DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM SHAINCHEISTEANNA RÍTHÁBHACHTACHA A THÉANN I GCION AR AN LUCHT SIÚIL

JOINT COMMITTEE ON KEY ISSUES AFFECTING THE TRAVELLER COMMUNITY

Déardaoin, 17 Meán Fómhair 2026

Thursday, 17 September 2026

Tháinig an Comhchoiste le chéile ag 12.30 p.m.

The Joint Committee met at 12.30 p.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

John Connolly,	Joe O'Reilly.
Dessie Ellis,	
Séamus McGrath,	
Naoise Ó Muirí,	
Maurice Quinlivan,	
Pádraig Rice.	

Teachta / Deputy George Lawlor sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

Tháinig an comhchoiste le chéile i seisiún príobháideach, cuireadh an suí ar fionraí ar 12.44 p.m. agus cuireadh tús leis arís i seisiún poiblí ar 12.48 p.m.

The joint committee met in private session, suspended at 12.44 p.m. and resumed in public session at 12.48 p.m.

Traveller Accommodation: Discussion (Resumed)

An Cathaoirleach: Apologies have been received from Senator Noonan.

This meeting is to discuss the issue of Traveller accommodation. Our witnesses are Mr. David Kelly, assistant secretary, Mr. Patrick O'Sullivan, principal officer, and Ms Samantha Kenny, assistant principal officer, all from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. We also have Mr. Eddie Taaffe, chief executive of Wexford County Council, and Mr. Gerard O'Sullivan, director of services, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, who are representing the County and City Management Association, CCMA. You are all very welcome. I ask anyone attending remotely to mute their microphone when not contributing so that we do not pick up any background noise or feedback. As usual, I remind all those in attendance, including myself, to ensure that their mobile phones are switched to silent or switched off.

Members attending remotely are reminded of the constitutional requirement that, in order to participate in public meetings, they must be physically present within the confines of the Leinster House complex.

As the witnesses are within the precincts of Leinster House, they are protected by absolute privilege in respect of the presentation they make to the committee. This means that they have an absolute defence against any defamation action for anything they say at the meeting. However, they are expected not to abuse this privilege and it is my duty as Cathaoirleach to ensure that it is not abused. Therefore, if their statements are potentially defamatory in relation to an identifiable person or entity, they will be directed to discontinue their remarks. It is imperative that they comply with any such direction.

Members are also reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person or entity outside of the Houses, or an official of the Houses, either by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

I invite Mr. Kelly to make his opening statement, followed by Mr. Taaffe. We will then proceed with a question-and-answer session.

Mr. David Kelly: I am grateful for the invitation to address the Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community. Addressing Traveller accommodation is a priority for the Government and for the Department and I appreciate the opportunity to update the committee on the delivery of accommodation for Travellers. I am joined today by my colleagues: Patrick O'Sullivan, principal officer, and Samantha Kenny, assistant principal in the social inclusion unit.

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 underpins the policy in respect of Traveller accommodation and provides that housing authorities have a statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller accommodation programmes in their areas. In line with the statutory framework, the Department must ensure that there are adequate structures

and supports in place to assist local authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding. Each local authority prepares a Traveller accommodation programme, or TAP, within which targets are set for the provision of Traveller accommodation. The TAP sets out the plan for local authority investment priorities and informs the basis for the delivery across a range of housing options including Traveller-specific accommodation and social housing supports. The current round of TAPs runs for the five-year period from 2025 to 2029, and the Department is committed to supporting the local authorities in delivering on their TAPs.

Implementation of the TAPs involves local authorities managing the delivery and allocation of all forms of accommodation for Travellers under these strategic five-year rolling programmes, to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in their areas. Local authorities are accountable to their elected members through a system of reserved policy functions, mandatory reporting by management, and direct oversight by the chief executive. This includes in respect of delivery of Traveller accommodation against their TAPs targets. The Department continues to work with local authorities in respect of the provision of Traveller-specific accommodation. The delivery of Traveller-specific accommodation includes the delivery of new projects and the refurbishment of existing accommodation, in conjunction with trailers funded through the caravan loan scheme supporting the delivery of their TAPs. In 2025, which was the first full year of the current TAP, local authorities reported an overall accommodation of 665 Traveller families against a target of 726 Traveller families, which was primarily provided through standard and voluntary housing as well as HAP supports. Some 88 Traveller families were accommodated in Traveller-specific accommodation.

