

# Summary Document

*Feasibility Study on the Establishment of a Traveller Led Voluntary Accommodation Association Building a Better Future for Traveller Accommodation.*

**Irish Traveller Movement  
Gráinne O' Toole  
2009**



## **Preface**

Jim O'Brien, Chairperson of the Irish Traveller Movement

As chair of the Irish Traveller Movement I welcome research which shows that Travellers and Traveller organisations are once again at the forefront of developing innovative ideas in order to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers. Accommodation remains one of the key issues for Travellers as it impacts on every facet of our lives.

The report looks at the barriers that Travellers face in the delivery of accommodation. It points the way to how Travellers engagement with this process and their willingness to take the lead in generating responses is fundamental to delivering culturally appropriate accommodation.

I would like to thank the researcher, Gráinne O'Toole, the peer researchers Charlie McDonagh, Mary Connors, Brigid Myers and Martina Nevin who have done such a great job in bringing Travellers together and creating spaces for Travellers to discuss what a Traveller-led voluntary accommodation scheme might look like. I would also like to thank the ITM Accommodation Working Group for their active participation and the support of the ITM accommodation workers Bridget Casey, Bridget Connors and Collette Spears.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for funding this research. ITM looks forward to working with the Department and other relevant organisations to make the findings of this report a reality by working together to develop and deliver a Traveller-led voluntary accommodation programme.



## **Foreword**

The voluntary and co-operative housing sector is a valued partner in the delivery of social housing and in meeting the special accommodation needs of certain groups including the elderly, persons with an intellectual or physical disability, the homeless and Travellers. The Capital Assistance Scheme provides funding of up to 100% of the approved cost of the accommodation provided and this can include standard accommodation as well as serviced residential sites for Travellers. However, only a minority of Approved Housing Bodies have so far provided specific accommodation for Travellers and this generally includes standard houses or small Traveller-specific group housing schemes.

The Feasibility Study for the establishment of a Traveller-led Approved Housing Body shows that the central involvement of Travellers in the planning and design, siting and implementation of projects for Traveller-specific accommodation can bring added value and better outcomes overall in terms of choice, empowering Travellers and giving them ownership of the task of finding effective solutions to Traveller accommodation issues.

Travellers have engaged at national and local level through the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and the local consultative committee's which influence and shape the content of Traveller Accommodation Plans at local authority level. There are high levels of competence and experience on accommodation issues within Traveller groups locally and within the wider representative organisations. This will stand them in good stead as they go about the task of advancing the proposal to establish a Traveller led Approved Housing Body. The Department and the Irish Council for Social Housing will give every assistance in this regard.

Jim Ganley  
Principal  
Voluntary and Co-operative Housing



## **Section One: Introduction**

This document provides a summary of the Irish Traveller Movement's Feasibility Study on the establishment of a Traveller led Voluntary Accommodation Association: Building a Better future for Traveller Accommodation. It outlines the key findings and recommendations from the national consultation process carried out to determine if the establishment of a Traveller led Voluntary Accommodation Association (TVAA) is a feasible option as a complementary mechanism to deliver a diverse range of Traveller accommodation.

All those who participated in the research identified the need for new innovation to develop new approaches and contribute to the debate on best practice in the design, development and management of Traveller accommodation. Alongside this it was highlighted that whilst all stakeholders must continue to play their role in line with their legal obligations, new players such as the Voluntary Housing Sector and a TVAA have a lot to offer by way of complementing the current system.

This summary document contains the following sections:

Section two outlines the methodology undertaken to carry out the study and lists stakeholder participation.

Section three sets the context for Traveller accommodation issues including current trends.

Section four details the key findings from the fieldwork with the Voluntary Housing Sector

Section five sets out the study findings from the national consultation process examining the rationale, if any, for the establishment of the TVAA, benefits, barriers and addressing the barriers.

Section six provides an analysis of the findings.

Section seven concludes and puts forward short and longer term recommendations.

Section eight briefly outlines the emerging model for the establishment of a TVAA.

## Section Two: Methodology

The brief for the study was to assess the feasibility of establishing a TVAA through examining various voluntary housing association models and exploring possible strategies for the development of a TVAA model with the membership of the ITM and other stakeholders.

Fieldwork was carried out to draw on advice and lessons learned from voluntary housing associations and cooperatives and Housing Initiatives both mainstream and ethnic minority led from Ireland, North and South, and the UK. The majority of the organisations interviewed had undertaken work with Travellers.

<b>Voluntary Housing and Cooperatives &amp; Housing Initiatives</b>	<b>Undertaken work with Travellers</b>
<b>Irish Council for Social Housing</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>National Association of Building Cooperatives</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Respond!</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Clúid</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Focus Ireland</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>North &amp; West Housing LTD</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Rooftop Housing Limited</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Innisfree Housing Group</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Habitat for Humanity</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Northern Ireland Housing Executive</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Hackney Homes</b>	<b>Yes</b>

The knowledge and lessons learned from this process were fed in to the consultation process with key stakeholders.

