



Limerick County Council

Traveller Accommodation Programme

2005 - 2008

Adopted by Limerick County Council on 28
February 2005

Limerick County Council
Comhairle Chontae Luimnigh

Accommodation Programme for the Traveller Community (2005 - 2008)

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Introduction

The 1998 Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act requires that each housing authority prepares and adopts a Traveller Accommodation Programme. Limerick County Council adopted such a programme on 31 January 2000 in respect of the period ended 31 December 2004 and an amendment to same was adopted on 23 June, 2003. It is now necessary to prepare and adopt a new programme for the county to cover the four years ending on 31 December, 2008. While this document primarily consists of the provisions of this new programme, it is also appropriate to acknowledge the achievements of Limerick County Council in addressing the accommodation needs of the Travelling community in the county since the adoption of the first programme on 31 January 2000.

These achievements include the following:

- A total of 94 Traveller families have been offered permanent accommodation by the Council since the adoption of the first Traveller Accommodation Programme.
- The overall targets included in that programme have been exceeded by the Council.
- A total of 21 meetings of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee have taken place. (to 21 January, 2005)
- An extensive review of the programme was carried out in 2003 and an amended programme that included 4 material changes was adopted by the Council on 23 June, 2003.
- Three capital projects that provided housing to 6 families were completed and three other capital schemes that are likely to benefit over 30 families are significantly advanced and works on site should commence in 2005.
- An official at Senior Staff Officer level has been assigned by the Council's Housing Section to assist in the implementation of projects aimed at addressing Traveller accommodation issues.

It is intended that this new Traveller Accommodation Programme will build on this success and that further progress will be made in meeting the accommodation needs of the Travelling community of Co. Limerick. In preparing this programme the Council carried out a detailed assessment of the current accommodation needs of Travellers in the county and any projected needs that are likely to arise during the period of the programme. As part of the preparation, an extensive consultation process was also engaged in by the Council. This involved meetings with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and members of the Council. Contact was also made with adjoining local authorities, health boards and other organisations that have an interest and an involvement in the welfare of Travellers. By way of advertisements in the local press, written submissions were invited from members of the public and any group that might wish to make a contribution towards the preparation of this programme. As a result of this process a Traveller Accommodation Programme in respect of the four year period ending on 31 December 2008 was prepared and what follows are its provisions.

Section One

Policy Statement

- It is the policy of Limerick County Council to provide appropriate accommodation for indigenous Traveller families who request it, and who, pursuant to generic Housing legislation and the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 are considered to be in need of accommodation.
- Applicants for accommodation will be assessed and considered in the context of this programme and Limerick County Council's Scheme of Letting Priorities.
- Indigenous families are those who originally come from the administrative area of Limerick County Council and have been resident in the area for twelve months or more prior to application. It is necessary that one of the applicants come from the administrative area of Limerick County Council.
- It is also the policy of this Council that where feasible the preferred option requested will be considered but if this is not possible, other accommodation options will be considered and may be offered to individual families. If this is refused by individual families, without good reason, their application for accommodation may be given a reduced priority or be closed and they may not be considered for future accommodation.
- Limerick County Council will implement this programme based on proper consultation with individual families, members of the public and community based voluntary organisations where appropriate, other statutory agencies, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, the voluntary sector and other relevant bodies. Regard will be given at all times to the statutory obligations of Limerick County Council and to the feasibility of recommendations and suggestions made in relation to the implementation of the programme.
- New applicants must meet the requirements outlined above and if applying from the roadside or an unofficial site they must provide evidence that they have pursued other accommodation options. If other options are available as interim solutions Limerick County Council has to be satisfied that a family's decision to opt for the roadside or an unofficial site is reasonable taking individual circumstances into account. If Limerick County Council is satisfied that applicants have no other option, an application from a roadside or an unofficial site will be approved if the applicants are considered to be in need of assistance and meet the other qualifying criteria.

