

# **COUNTY WEXFORD LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

INCORPORATING

**WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL  
WEXFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
NEW ROSS TOWN COUNCIL  
ENNISCORTHY TOWN COUNCIL**

**DRAFT TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION  
PROGRAMME  
2009 – 2013**

# TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME 2009 – 2013

## INTRODUCTION

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005 – 2008 expired on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008. At the request of the Minister of The Environment, under the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, a new five year Programme is now required.

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 – 2013 contains the targets and strategy of how all County Wexford Local Authorities, will provide Traveller Accommodation from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013.

Once adopted, the Programme shall become official policy of county Wexford Local Authorities for the provision of Traveller accommodation until the end of 2013.

## HISTORY

The assessment of needs has been taken from the general Housing Needs Assessment which was carried out in March 2008 along with any applications which were subsequently received.

All Applicants were asked to indicate their preference of accommodation type and choice of areas. Following this exercise an analysis was made which indicated a need of 117.

## COUNTY PROFILE

County Wexford has a relatively high Traveller population. According to the Annual Count carried out in November 2008 a total of 521 families reside within the county within the categories listed in the table below:-

### TRAVELLERS IN ACCOMMODATION WITHIN COUNTY WEXFORD - Annual Count 2008

Type of Accommodation	Wexford	New Ross	E/corthy	Gorey	Total
L A Accommodation	43	49	67	26	185
L A Halting Sites		3	6		9
Voluntary Housing	1	3	3		7
Private Houses Acquired with L.A. assistance	3	7	12	1	23
Other Private Houses	27	44	38	9	118
Private Rented Accommodation	25	17	27	5	74
<b>OTHER</b>			1	1	2
<b>Total Families with Accommodation</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>418</b>

**TRAVELLER FAMILIES WITHOUT ADEQUATE ACCOMMODATION IN COUNTY  
WEXFORD – Annual Count 2008**

Type of Accommodation	Electoral Area				Total
	WEX	N R	E / CORTHY	GOREY	
Yards of Houses	12	25	15	6	<b>58</b>
Families Legally parked on Private Sites		1	6	3	<b>10</b>
Sharing a Unit of accom. with relatives	12		8	10	<b>30</b>
Roadside Caravans		4			<b>4</b>
No Fixed abode	1				<b>1</b>
<b><u>Total Families without Accommodation</u></b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>103</b>

It should be noted that certain areas have a higher concentration per capita of population indicating traditional areas of traveller settlement. These areas are mainly Enniscorthy and New Ross Town and environs, Wexford, Clonroche, Taghmon and Bunclody.

The table hereunder indicates comparative numbers of Traveller families in County Wexford from 1999 to 2008

**Table A  
Families with Accommodation**

( Table updated to include figures from annual Count 2008 )

Type of Accommodation	1999	2004	2008
Local Authority Housing	88	138	185
Voluntary Housing	1	7	7
Official Halting Sites	20	21	9
Private Houses Acquired with L.A. assistance	13	22	23
Other Private Houses	61	86	118
Private Rented Accommodation	5	20	74
<b><u>Total Families with Accommodation</u></b>	<b>188</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>416</b>

**Table B**  
**Families without Accommodation**  
 ( Table updated to include figures from annual Count 2008 )

<b>Type of Accommodation</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2008</b>
Families parked on Private Sites		<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
Sharing with relatives	20	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>
Yards of Houses		<b>53</b>	<b>58</b>
Roadside	110	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>
No Fixed abode		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b><u>Total Families without Accommodation</u></b>	<b>130</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>103</b>

## REFUSALS

Following request from Wexford Traveller Network, it is proposed to carry out an analysis of the reasons for refusals of reasonable offers of accommodation along with deferrals of offers of accommodation.

## POLICY

It is the policy of County Wexford Local Authorities to provide accommodation in accordance with the indicated preferred choices of the families concerned who normally reside in the county and as far as possible within the areas of choice.