A national consultation process was conducted with the following stakeholders:

- A target was set to ensure that 100 Travellers and Traveller organisations inputted to the consultation process. This was achieved as there were 113 inputs from Travellers and Traveller organisations in to the process with a total of 97 participants.<sup>1</sup>
- Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government/ Voluntary Housing Section and the Traveller Unit,
- Four Local authorities were interviewed; Meath County Council, Louth County Council, Cork City Council and Dublin City Council. The local authorities were selected on the basis of highest voluntary housing sector build in 2007 and 2008 and with the highest numbers of Travellers accommodated in Voluntary Housing Schemes. This criterion was set down to ensure the personnel would have recent experience of the VHS and Traveller integration in to existing schemes,

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<sup>1</sup> 8 people attended 2 consultation events and 4 people attended three consultation events.

- One county manager was interviewed to provide a boarder view regarding the scope and role of a TVAA and its relationship with the TAPs and the National Traveller Accommodation Strategy.

There was a high level of engagement from all stakeholders in the study and a willingness by all to give their advice, information and their support to the project. One of the most striking aspects of the consultation process was the 'can do' attitude of most of the stakeholders interviewed. The progressive attitude of the voluntary housing sector and the local authority personnel who deal solely with the voluntary housing sector was particularly notable. They were interested in addressing issues, problem solving and ultimately providing the best accommodation possible to the communities in which they work.

In respect of the Traveller sector, the idea of a TVAA created significant interest and enthusiasm. The sector believe that the Traveller accommodation issue can be solved with real will at a political and institutional level. The Traveller sector are supportive of a TVAA that is Traveller led with the capacity to produce results and thereby contributing to building a better future for Traveller accommodation.

### Section Three: Traveller Accommodation in Context

The 2006 Irish Census counted 22,435 Irish Travellers which represents 0.5 percent of the total national population (Central Statistics Office, 2007). However, Traveller organisations estimate that there may be up to 30,000 Travellers with a further 1,500 Travellers in the North of Ireland.<sup>2</sup>

*'Travellers long shared history, cultural values, language, customs and traditions make them a self-defined group, and one which is recognisable and distinct. Their culture and way of life, of which nomadism is an important factor, distinguishes them from the sedentary (settled) population.'*<sup>3</sup>

At a European and International level, various conventions, that Ireland has ratified, recognise that Travellers are a distinct ethnic group.<sup>4</sup> At a national level this position is supported by various bodies and academics. However, the Irish government do not officially recognise Travellers as an ethnic group and refer to Travellers as a cultural group. Therein there is a conflict between the International and European position and the Irish governmental position which impacts on the delivery of policies, programmes and services that effect Travellers lives.

The linkages between proper accommodation and better health, educational, employment, social and other outcomes are well documented. The fact that Travellers fair poorly on social indicators such as poor educational attainment, high unemployment and poor health status is also widely known. The 2006 Census showed that only 13.8 percent of Travellers over the age of 15 years are in employment compared to a national average of nearly 60 percent. To further compound this situation, Travellers, as individuals and as a group, experience discrimination and racism on a daily basis.

<sup>2</sup> Pavee Point Website [www.pavee.ie](http://www.pavee.ie)

<sup>3</sup> Irish Traveller Movement @ [www.itmtrav.ie](http://www.itmtrav.ie)

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe: Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the United National International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racism and Discrimination



While many initiatives and strategies have been put in place to progress the issues facing Travellers, *'it is clear from the resources and energy that has been pumped into Traveller issues since 1995, both by the Government and Traveller representatives, that the challenge of making Ireland a fairer place for Travellers is not an easy one. As Travellers represent only 0.06% of the population this lack of progress can be frustrating. The blockages that prevent those resources from resolving a relatively small but complex problem need to be identified and removed.'*<sup>5</sup>

The framework for Traveller policy issues are embodied within the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) which contains a series of key recommendations in relation to a range of Traveller issues, including accommodation.<sup>6</sup>

Since the publication of the Task Force report progress has been made on Traveller accommodation issues. A National Traveller Accommodation Strategy was introduced which now has a legislative basis. The strategy provided for the introduction of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 which enshrines in law the requirement of local authorities to provide culturally appropriate accommodation in all its forms, including halting sites, group housing schemes, standard houses and transient accommodation. The Act requires each local authority to prepare and adopt Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in their areas. The first TAPs covered the period 2000–2004, the second programmes ran from 2005–2008 and the third will run from 2009–2012.

The Act also provides for the establishment of Local and National structures; the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACCs) comprising elected representatives and officials of the local authority, Travellers and Traveller organisations whose role is to advise in relation to the preparation and implementation of the TAPs<sup>7</sup> and the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) whose role is to monitor the preparation, adequacy and implementation of the TAPs and advise the Minister accordingly.<sup>8</sup>

A number of national mainstream policy initiatives, such as Towards 2016; The Framework for Social Partnership and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016 reaffirm the governmental commitment to the implementation of the local authority TAPs. Also, the DoEHLG's statement on Housing Policy in Ireland, Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities (2007) target Traveller accommodation as part of the policy in particular, actions to improve the management and maintenance procedures and practices, efforts to improve the delivery of targets under the TAPs and the development of methods for self-supporting approaches to meeting housing needs by Travellers themselves.

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<sup>5</sup>Second Report of the Committee to Coordinate and Monitor the Recommendations of the Report of the Travelling Community, Government Publications, p56.

<sup>6</sup> The progress to which the report's recommendations are being implemented is monitored by the Monitoring Committee for Progress on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community.

<sup>7</sup> Section 21(3) of The Act.