- It is the policy of Limerick County Council that priority will be given to the provision of permanent accommodation for indigenous families and that the provision of emergency/temporary services will be considered only in exceptional circumstances.
- Emergency/temporary services will not be provided, if an offer of accommodation is refused, or to families who already have been accommodated or who have the resources to provide their own accommodation.
- It shall be the policy of Limerick County Council that consideration will be given to the provision of transient sites in consultation with adjoining local authorities.
- Having regard to the special circumstances in Rathkeale, specific site provision will continue to be provided in Rathkeale to meet the needs of local families who lead a transient lifestyle and for those who reside permanently in the town. Provision of accommodation in Rathkeale will be for local Rathkeale families only.
- Limerick County Council will endeavour to support the Traveller economy and this will be considered when planning specific Traveller accommodation. Direct provision for the keeping of horses will not be made available by Limerick County Council.
- Persons who own horses are obliged to comply with the requirements of the Control of Horses Act 1996 and the Control of Horses Bye - Laws 1998.
- Limerick County Council will assist families prior to and after the allocation of accommodation and training will be provided in conjunction with Limerick County Council's pre-tenancy training programme. The Council in conjunction with the Mid Western Health Board will seek to develop a family support system to assist such families and Traveller families will be assisted and encouraged to participate in tenant participation programmes.
- Traveller accommodation will be managed on the same basis as the Council's policy for the maintenance and the management of its housing stock. It is intended to establish an inclusive management structure for Traveller specific accommodation involving tenants, caretakers and Council staff.
- Accommodation provided will be to a high standard and maintenance of this accommodation will be provided in accordance with the Council's policy in relation to the general housing/accommodation stock.

- Tenants will be required to meet their responsibilities as outlined in the tenancy agreement entered into between themselves and the Council and the "Tenants Handbook".
- It is the policy of Limerick County Council that tenants who fail to comply with the requirements of these agreements, including the provisions relating to anti-social behaviour, will be requested to surrender their accommodation or else legal proceedings may be initiated against them.
- Illegal encampments will be dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation as appropriate. Prior to families being asked to move or vacate an area which is not authorised for caravan parking the Housing Department will investigate the circumstances of the family to establish if they are included in the accommodation programme.
- Nothing in this section will prevent consideration being given to an application for accommodation from Traveller families who have resided in the area for two consecutive years or more.

Section Two

Accommodation Provided

Since the adoption of its first Traveller Accommodation Programme in January 2000 Limerick County Council has made significant progress in addressing the accommodation needs of Travellers in the county.

In October, 2004 ninety four families were offered permanent accommodation by the Council since January 2000. Of these, 71 families accepted the offers and 23 families refused same. These 94 offers consist of a combination of standard Council housing, halting site provision and loans that allow families to purchase their own houses. A further 27 families were allocated loans by the Council to acquire their own caravans. Four families were provided with temporary halting site accommodation and 20 families avail of short stay halting site accommodation in Rathkeale each year.

These figures do not include the 145 families who were provided with such assistance prior to 2000 details of which are included in the Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme (2000 - 2004).

Standard Council Housing	66
Halting Site Provision	17
Single Houses	7
Group Housing	<u>1</u>
Total	91

Abbeyfeale	8
Askeaton	11
Ballysimon	1
Castletroy	7
Kilmallock/Bruree	8
Lansdowne Bridge	8
Newcastle West	3
Patrickswell/Mungret	4
Rathkeale	<u>41</u>
Total	91

Section Three

(a) Assessment of Need

In October, 2004 there were 91 Traveller families seeking

assistance with accommodation from Limerick County Council. The results of the Statutory Assessment of Need for Housing Accommodation in March 2002 indicates that the net need for housing is 676 households (including Traveller applicants). While this latter figure is almost three years old at this stage and is due to be updated in March, 2005 it indicates that the 91 Traveller applicants referred to above represent approximately 14.5% of the total net accommodation need in the county.

In terms of their preferred categories of accommodation details are as follows:

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The locations that these 91 families have expressed a preference for are as follows:

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* Due to their nomadic lifestyle some of the applicants were not available for assessment in October 2004 and some trader applicants may not meet the qualifying criteria to be approved applicants

Section Four

Strategy

Limerick County Council will, within the period of this four year programme, endeavour to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers who are approved housing applicants. Recent statistics indicate that Limerick County Council provides accommodation for approximately 20% of housing applicants annually and the target for accommodation provision for Travellers during the course of this programme is that 25% of approved Traveller applicants will also be offered accommodation each year.