The programme board established by the Minister in 2020 continues to oversee the implementation of recommendations from the 2019 report of the expert group on Traveller accommodation. The programme board is chaired by the independent chair of the national Traveller accommodation consultative committee, Mr. Niall Crowley. On foot of the work of the programme board, the social housing assessment regulations include a Traveller identifier, allowing for a more evidence-based approach to the provision of Traveller accommodation, giving local authorities better data in planning their TAPs and setting targets. There are many other work programmes under way and at the request of the programme board, the Housing Agency recently completed a research paper to look at how local Traveller accommodation consultative committees could better operate to improve engagement with local authorities to better support local delivery and management of Traveller-specific accommodation, and how to improve their influence. The research paper, which has been accepted by the programme board, is now informing the preparation of revised LTACC guidelines for approval by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to issue to all local authorities. The programme board is actively considering the expert review recommendation for the establishment of a national Traveller accommodation authority. The programme board expects a research paper shortly for its consideration from the Housing Agency, considering the role of the NTACC and wider practical options for national governance arrangements.

I am pleased to report that Traveller-specific accommodation funding continues to be fully drawn down by local authorities, resulting in capital investment of over €125 million in Traveller-specific accommodation over the six-year period from 2020 to 2025. Since 2020, it is open to all local authorities to apply for and draw down funds at any time throughout the year and this is actively encouraged by the Department. In addition to this capital expenditure,

some €38 million was spent through current expenditure in the same period, supporting local authorities in the management and maintenance of Traveller-specific accommodation, particularly halting sites. Increased funding of €34 million was made available in budget 2026, further demonstrating the ongoing commitment in respect of Traveller accommodation. This investment by the Department through the local authorities demonstrates strong commitment to Traveller accommodation. The Traveller accommodation unit's budget is provided for Traveller-specific accommodation such as group housing schemes and halting sites, and does not include accommodation provided through the Department's other social and affordable housing programmes. As such, funding available for and spent on accommodation solutions for Travellers is much broader than is often reported under the Traveller-specific accommodation spend.

The incidence of Traveller families in homeless emergency accommodation is recognised as a significant challenge. Together with local authorities, which have statutory responsibilities for the provision of homeless accommodation and in tackling homelessness, the Department continues to work to address this challenge in conjunction with the broader challenge of homelessness. The ministerial-appointed representative from a national Traveller organisation to the national homeless action committee plays an important role in the work of the committee in maintaining a focus on Travellers in homelessness to address their needs.

Alongside the programme board's ongoing projects, the Department continues its broader commitment to improve Traveller accommodation, which remains a key priority, evidenced by ongoing investment under our national housing plan, Delivering Homes, Building Communities 2025–2030. Current progress demonstrates the drive and commitment which the Department, in conjunction with local authorities, continues to foster in delivering social housing supports and Traveller-specific accommodation central to ensuring we continue to improve the lives of Travellers. I hope this information is of assistance to the committee in informing its ongoing important work. My colleagues and I will be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: I am chair of the CCMA housing committee and chief executive of Wexford County Council. I am accompanied today by Gerard O'Sullivan, director of housing in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and a fellow committee member. On behalf of the CCMA, I would like to thank the committee for the invitation to attend. We appreciated the opportunity to engage with the committee during our previous appearance in April and welcome the opportunity today to address any further issues, questions or matters relating to Traveller accommodation and associated housing policy issues.

Local authorities recognise Traveller accommodation as a core housing responsibility and remain committed to delivering culturally appropriate accommodation. However, sustained progress requires joined-up national support, clear delivery pathways and continued partnership with Traveller communities and representative organisations. This work is being progressed through Traveller accommodation programmes, refurbishments, acquisitions, new-build schemes and mainstream social housing responses. Delivery depends on effective collaboration between local authorities, Traveller representative bodies, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, approved housing bodies and the Housing Agency, but is increasingly affected by rising demand, constrained resources, competing priorities and long-standing barriers to Traveller-specific accommodation.

Some of the key barriers to delivering Traveller accommodation projects relate to the complexity of the sites and the development process itself. Projects can be delayed or constrained by environmental issues, including flood risk, former landfill sites and land contamination, which require extensive technical assessment and mitigation measures before development can proceed. Planning-related challenges can also arise, including objections, approval processes and the need to navigate complex statutory requirements. In addition, many projects require significant inter-agency co-ordination between local authorities, Government Departments and other stakeholders, which can add complexity. Finally, a number of schemes involve the regeneration of long-established or legacy sites, where existing infrastructure deficits, site conditions and the need to accommodate residents during redevelopment can make projects particularly challenging to progress.