## MAIN PURPOSE OF THE ACT

**The main purpose of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, is:-**

- To provide that each major housing authority must prepare and have adopted a programme of traveller accommodation in their respective areas.
- To provide that in the event of failure of the members to adopt the said programme within the specified time, the County Manager will be required to adopt same by order, within one calendar month.
- To provide for a public notification and consultation process in respect of the preparation of Traveller Accommodation Programme.
- To require housing authorities to take reasonable steps to secure the implementation of Traveller Accommodation Programmes.
- To provide for the establishment of National and Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees
- To extend statutory financial support for the provision and management of Traveller accommodation.
- To extend the range of options available to Travellers
- To enhance the powers available to Housing Authorities to control unauthorised temporary dwellings

- To ensure that relevant development plans specifically include objectives concerning the provision of Traveller Accommodation.
- To extend to Traveller specific sites the powers available to Local Authorities under the Housing (miscellaneous provisions) act 1997, relating to anti-social behaviour and estate management.

## ACTIVITIES UNDER PREVIOUS PROGRAMMES

County Wexford Local Authorities have been positive towards the provision of accommodation for Travellers prior to, and during previous programmes on a broad spectrum which not only includes traveller specific accommodation but also standard local authority housing.

Traveller specific projects are indicated in the table hereunder:–

Type	Location	No
<b>Group Housing Scheme</b>	Drumgoold,	14
	Bunclody	7
	Ballagh (Clonroche)	4
	Clonleigh	2
	Palace	2
	Cherryorchard	8
	Hewittsland	4
	Single houses	5
	House purchase	3
<b>Halting Sites</b>	New Ross	12
	Bunclody	6
	Marshalstown	2
<b>Totals</b>		<b>69</b>

It is accepted that among the successes there will always be an occasional failure such as Ballagh which has been reduced to 1 traveller specific house.

The temporary site in Marshalstown has been closed due to the re housing of both resident families in Marconi Park group scheme.

## THE APPROACH

- It is intended to provide the necessary required accommodation over the five year period of the programme.
- It is intended that the major element of accommodation will be provided under the relevant standard housing programme in accordance with the stated choices of the applicants.
- It is envisaged that elements of traveller specific requests will be accommodated through vacancies in existing units.
- In addition to the obligation on adopting a Traveller Accommodation Programme, County Wexford Local Authorities intend to take all necessary steps and use all available means to implement the programme during its currency.

## PROGRESS UNDER PREVIOUS PROGRAMMES

To date County Wexford Local Authorities have provided 105 units of accommodation for travellers from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

Two families have acquired accommodation with the assistance of the Local Authorities.

One Family provided their own accommodation under the affordable sites initiative.

Some offers of accommodation were met with refusals for various reasons however such families were not penalised when being considered for subsequent accommodation.

## SUMMARY

At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008 of the order of 105 families have been accommodated by County Wexford Local Authorities since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005 and it is the intention that 117 further families will be accommodated by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013. This puts into perspective the seriousness of the commitment which is being given towards Traveller Accommodation in County Wexford, past and present and to be continued into the future.

## ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS 2009 – 2013

In carrying out the assessment all applications were considered and assessed in accordance with the relevant criteria. Applications from families from existing permanent accommodation were considered on grounds of overcrowding, special needs etc.

Private Rented accommodation is considered as “short term” and families in such accommodation are still considered as eligible applicants on grounds of insecurity of tenure.

Families in Rental Accommodation Scheme (R A S) accommodation are considered long term, however applications will be considered on grounds of need. At 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2008, 1 Traveller is under R A S contract with another 2 being processed.

The total assessment of need consists of 113 applications plus 4 transfers giving a total of 117

Of the 113 the following are their stated accommodation preferences.

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS			
ELECTORAL AREA	AREA OF CHOICE	NO	
ENNISCORTHY	ENNISCORTHY RURAL	10	
	BUNCLODY	18	
	URBAN	11	
TOTAL		<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>
GOREY	Town and environs	10	
	Rural	6	
TOTAL		<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>
NEW ROSS	TOWN	13	
	N R RURAL	16	
TOTAL		<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>
WEXFORD	WEXFORD TOWN	14	
	WEXFORD ENVIRONS	8	
	RURAL	7	
TOTAL		<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSESSMENT</b>			<b>113</b>

The analysis of choice of type of accommodation for the total need 117 is indicated on the following table:

TYPE	N R	WEX	E/CORTHY	GOREY	TOTAL
STD HSG	19	34	44	9	<b>106</b>
TR GROUP	3	0	1	0	<b>4</b>
SP NEEDS	2	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
TRANSFERS	3	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
AFF' HSG	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
OTHER	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>117</b>

It is noted that of the 117 applications, 106 have expressed standard housing as their choice of preference. This trend indicates a change among the younger Traveller generation who have a desire for social integration.