Limerick County Council will actively promote the full range of social housing options for Traveller families which are set out hereunder:

- Standard Local Authority Housing
- House Purchase Programme
- Group Housing
- Shared Ownership Scheme
- Residential Caravan Sites
- Caravan Loan and Grant Scheme
- Annuity Loans/Traveller Grants
- Disabled Persons Grants/Essential Repairs Grants
- Rural Cottage Programme
- Improvement Works in Lieu of Re-housing
- Affordable Housing Scheme
- Voluntary or Co-operative Housing

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) will meet at least four times annually and will be regulated by standing orders. A written annual report on the activities of the LTACC, progress made and issues arising will be prepared and presented to the Council's Housing Strategic Policy Committee (SPC).

Policy issues pertaining to Traveller accommodation will be considered by the LTACC and where necessary reports will be presented on these issues to the Housing SPC.

Within four months of adoption of the programme an agreed consultation process regarding specific Traveller accommodation projects will be adopted by the LTACC.

Officials of Limerick County Council will ensure that applications for funding from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government will be made and that Traveller accommodation needs are included in the Housing Action Plan for County Limerick

Consideration will be given to the accommodation needs of Traveller families when preparing the Council's Housing Strategy for the county. Likewise the issue of Traveller accommodation and the provisions of this programme will be taken into account when adopting the County and Area Development Plans.

Limerick County Council will develop and deliver its accommodation programme in an integrated manner and will consult and liaise with other service providers via existing structures such as the County Development Board, Traveller Health Unit etc.

The provision and management of accommodation for Travellers by the voluntary housing sector will be encouraged and supported by Limerick County Council. Indeed, discussions on the possibility of accommodation being provided in such a way took place during the course of the 2000 - 2004 programme between the Limerick Travellers Development Group and Limerick County Council.

Needs will be assessed and prioritised on a geographical basis within the county but families will be encouraged to consider areas other than their first preference with a view to creating a balance in the Council's housing settlement policy and improving the options available to applicants themselves.

On the basis of the assessment of need and projected need, proposals will be contained in this accommodation programme with the intention of addressing these needs as far as is possible, bearing in mind the availability of resources to do so, legal requirements and restrictions, co-operation from applicants, and, where possible, community support.

The Traveller Accommodation Programme adopted by Limerick County Council will be reviewed within three years from the time it has been adopted or at any other time as directed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government. An annual report on progress made will be presented to the LTACC and the Housing SPC.

Support will be given to community based initiatives that will facilitate Travellers and the settled community to work more closely together and that will enable Travellers to have an active role in their local communities.

Families who own their own property will be encouraged to improve these properties if necessary and the Council will actively use the appropriate statutory provisions to deal with areas of dereliction.

Halting Site Provision
Standard Council Housing
Total

8 Families
<u>4 Families</u>
12 Families

Section Five

Proposed Accommodation Programme

a) Bruff Electoral Area

The assessment of need for the Bruff electoral area indicates that there are 12 families seeking accommodation. Their preferred accommodation options are:

The halting site applications will be met by the extension of the existing Halting Site in Clondrinagh. The existing bays will also be refurbished. In total 14 families will be either provided with new or improved halting site accommodation.

Land has been acquired to facilitate the extension to the site and plans are at an advanced stage for this development.
This development should be completed in 2005.

It is also anticipated that in the region of four Traveller families in this electoral area will need assistance from the Council in terms of meeting a housing requirement. This assistance is likely to involve the provision of standard Council housing or the advancement of loans by the Council to these families to acquire their own houses. These families are from the general Patrickswell/Mungret area.

The previous Traveller Accommodation Programme included a proposal on the provision of a transient site at an agreed location to address the issue of roadside parking by Traveller families in the area between the city environs and Patrickswell and Mungret. This proposal is being retained in this new programme and will be considered during the period of same.

Halting Site Provision
Group Housing
Total

7 Families
1 Family
8 Families

(b) Castleconnell Electoral Area

The assessment of need for the Castleconnell electoral area indicates that there are 9 families seeking accommodation. At the time of the assessment these applicants stated that their preferred accommodation options are as follows:

The halting site preference of 7 families will be met by the provision of such accommodation in Castletroy.

A permanent 7 bay halting site will be constructed on Council owned lands in Newcastle, Castletroy. This development should be completed in 2005.