<sup>8</sup> This group includes representatives of the Irish Traveller Movement, Pavee Point, the National Travellers Women's Forum, the County and City Managers association, county councillors, the Department of Environment and Local Government, and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The National Development Plan commits a level of resources to implement these plans. However, given the current economic climate the Traveller Accommodation budget have been subject to cuts.

Central policy and legislative frameworks underpinning all of the above developments are the National Action Plan against Racism, which advocates the integration of intercultural and anti-racism approaches in to all policy areas and the Equality legislation which protects Travellers and other groups against discrimination in the provision of goods and services including Traveller accommodation provided by the local authorities.

In terms of overall monitoring of progress of Traveller issues including, Traveller accommodation provision, the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee (NTMAC) is an oversight committee drawing together all the relevant bodies with a responsibility for Traveller issues. Its role is to serve as a forum for consultation on current issues of national importance affecting the Travelling community, to identify issues of national importance to the Traveller Community which might not be dealt with adequately through existing mechanisms and suggest appropriate responses to issues identified.

Recent key trends identified in relation to Traveller accommodation are:

- The number of Travellers living in permanent accommodation, especially standard local authority housing is increasing,
- Steady and significant increase in the number of Travellers living in private rented accommodation,
- Fewer numbers of Travellers are now living in Traveller-specific accommodation, and the number of families accommodated on halting sites is decreasing,
- There is a high percentage of the Traveller population under 18 years which indicates that Traveller accommodation needs will not decrease and will grow in to the future,
- No evidence of transient accommodation provision,
- There are still a considerable number of Traveller families living on the roadside and who remain to be properly accommodated.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Section Four: Key Findings from the Fieldwork**

In the late 1980s and early 1990s government policy began to promote the development of housing associations and co-operatives in Ireland to achieve the following:

- to promote new systems of housing management
- to encourage a greater diversity of suppliers of social rented housing.

This policy was supported by the introduction of funding schemes which provide one hundred percent costs for the building of the accommodation and in the case of one of the schemes (Capital Loan Scheme) a grant for maintenance. The government recognise that the *'provision of rental accommodation by the voluntary and co-operative housing associations and other*

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<sup>9</sup> These trends are based on the Annual Count Figures from 2004 - 2008 from the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, 2009.

*approved voluntary organisations has become an increasingly important part of the overall response to national housing needs.*<sup>10</sup>

The Voluntary Housing Sector had a turnover of around 266 million in 2007 and provided 1685 new homes in that year. This sector is responsible for about a quarter of all social housing output each year. To date 104 Traveller families have been accommodated by the voluntary housing sector mainly in their mainstream housing provision. Recently, Clúid Housing Association developed a group housing scheme with ten Traveller families in South Dublin and Respond! completed a group housing scheme with six families in Kildare. The Voluntary Housing Sector is a significant resource that Travellers could access in the future to meet their accommodation needs.

The Voluntary Housing Sector is involved in a range of housing activities such as:

- building new homes and the provision of services to tenants,
- the provision of housing and services to specific groups e.g. older persons, persons with disabilities and services such as visiting health professionals and recreational activities, full time warden, caretaker or other support staff,
- provision of specialist services e.g. accommodation to women and children experiencing domestic violence and homeless hostels,
- the provision of general need housing which is very similar to standard local authority housing,
- the management of homes under the Rental Accommodation Schemes,
- the management of estate on behalf of local authorities,
- the management of affordable housing schemes.

Some of the challenges facing the sector include complex funding arrangements which can slow down projects and lack of adequate numbers of suitable building sites. Revised arrangements for the appraisal and approval of projects under the Capital Funding Schemes have recently been issued by the DoEHLG and are currently being reviewed by the local authorities and the voluntary housing sector.

The Irish Council for Social Housing have also called for the need for a Land Management Plan to be initiated which ensures that 10,000 – 12,000 sites are designated for both voluntary and co-operative housing projects for the period between 2006 and 2010 and direct access for the voluntary housing sector to the National Finance Agency.<sup>11</sup> These and other measures would support the increased output of the sector in line with targets set out in the Partnership Agreement-Towards 2016.

As a result of interviews with eleven voluntary housing sector projects and initiatives the following is the key learning gathered from this process.

**The key learning from the case studies included the following:**

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<sup>10</sup> Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Governmental Memorandum, Capital Funding Schemes for the Provision of Rental Accommodation by Approved Bodies (VHU:2/02), 2002, p6.

<sup>11</sup> Irish Council for Social Housing, Background Paper and ICSH Preparation for negotiation of new Social Partnership Agreement Irish Council for Social Housing – Priority Areas.

