were provided to COPE Galway for families for the purposes of enhancing their access to sanitation, etc.

Port-a-loos were provided to young family formations across all sites, as required – these remain in place

2 mobile homes were purchased, through COVID funding to support two households over 65 to cocoon. There are currently 4 special lettings to Traveller Households that are covid related i.e. relocation of Travellers families from Traveller Specific due to overcrowding and recognition of health needs of Traveller families in homeless accommodation.

### **COVID Funding:**

Direct expenditure on Traveller supports under COVID measures has been €104,943 to date.

<b>COVID Response measure</b>	<b>DHLGH Funded Amount</b>	<b>LA Funded Amount</b>
Mobile Homes & Touring Caravan	€34,150	
Void Works to Units	€23,214	
Port-a-loos	€28,396	
Increased services for halting site (e.g. cleaning, biofogging/ waste management)		€30,684

Provision of Electrical connection	€1,044	
Removal of trailer	€851	
Kit out of Community Centres		€5,000
Set-Up Costs for Traveller Accommodation	€15,686	
<b>Total</b>	<b>€103,341</b>	<b>€35,684</b>

## Sub-Committees:

### Estate Management Sub-Committee

A sub-committee of the LTACC was established in 2020 to focus on Estate Management in Traveller Specific Accommodation. This Committee has met 4 times in 2020 (6<sup>th</sup> March 2020, 27<sup>th</sup> August 2020, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 & 3<sup>rd</sup> December). To date in 2021 the committee has met on three occasions (27<sup>th</sup> January, 23<sup>rd</sup> March & 30<sup>th</sup> June) with a further meeting scheduled for the 29<sup>th</sup> September.

The focus of the sub-committee, as agreed at the outset, remains:

- To advise and provide direction to the LTACC on issues relating to Estate Management in Traveller Specific Accommodation.
- To assist in the development of an Estate Management Strategy for Traveller Specific Accommodation.
- To promote best practice in Estate Management with the aim of improving the quality of life for those in Traveller Specific Accommodation.
- To support the application of the Equality & Human Rights Statement developed by Galway City's LCDC in actions and initiatives relating to the Estate Management of Traveller Specific Accommodation.

The initial meetings of the sub-committee focused on agreeing Terms of Reference and a direction and remit for the committee, with discussions taking place on the definition of estate management, goals, objectives and legacy. In addition to these general considerations, specific work tasks and actions were discussed, including Galway City's Severe Weather Response Plan, public consultation during Covid19 and budgetary concerns in Traveller Specific Accommodation.

Through the committee, a positive perspective on estate management will be promoted, with a focus on building relationships, sustainable communities, engagement and integration. Work has commenced on specific actions, including the development of a Galway City Council staff directorate, the drafting of an Estate Management Strategy and the promotion of Residents Associations within Traveller Specific Accommodation.

Arising from this sub group Galway City Council staff on the Estate Management Team and the Social Work Teams have met GTM in a collaborative space on two occasions thus far to foster shared understanding and learning with a view to enhancing the above work – support has been given to form a Residents Association, ongoing work in relation to the A-Z directory, sharing of the tenant handbook with the GTM with a view to their input.

The input of the technical and maintenance department on this sub group has facilitated enhanced protocols around the reporting of all maintenance issues in a more robust manner. The focus on moving away from crisis management to planned maintenance has been central to these discussions and support was sought and given by the GTM to assist in addressing issues on the ground, through their network of primary care workers.

The development of an Estate Management Strategy for Traveller Specific accommodation continues to be progressed and it is envisaged that this will be complete in Q1 2022.

### **Operational Sub-Committee**

The LTACC Operational Subcommittee met twice in 2020 (18<sup>th</sup> September & 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020) and four times so far in 2021 (25<sup>th</sup> January, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 12<sup>th</sup> May & 29<sup>th</sup> June). The work of the committee has been underpinned by the agreed primary objectives, which are to:

- Support and drive the implementation of the planned TAP housing/accommodation projects in between the LTACC meetings.
- Have a key focus on the delivery of the Traveller specific culturally appropriate accommodation projects
- Enable and foster a space to discuss and troubleshoot issues of planning, design and communication including ongoing consultation with the Traveller community.
- Foster a space that generates ideas and innovation that will support the full implementation of the TAP targets
- To promote best practice in the provision of housing and accommodation for the Traveller community
- Apply the Equality & Human Rights Statement developed by Galway City's LCDC to the work of the subcommittee.

Attention and focus has been on the upgrade works at Carrowbrowne, profiling the needs of families on Carrowbrowne to seek solutions and timelines for those families, progressing the Headford Road Scheme and Keeraun development and Cul Trá closure.

The next meeting of the Operational Sub Group is due to take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021.

### **Irish Human Rights Commission Equality Review**

In October 2019 the Irish Human Rights and Equality Authority invited each local authority to conduct an equality review in relation to Traveller accommodation, including the drawdown of capital funding. IHREC subsequently made recommendations on Galway City Councils equality review in June 2021. Galway City Council was asked for a response on those recommendations which was returned back to IHREC in late August 2021.