The group housing application is from a family residing in the unofficial halting site in Ballysimon. However, the review of the previous Traveller Accommodation Programme which was adopted by the Council on 23 June, 2003 included an amendment whereby the provision of group housing would not proceed in Ballysimon as the families living there stated they did not wish to be considered for such housing and wished to provide their own housing instead. With regard to the family that still wishes to be considered for group housing it is proposed to consider other social housing options that are more appropriate.

There has been a pattern of roadside parking by Traveller families in the Castletroy, Annacotty and Lisnagry areas and the provision of a transient site at an agreed location in this area needs to be considered to address this issue. This proposal was also included in the previous Traveller Accommodation Programme.

(c) Kilmallock Electoral Area

Standard Local Authority Housing	6 Families
Halting Site Accommodation	<u>2 Families</u>
Total	8 Families

Standard Local Authority Housing	11 Families
Total	11 Families

The assessment of need for the Kilmallock electoral area indicates that there are 8 families seeking

accommodation. Their preferred accommodation options are:

It is proposed that during the course of the 2005 - 2008 Traveller Accommodation Programme, the six families who applied for standard Council housing will be allocated same in the Kilmallock/Bruree area.

Two families have applied for halting site accommodation in Kilmallock. These applications will be considered in the context of the existing halting site in Kilmallock. It is the Council's intention to improve the accommodation on this site pending the agreement of the families resident there.

Families who own their properties and who are considered to be in need of assistance with accommodation will be assisted to improve or develop these properties where deemed appropriate.

(d) Newcastle Electoral Area

The assessment of need for the Newcastle electoral area indicates that there are **11 families** seeking accommodation. At the time of the assessment these applicants stated that their preferred accommodation option was for **standard Council housing**. Eight such families wish to be housed in Abbeyfeale and three in Newcastle West. It is proposed that these families will be provided with such accommodation during the 2005 - 2008 programme.

Where appropriate families will be assisted to purchase their own houses via Shared Ownership or Annuity Loans.

Standard Local Authority Housing	49 Families
Single Housing	<u>3 Families</u>
Total	52 Families

(e) Rathkeale

Electoral Area

The assessment of need for the Rathkeale electoral area indicates that there are 52 families seeking accommodation. Their preferred options are as follows:

Plans are underway to provide 20 Council houses at Hogan's Field, Rathkeale. It is envisaged that this development will be completed in 2005.

Of the 49 families that have applied for Council housing, 41 of them are from the town of Rathkeale. Due to their nomadic lifestyle, some of these applicants were not assessed by the Council at the time of the assessment carried out in October, 2004. However, a number are likely to be approved and will be accommodated in the development in Hogan's Field referred to above. The remaining approved applicants will be considered for the tenancies of other Council houses that become available for letting from time to time and halting site accommodation. Other social housing options will also be looked at by the Council in order to meet the accommodation needs of those Travellers in Rathkeale who will not be offered housing in Hogan's Field. It is also important to note that the provision of accommodation for Travellers in Rathkeale always demands special consideration bearing in mind the significance of the town to the Traveller way of life, the ability of some families to possibly provide their own accommodation, the transient lifestyle of many of its Traveller residents and the overall impact of this issue on the town and the local community.

Families who can provide their own accommodation will be encouraged to do this and where appropriate will be offered assistance and support by the relevant sections of the Council.

Limerick County Council will offer advice and support to Travellers who wish to provide private housing developments in the town of Rathkeale.

Short stay halting site accommodation in the existing halting site will continue to be provided to local Travellers who lead a transient lifestyle

With regard to the other 11 families, 8 of them have applied for standard Council housing in Askeaton and the other 3 have requested that they be accommodated in that area in houses on single sites. This will require the purchase of houses or the construction of

houses if their preference is to be met. It is intended to meet these needs during the course of the 2005 - 2008 Traveller Accommodation Programme.

Section Six.

Summary

This programme outlines the existing and projected need for Traveller accommodation in Co. Limerick for the four year period, 2005 to 2008. It also outlines the policies in relation to Traveller accommodation and the strategy for implementation. Limerick County Council will work with Travellers, Traveller representatives, local communities and other agencies to deliver the programme and provide high quality accommodation for members of the Travelling community.

The programme is based on consultation and a recognition of the needs of the Travelling community, the views of local settled communities and statutory requirements as outlined in various legislation.

The implementation of this programme requires a commitment from all involved to work together and to commit to agreed proposals. The proposals contained in the programme are also subject to the necessary funding being available.

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