



Kilkenny County Council

Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh

Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme

2025 – 2029

September 2024

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Introduction

County Kilkenny is an important and historic county located in the south east of Ireland occupying an area of 2,062 square kilometres. Kilkenny's population as per Census 2022 is 104,160. This is an increase of 5% or 4,298 people between 2016 and 2022.

There were 637 travellers in County Kilkenny in census 2022 compared with 557 in 2016, an increase of 14%. This included 314 females and 323 males. The average number of persons per traveller household in Kilkenny was 4.3 at census 2022.

The socio-economic profile of the Traveller population is an important factor in determining accommodation needs.

According to Kilkenny County Council 2023 Traveller Families Annual Estimate 211 traveller households were residing in the county, 178 in standard local authority housing, group housing and private houses, 2 families were residing in private rented accommodation, 16 were sharing with family/ friends, 5 on halting site accommodation and 10 on the roadside/ private gardens/yards/fields.

In terms of Traveller Specific Accommodation, there are 2 Traveller Group Housing Schemes (in St. Catherine's, Wetlands and Saint Mary's, Hebron)

Kilkenny County Council is the single local authority for County Kilkenny. Since the implementation of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, County Kilkenny has four Municipal districts for local government which are:

- Callan/Thomastown
- Castlecomer
- Kilkenny City
- Piltown

Section One Role of the Implementing Authority

Role of Implementing Authorities

Kilkenny County Council is the statutory authority with responsibility for meeting the accommodation needs of the Travelling community and for the implementation of the TAP.

Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC)

The Traveller Accommodation Act (1998) established Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees, which meets quarterly or as deemed necessary by the members. Membership reflects interested parties involved in the provision of Traveller Services and includes representatives from the Travelling Community, Elected Members, Council Officials and representatives from Voluntary and Statutory agencies. One of the main duties of the LTACC is to regularly review progress and monitor the delivery of the accommodation programme.

Voluntary Housing/Accommodation Bodies

Kilkenny County Council works with the voluntary sector for the provision of accommodation for Travellers. Approved housing bodies (AHB) play a vital role in the provision of Traveller Accommodation in Kilkenny.

Section Two Review of Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 - 2024

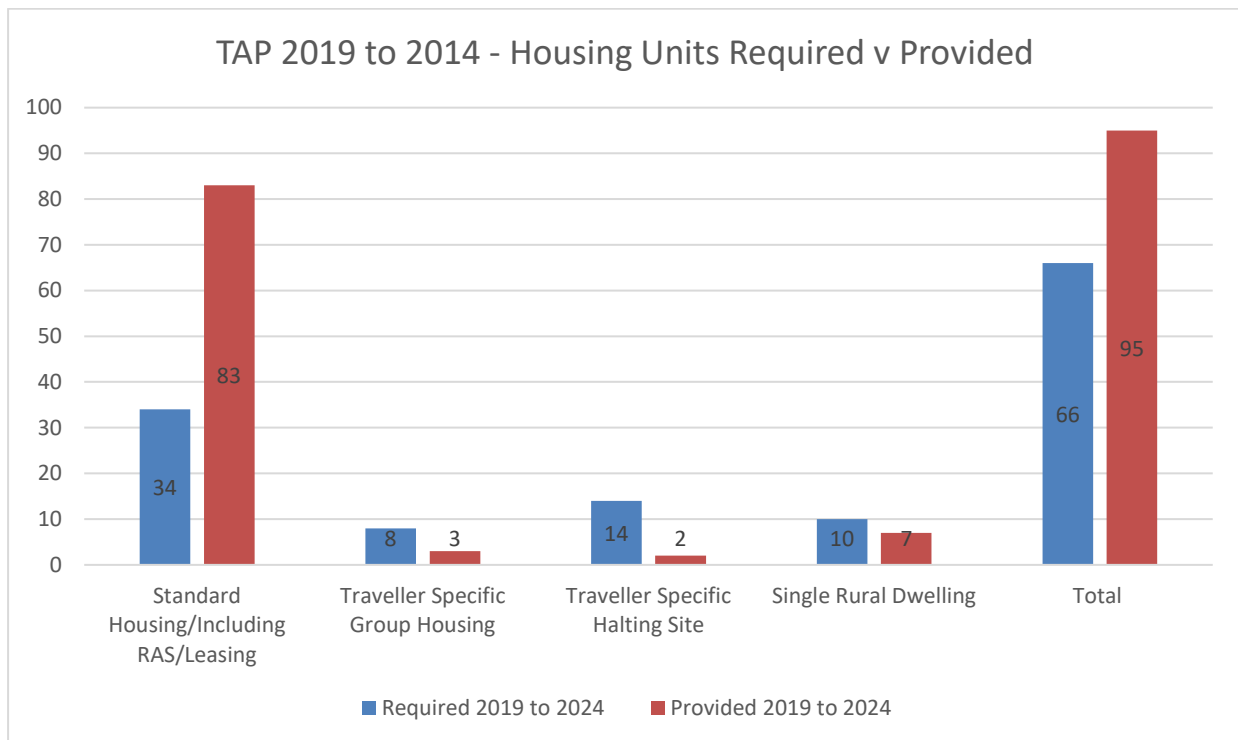
In preparation for the previous TAP, an assessment of housing need was carried out by Kilkenny County Council to establish the existing and projected accommodation needs for the Travelling Community of County Kilkenny.