Traveller accommodation remains a key priority for local authorities. In 2025, the full allocation of €23 million in Traveller-specific capital funding was utilised, demonstrating continued investment in delivering and improving Traveller accommodation. A further €26 million capital allocation has been made available for 2026. These figures are presented on the basis of current Department and local authority returns and should be read as the best available position at the time of preparation.

On traveller accommodation plans, the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998 places a statutory obligation on local authorities to make provision for the accommodation needs of Travellers through the adoption and implementation of five-year Traveller accommodation programmes. The mid-term review of Traveller accommodation programmes is due in 2027 and will assess progress in accommodation delivery. Updates on the progress of the TAPs are provided at meetings of the local Traveller accommodation consultative committee. The Housing Agency's report on good practice in the development and design of Traveller-specific accommodation provides guidance on high-quality, Traveller-appropriate accommodation. A key finding from extensive consultation with local authorities and Traveller communities was that, while design and physical standards are important, ongoing consultation and engagement between local authorities and Travellers throughout the development and management process are critical to the success of accommodation schemes.

Across the local authority sector, 152 Traveller accommodation outputs were delivered in 2025 across a range of accommodation supports and schemes.

Delivery included 26 new group housing units, five group housing major refurbishments, 14 acquisitions, 20 emergency replacement mobile homes, 85 caravan loan schemes and two Covid-related mobile home provisions.

Traveller households continue to be accommodated through mainstream social housing programmes alongside Traveller-specific accommodation. Based on the 2025 annual estimate of accommodation of Traveller families in all categories of accommodation, the number of Traveller households accommodated by or with the assistance of local authorities increased to 9,117 households in 2025, up from 8,694 in 2024 and 8,423 in 2023. This represents an increase of approximately 5% of households on 2024 and an 8% increase on 2023.

Traveller homelessness was a significant challenge in 2025. A total of 356 self-identified Traveller households accessed emergency accommodation through the year, comprising 195 family households and 161 individual households. At the same time, local authorities

supported 126 Traveller households to exit homelessness, with the majority of successful exits achieved through local authority housing - 68 households - and approved housing body accommodation - 42 households. Local authorities also continued to focus on homelessness prevention, helping 51 Traveller households avoid entering emergency accommodation through housing interventions and tenancy supports. Despite these positive outcomes, 88 Traveller adults were recorded as rough sleeping during 2025, highlighting the continued need for increased housing supply, sustained homelessness prevention measures and targeted supports to address Traveller housing need.

The Traveller liaison officers within the local authorities are the key bridge between Traveller families, local authorities and support agencies. They help to deliver Traveller accommodation, sustain tenancies, support estate management and build positive community relationships. Their role is central to ensuring that Traveller accommodation services are effective, inclusive and responsive to local needs. The Traveller liaison officer plays a critical role in interagency co-ordination to support households with complex needs.

In terms of Traveller accommodation construction projects, there are currently 20 Traveller-specific housing projects being progressed across 12 local authorities, with the potential to deliver 126 homes. The pipeline includes 32 units at stage 1 and 88 units at stage 2 approval. Final funding has been approved for four projects to award a contract and then subsequently commence on site. A further five local authorities have projects either on hold or at the early proposal stage. These pipeline figures reflect the current reported position and may change as schemes progress through approval, procurement and delivery stages.

As part of the development of the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2027-2030, local authorities must identify and plan for Traveller accommodation needs alongside other specialist housing requirements. Using the TAP and summary social housing assessment, SSHA, data, authorities are required to incorporate evidence-based Traveller accommodation needs into their housing delivery action plans, HDAPs, supported by a delivery programme and performance framework. The Department has already provided local authorities with the assessed need from the TAP and SSHA process to inform planning and delivery for the period from 2027 to 2030.

In conclusion, local authorities remain committed to delivering appropriate Traveller accommodation and improving outcomes for Traveller families. While the sector is making significant progress, many projects continue to face complex planning, environmental, regeneration and engagement challenges. The priority now is to work collectively with Traveller communities, the Department and relevant stakeholders to remove barriers, strengthen delivery capacity and ensure Traveller accommodation is fully integrated within Ireland's wider housing response. We welcome the opportunity for further dialogue and are happy to answer any questions the committee may wish to raise.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Mr. Taaffe and Mr. Kelly. I now call Deputy Quinlivan.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: I thank both witnesses for their presentations. I will start with questions for the Department. Mr. Kelly said:

> In 2025, which was the first full year of the current TAP, local authorities reported an overall accommodation of 665 Traveller families against a target of 726 Traveller families [a

shortfall of 61], which was primarily provided through standard and voluntary housing as well as HAP supports.

