

Preparation of
Waterford City & County Council's new
Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2023
Submission

The WTCDP welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the development of the new TAP. We also welcome the improved engagement with senior WCCC housing personnel with our organisation over the last year, and commitments given to improve the accommodation situation of Traveller families in Waterford.

Review of previous TAP

The two needs assessment undertaken separately by (then) Waterford City Council & Waterford County Council identified **a total need for 61 units** to be delivered in the period of 2014 – 2018. However, the total of units identified to be delivered under the subsequent adopted TAP, added up to a **mere 42 units planned**. In doing so WCCC failed in its statutory obligation under the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 to develop a TAP, based on the needs identified.

In addition to insufficient targets set, there was also a failure to deliver on these targets, particularly noticeable in the delivery of new Traveller-specific accommodation (group housing & halting site units).

The previous TAP committed to:

- *“Develop a three house Group Scheme by the end of 2017 in the environs of the City” (p24),*
- *“The need for Halting Site accommodation will be met ... by developing one small six bay site” also in the city (p20) and*
- *“The establishment of a group housing scheme in the Dungarvan area will be further examined and the Council will explore the possibility of providing such a scheme in conjunction with a social housing provider” (p24).*

None of this has been delivered. The re-development of Kilbarry is a commitment outstanding even longer, going back to an even older TAP, which has still not been delivered on.

Failure to Deliver Targets & Traveller Accommodation Funding Underspent

The government commissioned the Housing Agency to undertake a review of Traveller Accommodation Funding under `Rebuilding Ireland`.

(<https://www.housingagency.ie/getattachment/Our-Publications/Housing-Management/17-11-21-Independent-Review-of-Funding-for-Traveller-Specific-Accommodation.pdf>).

The appendix of the report provides a stark indication of the failure of WCCC to deliver on its own targets. It lists an **official deficit of - 41 units** not delivered by WCCC between 2000 – 2015 (see p75), though the real figure is likely to be much higher for a variety of reasons: There is no actual delivery figure provided by WCCC for the period from 2005 – 2009, when there was an official target of 85 units. Less than half of the allocated, central funding was drawn down, with almost € 2.3 million unspent. This period coincided with the shameful actions of WCCC dismissing its own Traveller accommodation needs assessment and halving of its targets, between the publication of the draft TAP and the adoption of the final TAP.

Due to this, the probable real figure for under-delivery until 2015 is probably closer to 100. Taking account of more recent figures, noting a drastic trend of further reductions in draw-downs of allocated funding, combined with the noted failure to deliver any of the promised, new Traveller-specific accommodation, **the real deficit up to 2018 must be in the region of approx - 120 units**. And this approximate deficit of 120 units relates to official targets only and we have already outlined that targets fell short of identified needs in 2014 – 2018, and the same applies to previous TAPs.

The report also analyses the figures of central funding allocated, compared to funding actually drawn-down and spent by WCCC. It records an underspent of € 4,891,140 between 2000 – 2015. A recent PQ updates these figures to close to the end of 2018, which highlights a total underspent of € 5,980,265 in the period of 2000 – 2018. What is particularly worrying, is that spending has reduced to a trickle in the period of the most recent TAP. While spending, compared to allocated funding, was in around 50% for the first three TAPs, it has **reduced to WCCC drawing down a mere 2.35% of available funding in the period 2015 – 2018**.

(<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2018-11-20/642/?highlight%5B0%5D=traveller&highlight%5B1%5D=accommodation&highlight%5B2%5D=2018>)

The most recent figures (Annual Count of Traveller Families, November 2018, WCCC for DoH) indicate that there are 224 families living in Waterford City & County. Of these 30 are sharing housing, 9 are living on `unauthorized sites` and a further 9 live in homeless accommodation. **That means 48 Traveller families in Waterford (of a total of 224) were effectively homeless at the end of 2018.** The figure on `unauthorized sites` is also noteworthy, as a marked increase from 2 in 2016 and 0 in 2015. These figures indicate a worsening accommodation crisis and homelessness problem among Travellers in Waterford.

https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/2017_traveller_families_in_all_categories_of_accomodation.pdf

Traveller Ethnicity

Following the historic, formal recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority group in Irish society in March 2017, the introduction of the new TAP should reference this. The spirit of this historic decision needs to be carried through the whole body of the new TAP, and the term `Traveller` should be capitalised throughout the document.