The requirements for Kilkenny for period 2019 to 2024 were as follows;

| Standard Housing/Including RAS/Leasing | Group Housing | Halting Site | Single Rural Dwelling | Total |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| 34 | 8 | 14 | 10 | 66 |

During the duration of the programme, Kilkenny County Council provided 95 units of accommodation (as of July 2024).

| Standard Housing/Including RAS/Leasing | Group Housing | Halting Site | Single Rural Dwelling | Total |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| 83 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 95 |



During the Programme some of the traveler specific projects undertaken by the Council include:-

- Construction of a new house on an infill site at St Mary’s Crescent, Group Housing Scheme
- Full renovation and extension of a house at Skeaghacloran Callan, including provision of additional demountable accommodation to the rear.
- Purchase, full upgrade and special needs adaptation of two 4 bedroom bungalows in Rosbercon and Kilmoganny
- Purchase, full refurbishment and adaptation works to a 3 bed house (formally RAS scheme) in Kilkenny City, in order to retain tenants in their existing community.
- Purchase and upgrade of a 3 bed rural bungalow in the Callan Area
- Purchase and upgrade of a 4 bed rural bungalow in the Piltown Area
- Provision of 3 new demountables and associated bay upgrade works at St Marys halting site.



During the 2019 to 2024 period the delivery of standard social housing was significantly increased, which allowed for 6 allocations to Travellers in newly constructed housing schemes.

Section Three Legislation and Policy

The Traveller Accommodation Programme has been prepared in accordance with the provisions set out in the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998. The Act provides a comprehensive legislative framework which requires Local Authorities to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers within their functional area. It also plays an integral role in promoting social inclusion and equality for the Travelling Community.

The plan will be implemented having regard to all relevant housing and other legislation and will take into consideration the requirements of relevant policies and departmental guidelines and circulars.

All allocations will be on the based on meeting the reasonable accommodation needs of the applicant, having regard to the Allocation Policy, Choice Based Letting, Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, Tenant Handbook & Housing Maintenance Policy, and the resources available to the Council.

Housing for All Strategy is a multi-annual and multi-billion plan which aims to improve the Irish Housing System and deliver more homes of all types for people with different housing needs. The Council will work within the policies outlined in this Strategy.

Section Four Policy Statement

In 2017, the Travelling Community were officially recognised by the Irish State as an ethnic minority. Kilkenny County Council recognises Travellers as an indigenous ethnic minority community which has their own unique heritage and culture and that it is reasonable to identify as both a Traveller and Irish.

Accommodation Application

It is the policy of Kilkenny County Council to provide appropriate accommodation for Traveller families who apply, and who, pursuant to generic housing legislation and the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 are considered to be in need of accommodation.

All applications will be considered in accordance with the Allocation Schemes and Scheme of Letting Priorities of the County Council. Kilkenny County Council has recently introduced Choice Based Letting (CBL), which is a new system for the allocation of vacant Council and AHB properties. All approved housing and transfer applicants will be granted access to this system and they can express an interest in vacant properties that are suitable for their needs. Support and advice will be given to any applicants who may encounter any difficulty in accessing this system.

Applications must be made by means of the standard social housing application form. Where the applicant has particular family circumstances or a disability, the Housing Section will consider such issues when carrying out the assessment of housing need. Advice and assistance will be provided to applicants and/or their nominated representatives, if requested by the applicant, to address any difficulties that may arise in completing the application process.

Where feasible, the preferred option in terms of the type of accommodation requested will be considered. If this is not possible, other accommodation options that meet their needs will be considered and may be offered to individual families.

Requests for transfers will be considered where a vacancy occurs within an existing accommodation unit and the transfer will meet the applicant's long-term housing needs.

