

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LIATROMA  
LEITRIM COUNTY COUNCIL**



**TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION  
PROGRAMME (DRAFT)  
2009 – 2013**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Statutory Requirements**

In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 and as directed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Leitrim County Council has prepared a five year Programme for the period 2009 – 2013, subject to periodic review, for the provision of Traveller Accommodation in the County.

Under the 1998 Act, Leitrim County Council has certain obligations in relation to the preparation, adoption and implementation of a Traveller Accommodation Programme. In summary, Leitrim County Council is required: -

- To prepare and adopt by the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2009, an Accommodation Programme to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers, in County Leitrim, in consultation with Travellers.
- To provide for a public notification and consultation process in relation to the preparation of the draft traveller accommodation programme or an amendment to or replacement of the programme.
- To take reasonable steps to secure implementation of the programme.
- To include objectives concerning Traveller accommodation in the County Development Plan.
- To review the programme by 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2011.

### **1.2 Public Consultation**

Leitrim County Council in preparing this programme undertook an extensive consultation process with all stakeholders. Notice of the intention of the Council to prepare the Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme was given to the following:

- Adjoining Housing Authorities
- Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Mohill Traveller Development Group
- Rosebank Traveller Development Group (Carrick-on-Shannon)
- Inter Agency Traveller Services Group
- Housing Strategic Policy Committee
- Health Service Executive West

Submissions were also invited and a total of four submissions were received concerning the preparation of the draft Programme from the following:

- Rosebank Traveller Development Group (Carrick-on-Shannon)
- Mohill Traveller Development Group
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Health Service Executive West

These submissions have been noted and taken into consideration in the preparation of the Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 - 2013.

### **1.3 Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee**

The Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee meets on a quarterly basis to advise Leitrim County Council on the provision and management of accommodation for Travellers. The Committee facilitates consultation with local Travellers on the preparation of Traveller Accommodation Programmes. Implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme is monitored by the Committee and issues arising are addressed. Membership comprises four elected Traveller Representatives, six Members of Leitrim County Council and two Council Officials.



## **2. Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005 – 2008**

The Traveller Accommodation Programme for the period 2005 – 2008 was adopted on the 10 January 2005 and reviewed in accordance with Section 17 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 in December 2007. It was not considered necessary to significantly amend or replace the 2005 – 2008 Programme.

The principal accommodation proposals contained in the Programme were:

- Redevelopment of Shannonside View Halting Site, Carrick-on-Shannon
- Development of 2 Group Houses in Carrick-on-Shannon.
- Provision of Standard Local Authority Housing Accommodation

The targets set out in the programme have been achieved despite a number of significant issues arising during the course of the programme.

### **2.1 Accommodation Provision under the 2005 – 2008 Programme**

**Kilboderry** : Two group houses were provided at Kilboderry, Carrick-on-Shannon in 2005 and 2006 under the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

**Standard Housing**: Five families were appointed to standard Council houses in Carrick-on-Shannon. A further six offers of standard local authority housing accommodation made to Traveller families were refused during the period of the Programme.

**Shannonside View**: The major redevelopment project at Shannonside View, Carrick-on-Shannon was completed in October 2008. The provision of eight group houses and six halting site bays at the existing fourteen bay halting site addressed the accommodation needs of families

seeking Traveller-specific accommodation during the 2005 - 2008 Programme. In consultation with the Travellers, the houses and bays were developed on a two phase basis. The tenants' transition from their old accommodation has been successful. The timescale for completion of the project was delayed due to the illegal occupation of four of the Shannonside View accommodation units in 2007 and areas of the site in 2008.

## 2.2 Accommodation Units Provided

Table 1.

Year	Group Housing	Standard Housing	Permanent Bays	Total
2005	1	-	-	1
2006	1	-	1	2
2007	4	1	3	8
2008	4	4	4	12
<b>Total 2005– 2008</b>	10	5	8	23



### **3. Assessment of Need/Projected Need**

#### **3.1 Assessment of Need**

In accordance with Section 9 of the Housing Act 1988, as amended, and Section 6 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, Leitrim County Council has identified the accommodation needs of Traveller families to be met during the period of the programme from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2013.

This assessment relates to the existing accommodation need and the projected need estimated to arise across the range of Traveller accommodation options including group and standard housing, permanent residential sites for caravans and transient sites.