- **Traveller involvement in the development of their own accommodation:** The central involvement of Travellers in the development of their own accommodation is a key recommendation made across all of the case studies. The majority of voluntary housing groups interviewed had undertaken work with Travellers. All of them has a positive experience of working with Travellers and believed that the essential reason for this was that they committed resources to work with Travellers intensively in the development of the schemes. They made staff available at all stages to ensure the inclusion of Travellers and adapted to meet Traveller's requirements.
- **Involvement of tenants on the management boards:** A number of the voluntary housing groups include the community/tenants at all levels of the organisation, including at management level. These organisations are built on the ethos of involvement of the community and tenant participation. A critical part to creating independent living and ensuring that the work is focused on the community is the involvement of the target community in all levels of their organisations. For example, 75 percent of the board membership of the Innisfree Housing Association is drawn from the Irish community. Likewise the Cooperative Movement creates a range of opportunities for the membership to be involved in the running of their schemes and inputting in to the direction of the movement. This is part of their strategy to promote ownership and independence. Some groups had moved away from this approach in favour of a more specialised skill set on their boards. The reason given for this is that the business of building homes, securing funding, lands etc requires a specialised skill set and this was the type of expertise they needed to advance their work. They believe that the more meaningful ways of including tenants is at estate level.
- **Tenant participation and community development:** All of the voluntary housing sector organisations interviewed emphasised the importance of tenant participation and the need for resources to be allocated to support this work. It was acknowledged that tenants were best placed to provide the insights to their needs and design the strategies, services and responses that could effectively meet these needs.
- **Provision of support services:** All of the organisations highlighted the need to provide a range of support services to meet the needs of tenants. The focus is on a holistic approach that addresses the needs of tenants. Having an effective range of services or access to these, is importance to address any issues emerging for tenants but also for their neighbours and creates an environment whereby the sustainability of the accommodation is greatly enhanced. Most organisations provide a 'floating support service' whereby support is provided when needed to tenants at any stage in their tenancy and removed once no longer needed. If there are supports that cannot be provided through the housing association due to lack of expertise, they will source these services from other organisations.
- **Management of voluntary accommodation:** Key to the success of effective management of accommodation is clear policies and procedures, clarity with tenants on their rights and responsibilities and those of the housing association and acting quickly as issues emerge. Voluntary Housing Associations identified that they could manage effectively as they are close to the community and have a housing officers linking with tenants on their schemes on a daily basis.

The information gathered from the fieldwork stage was presented to the consultation process with the Traveller sector to inform their thinking regarding the type of model and functions a voluntary accommodation association could undertake in a Traveller context. The key reaction to

the information presented was to take on board the good practice elements from the models presented but not to limit a TVAA to one type of model. It was agreed that 'one cap will not fit all' as the Traveller community is a diverse grouping with a diverse set of needs. As such it was recommended to draw on all of the models in shaping a TVAA. The overriding factor to inform the model is to ensure that Travellers are actively involved and lead up the TVAA. This was considered to be the most significant principle to inform a TVAA model.

## Section Five: Study Findings

There was a high level of consensus from all stakeholders that the setting up of a TVAA was both needed and a welcome development as a complementary measure to bring innovation and new thinking in to the design and provision of Traveller accommodation. The majority of barriers to the establishment of a TVAA were posed by Travellers and Traveller organisations. Whilst other stakeholders; the local authorities and all housing associations, envisaged barriers being experienced by a TVAA, they were confident that these could be overcome with a TVAA that is well structured, supported, resourced and has clear policies and procedures in place.

**The following provides an overview of the key study findings under the headings of Rational, Benefits, Barriers and Addressing the Barriers.**

### Rational for a TVAA

**Experience and Expertise:** It is an opportune time to establish a TVAA. All of the stakeholder's engagement in the National Traveller Accommodation Strategy has developed a range of expertise and experience that could inform its development.

**Partnership:** A TVAA should work from an integrated partnership approach and develop new relationships with existing housing associations and local authorities in pursuing the delivery of Traveller accommodation. The role of a TVAA as a complementary body should be explicitly promoted thereby enforcing the point that a TVAA is not a panacea to deal with all Traveller accommodation issues.

**Promoting culturally appropriate provision:** A TVAA could ensure the delivery of culturally appropriate accommodation.

**Identifying needs:** A clear and evidenced needs analysis for Traveller voluntary accommodation is required that reflects the real needs. A TVAA could assess these needs.

**Addressing needs:** In some areas there are significant Traveller accommodation needs, so an additional provider would be welcome.

**Choice:** A greater choice for Travellers to meet their accommodation needs.

**Prejudice free:** TVAA would be free of prejudice so could achieve a significant amount.

**Traveller involvement:** A TVAA would have a commitment to put in place partnership approaches with Travellers on the development of accommodation and management systems which would be innovative.

**Effective management:** It was acknowledged by some local authorities that housing associations manage more effectively than local authorities as they are smaller and community based, so can respond to the needs of tenants more effectively. A TVAA would be in a position to deliver effective management services.

**Effective Services:** The social and developmental aspect to the work of voluntary housing associations was identified as invaluable in ensuring the sustainability of housing schemes, an approach which the TVAA could replicate.

**Cost effectiveness:** The high cost of private rented accommodation that more Travellers are now opting for provides one of the reasons for the need for a TVAA so as to provide more cost effective options and alternatives to Travellers.

**Provide Expertise:** There is a general lack of expertise in the development and management of Traveller accommodation in the voluntary housing sector. This gap could be addressed by a TVAA.

**Provide the range of Traveller Accommodation:** Whilst some existing voluntary housing associations are willing to provide group housing they do not have plans to provide the range of Traveller accommodation in the short to medium term, therefore, there is a clear role for TVAA in this regard.

**Meeting Diverse needs:** The potential response of a TVAA could be significant due to the diverse needs. The TVAA should focus on culturally appropriate accommodation but also specific needs e.g. elderly provision/ domestic violence.