We recommend that the new TAP should state that “WCCC recognises Travellers as an ethnic minority group within Irish society, and the actions in this Traveller Accommodation Programme are informed by this recognition.”

Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment

WTCDP hopes that WCCC will continue to work with Cena, the Traveller-specific approved housing body (AHB) regarding the needs assessment for the new TAP. While we had few concerns about the appropriateness of needs assessments undertaken by the old Waterford City Council in the past, we had serious concerns about the insufficient proposed actions in previous TAPs falling well short of identified needs.

There needs to be an assessment for projected needs as per the ‘Guidelines for the Preparation Adoption and Implementation of Local Authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2019 – 2024’, issued by the Department of Housing Planning & Local Government, issued in July 2018 (Part 3, Section 4) which states in relation to the accommodation needs assessment : “*This must relate to the **existing accommodation needs and the projected need that will arise during the period of the programmes** ...*” This projected needs assessment has to be matched by actions for delivery, as the needs will arise during the operational period of the new TAP, in view of the Housing Agency’s observation, that there is a “*lack of forward planning for family growth*”.

We hope the proposed close association with Cena will lead to a new, ambitious TAP, which will seek to meet all identified needs within a short, though realistic, timeframe.

Fire Safety Concerns, Overcrowding & Emergency Powers

The fatal tragedy in Carrickmines in 2015 resulted in an almost immediate flurry of activity to assess fire safety risks on Traveller accommodation.

There have been some improvements since then. The Fire Department has worked with the WTCDP on training, smoke detectors have been delivered, and fire fighting equipment has been installed. However, the serious fire risks, associated with caravans and mobiles too close to one another or to buildings (i.e. less than 6 m) poses a serious, ongoing fire safety risk. Chronic overcrowding and the failure to deliver on Traveller accommodation, aggravates, rather than alleviates, this problem, with growing families cramming into limited spaces. This is particularly pronounced in both Carrickpherish & Williamstown group housing schemes, where there are so many caravans, making it near impossible to keep a safe distance between caravans, and thus creating an ongoing fire risk

The proximity of a high wall, very close to backrooms in Kilbarry Halting Site also continues to pose serious risks in terms of potential fire escape routes. This was identified by the Department at an early planning stage in the late 1990s, but misleading documentation submitted by (then) Waterford Corporation to the Department, led to the site being redeveloped with this serious risk in-situ.

A speedy delivery on the new TAP should alleviate these fire risks. In the meantime, WCCC should use legal, emergency powers to provide basic, safe services to families in need, as suggested in Part 3, Section 20 of the departmental Guidelines.

The new TAP should commit to ***“WCCC will monitor fire safety risks on Traveller accommodation on an ongoing basis. It will address fire risks caused by overcrowding. It will use emergency powers under Section 138 (4) & (5) of the Local Government Act, 2001 in providing emergency Traveller accommodation, where required”***

Traveller-Specific Accommodation (permanent)

The delivery of new, additional Traveller-specific accommodation has been lagging well behind the identified need for same.

Waterford City

Kilbarry – Kilbarry is the largest halting site in Waterford. It was to be re-developed/refurbished under the most recent TAP, and the one before that, but no refurbishment has taken place. Complete re-development is an urgent, outstanding issue, which needs to be prioritised in the new TAP. When Kilbarry does get re-developed, the ongoing fire safety trap with a high wall far too close to the building needs to be addressed too. This issue was raised by the (then) Department of the Environment about 20 years ago, but the issue remains. The existing site should be divided into three smaller Traveller accommodation schemes, side-by-side. The issues in Kilbarry require a complete re-development, as a mere refurbishment would not address these issues.