The range of housing options that are available to Travellers include, Standard Social Housing, Traveller Group Housing, Traveller Halting Site, Private House Ownership (Affordable Housing & Private Purchase), Cost Rental, Housing Assistance Payment Scheme, Long Term Leasing, Loans and Grants. It is the policy of the Local Authority, that social housing applicants will only be considered for rural housing in exceptional circumstances.

The Homeless Services section will also assist those experiencing homelessness and cases will be managed with the assistance of the Homeless Action Team. Travellers who present as homeless will be afforded the supports contained in the South East Region Homeless Action Plan.

Following the required public consultation Kilkenny County Council will endeavor to implement this programme.

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

It is the policy of the County Council to adopt an inter-agency approach in the delivery of Traveller services. New accommodation provision and/or support services will be provided as part of the interagency strategic approach to service delivery.

Families will be assisted prior to and after the allocation of accommodation and training will be provided via pre tenancy meetings held with each new tenant. Every attempt will be made through the support of other agencies, to provide additional appropriate supports where this is deemed necessary and where resources allow.

Travellers are a target group under the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programmes. SICAP can provide supports to Traveller Community Groups and individuals seeking return to work and employment. SICAP is implemented in Kilkenny by Kilkenny Leader Partnership under the supervision of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

Housing applicants have a right of appeal to the Senior Executive Officer or nominated officer in the event of refusal of housing support.

Management and Maintenance of Accommodation

Well maintained accommodation and estates enhance the quality of life for tenants. Traveller accommodation will be managed on the same basis as the Council's policy for the maintenance and the management of its housing stock.

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. The requirements of

National Guidelines will be considered in the construction, maintenance and management of Traveller accommodation.

Once accommodation units are provided, it is critical that sufficient supports be given to the tenants to ensure that they can meet the terms of their tenancy in full. Whilst the management of Traveller specific accommodation will remain the primary responsibility of the local authority, the Council will undertake to ensure that:

- Travellers accommodated by the Council will be encouraged to develop a sense of ownership and where feasible, to actively participate in the site management and tenancy committees. The Council acknowledges and will continue to facilitate the important role that outside agencies can play in promoting good estate management in accommodation.
- A Tenancy agreement setting out the terms and conditions of tenancies will be required for all tenancies. In the interests of all tenants living on the site/in the area, the Council will enforce the content of the tenancy agreement and each tenant has a responsibility to ensure that the terms of the tenancy agreement are met in full. Where tenancy Agreements are being broken repeatedly, the Council will implement appropriate remedies up to and including proceedings for repossession of the property against the offender/s. If a repossession order is granted, housing supports will not be available for a period of two years.
- All Travellers will be expected to attend pre-tenancy training courses irrespective of accommodation type provided.
- The Council will ensure that there is on-going liaison between the relevant housing staff, voluntary organisations and tenants of the sites to ensure effective management.

- Where a waste management service is provided it is expected that the tenants of the site will co-operate fully with the service providers. Where tenants do not co-operate with the service or abuse the service provided by allowing the unreasonable accumulation of waste on open spaces the service will be removed and appropriate action taken under breach of tenancy legislation.
- It is the policy of the County Council that failure on the part of tenants to comply with the requirements of the tenancy agreement, including provisions relating property maintenance and anti-social behaviour, may lead to such tenants being required to surrender their accommodation. If necessary, legal proceedings will be initiated including an application for an exclusion order or a repossession order. If an exclusion or repossession order is granted, housing supports will not be available for a period of two years.
- A tenancy agreement outlining the terms and conditions for all tenancies including the payment of differential rent and tenant responsibilities around conduct and maintenance will be entered into by all tenants as part of the allocation process.
- Persons who own horses are obliged to comply with the requirements of the Control of Horses Act, 1996 and Local Government Act 2001, animal welfare legislation and the Control of Horses Bye - Laws 1998 and 2015. The local authority can not provide land, or facilities for the keeping of horses as part of any accommodation provided under this plan.
- Where there is an unauthorised encampment or temporary dwellings the Council will investigate the circumstances and act where appropriate to do so in accordance with the relevant legislation.

- Where social housing has been provided to and accepted by any family or household it will be the view of the local authority that the assessed housing need of that family or household has been met. Where that accommodation is abandoned, unoccupied for an extended period of time or surrendered by the family or household no further social housing supports will be provided for a period of two years. This includes consent to place any temporary accommodation at other local authority owned properties or sites.

Transient Sites

Under S.10 3(c) of the Act, a relevant housing authority, in preparing an accommodation programme, must consider the needs of transient Traveller families.