## Benefits of a TVAA

- The development of a Traveller led model thus creating a mechanism where Travellers can be fully involved in the design, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation that meets their needs.
- A TVAA would be prejudice free so this immediate barrier would not be present. Also, it would have a strong analysis and commitment to Traveller issues which would ensure it was well placed to address prejudice and racism in a strategic way.
- A TVAA's sole focus will be the development of Traveller accommodation and as such it will be in a position to develop models of innovation and best practice in the design, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation that would encourage others to provide effectively.
- A TVAA will have a unique opportunity to be creative and imaginative in developing new concepts around Traveller accommodation design.
- The TVAA's role as a provider of accommodation would enable it to form and develop new working relationships with the local authorities and housing associations and led the way in the provision and management of high quality, sustainable Traveller accommodation.
- A TVAA will provide more accommodation options to Travellers, employment opportunities to Travellers and increase the opportunities for Travellers voice to have a real impact in Traveller accommodation developments.
- A TVAA would have insight and expertise in dealing with oppositions to Traveller accommodation.
- A better relationship as trust and rapport would be easily built between the TVAA and Travellers. As a result a TVAA could manage Traveller accommodation well due to this positive relationship.
- A TVAA would generate learning from its work and feed this in to a range of fora.
- The TVAA could be a cost effective option in the future.

## Barriers to a TVAA

- The relationship between the TVAA and local authorities is a key factor that will determine the success of a TVAA in delivering Traveller accommodation. Concern was expressed regarding the willingness of local authorities to work with a TVAA due to the following:
  - prejudice
  - lack of a commitment to the delivery of Traveller specific accommodation
  - lack of commitment to Traveller accommodation at senior management level in some local authorities
  - the willingness of local authorities to work with Travellers will vary from area to area depending on commitment to building diverse forms of accommodation. For example, support for halting site provision is weak in some areas so local authorities would be reluctant to support its development in cases where a need is identified.
- Planning issues are a critical barrier to the development of the work of a TVAA. The Part 8 Process will generate considerable opposition from the general community which can be difficult to overcome.
- Sourcing suitable sites is a specific issue that will face a TVAA. Traveller halting site accommodation must be to be designated specifically in the County Development Plan to comply with the Planning and Development Act, 2000. Where halting sites are not included and may need to be, it will be difficult to obtain suitable sites and secure the necessary zoning. Also, land availability in urban areas was identified as a significant challenge.
- Opposition from the local community and politicians, the NOT IN MY BACK YARD syndrome is a real difficulty. Although the planning system provides a forum to deal with objections, the view was expressed that prejudice is inherent in the system and can seep through. Also, support from within the council can never be assured so this needs to be expected.
- Prejudice toward Travellers influences the delivery of accommodation. For example, one council indicated that they would not be in a position to advance the TAPs until after the local elections.
- As a TVAA would be dependent on the local authority for funding, land, and support for planning permission, Traveller and Traveller organisations were sceptical as to how a TVAA could overcome these barriers where the local authority have failed to do so.
- A range of concerns were raised in relation to the management of Traveller accommodation and there were diverse views on Traveller accommodation management issues.
- As a TVAA will be working of the local authority lists to be eligible for funding it is difficult to envisage how transient accommodation be developed as this provision is not included currently in the TAPs. In addition, local authorities involved in this research articulated that transient accommodation will not be delivered at local level.
- There was a significant anxiety that the development of a TVAA would create unrealistic expectations among Travellers about what can actually be provided which could damage relationships between Travellers and the TVAA.

- To be eligible for funding a TVAA would have to work off the local authority housing and accommodation lists. It was identified that working off the TAPs is problematic as there are significant questions as to whether such programmes meet family's needs.
- Current budgetary constraints are significant which will dictate if a TVAA can be resourced.
- The requirements of the funding schemes are quite complex and a high level of expertise is required to deal with this which may not be available to the TVAA in the early stages.

## Addressing the Barriers

- A TVAA should work with local authorities who are willing and have a high demand for Traveller accommodation as a strategic starting point. In the initial pilot phase, the TVAA could consider working on delivering a scheme where the local authority has secured the land and planning for Traveller accommodation. This would overcome planning difficulties in the first instance. The TVAA could develop and build the accommodation and manage the units. The TVAA should also examine Part V opportunities whereby developers hold 20 percent of the land on their developments for social housing. There can be opportunities in integrated development of this nature.
- Support from National government will be required in addressing difficulties, particularly where problems cannot be addressed at local level. The TVAA should seek to engage with the DoEHLG, the NTMAC and the NTACC to ensure it has the governmental and national support required to be in a position to deliver.
- Existing voluntary housing associations will work with TVAA and provide Traveller accommodation themselves. They are willing to build group housing and would move in to halting site provision if the supports were there, 'know how' regarding management issues. A TVAA could provide such supports.
- The TVAA should second experts from the Voluntary Housing Sector to brief and train them on the financial and other procedures. In addition, the TVAA could set up a team of experts from the early stages that it could use for its schemes such as a quantity surveyor, solicitor who focuses on conveyancing and an architect or use the teams of existing housing associations.
- The TVAA should ensure that it develops strategic, logical project proposals that are based on identified need, in suitably zoned locations, are value for money and meet building design requirements.
- The use of a community development approach to the work of the TVAA will ensure that strong relationships of trust are built with Travellers. In addition, a community development element to the work with tenants was recommended to support tenant involvement and address any issues they are experiencing.
- The TVAA should communicate effectively and clearly its role in relation to Traveller accommodation to Travellers and more broadly. This will ensure unrealistic expectations are not raised.
- The TVAA should work in partnership with local Traveller groups to address issues of integration and sustainability of accommodation.