Green Road – The absence of sufficient Traveller accommodation in Waterford City, led to the development of a temporary site on the Green Road, well over ten years ago. Families there are long-term residents, living in clearly sub-standard conditions. The development of the Green Road site into a group housing scheme for the families of 5 units for the members of one extended family remains an urgent matter. WTCDP welcomes the efforts of the Council to develop a new Traveller specific Group Housing scheme for the residents of the Green Road.

Carrickpherish – The 3–unit Carrickpherish Group Housing Scheme has been overcrowded almost since its inception. Overcrowding has been chronic over the last few years, with families `doubling/trebling-up` in bays, and other encampments being established nearby. WTCDP welcomes the efforts of WCCC to develop an extension site, to develop 6 units adjacent to the existing scheme. This matter needs to be expedited to alleviate the chronic overcrowding.

Williamstown - The 3–unit Williamstown Group Housing Scheme has also been overcrowded almost since its inception. The overcrowding there needs to be addressed through the development of an additional bay for one family, adjacent to the existing scheme and a new, stand-alone group /halting site scheme of about 3 units in a different location for one extended family.

Bilberry - The previous TAP makes little reference to the Bilberry Halting Site. The site is too small and overcrowded, without any proper bays, a communal toilet block, any area for children to play, underneath a dangerous cliff and immediately facing a busy road and river. New Traveller-specific replacement accommodation needs to be built in a different

location for the seven families there. Waterford City Council itself recognised the unsuitability of the location of the Bilberry Halting Site in its very first TAP and committed itself to its closure as a `matter of urgency`. This urgent matter remains some 20 years later.

New Traveller-Specific Accommodation – Apart from the one new Traveller-specific accommodation scheme referred to above for the Green Road there is arguably, a need for three additional, new Traveller group housing schemes/sites in the city, considering current identified needs. There is also a need for strategic planning to accommodate the needs of new family units being formed over the next 5 years.

WCCC need to deliver a further scheme for an extended family, who currently live in standard housing. Some Traveller families were pushed into standard housing in the past, due to the unavailability of Traveller accommodation. Their real needs were not met, and standard housing was an ongoing, temporary solution. With the formal recognition of Traveller ethnicity two years ago, the new TAP now needs to address these shortcomings from the past.

County Waterford

Shandon – The Shandon Halting Site in Dungarvan was due to be re-developed at the time of the statutory review of the TAP in late 2016. However, this re-development failed to materialise, and a complete re-development of the site remains outstanding.

New Traveller-Specific Accommodation – A new 6-unit Traveller Group Housing Scheme was envisaged in the last TAP (but not delivered on). Need for additional Traveller-specific accommodation in the Dungarvan area continues, as can be seen by a long-term encampment close to the Dungarvan ring-road (Minogue`s Furniture) and the identified needs of an extended family (McDonagh family).

The new TAP needs to have clear, annualised targets for the delivery of new Traveller-specific accommodation. In view of the failure to deliver Traveller accommodation in past TAPs, this needs to be prioritised and frontloaded to the earlier part of the new TAP. The plan and the delivery targets need to be ambitious, while allowing for proper consultation and agreements with residents/prospective tenants (in line with NTACC guidelines).

Kilbarry needs to be re-developed as a matter of urgency the development of the Green Road from a temporary facility into proper Traveller accommodation is a priority, as is the Carrickpherish extension.

There is a need for three additional, new Traveller group housing schemes in the City, considering the growth in family units into the future and current identified needs.

In the County, the Shandon re-development is overdue. There is a need for additional Traveller-specific accommodation in the Dungarvan area to meet the needs of a number of extended family groupings.

Ambitious, clear targets need to be set for new schemes, new, additional units, as well as re-development or refurbishment targets. WCCC should commit itself to work with Cena, and other AHBs (Cluid, Respond, Focus, etc.) to progress its delivery on some of the group housing targets.

HAP & Difficulties in Accessing Private Rented Accommodation

Ever increasing numbers of Traveller families are living in short-term, insecure accommodation leading to homelessness. This is allied to difficulties in accessing such private rented accommodation due to discrimination.