Travellers, Traveller Representatives, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, the Mohill Traveller Development Group, the Rosebank Traveller Development Group (Carrick-on-Shannon) and the Leitrim Inter Agency Traveller Services Group were consulted when carrying out this assessment. Submissions received from the Rosebank Traveller Development Group, the Mohill Traveller Development Group and the Health Service Executive together with annual and monthly census data since 2000, assessments of housing need and all other relevant accommodation information have been taken into account in completing this assessment.

In addition, to ensure that a comprehensive identification of needs was obtained, Leitrim County Council invited each of the County's Traveller family units to participate in the assessment process. Thirty one families attended individual consultations and outlined their specific accommodation preferences.

The number of approved Traveller family applicants seeking housing accommodation at 31 March 2008 was 24 representing 7% of overall housing need as identified through the Statutory Assessment of Housing

Needs. The number of approved Traveller households seeking housing accommodation as assessed in September 2008 in preparing the draft Traveller Accommodation Programme was 26 – this number includes three transfer applicants (1 from Carrick on Shannon and 2 from Mohill). Net need is thus 23 family units.

### 3.2 Projected need

The Council is obliged to make an assessment of the number of Traveller households who will require accommodation within the lifetime of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 – 2013. The census returns since 2000 have shown a significant increase in Leitrim's Traveller population. This was primarily due to the increasing number of emigrants returning to Carrick on Shannon and has stabilized since 2003. Details of these Census figures are outlined in the Table 2 below.

Table 2:

Year	Private Rented House	Standard LA House	Group House	Permanent Halting Site	Sharing with Relatives	Unauthorised Encampment	Total
2000	0	0	2	20	0	0	22
2001	0	0	2	21	8	1	32
2002	0	0	2	19	10	0	31
2003	1	0	3	21	21	3	49
2004	9	3	3	22	11	0	48
2005	16	3	4	20	8	0	51
2006	19	2	5	16	13	0	55
2007	22	3	9	12	11	0	57
2008	24	7	13	13	4	0	61

Sixty one Traveller family units are currently resident in County Leitrim (in the South of the County). Fifty one families live in Carrick-on-Shannon and ten reside in Mohill.

It is difficult to predict how many of the new households formed will remain in the County during the next five years. However, based on the assessment of needs, Traveller census data and the projected population increase it is estimated that an additional seven Traveller families will seek accommodation assistance from Leitrim County Council. The number of units and the range of accommodation required will be kept under review on an ongoing basis.

Travellers are accommodated in permanent halting site bays, group housing, standard housing and in the private rented sector. There are no families living in the County in unauthorised sites or roadside encampments.

### 3.3 Current Accommodation

Table 3.

<b>Permanent Halting Site Bay</b>	<b>Group Housing</b>	<b>Standard Local Authority Housing</b>	<b>Private Rented Housing</b>	<b>Sharing with Relatives</b>	<b>Total</b>
13	13	7	24	4	61

The expressed accommodation preference of the majority of Traveller housing applicants is for standard local authority housing. It is anticipated that this need will be met, over the period of this Accommodation Programme, through the provision of standard Local Authority housing and through the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

### 3.4 Traveller Specific Accommodation

- Bedroom extensions are required at two of the new Shannonside View, Carrick on Shannon service blocks to meet the specific accommodation needs of persons with a disability. These will be prioritised for provision subject to available funding.

- It is proposed to provide a group housing scheme in Tawlaughtmore, Mohill to meet the accommodation needs of the Mohill Traveller families as identified in the assessment of needs.

## **4. Policy**

Leitrim County Council endeavours to meet the needs of Travelling people using the range of accommodation options available to the Council – including group and standard housing and permanent residential sites for caravans. This takes place in consultation with the Travelling community, the settled community and with the various other statutory and voluntary agencies delivering services to Travellers.

Traveller applicants will be considered in conjunction with all other eligible applicants for suitable accommodation vacancies arising in accordance with the Council's scheme of letting priorities.