I ask Mr. Kelly to give the committee a breakdown of those figures. How many people were in receipt of HAP, how many were voluntary and how many were done by councils?

Mr. David Kelly: As I am pulling out that figure, one of the things to note is that for the last couple of years, on foot of the work of the expert group there is an identifier which indicates the housing preference of Travellers who identify as a Traveller. The majority look for standard housing.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Did Mr. Kelly say that the majority seek standard housing?

Mr. David Kelly: Standard housing, yes, rather than Traveller-specific accommodation. The 2025 figure for Traveller-specific accommodation was 152. Does the Deputy want me to give a breakdown of that figure?

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: I want a breakdown of the 665 figure mentioned in the opening statement.

Mr. David Kelly: I have a figure of 152 for Traveller-specific accommodation. The balance is provided through HAP and allocations. I do not know if I have a further breakdown on that but we can certainly send it on. That would be the housing assistance payment, the rental assistance scheme and local authority or approved housing body allocations made under a local authority allocation scheme.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: That is from a local authority. Basically, it is a council house.

Mr. David Kelly: Under the scheme of letting priorities, local authorities allocate a home owned by a local authority or an approved housing body to a household on the social housing waiting list.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: In Limerick, Focus Ireland might have a house and then the council would nominate the person from the social list.

Mr. David Kelly: Yes.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Is Mr. Kelly saying that 152 are Traveller-specific and the rest were on HAP?

Mr. David Kelly: No. The rest were a combination of allocations by local authorities and housing assistance payment-----

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Does Mr. Kelly know how many allocations there were?

Mr. David Kelly: I will dig out that figure and get back to the Deputy.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Will Mr. Kelly come back to the committee with a list in the context of the 665 families he mentioned? I would like to know exactly who got what within those 665 families.

Mr. David Kelly: Yes, the allocations.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Thank you. Mr. Kelly said that "The incidence of Traveller families in homeless emergency accommodation is recognised as a significant challenge." How many Travellers are in emergency accommodation?

Mr. David Kelly: Over the last couple of years, we have introduced an ethnic identifier. In respect of the ethnicity of adults, some 378 adults from a total of 11,800 adults were identified as Travellers. Ethnicity is provided on a voluntary basis so the number might be slightly higher if people are not willing to declare their ethnicity. From the data we have been provided with, 378 or 3.2% of adults were identified as Irish Travellers.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: When does that statistic date from?

Mr. David Kelly: The July 2026 report. The August data will probably be available on the last Friday of this month. The July figure is the latest one.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: The data is pretty up to date. Thanks for that.

My next questions are for the CCMA. Mr. Taaffe said in his opening statement that €23 million of capital funding was utilised last year. Can he provide a breakdown of that by local authority?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: I do not have it on me but we could get the information from the Department and submit it to the committee.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: That is fine, thanks.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: I thank all of the witnesses for coming in today. When we have Traveller groups in here, housing is the number one issue. Accommodation is repeatedly mentioned. I will start by asking the Department officials about local authority performance. They probably have evaluated the performance of local authorities or have a very good assessment of how they are doing. This issue comes up the whole time with groups here, local authority by local authority, and it is sometimes really hard to get behind that as to who is doing well. In terms of a league table, who is and who is not doing well?

Mr. David Kelly: I think we work well with all of the local authorities. There are different challenges in different local authorities. We have a good relationship with all of the local authorities that we work with. The delivery can be delayed for particular reasons but I would not call out anybody for criticism. There can be different challenges for different projects but we would have a good relationship with all of the local authorities when trying to deliver projects.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: Are they all doing equally well in terms of performing and delivering on their commitments?

Mr. David Kelly: For different reasons. We have mentioned, in terms of the TAPs, that some local authorities will have done better in 2025 in terms of their targets than others but you would expect that things that have not been done in 2025 are likely to be done in 2026. Capital projects and some other projects can be complex. There can be delays in capital works. Sometimes when we have a forecast for something to be completed in 2025, it can be delayed for different reasons.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: I take from what Mr. Kelly has said that they are all performing pretty much in the middle.