This situation is well documented in reports by the ESRI . (“... *there are difficulties in accessing and remaining in private rented accommodation for Travellers, including high costs, discrimination by landlords and the general public, overcrowding due to large family sizes and separation from family and community*” (KW Research and Associates, 2014, quoted in ESRI Report) and the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission (“*Travellers are 22 times more likely than White Irish to experience housing discrimination, controlling for the membership of the other equality groups. This large difference in the experience of discrimination is halved when we control for education and employment status. It decreases further, although only slightly, when we also control for housing tenure. In the full model, Irish Travellers are nine times more likely than other White Irish respondents to experience discrimination in access to housing*” (‘Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland’ IHREC, June 2018). This reality was further strongly highlighted in the recent RTE PrimeTime Investigates TV documentary.

Travellers in insecure accommodation have a continuing accommodation need. This applies to RAS, HAP or any similar accommodation provision.

The new TAP should state: **“WCCC recognizes the difficulties faced by Travellers in accessing private rented accommodation, including HAP. We will provide support to Travellers wishing, or being forced to, access private rented accommodation. Families, who access HAP or RAS as a short-term measure to avoid acute homelessness or severe overcrowding will remain full housing applicants on the Housing List”**

Homelessness

Traveller homelessness, and its unique features, has been well documented recently. The ESRI noted “*One factor likely to be contributing to this overcrowding is the practice of sharing accommodation or doubling up on halting site bays. This, together with location on unauthorised sites, masks what might otherwise be a homelessness problem in the Traveller community, which is linked to inadequate provision of suitable accommodation.*” (‘A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland’, ESRI January 2017), while IHREC observed “*members of the Traveller Community are the most at risk of being homeless – while they represent less than 1 per cent of the Irish population they make up 9 per cent of the homeless population.*” (‘Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland’ IHREC, June 2018).

This issue is as prevalent in Waterford, as it is elsewhere. Standard tenancy agreements prevent homeless Traveller families from parking in the driveway of a relative in a public estate. This necessary practice takes place on Traveller halting sites and group housing instead, where the problem of homelessness and overcrowding is exacerbated, but hidden from public view.

The Annual Count of Traveller Families, November 2018 indicates that there are **30 families sharing housing and 9 families are living on ‘unauthorized sites’**. This means that close to **17.5 % of the overall Traveller population in Waterford (224**

families), are facing the `hidden homelessness` crisis amongst Travellers. This is on top of the 9 families in official homeless accommodation, giving a total Traveller homelessness figure of almost 21.5 % of the overall population at the end of 2018.

In view of the crisis, Travellers need to remain a priority in WCCC`s Housing Allocation Scheme.

The new TAP should commit **“WCCC recognises the particular features of Traveller homelessness, and will provide improved access to its Homeless services, and will work with homeless Traveller families, their representatives and other stakeholders in a spirit of co-operation. Travellers will remain a priority group in terms of WCCC`s housing allocation policy.”**

Evictions & Use of Emergency Powers

Overcrowding and lack of forward planning by WCCC has led to the creation of a number of `unauthorised encampments` on the perimeter of existing sites and elsewhere. City Council should consider the use of trained mediators in the Traveller Conflict & Mediation Service in seeking to avoid legal eviction procedures and avoid unnecessary tensions.

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 is currently being reviewed by an `Expert Group` on behalf of central government, after its failure to provide for Traveller accommodation over the last two decades. A review of the Criminal Trespass legislation is included in this process. In the circumstances it would be highly inappropriate for WCCC to seek to evict families to whom it has a duty of care, especially when it is fully aware of the additional difficulties in accessing social housing and private rented accommodation by Travellers. There should be a moratorium on the use of the Criminal Trespass legislation.