In carrying out its assessment of need Kilkenny County Council has not identified any evidence of transient need in the county and there is therefore no basis to propose the development or provision of a transient Traveller site in Kilkenny.

Section Five Assessment of Need/ Projected Need

A review of the Social Housing Waiting list was carried out to determine the requirements of all applicants who wished to identify as a traveller. This Summary of Social Housing Applications is carried out annually by the Local Authority.

As of June 2024, there were 28 open applications on the waiting list for members of the travelling community. A further 13 families are currently in social housing and approved for transfers. An attempt was made to contact all applicants on the waiting list by Kilkenny County Council and they were invited to participate in an assessment process, however, we were unable to contact all applicants. In total, 12 of the 28 open applicants completed the assessment of needs process. Kilkenny County Council also gave prior notice of their intention to carry out an assessment of the needs of travellers in their administrative area to:

- Adjoining Local / Housing Authorities
- HSE
- Approved Housing Bodies
- Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Such other Community Bodies as the Housing Authority consider appropriate including Local Traveller Organisations

Of the 12 families that attended for assessment 7 stated a strong preference for Standard Social Housing and 5 applicants expressed a preference for traveller specific accommodation. It was noted that the majority of families who expressed an interest in traveller specific accommodation have a preference for a permanent traveller halting site / Group Housing. The main reason given for this preference is the need for family support and cultural preference.

Transfer Applications and Disability Need

There are 13 open transfer applications from travelling families for the following reasons:

- Disability/Health/Compassionate – 9

- Overcrowding – 4

The existing housing need is 41, that is 28 open applications and 13 approved transfer applications. Based on the families interviewed as part of the assessment 58% of families demonstrate a preference for standard local authority housing and 42% for traveller specific accommodation. On that basis the preferred housing option of 24 approved applicants is standard local Authority housing and 17 approved applicants in traveller specific accommodation. Housing need will be prioritized over preference where families are in need of immediate solutions.

Projected Need

The projected need was estimated based on the available information regarding household composition and ages of the household members of housing applicants, tenants of Local Authority, Approved Housing Bodies and owner occupiers.

Much of this information was garnered from i-House (Local Authority IT system) and following consultation with Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, local knowledge and previous assessments of needs and annual estimates and census data from 2022.

The following table shows the number of persons who will reach the age of 18 during the lifetime of this programme.

| Age | Number of Persons |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| 14 | 8 |
| 15 | 10 |
| 16 | 7 |
| 17 | 8 |
| 18 | 9 |
| Total | 42 |

In determining projected need, Kilkenny County Council had regard to the following:

- Every person over 18 years will not apply for housing/accommodation
- Some will leave the county
- A number of the 42 may marry or form relationships with each other

It is not possible to accurately predict the projected need during the duration of this programme. However, a proportion of the 42 persons reaching the age of 18 during the lifetime of this plan will apply for accommodation. It is not possible to establish the accommodation preference of these individuals. However, it is envisaged, based on the current housing status of the majority of travelling families in County Kilkenny the preference will be split between standard Local Authority Housing and Traveller Specific Housing at an approximate break down of 58% standard local authority housing and 42% traveller specific accommodation.

It is proposed that Kilkenny County Council would make provision for 17% of the projected need to require accommodation solutions during the term of the TAP. This results in a projected need for an additional 7 units of

accommodation with a preference for 4 standard local authority housing and 3 traveller specific accommodation.

The overall target for the Council is 48 (41 existing assessed housing need and 7 projected need) of accommodation to be provided for existing and new family households during the course of the TAP, with an annual target of 9 to 10 units.

It is proposed to develop a capital delivery pipeline of construction and acquisition to meet the assessed housing need of 48 traveller families or households. The preference for 28 standard local authority houses and 20 units of traveller specific accommodation will be considered in all proposals to provide accommodation.

It is accepted that the delivery of traveller specific accommodation is challenging from a location, design, planning and construction point of view. Therefore the delivery of such accommodation will have a longer delivery time. While every effort will be made to meet both the assessed need and preference of traveller households housing need will be prioritized over preference to prevent homelessness, overcrowding, risk to safety or poor living conditions.

During the course of the next TAP the County Council propose the following solutions to the estimated current and projected demand of 28 standard and 20 traveller specific homes: -

- In the region of 800 standard social housing units are intended to be delivered in the next 5 year period, of which 28 will be allocated to traveler families.
- Provision of housing in the former community centre yard at St Catherines, house types and sizes to be agreed
- Introduce traveler specific modular housing to provide a better quality of

accommodation in permanent bays.

- Provision of at least one new small group housing scheme at a new location in Kilkenny City
- A need has been established for 2 specifically adapted units due to disability requirements and 2 units to facilitate downsizing and mobility issues.