- A TVAA should work closely with other housing associations and local authorities to support the delivery of Traveller accommodation. It was anticipated that once the TVAA works in an integrated way it would mitigate the risk of becoming isolated.
- The TVAA should carry out a needs analysis for voluntary housing schemes with Travellers in each local authority area in the longer term.
- Further thinking and discussion is required to develop a workable consensus on management issues including addressing conflicts as they arise. In the set up phase of the TVAA a consultation process leading to the development of an agreed set of management policies and procedures should be carried out. A TVAA could lead the way in best practice in the management of Traveller accommodation.
- In the longer term, the TVAA should work with a range of partners to examine the establishment of a network of 'pull in, pull out' areas on a national basis to meet Travellers nomadic needs. A funding stream for transient accommodation should be negotiated nationally and ring fenced.
- The TVAA should examine options to access caravans for long-term living.
- A national analysis of the cost per unit of Traveller accommodation should be conducted at national level to ensure that value for money is being achieved and that the development of Traveller accommodation is sustainable in the long-term.
- The TVAA should develop clear strategies for dealing with objections. This will involve thinking of all the possible arguments against the Traveller development and preparing answers to these; engaging with all the players from the early stages, conducting consultation at all points to keep the community including the Traveller community, fully informed.
- The TVAA should adopt a problem solving approach, work with a range of agencies and focus strategically on delivery.
- In addressing land shortages a TVAA can:
  - Identify suitable sites and work with the local authority to purchase them
  - Purchase sites from developers
  - Advertise for the need for sites
  - Seek donations of sites from religious orders or others
- Developing good linkages with the LTACCs, Traveller Interagency Groups and Local authority staff is important to gain support for the work of the TVAA.
- In relation to economic space all local authorities agreed if a good plan to include economic space was presented this could be supported. A key argument in this regard is that if it will encourage tenants to stay longer in accommodation it would be of real benefit. There was an acknowledgment that Travellers who own horses, for example, could be facilitated to rent land. Likewise if incubation units were proposed for a site and funding was secured from an enterprise grant for this, there was no reason as to why the local authority could not support this.
- TVAA should do a cost analysis to the state of accommodating Travellers in private rented and show what it could save in providing Traveller accommodation.
- ITM is already a lobbying voice so could complement the work of and work closely with a TVAA.
- A TVAA should not limit its focus to the provision of specific forms of accommodation but should examine the provision of a range of services and specialised accommodation to Travellers e.g. sheltered housing.

- All of those interviewed recommended that ITM should prepare the ground work for the TVAA and develop the necessary expertise so as to be a fully functioning voluntary accommodation association when funding comes back on stream.

## Section Six: Analysis of the Findings

There is a high level of consensus that a TVAA should be established from all of the stakeholders involved in the consultation process. The key reasons for this are:

- A TVAA would be Traveller led which would be unique and as such could tap in to a range of expertise and relationships to develop innovative ways of designing and delivering Traveller accommodation.
- A TVAA would be free from prejudice and would have one hundred percent commitment to the provision of Traveller accommodation in all its forms. It would not shy away from providing halting site and investigating with other stakeholders the provision of nomadic accommodation.
- Traveller accommodation need is great and is likely to increase in the future due to new family formations so an additional provider is to be welcomed.
- A TVAA could provide expertise and support to other Voluntary Housing Associations in the design and delivery of Traveller accommodation and could concentrate on delivering best practice in the design and management of accommodation that would encourage others to follow.
- A TVAA could develop new relationships with local authorities given its role as a service provider which would open up new possibilities for the Traveller sector.
- Travellers would have full control over the developments that the TVAA initiates and could develop agreements with other providers to deliver a range of other accommodation to Travellers.
- A TVAA would enable the Traveller sector to have dedicated resources to build a focus on Traveller accommodation provision.
- A TVAA could open up opportunities for provision for nomadism to be advanced.

The main fears and reservations regarding the establishment of a TVAA were raised by the Traveller sector which is realistic given the difficulties that do emerge in building Traveller accommodation. Some local authorities also highlighted that the barriers to delivery of Traveller accommodation are significant and require strategic responses.

It was the general view that a TVAA should be sufficiently supported with the necessary resources and governmental support. The need for cross departmental endorsement for the role and work of the TVAA will be critical to give the TVAA the support it needs to deliver the Traveller accommodation as identified. In this context, it is envisaged that it is an opportune time to test a new initiative and a new approach to Traveller accommodation with Travellers leading on this.

Whilst many reservations were highlighted so were many solutions. Starting small, communicating effectively the role of a TVAA, piloting initiatives, and reviewing and evaluating its work was highlighted as the key approach that would mitigate against any risks that may emerge. If a TVAA is experiencing insurmountable barriers to delivering on the pilot schemes it can

highlight this and communicate this widely. This would then indicate a significant problem to its development, outside of its control, that would have to be addressed at a governmental level.

The importance of being clear and realistic about what can be achieved was emphasised. Clarity of the role of TVAA and communicating this was emphasised as a key element that need to be progressed. The TVAA will be a complementary initiative with a capacity to deliver a small number of Traveller accommodation projects. It is imperative that it is seen in this context and not used as a mechanism for other bodies to renege on their legal commitments.