### **4.1 Travellers' Distinct Needs**

Recognising Travellers' distinct culture and needs, Leitrim County Council has provided twenty six units of Traveller specific accommodation, in consultation with local Travellers and Traveller Support Groups. Facilities for visitors to tenants of permanent Traveller specific accommodation units were provided under the 2004 – 2008 Programme. The design of any future schemes will continue to reflect the needs of Travellers and will also take account of technical, fire and public safety requirements. All accommodation provided will comply with the directions and guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

### **4.2 Permanent Accommodation**

The Council will have regard to the full range of housing options available in the provision of permanent accommodation for Travellers including - Standard lettings in Local Authority Estates; Lettings in Voluntary housing Schemes; Group Housing; Residential Halting Sites. Applications for accommodation will be examined and reports requested from other Local Authorities and statutory agencies as necessary in line with Leitrim County Council housing application assessment procedures.

#### **4.3 Transient Sites**

The incidence of roadside or unauthorised encampments is relatively infrequent in Leitrim with no discernible pattern arising. Facilities for visitors to tenants of permanent Traveller specific accommodation have been provided by Leitrim County Council. It is considered that transient accommodation suitable to meet the needs of nomadic families would best be provided on a regional basis with appropriate caretaking, maintenance and management services delivered.

#### **4.4 Unauthorised Encampments**

Unauthorised encampments present difficulties in relation to health and safety and can be hazardous to road users. Leitrim County Council will consult with relevant parties to address issues arising. The Council will however utilise powers available under the legislation to remove caravans/temporary dwellings when deemed appropriate and necessary.

#### **4.5 Emergency Accommodation**

Existing procedures for meeting emergency housing needs will be used for emergency Traveller housing needs. This may include sourcing temporary emergency accommodation or the provision of a caravan or mobile home subject to the availability of a suitable site.

#### **4.6 Rental Accommodation Scheme**

The Rental Accommodation Scheme provides Leitrim County Council with an additional option to meet the long-term accommodation needs of Travellers.

#### **4.7 Caravan Loan Scheme**

Leitrim County Council proposes to continue to administer the Caravan Loan Scheme. Current policy allows for the granting of loans for caravans up to €6,350 with grants of up to 10% available for the purchase of a new/second-hand caravan. Loans are repayable over a

period of 3 - 5 years. The amount of loan sanctioned is dependent on each applicant's ability to pay, which is determined by the Local Authority

#### **4.8 Back Up Services and Support**

Housing Welfare and Tenant Liaison Services are provided for tenants and housing applicants by Leitrim County Council. The Social Worker works with the Travelling Community to co-ordinate services and supports and assists in relation to tenancy sustainment as required. A Caretaker is employed to deal with maintenance issues in relation to Traveller specific accommodation units. In addition the Housing Staff are available to deal with issues arising.

The Mohill and Rosebank Traveller Development Groups also play an important support role in this context. County Leitrim Partnership's Traveller Development Work is significant and their assistance in the delivery of Traveller Accommodation services is acknowledged.

#### **4.9 Inter-agency approach**

It is the policy of Leitrim County Council to adopt an inter-agency approach in the provision of services to Travellers. The Inter-Agency Traveller Services Group, established in Leitrim in 2006, works in consultation with Travellers to enhance the provision of services and supports and to secure better outcomes for Travellers across the County.

## **5. Strategy Statement**

### **5.1 Implementing Authority**

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

- Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Housing and Corporate Services Strategic Policy Committee
- County Leitrim Partnership
- Traveller Development Groups
  - Mohill Traveller Development Group
  - Rosebank Traveller Development Group
- HSE West
- An Garda Síochána
- Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs
- St. Joseph's Training Centre
- Department of Education and Science
- Voluntary Housing Groups

It will be the responsibility of Leitrim County Council to seek the co-operation of the above groups to ensure the implementation of the Programme. The Traveller Accommodation Programme will be implemented in conjunction with the Inter-Agency Traveller Services Action Plan for County Leitrim.

Progress in relation to the Plan will be monitored by the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.

### **5.2 County Development Plan**

Provisions contained in the Draft Leitrim County Development Plan 2009-2015 are sufficient to realise the Traveller accommodation

objectives set out in the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 - 2013.

### **5.3 Development of Proposals /Implementation of Programme**

Where accommodation is being provided directly by Leitrim County Council the accommodation proposal will be subjected to a local consultation process with Travellers and the Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee; consultation and approval by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and adherence to requirements of the Part VIII Planning Procedure.

The Council will avail of the full range of housing options available having regard to expressed accommodation preferences.