The new TAP should state: **“WCCC will closely work with Traveller housing applicants in order to meet their accommodation needs. It will take measures to seek to prevent homelessness and overcrowding and will only seek to use powers of eviction as a very last resort. WCCC will further consider the use of the Traveller Conflict & Mediation Service in this regard.”**

Caravan Loan Scheme (CLS) & Caravan/Mobile Rental & Emergency Mobile Provision

Along with the continuation of CLS, WCCC should also take cognisance of the limitations of this scheme, as outlined in the Housing Agency report on CLS (<https://www.ntmabs.org/publications/policy/2018/housing-agency-review-of-caravan-loans-report.pdf>) and a report by National Traveller MABS`s `A Small Scale Study into the cost of Mobile Homes/Trailers for the Purpose of Social Housing for Travellers`, which noted that: *“It also raises questions as to whether or not a loan scheme is the most appropriate vehicle for the provision of good quality accommodation to Travellers who are largely in need of social housing and recommends exploration of alternative rental schemes.”* (<https://www.ntmabs.org/publications/development/2018/national-traveller-mabs-mobile-homes-study.pdf>)

We recommend the new TAP Strategy Statement should state ***“WCCC will support individual Traveller families in providing their own accommodation to meet their distinctive needs through administering the Caravan Loans Scheme on behalf of the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government. WCCC will also be flexible in supporting Travellers further to provide their own accommodation, like private sites, and will work with Cena on this issue.*”**

WCCC will continue to provide mobile homes and caravans (connected to services) as part of its social housing rental to Traveller tenants in its halting sites.

WCCC will consider the provision of emergency replacement mobile homes on the basis of needs.”

Accommodation of Choice/Culturally Appropriate Accommodation

Most procedures and practices of WCCC suggest only one direction of real choice in accommodation options for Travellers. Travellers residing in halting sites or unauthorised encampments have the choice of standard housing options. Movement in the opposite direction does not appear to be as easily available, as applicants are considered to be ‘appropriately accommodated’.

Following the formal Traveller Ethnicity recognition by the Irish State in 2017, all accommodation options (including Traveller-specific) need to be available to all Traveller housing applicants, including families living in standard housing, who may have opted for this only through the lack of availability of Traveller-specific accommodation in Waterford.

We recommend the Policy Statement of the new TAP should formally commit WCCC to ***“Traveller-specific accommodation options such as halting sites and group housing will be offered to all Traveller applicants, including those in standard housing and private rented.”***

Nomadism & Transient Accommodation

The previous TAP stated *“Waterford City and County and County Council recognises the culture of nomadism amongst certain sections of the Traveller community.”* and that *“the City and County Council will make every effort to meet the accommodation needs of the Traveller community both permanent and transient”*, but the reality on the ground is very different. There is no transient site (nor any transient bays) in Waterford. Nomadic Travellers are likely to be evicted, using a variety of draconian, inappropriate legal instruments.

It is the considered view of the WTCDP, that transient accommodation should be provided in parallel with badly needed, permanent Traveller-specific accommodation. If transient accommodation was to be provided in the absence of sufficient permanent, Traveller-specific accommodation, it would merely become temporary accommodation (possibly in the long term) for permanent Traveller residents in Waterford, rather than meeting the purpose of facilitating Traveller nomadism. Targets in the new TAP need to include targets for transient sites.

We recommend the new TAP should state: ***“WCCC will pro-actively consider the provision of transient accommodation in parallel with permanent accommodation, mindful of the reality that transient provision will turn into temporary accommodation in the absence of sufficient Traveller-specific accommodation. Targets will be set for this. Furthermore, WCCC will seek to facilitate visiting relatives on Traveller-specific accommodation.”***

Management & Maintenance of Traveller-Specific Accommodation; Structures for the Development of Accommodation Proposals & Good Working Relationships

In line with tenant participation and good estate management principles, the new TAP should commit itself to good practice in the management of Traveller-specific accommodation (Guidelines, Part 3, Section 7).

This section also instructs local authorities to include *“detail the structures for the development of accommodation proposals”*. Good, pro-active consultation guidelines, committed to negotiations and joint decision-making have been published by the NTACC/Department of Housing as guidelines. Application of these NTACC Consultation Guidelines should be as inclusive as possible and should be formally named in the new TAP.