### **NEW FAMILY FORMATION 2009 – 2013 (4%)**

An estimated 23 families will also require accommodation during the five-year period, 2005 – 2008, in addition to those currently in need of accommodation.

This number is calculated on the base figure of	117
Plus a projection of 4%	23
<b>Total projected need</b>	<b>140</b>

Continuous assessments of needs will be required throughout the period of the programme in order to take account of -

1. Changing circumstances and locations of Travellers in the County,
2. Progress in relation to the provision of accommodation.
3. Patterns of Persistent refusals of suitable offers of accommodation

### **ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME**

- The Accommodation Programme will include land owned by Travellers especially with the regard to provision of accommodation on Specific Sites.
- Local Authority Housing includes standard housing in schemes and single houses where appropriate.
- Private housing includes private houses acquired by Travellers from their own resources or with the assistance of loans from Wexford County Council.
- Accommodation provided in accordance with the analysis of needs shall be deemed to meet needs at present.

## TEMPORARY / EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

The provision of adequate Traveller accommodation as outlined in the Assessment of Needs is essential in order to fully cater for the accommodation needs of Travellers during the period of the Programme.

County Wexford Local Authorities will allocate the available resources to provide permanent, temporary, emergency or other accommodation required to accommodate Travellers in Co. Wexford as is deemed necessary in accordance with the adopted procedures for assessment of need.

### Private Rented Accommodation

A very noticeable trend in County Wexford during the past nine years is the large increase in Travellers moving to private rented accommodation:-

- In 1999 there were 5 travelling families living in private rented accommodation.
- In 2004 this figure has risen to 20 families. .
- In 2008 this figure has risen to 74 families.

Despite the perception of ongoing difficulties of Traveller families accessing this form of accommodation, this trend would seem to indicate that private rented is now the first and most popular choice of accommodation for young Traveller families in County Wexford, and is available more so in the past few years

It is accepted that despite the upward trend there is still difficulty with travellers obtaining Private Rented Accommodation.

It is the policy of County Wexford Local Authorities to provide whatever assistance and support can be made available for such families.

### TABLE INDICATING TRAVELLERS IN PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION

ELECTORAL AREA	2004	2008
ENNISCORTHY	1	27
GOREY	5	5
WEXFORD.	11	25
NEW ROSS	3	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>74</b>

### Temporary Accommodation

Temporary accommodation will only be provided on an emergency short term basis

## **Emergency Accommodation**

Details and conditions regarding the provision of emergency accommodation in accordance with S.24 of the Traveller Accommodation Act are outlined in Appendix I.

It is intended that wherever possible any emergency accommodation which may be required, shall be provided in conjunction with temporary halting site accommodation proposals in order to utilise land and resources to the maximum effect.

### **Voluntary Housing.**

County Wexford Local Authorities wish to indicate their willingness to work with the voluntary Organisations on specific developments at suitable sites in accordance with established need.

Approved Voluntary Housing Organisations will be required to have regard to the provisions of the Traveller Accommodation Programme when providing accommodation.

Accommodation which is provided by Voluntary Housing Organisations will be allocated in a similar manner to the Council allocation of new houses. Travellers who express a desire for Voluntary Housing shall be included in referrals to voluntary housing groups.

Traditional locations, native areas, current locations of Traveller families, and their preferred choice of location will be important factors when assessing sites for the successful accommodation of Travellers in the Voluntary Schemes.

## **TRANSIENT ACCOMMODATION**

There is no identified need for a transient site. However having regard to National Policy regarding the provision of transient sites, it is an objective of County Wexford Local Authorities to examine the feasibility of development of a transient site. However this objective cannot be developed without consultation and agreed policy with the other Local Authorities in the South East Region.

### **Traveller Economy and Equine facilities.**

The provision of such facilities will be researched during the life of the Plan.

## **ESTATE MANAGEMENT & RESIDENT PARTICIPATION**

The positive effects of good estate management should not be underestimated in achieving progress with the provision and maintenance of Traveller accommodation.