Assistance will be given to Voluntary Bodies in the provision of Traveller Accommodation through the provision of Sites if available and required and/or through the Capital Assistance or Loan and Subsidy Scheme as appropriate.

In relation to standard housing the need will be met through a combination of casual vacancies arising in existing housing stock and additional units delivered through the Social Housing Programme.

### **5.3 Resources**

The successful implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 – 2013 will be dependent on the provision of funding (capital and revenue) from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

### **5.4 Management and Maintenance of Accommodation**

The effective management and maintenance of accommodation is crucial. Traveller accommodation will be managed on the same basis as all other housing stock. Leitrim County Council will endeavour to ensure

maximum tenant participation to manage and maintain accommodation schemes to a high standard.

Serious problems have arisen in Shannonside View and in Tawlaughtmore in relation to illegal dumping of waste and the Council were required to carry out major 'clean ups' to address health and safety issues arising. Antisocial behaviour on the Tawlaughtmore Halting Site resulted in the vandalism of three of the nine service blocks and the communal areas. Leitrim County Council has convened mutli-agency meetings and inter-agency intervention is taking place with the tenants and the Traveller Development Group to resolve this situation.

Environmental enforcement proceedings and relevant legal powers regarding antisocial behaviour will be invoked as necessary to deal with problems arising in Leitrim County Council accommodation units and schemes.

## **6. Accommodation Programme 2009 - 2013**

Leitrim County Council will keep the number and range of accommodation units required under review. It is considered that the existing and projected need (which is determined to be 30 family units) up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013 can be met through the following proposals:

### **Permanent Residential Sites for Caravans**

No applications have been received in relation to the provision of permanent halting site accommodation through the Assessment of Needs carried out in 2008.

### **Group Housing:**

Under the first Traveller Accommodation Programme, 2000 – 2004, two group houses and five halting site bays were refurbished in Tawlaughtmore, Mohill. Four additional permanent bays were also provided. The site has been extensively vandalised since completion of this project. The expressed preference of the majority of the residents is for group housing and the Council proposes to provide a group housing scheme to meet this need. It is considered that any redevelopment works proceeding would be subject to full co-operation from the local Travellers and ongoing compliance with tenancy obligations.

### **Standard Council Housing:**

It is proposed to appoint six families to standard Council houses during the period of the Programme.

### **Private Rented Housing**

Twenty four families are currently accommodated in the private rented sector with rent supplement assistance. The Rental Accommodation Scheme will be used as an additional option in the provision of standard housing to meet the long term needs of Travellers requiring accommodation assistance.

### **Disability Needs**

It is proposed to develop bedroom extensions at two halting site service blocks to meet accommodation requirements for persons with a disability in Shannonside View, Carrick-on-Shannon

## **7. Measures for Implementation**

Leitrim County Council will report regularly on developments and progress on the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme and the following will have a monitoring role:-

- The Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- The Mohill Traveller Development Group
- The Rosebank Traveller Development Group
- Leitrim Inter Agency Traveller Services Group
- Housing Strategic Policy Committee
- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

### **7.1 Targets**

1. Develop a group housing scheme with family type houses in Tawlaughtmore, Mohill subject to agreement with relevant parties, funding approval and project planning permission
2. Allocate six standard Council houses to Traveller families in the Carrick-on-Shannon and Mohill areas.
3. Develop bedroom extensions at two halting site service blocks to meet accommodation requirements of persons with a disability in Shannonside View, Carrick-on-Shannon
4. Additional standard housing needs arising will be provided for under the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

These targets are summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4:

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
<b>Group Houses Project Planning/ Development</b>		3	3			6
<b>Local Authority Standard Housing</b>	1	1	2	1	1	6
<b>Specific Accommodation Bedroom Extensions</b>		1	1			2
<b>Rental Accommodation Scheme</b>	4	8	8	4		24
<b>Totals</b>	5	13	14	5	1	38

The above proposals address the net need as assessed together with the projected need as estimated and also address the expressed preferences of existing tenants for group housing and extensions to existing accommodation.

## **8. Conclusion**

Leitrim County Council acknowledges the commitment, co-operation and support of local Travellers, Traveller Representatives, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, the Mohill Traveller Development Group, the Rosebank Traveller Development Group and members of the Leitrim Inter Agency Traveller Services Group in assisting the Council in the delivery of its Traveller Accommodation Programme.