We propose the new TAP Strategy Statement should formally state : ***“In developing Traveller-specific accommodation WCCC is committed to adhere to the NTACC guidelines to the fullest extent possible”***

It should further state: ***“WCCC will carry out refurbishment and enhancement works, where required. It will carry out regular, ongoing maintenance on all accommodation provided to its Traveller tenant.”***

We further recommend: ***“WCCC is fully committed to build good working relationships with Travellers, their representative organisations and other key stakeholders by working in partnership, to promote integrated approaches to meet Traveller needs. WCCC is further committed to a policy of transparency and openness in this engagement.***

Operation of the LTACC

Our experience as members of the LTACC is varied but includes the experience of tokenism. At times relevant information is not made available to the members of the committee, making it difficult for the LTACC to exercise its statutory function as an advisory and monitoring body.

The Report on the Fire & Safety Risks on Traveller Accommodation in Waterford was an example of this poor experience. While the report should have been signed off by the LTACC, as the appropriate Steering Group (as recommended by the national, departmental group), the report was only given to the LTACC retrospectively. (As far back as late 2015, the WTCDP sought to be included in the task group, set up after the Carrickmines tragedy. This request however was declined, with the WTCDP being told it was an exclusively `in-house` WCCC committee.)

The LTACC also struggles with its marginal status within the overall WCCC structures of committees. The fact that LTACC meetings frequently take place in the absence of a

quorum, is an expression of this marginal status. The attendance of WCCC elected members is patchy.

There should be a dedicated section on the operation of the LTACC in the new TAP - as it is the statutory committee relevant to the monitoring and implementation of the TAP. The full potential of the committee, as a forum to resolve issues, has not been utilised. Nor have there been any site visits by LTACC in recent times.

Best practice needs to be embedded in the new TAP, with the LTACC evolving from being a forum for information exchange, to active involvement and meaningful consultation. To adhere to the statutory Terms of Reference for LTACCs, it needs to be more proactively involved in advising on planning, implementation and the review of the TAP. There also needs to be a formalised link with the WCCC Housing SPC, and the LTACC should jointly meet with the SPC at least once a year.

We propose the new TAP should have a separate section on the LTACC in its Strategy, which should formally state: ***“WCCC is committed to best practice in the operation of its LTACC and will implement NTACC guidelines and recommendations in relation to the operation of the committee. The LTACC will be fully involved in monitoring the TAP in terms of its implementation and its planning and will be actively engaged on reviewing the TAP at regular intervals, including funding allocations and funding spent”***.

Approved Housing Bodies

The previous TAP committed *“to engage with Approved Housing Bodies providers who have expressed an interest in developing Traveller specific accommodation proposals ...”*.

Cena is an Approved Housing Body, with a particular brief and expertise in the area of Traveller-specific accommodation. WTCDP welcomes the recent engagement by WCCC with Cena, and we hope this relationship can be developed further.

Respond is another AHB, which has expressed an interest in the delivery of Traveller accommodation in the past (WTCDP contacted Respond in 2016 and showed them around a number of sites in Waterford City). Cluid manage a Traveller-specific scheme in another local authority (as does Respond).

One of the difficulties in the delivery of Traveller accommodation is Section 8 of the planning acts. AHBs offer opportunities to overcome some of the difficulties associated with Part 8. In March 2018 Michael Walsh, CEO of WCCC, made the following observation at an Oireachtas Housing Committee meeting on behalf of the City & County Management Association: *“We need to develop mechanisms or structures so that Traveller Accommodation proposals can be progressed through the non local authority development planning approval processes. The greater involvement of AHB’s for example or the generation of additional traveller led AHB’s for example would facilitate different delivery mechanisms”*.

<https://webarchive.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/housingplanningandlocalgovernment/presentations/Updated-Opening-Statement-CCMA.pdf>

In view of the ongoing overcrowding, and the backlog in the delivery of targets, engagement with Approved Housing Bodies needs to be pro-actively pursued and built upon, and WTCDP welcomes a senior WCCC official's offer to convene a meeting of AHBs to look at this issue in a co-ordinated manner.

We recommend the new TAP should name the Traveller-led Approved Housing/Accommodation Body Cena, and should further state **“WCCC will pro-actively explore opportunities to work with Cena and other AHBs (Cluid, Respond, Focus, etc.) in the delivery of Traveller-specific accommodation, and will convene a meeting of interested AHBs and other stakeholders to pursue this matter.”**

Horse Ownership

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 puts a strong emphasis on Travellers' *“the distinct needs and family circumstances”* (Section 10. (3)(b)), which clearly includes cultural and potential economic activities like horse keeping.