The level of frustration regarding Traveller accommodation issues displayed within the Traveller sector was evident throughout the process. The view that Traveller accommodation will never be effectively delivered was commonly held and there is a significant amount of mistrust of local authorities and the political system. This a key issue of credibility of accommodation services. The TVAA could create new opportunities for a range of new relationships to be developed with local authority officials who deal with the voluntary sector and the Voluntary Housing Sector. This could garner new support for Traveller accommodation delivery. Also, demonstrating and communicating best practice will also be a mechanism that will encourage involvement in this area.

The possibilities of establishing a new Traveller accommodation project has created a sense of new hope and generated a lot of discussion. It highlighted the level of expertise that can be tapped in to in the development of a new approach and innovation in this area of work. Alongside this the need for realism was emphasised at all stages. In the early stages the impact of a TVAA will undoubtedly be limited, however, with strategic approaches and effective use of its resources, its work could and should have a significant influence and leverage to encourage best practice in the design, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation.

## **Section Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

Undoubtedly the delivery and management of Traveller accommodation presents an ongoing challenge for all those involved. It is important not to underestimate the scale of the barriers that present themselves in the delivery of Traveller specific accommodation. It is within this context that a TVAA would be operating and its commitment to the delivery of the full range of Traveller accommodation, the uniqueness of the model and the development of a range of strategic relationships with other providers will not be sufficient to create the necessary conditions that will enable a TVAA to carry out all its functions. In context if one considers that no voluntary halting site scheme has been built in Ireland and the development of nomadic provision has not been addressed; this is the scale of the challenge that will face a TVAA.

In order to ensure that a TVAA has a chance of real success support will be required from national and local level to secure delivery. A real partnership between the TVAA and the DoEHLG, the NTACC and the NTMAC will be required to support a TVAA in the early days to establish itself and develop the necessary relationships to implement its work programme. For example, the national structures will be instrumental in inviting local authorities to work with a TVAA on the provision of a halting site and creating the necessary incentives to make this a reality.

To lay the foundations for a TVAA a led in period will be required that needs to be supported by the DoEHLG. This led in period will enable the ITM to put in place the necessary policies, procedures and structures that will ensure that it has the capacity, expertise and resources to carry out its functions. For example, developing good practice guidelines for the management of Traveller accommodation is an area of work that requires particular attention and a national consultation process on this issue needs to be carried out so as to inform best practice.

The good will of the Voluntary Housing Sector and their willingness to undertake projects with Travellers also needs to be harnessed given the substantial role they play and will continue to play in to the future. The TVAA needs to approach this work strategically to ensure sustainable and productive relationships are formed that can deliver real outcomes to Travellers.

The possibilities of what a TVAA can achieve are significant but starting small, building experience and working in a collaborative way with other social housing providers will ensure that its risks in to the future are minimised. Also, in the early days ensuring the conditions are right for the development of its first pilot schemes will be critical to harnessing the successes it will need to build its work in to the future.

### Short-term Recommendations

In the next 18 months the ITM should secure funding from the DoEHLG to employ a Project coordinator and a Development worker to lay the ground work for the development of the TVAA. This will include:

- establishing the board and structures for the TVAA to gain approved status,
- conducting a national consultation and as a result developing best practice for the management of Traveller accommodation,
- conducting a skills audit to inform a Traveller employment strategy for the TVAA,
- laying the ground work to conduct two Traveller accommodation pilot schemes, a halting site and a group housing scheme including the development of criteria for the pilots,
- developing a range of strategic relationships with the local authorities, Voluntary Housing Sector, DoEHLG, NTMAC, NTACC and other stakeholders,
- developing training and other supports for the voluntary housing sector on Traveller accommodation issues as required.

A interdepartmental group consisting of the DoEHLG, the Department of Justice Equality and Law reform, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht affairs, Department of Health and Children, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, ITM, representatives from the Local authority sector and the Voluntary Housing Sector should be established as a subcommittee of the NTMAC to support the development of the work of the TVAA.

To advance the Pilot schemes the DoEHLG with the above sub-committee should consider and implement specific incentives for local authorities to undertake the pilot work with the TVAA. This will involve sourcing land and planning for the construction of a halting site and a group housing scheme.

## Long-Term Recommendations

- The TVAA should review and share the learning from the pilot schemes and feed its work in to a range of policy fora,
- The NTMAC sub-committee should undertake a needs analysis of the level of demand for voluntary housing in each local authority area,
- The TVAA should develop a strategy for future provision and implement same,
- The TVAA should implement its Traveller employment strategy,
- The TVAA should develop agreements with a range of social housing providers to meet Travellers needs,
- The TVAA should work with a range of stakeholders including the NTMAC sub-committee to advance the issue of nomadic provision,
- The TVAA should seek representation on the DoEHLG Voluntary Housing Working Group.

## Section Eight: The Emerging Model

The implementation of the following plan is based on securing the necessary resources.

### Vision

The vision for the TVAA is the ideal outcome that the TVAA and others are working towards.

An Ireland where all Travellers are accommodated in culturally appropriate accommodation that meets their needs and achieves Travellers right to a home within a sustainable community setting of their choice

### Mission

The TVAA's mission is what the TVAA will seek to achieve on a day-to-day basis in order to contribute to the achievement of its vision.

To establish and develop a TVAA that leads the way in innovation and best practice in the design, delivery and management of culturally appropriate accommodation to Travellers and builds strategic relationships with other social housing providers to achieve its vision.