One of the most effective instruments will be the Traveller Accommodation Programme, which deals with many aspects of Traveller accommodation and will help alleviate some of the fears and worries of members of local communities and Travellers.

The negative effects of fears and concerns, if not addressed, or the lack of information in relation to the need to provide Traveller Accommodation, may result in slower progress in achieving the implementation of the Programme. It is essential that adequate arrangements are made for the management and maintenance of Traveller accommodation in order to ensure that the accommodation and surrounding area are maintained in good condition and that the families are successfully located there. Caretakers will be provided for temporary and permanent halting sites and group housing scheme accommodation where necessary.

Members of local communities must be reassured that the proposed accommodation in their areas will be adequately maintained and managed in order to encourage acceptance for the proposals.

In addition, regulatory powers are also available to ensure that Traveller accommodation is successfully managed in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, Litter Act 1997, etc. The maintenance and management of the accommodation will also be dealt with in conjunction with the letting arrangements.

A sense of responsibility and ownership of bays or houses must be encouraged among residents of the accommodation in order to reduce the level of management and maintenance required for the various sites and schemes.

Support will be required from the Caretaker of the accommodation, Local Authority staff involved with Traveller accommodation, Travellers support representatives and any other interested parties in order to ensure that Traveller accommodation is well maintained. Consultation will be required with individual families in this regard, particularly in new accommodation.

Travellers in Standard Local Authority Housing will be encouraged to take part in resident associations and attend meetings and voice their opinions. It is noted that one particular resident association has a very active Traveller participation who voluntarily serviced open spaces before the actual formation of the group

### **ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

Travellers will also enjoy the benefit of, and be subject to Anti Social Behaviour legislation. Anti Social Behaviour is defined as – Any behaviour that is so significant, and persistent, that is likely to cause harm, loss or injury to any person. Anti Social Behaviour can be classified as persistent harassment, threats, and acts of violence towards a person over a period of time.

The Anti Social Behaviour unit is available to:–

- Offer a structured system for all members of the public to report incidents of anti social behaviour in a confidential and secure environment
- Assist in the early prevention of Anti Social Behaviour.
- Improving co-ordination and co-operation between County Wexford Local Authorities and the Statutory Agencies

- Provide a better quality of life for all residents of Local Authority accommodation
- Travellers shall be encouraged to use the anti social behaviour process to prevent any incidents of such behaviour towards them.

## **POLICY RE UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS ON PUBLIC LANDS**

County Wexford Local Authorities shall use the relevant powers of enforcement only where deemed necessary. In all cases all factors relevant to the situation shall be taken into consideration before any enforcement procedure is taken.

## **THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS**

The County Wexford Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) is in operation and shall meet regularly on a three month basis to advise on Traveller issues, The LTACC membership is constituted as follows.-

<b>County Wexford L T A C C</b>	
Wexford County Council	4
Wexford Borough Council	1
Traveller Representatives	5 (1 vacancy)
Wexford County Council Chairman	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>

In addition 3 outside bodies take part in an advisory capacity to the five Traveller representatives.

The official review of this representation will take place in conjunction with the 2009 Local Elections.

LTACC is a very purposeful committee whereby policies on Traveller issues are discussed and advice conveyed to the Local Authority regarding dealing with such issues.

County Wexford Local Authorities has a competent team of Social Workers to provide backup, training and support for Travellers in Co. Wexford waiting for accommodation or for those provided with accommodation of their choice. Support programmes will be arranged for families who are allocated accommodation prior to and following their entry to accommodation.

County Wexford Local Authorities recognises the need for training and support for Traveller families, in order to ensure that the accommodation which is provided will be suitable and effective in resolving the accommodation needs of these families.

The provision of assistance from any interested parties, in relation to training and support for Traveller families requiring accommodation and those provided with accommodation, will also be welcomed and co-ordinated by the Council.

### **Meeting distinct needs and family circumstances of Travellers**

The individual family circumstances and distinct needs of Travellers families will be ascertained by the Council when specific accommodation for these families is being arranged. This may involve consultation between the Traveller families, Council staff and Traveller support representatives, as required.

The design of Traveller accommodation will generally be in accordance with the Department of the Environment and Local Government guidelines. Group Housing Schemes will also be designed to take into account Traveller families lifestyles as far as practicable while at the same time having regard to the need for effective accommodation management.