The Council will continue to work with Travellers, their representatives, Traveller Support Groups, Leitrim Inter Agency Traveller Services Group and other relevant agencies in the provision of accommodation for the Travelling Community.

The targets set out in this Programme have been developed having regard to the existing and projected need for Traveller accommodation. The delivery of this programme requires a commitment from all stakeholders to work together and is also dependent on the availability of necessary funding.

**Report of Community, Cultural and Enterprise Development  
Strategic Policy Committee Meeting  
held 16<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

**1. Discuss provision of Broadband in County Leitrim.**

The SPC was briefed on information on the National Broadband Scheme, work that has been done on identifying broadband weaknesses, mapping broadband infrastructure and awareness raising events, as well as proposed actions on increasing availability of broadband and raising awareness of the existing broadband infrastructure. (Report Attached)

**2. Discuss Preparation of Library Development Plan for County Leitrim for 2008 – 2013.**

The Library Committee and the Community, Cultural and Enterprise Development SPC are holding a joint meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008 to discuss the Library Development Plan for County Leitrim for 2008 – 2013 and it is hoped to bring the Draft Plan before the December Council meeting. Any comments that a member may still wish to make in relation to the proposed plan, should be forwarded immediately to Sean O'Suilleabhain, County Librarian.

**Signed:**

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**Cllr Thomas Mulligan  
SPC Chairman.**

### **National Broadband Scheme**

In Summer 2007, the Minister for Communications, Energy, Marine and Natural Resources (DCENR) announced the launch of a procurement process for the Government's new National Broadband Scheme.

The stated aim of the National Broadband Scheme (NBS) was "*to provide broadband services to the areas of Ireland that are currently unserved and ensure that every reasonable request for broadband in these unserved areas is met. This Government believes that everyone, irrespective of where they are, should have access to high quality competitively priced broadband services. This tender will help to make that happen. The knowledge worker cannot be confined by geographic location and should be free to live and work outside of the cities and towns.*" (DCENR Press Release, 2/5/2007).

Leitrim County Council reviewed the coverage maps for Leitrim which the DCENR were using in the tender process. This map showed that Leitrim had, according to the DCENR maps, almost full broadband coverage with a very small proportion of the County left to be covered by the NBS. The final provider to deliver the NBS is due to be selected in November 2008. Having considered the map as prepared, Leitrim County Council decided some local action was needed.

### **Identifying Broadband Weaknesses**

A survey was carried out across the County to assess the level of broadband availability. The results of the survey were as follows:

- 1,282 surveys returned
- 900 had no broadband (70%)
- 382 had broadband (30%)
- Of those who had no broadband the reasons for this were as follows:
  - o 71% stated it was unavailable to them.
  - o 21% stated they did not require it.
  - o 7% stated it was too expensive.
  - o 1% stated other reasons.

Leitrim County Council met with DCENR officials in December 2007 to outline the results of the survey and to discuss how the DCENR maps had been compiled. The DCENR provided a list of broadband providers operating in Leitrim. They also suggested that the survey could equally be suggesting that people were not sufficiently aware of the broadband services available in the County. Leitrim County Council mapped the broadband availability in the county, based on information supplied by providers either directly or through their websites. This information was made available at a Broadband Stand at the Leitrim Recruitment and Relocation Expo in the Landmark in February 2008.

### **Proposed Actions**

Leitrim County Development Board established a Regional Infrastructure Group with neighbouring counties in 2006 to jointly look at infrastructure issues impacting on the counties involved. At the September 2008 meeting, which focused on broadband, the following actions were agreed subject to funding:

1. The 3 counties (Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo) plan to survey approximately 30 households in blackspot areas of each County to test broadband availability and speed using outside broadband expert.
2. Survey a number of businesses in each County to assess satisfaction levels with availability, cost and speed of broadband.
3. Prepare questionnaire to be circulated in libraries in the 3 counties to internet users.
4. Prepare a joint report on the findings to be sent to the Dept. of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

In addition, Leitrim County Council plan the following actions:

5. Check with providers in the County to see if they have increased their coverage range.
6. Hold a broadband awareness event in Ballinamore and Manorhamilton on October 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>.
7. Do follow up survey to those who identified that broadband was unavailable to them in order to establish any further progress

These actions were endorsed by the SPC as appropriate for Leitrim at this stage.