We hear all the time that the Traveller programmes are fully resourced and that lots of capital resources, etc., are going in. It always seems to be about the money going in versus what comes out the other end, which is the units of accommodation.

As I said, when we have Traveller groups in here, housing units are always the key thing. How is the Department measuring that? It seems to be all about the money going in, with the programme fully resourced. We are putting lots of money in. Is Mr. Kelly happy that he has the metric right with regard to units coming out?

Mr. David Kelly: I mentioned there that we are reviewing the TAPs. We are looking at delivery against targets in the TAPs. There are different reasons, as I mentioned. Some of the projects have run into issues or delays. There have been delays with some of the capital projects but we are monitoring delivery. Every local authority has a target in its TAP and we are measuring the delivery against the TAP in each year. We work with local authorities. It is a five-year programme. If there are delays in the first year, we work with local authorities to make sure they are delivered in future years.

On allocations, as with capital programmes, local authorities have housing targets. Given the large numbers of Travellers being accommodated in standard social housing, local authorities have been performing really strongly in social housing delivery. We have been delivering more social houses in the last couple of years than we ever have. That provides local authorities with the tools to allocate more homes to Travellers who wish to have standard social housing.

I would not say it is just about spending the money. I would say it is about spending the money and delivering targets as indicated in the TAPs. We will be doing a midterm review of the TAPs as well, to look at how local authorities are performing.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: Does Mr. Kelly think the Department needs to review TAPs? I know it is probably obliged to do it, but what is the advantage of reviewing TAPs now versus driving on with targets that Mr. Kelly knows are there and that are really important to make?

Mr. David Kelly: We want to understand in the Department whether there are any issues or delays with projects being met. We have capital funding. We provide capital funding to local authorities at any time of the year for projects that are submitted. There would have been cases in the past where we provided allocations to different local authorities but that might have meant an underspend with projects delayed, and other local authorities that were delivering strongly then were not able to draw down funding. At the same time, we want to make sure that local authorities who have targets under TAPs are drawing down the funding. We engage bilaterally with local authorities to see how they are performing in regard to the TAPs and to see if there are any issues we can work with them on.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: Turning to the local authorities, I have a similar question. I will start with Dún Laoghaire. The rubber hits the road when the units appear. For 2025, the year gone by, Dún Laoghaire presumably had a target to deliver in terms of housing units. What was that target, and did the council make it? The second question relates to 2026. We are

coming up to quarter 4 of 2026. Does the council have an output target for units for 2026, and is it going to make it?

Mr. Gerard O'Sullivan: We have seven projects in our accommodation plan. They will be delivered over the lifetime of that scheme. We have stage 2 and 3 approval and we are ready to go to tender on two projects.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: Can we talk housing units? How many units will come on stream in 2026?

Mr. Gerard O'Sullivan: It will probably be by 2027 when we will be looking for 8 to 12 units. Prior to that, this year, for example, we had a contractor appointed and we were ready to go on two sites, but that required us to move to a temporary location and at the last minute that fell through. One of the individuals did not want to proceed with that, so that is one of the challenges. Moving is stressful and sometimes you can get a change of heart at the last minute.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: Was that in 2026 or 2025?

Mr. Gerard O'Sullivan: It was 2025. We have a plan for this year. They were two projects where we were hoping to be on site.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: Did the council have anything out in 2025 in terms of units?

Mr. Gerard O'Sullivan: No units were built but we did progress schemes where we had the detailed design done and we had stage 3 approval.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: For me, eight to 12 units over two years is quite a low output.

Mr. Gerard O'Sullivan: Yes, but this year we would have had those eight units done if there had been no issue with moving to the temporary location. We had the welfare facilities on site. We were ready to go.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: Does Mr. O'Sullivan understand the point I am making? We hear it all the time. Traveller groups come in here and they have real challenges with accommodation. We hear programmes are fully funded, and then we are looking for units to pop out of the hopper and they are not arriving. The council had no units last year and it is hoping, fingers crossed and everything going well, that somewhere between eight and 12 units will be delivered next year. Does Mr. O'Sullivan understand where I am coming from?

Mr. Gerard O'Sullivan: I do.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: I am about to ask Mr. Taaffe the same question.

Mr. Gerard O'Sullivan: It is over the lifetime of the programme. Issues come up. We have another scheme where we got an arboricultural report done and there was a tree preservation area. That is something we would not have foreseen that we have to now deal with, but we will deal with it and get it delivered over the lifetime of the plan.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: Can Mr. O'Sullivan see how - I do not know why it is - on these schemes, Traveller schemes in particular, these issues keep coming up and the output is delayed?