The previous TAP also committed that *“Waterford City and County and County Council would be willing to support proposals for the development of an appropriate horse project”*, though this is another item which has not been progressed. Instead the Council is proposing a virtually total ban on sulkies via a by-law.

Michael Walsh, in his submission to the Oireachtas Housing Committee called for a *“reasoned dialogue on the management of horses by travellers in the urban environment and the provision of facilities for same”* (see above link).

We recommend the new TAP should restate the commitment from the previous TAPs that **“WCCC is willing to support proposals for the development of an appropriate horse project”**, while expanding this to give a commitment **“to work with Traveller horse owners to positively explore this issue, support the identification of suitable parcels of land for stabling, and/or grazing, and to support the development of related initiatives.”**

National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS)

As well as referencing the Traveller Ethnicity recognition in 2017 the new TAP should also make reference to NTRIS, adopted government strategy and policy, especially the Chapter dealing with Traveller accommodation (Actions 126 – 131)

The new TAP should state **“WCCC welcomes NTRIS and is committed to work with central government and local stakeholders on the delivery of its actions, especially regarding Traveller accommodation”**

Human Rights & Equality Impact Assessment

Since the adoption of the previous TAP, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014 has come into force. Section 42 of the Act places a positive duty on public sector bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights, in their daily work. This is relevant to WCCC, especially regarding its role as a landlord and public housing/accommodation provider.

WCCC should undertake a Human Rights & Equality Impact Assessment to assess its compliance with the Act. This should be undertaken regarding the new TAP and should involve key stakeholders like Traveller tenants/applicants and the WTCDP. Impacts in need of assessment should include the operation of the housing list, CBL, HAP, procedures and practices for evictions, homeless registration, estate management, approaches to fire safety risk management, etc. (This is not an exhaustive list)

The preparation of the new TAP should be human rights & equality proofed in advance and in conjunction with key stakeholders. Following this, the new TAP should state : ***“The preparation of this TAP was informed by a Human Rights & Equality Impact Assessment involving WCCC and key stakeholders. WCCC is committed to ongoing impact assessments in this regard to ensure best practice in its Traveller accommodation delivery.”***

EU Race Equality Directive & UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Similar to the IHREC Legislation, the EU`s Race Equality Directive is also of relevance to the WCCC delivery of services (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-07-257_en.htm?locale=en), and WCCC should formally state its commitment to comply with same.

One of the distinguishing features of Traveller families engaging with WCCC as either tenants or applicants, is the much larger cohort of children within families (compared to the majority population). This highlights the particular needs of children, which need to be addressed and taken account of.

The new TAP should state : ***“WCCC is committed to comply with the EU Race Equality Directive in its Traveller accommodation delivery, and also takes particular account of the needs of Traveller children, recognising its obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child”***

Conclusion

WTCDP is somewhat hopeful of improved outcomes and the future delivery of Traveller accommodation, based on engagements with senior housing personnel over the last 18 months. However, we also have the experience of four previous TAPs delivering very little, and certainly falling well short of meeting identified Traveller accommodation needs, year after year, TAP after TAP.

If the hopes of Waterford Travellers and the WTCDP are not to turn into complete disillusionment, then WCCC needs to produce an ambitious new TAP with targets for delivery frontloaded. As past experience has shown, a TAP is only a plan - and if it fails to be delivered on, disillusion and cynicism will be the inevitable consequence. An ambitious, culturally appropriate plan needs to be followed by real and ambitious actions – not talk of actions, some time in the future.

Plans and actions to meet current needs, must be met by plans and actions to meet projected accommodation needs too. Otherwise past inaction will not be remedied, and a situation of chronic overcrowding will just continue (even in newly built accommodation).

WTCDP looks forward to work in partnership with WCCC in the planning and the implementation of an ambitious new Traveller Accommodation Programme for Waterford City & County.

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