### Aims:

- To develop a Traveller led model for the delivery and management of Traveller accommodation that will support Travellers to take a lead and participate in all levels of the TVAA including creating opportunities for the employment of Travellers,
- To design and deliver with Travellers a range of culturally appropriate accommodation (standard housing, group housing, halting sites, provision for nomadism) that meets their needs and is innovative, child centred, energy efficient and sustainable,
- To develop management systems, including self management, for Traveller accommodation that have the flexibility and capacity to meet the needs of Travellers and ensure sustainability of Traveller accommodation,
- To provide a range of services that support Travellers to live and participate fully and independently in the community in which they live,

- To develop a range of key relationships with social housing providers, Traveller organisations and other relevant stakeholders to support the implementation of Traveller accommodation across a range of options.

### **Objectives:**

- To establish a TVAA that is Traveller led and ensures the participation of Traveller at all levels, including the employment of Travellers,
- To work with other stakeholders to identify the Traveller accommodation need for voluntary accommodation in each local authority area,
- To develop, design and deliver a number of pilot culturally appropriate accommodation schemes with Travellers in the short term to develop a track record and models of best practice,
- To develop and deliver best management practices in ensuring Traveller accommodation is sustainable,
- To provide a support services to Travellers in accommodation, as required, to support their needs and their integration in to the community,
- To share learning and best practice developed and feed this practice in to a range of fora,
- To work with a range of social housing providers to deliver a range of options to Travellers to meet their accommodation needs.

### **Functions**

- To test new approaches and develop innovative work with Travellers on the provision of Traveller accommodation,
- To ensure that Travellers full participation and employment is achieved in the, development, design, management and delivery of all the work of the TVAA,
- To build strategic partnerships with a range of housing providers to work towards and support their development and provision of Traveller accommodation,
- To develop flexible and sustainable management policies and procedures for Traveller accommodation,
- To provide a range of services to support Travellers to live independently within their homes and communities,
- To lead the way in best practice in the design, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation,
- To work with other relevant stakeholders to implement an effective national response to the nomadic needs of Travellers.

Over the next 18 months, the ITM will lay the foundations for the establishment of a TVAA that will have the requisite structures, systems policies and resources to fully establish itself as an independent entity at the end of the led in period. This will be dependent on securing the necessary resources from the DoEHLG.

To achieve this, five key areas of work with clear objectives and dedicated staff resources will be advanced, in order to ensure that the objectives are met. These areas are:

#### **1. Establishing the TVAA:**

- Secure funding and recruit a project team ( Project coordinator and Development worker ) to undertake the work on its behalf,

- Develop and implement a communication strategy for the TVAA,
- Promote the TVAA amongst the membership of the ITM, NTWF, Voluntary Housing Sector, Local Authorities and other relevant stakeholders,
- Set up the board and company structure for TVAA, including, recruiting board members, drafting company documents, briefing, and training,
- Develop a strategy and work plan with the board for the work of the TVAA,
- Work with Irish Council for Social Housing to establish the structures and protocols for the effective operation of the TVAA,
- Work with an established Voluntary Housing Association to put in place effective financial and other procedures,
- Working with established Voluntary Housing Providers to put in place a technical team e.g. architect, quantity surveyor, legal supports,
- Secure Voluntary Housing Status from the DoEHLG.

## **2. Initiating Traveller accommodation pilots:**

- Design criteria for the selection of the pilot schemes in consultation with the membership of ITM and local authorities. Two pilot schemes will be developed; a halting site and a group housing scheme,
- Select pilot areas,
- Identify and work with families to be involved in pilots,
- Develop a partnership structure with all stakeholders in the areas to work on the development and implementation of the projects,
- Put together a technical team for the projects,
- Develop the project proposals and the designs for the pilots,
- Identify suitable land for the projects and begin the process of securing planning permission, if not already secured,
- With the respective local authorities, secure funding for the projects through the relevant schemes and begin to implement the relevant processes.

## **3. Best practice management guidelines:**

- Develop a strategy to consult widely on effective management practice for Traveller accommodation,
- Implement a national consultation process,
- Develop and agree a set of guidelines for the effective management of Traveller accommodation,
- Agree management practice and tenant policies for the TVAA based on these Guidelines,
- Develop training on best practice for the management of Traveller accommodation,
- Implement training on the guidelines for board and staff of TVAA and other Housing providers.

## **4. Development of strategic relationships:**

- Promote the role and vision of the TVAA with a range of stakeholders, e.g. voluntary housing sector, local authorities, county and city managers and county councillors,
- Work with the DoEHLG, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, the Department of Rural Community and Gaeltacht Affairs, NTACC and the NTMAC to ensure national support for the development of Traveller accommodation through the voluntary housing sector,
- Work with the ICSH, Cluid, Respond, NABco, Habitat for Humanity and other voluntary housing providers to examine joint work that can be undertaken with accompanying agreements for action,
- Engage with local authorities to examine joint projects with accompanying agreements for action.

**5. Development of an employment action plan for the TVAA:**

- Training Travellers in housing management to ensure Traveller employment opportunities are created from the outset,
- Undertaking a skills audit to assess the level of interest, skills and experience in the building sector, management and maintenance amongst the Traveller community,
- Put in place a strategy to employ Travellers in response to the audit within building and maintenance schemes with the support of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment,
- Explore mentoring and apprenticeship schemes to support Traveller involvement supported by FAS.