Basic amenity and community facilities will be provided where feasible and as required to cater for social, educational and training needs, in association with the provision of accommodation, in order to improve the quality of life - particularly for the future benefit of young Travellers.

### **OTHER INITIATIVES:-**

Other accommodation options available through County Wexford Local Authorities to travellers are as follows:-

- House Purchase Loans.
- House Construction Loans
- Shared Ownership
- Affordable Housing
- Affordable Sites
- Housing Aid for Older People
- Housing Adaptation Grant for people with disability
- Mobility Aids Housing Grant Scheme.

Travellers shall avail of any of the foregoing services providing the necessary criteria are fulfilled. It is the policy to provide whatever assistance possible to Travellers in applying for such services to the relevant Sections.

It is noted that Travellers have already availed of parts of this wider range of accommodation options and every encouragement shall be given to avail of such services.

### **BACK UP SERVICES – OTHER AGENCIES**

The Social Worker team assist with the accommodation of Travellers and in relation to the following matters:-

- (a) Co-ordinating the various statutory services for Travellers and liaise these services with those of any voluntary organisations engaged in work on behalf of Travellers.
- (b) Arranging for referrals to relevant organisations catering for needs of Travellers requiring special assistance and assisting Travellers, as necessary, in obtaining statutory Health and Welfare services.
- (c) Advising and assisting Travellers in a general way on the care of children, diet and clothing and encouraging school attendance.

This work and liaising will help to prevent difficulties arising in the course of providing Traveller accommodation. Staff involved in the provision of Traveller accommodation will be available to provide assistance in the event of any difficulties arising with regard to the accommodation.

Difficulties in relation to the maintenance of the accommodation must be raised initially with the Caretaker or immediate Council staff involved in the maintenance of the accommodation.

Inspections will be carried out and repairs completed as necessary for maintenance problems as in the case of Local Authority standard housing repairs.

Family or social issues will be dealt with by the Social Worker or relevant support staff. The Social Worker or other support staff involved in Traveller Accommodation may visit Traveller families regularly in order to help resolve difficulties, which may arise from the new accommodation.

Staff may hold discussions and meetings with members of the local community regarding any related difficulties, which may arise following the provision of accommodation in their locality. Appropriate action will be taken to resolve difficulties as soon as possible, following an assessment of the particular situation by the Council.

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee should also be available to meet representatives of local groups and discuss difficulties, which may arise as a result of the provision of accommodation for Travellers.

## **REVIEW PROCEDURE**

The County Wexford Local Authorities will hold an annual review of progress in relation to the implementation of the Accommodation Programme.

The review will be carried out following the end of the calendar year and will include the number of families accommodated, the number of units and type of accommodation provided, the number of sites selected for Traveller accommodation during the current year, steps taken to secure the implementation of the Accommodation Programme and the activities of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. A statutory review of the Programme will be carried out after three years.

## TARGETS / TIMETABLE

Taking into consideration that the demand consists entirely of standard housing it is difficult to project accurate individual annual targets. It is the target of this programme to provide 117 units of accommodation over a five year period.

There is no provision for Traveller Specific accommodation as the request of 106 applicants is for standard Local Authority accommodation. However the need in the New Ross area for a Traveller Group Scheme will be monitored and if the needs cannot be met through casual vacancies in the existing group scheme, the development of a new Traveller Group Scheme will be considered during the time frame of the programme.

Initial annual targets are thereby set at a rate of 20% which is 23 per year. It is envisaged that the actual output may fluctuate during each individual year but the overall figure shall be aspired to.

The anticipated expenditure for this programme will be €17.5 million having regard to current costs. As this accommodation is not Traveller Specific Accommodation it will largely be funded under the overall Social Housing Programme.

All County Wexford Local Authorities will consult regularly to ensure that the needs outlined in the Programme are fulfilled.

The consultations will include regular meetings between the various Local Authorities staff and Councillors, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, and other bodies providing accommodation for Travellers in order to:

- (i) Co-ordinate accommodation development.
- (ii) Agree timescales for the provision of the accommodation.

Adopted by,

Wexford Borough Council - 10<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

Wexford County Council - 9<sup>th</sup> March 2009.