During the design process the Council will continue to consult with families in order to meet specific needs where appropriate and feasible, in accordance with current building standards and any available technical guidance on traveler specific housing.

Section Six Performance, Monitoring and Measurement

It is planned that 48 households will be offered or provided with permanent accommodation during the duration of the programme. In relation to projected need, consideration will be given to all new applicants who apply during the lifetime of the programme. All new applicants must be assessed and will be considered for accommodation if deemed to need assistance. The ability of the local authorities to meet accommodation needs is dependent on the levels of available funding, and suitable vacancies being available or housing provided under Leasing arrangements.

It is a requirement that all those interested in receiving social housing supports from Kilkenny County Council complete an application form and supply the relevant documentation. It is also essential that all applicants ensure that their information is updated with changes in circumstances.

The implementation of the programme will be monitored on an ongoing basis. In house meetings will be held on a regular to ensure that targets are being achieved. Annual returns are also made to the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage. Progress reports are also prepared for the LTACC, with a mid-term review of the TAP in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 carried out.

Section Seven Strategy for Implementation

Kilkenny County Council will, within the period of this programme, endeavour to meet the accommodation targets of applicants as outlined above. Social Work, Tenancy Support and Community Liaison services will be provided to assist in meeting the needs of the Traveller community. While the targets reflect the preferred options, the Local Authority will work with applicants to explore other options of meeting their housing need either on a temporary or permanent basis.

Tenant support and community sustainment is a guiding principle in the delivery of social housing/ social accommodation in County Kilkenny and will be at the core of implementation of this programme.

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

- Standard Housing
- House Purchase Scheme Options Detailed in Housing for All
- Group Housing
- Residential Caravan Sites
- Mobility Aids Housing Grant Scheme
- Housing Aid for Older People
- Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability
- Voluntary or Co-operative Housing
- Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)
- Lease Arrangements
- Caravan Loan Scheme

The provision and management of accommodation for Travellers by the voluntary housing sector will be actively encouraged and supported by the Council.

Needs will be assessed and prioritized on a geographical basis within the County, but families will be encouraged to consider areas other than their first preference with a view to improving the options available to applicants.

The Choice Based Letting Scheme allows families to bid on properties outside of their areas of choice.

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee will meet at least four times annually and its business will be regulated by standing orders. Policy issues pertaining to Traveller Accommodation will be considered by the committee and where necessary reports will be presented on these issues to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee.

Kilkenny County Council will ensure that applications for funding from the Department of the Housing, Local Government & Heritage will be made and that Traveller accommodation needs will be included in the Housing Action Plan. Every effort will be made to progress projects that are at planning stage. These applications will be made subject to Department guidelines and procedures.

The issue of Traveller accommodation and the provisions of this programme will be considered when reviewing the County Development and Local Area Plans.

Kilkenny 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 Local Community & Development Committee (LCDC) and Traveller Support Groups. This programme also aims to assist in meeting the needs identified in the Local Community & Social Inclusion Plan for Kilkenny.

The Traveller Accommodation Programme adopted by Kilkenny 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 Housing, Planning and Local Government. A review of the programme can be carried out at any time if considered necessary by the Housing Authority.

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 County Council in consultation with residents will attempt to improve existing Traveller Specific accommodation through remedial works and extensions. These works are dependent on securing funding and support from the relevant parties.

Conclusion

The Traveller Accommodation Programme outlines the existing and projected need for Traveller Accommodation in County Kilkenny for the period 2025 to 2029. It outlines the policies in relation to Traveller accommodation, strategy for implementation, targets and the review processes.

There has been an increase in younger Traveller families seeking assistance from the County Council. There is a large cohort of young Travellers who are either eligible or will be eligible for Housing by the end of the TAP. This

represents a serious challenge for the County Council into the future.

The majority of Travellers prefer standard social housing and this has been reflected in the allocations in the previous plan. There is a rolling Capital Plan that is designed to refurbish existing accommodation and provide new units for the Community.

The Council has also developed processes to improve data collection and reporting. It is also hoped to further promote Traveller advocacy on the LTACC and establish forums where the Traveller voice can be heard. This will involve regular surveys of the Travelling Community. The Housing Section will also be providing its staff with anti-discrimination training.

The County Council is committed to its Public Sector Duty and will use the Equality Strategy and TAP to meet not just the accommodation needs of the Community but also the wider needs. The Education Project that is being led by the Council is an example of the commitment to the Community, but also highlights the need for collaborative work between voluntary agencies, public sector and the Travelling Community.