Will Mr. Taaffe comment on Wexford?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: We have a number of objectives in our Traveller accommodation programme. The main one is a group housing scheme to replace a transient site in Wexford town, and that is progressing through design and, first, consultation with the Traveller families who are in that unit. We are working through design on it. There is no doubt about it; that scheme is taking a lot longer than normal because of the environmental sensitivity of the area. It is adjacent to an old landfill site and a special area of conservation, SAC, so there is a significant number of environmental reports to do with that. Then it has to be submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála. It will not be a normal Part 8 process done by the local authority.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: What were the units out for 2025?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: In 2025, we did not have any units in Traveller-specific accommodation. For the majority of Travellers in Wexford whom we consult and engage with, their choice is very much for standard social housing. If you look at our standard social housing output over the last number of years, broadly speaking, if you take a three- or four-year period, we are delivering about 30% more than our target in social housing. That is where the bulk of families we engage with want to be housed, and it is where we are housing the bulk of Traveller families as the need arises. In the case of the one project we have, it is delayed and it is taking longer than normal. We are working through the design process on that.

The other challenge we have is that we have two halting sites in Wexford, and we are engaged in a programme of refurbishment for one of them, the first one, in New Ross. We intend to do major refurbishment work on the second one in Bunclody next year.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: That project Mr. Taaffe mentioned will be delivered either this year or next year in terms of new units. How big is that scheme?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: It is a group housing scheme. Off the top of my head, I think it is for six families.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: It is still very small in scale.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: It is but, as I said earlier, it is looking at and matching the need and the desire of Traveller families with what they want. Not to labour the point, but the vast bulk would much prefer a social housing allocation.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: They go through the social housing system and get a-----

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: Yes.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: Okay.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: We are delivering over our target on that. One of the issues we have is, for example, if you take the geographical distribution of our social housing, that can become a challenge because in some years we do not always deliver new-build social housing in the geographical area as projects are aligned. For example, we have had some approved housing body, AHB, housing in New Ross, but our own direct-build social housing scheme in New Ross is still about a year to 18 months away. That has caused a delay whereby some of the families who are in a halting site and want to get into social housing are not able to access that. That is something we address because of our pipeline. It is just the way the projects have fallen and the way we are opening housing schemes.

Deputy Dessie Ellis: I thank the witnesses for all the introductions. What are the consequences for local authorities missing their targets? We have heard so many times about missed targets over the last while. Are there any consequences and what happens with those?

I have always been curious about why we always look at local authorities. We have specific local authorities that deal with Traveller accommodation but that never spreads anywhere else. It never goes into other areas. There are lots of areas throughout the country where there is no Traveller accommodation and no input from local authorities. I would love to know if that has ever been addressed. I know the Traveller committees meet with the witnesses but I am always curious as to why we have not looked at expanding. Whether that is down to problems with communities or otherwise is irrelevant, in my mind. It seems unfair that there is not a broader approach to Traveller accommodation.

I wish to ask about the caravan loans in Dún Laoghaire and Wexford.

Do the CCMA representatives' local authorities have caravan loans? Is there much of that going on? There has been a lot of controversy over caravan loans. I am not sure how much Dún Laoghaire or Wexford engages with them and how the local authorities work it out in the communities.

I see the figure there of 726 accommodations delivered over the year but I never see the loss of units in halting sites. For example, in St. Margaret's, we have lost approximately ten units. In St. Joseph's, we have lost approximately 13 over the past number of years. I have never seen what is balancing that out. Those figures are deceptive. That is what is being delivered but there is a lot being lost. There are various different reasons for this and I will not go into them. Do we calculate those losses to make a comparison?

We have seen the Dunsink plan and the Travellers in Dunsink Lane. I am curious. Does the Department engage with Fingal in terms of the Traveller families there and the accommodation? There is no mention in its plan about what it will do with the Traveller families in Dunsink Lane. I wonder whether the Department is on top of such issues.

We have a similar situation in Avila Park in Finglas, where the families need to expand. There is a huge amount of people needing accommodation. There is an overspill in a lot of these areas and it is not being catered for. What engagement takes place with the Department and the local authorities in terms of addressing these? It is obvious that Avila Park has remained the same for the past 20 or 30 years, yet the families have expanded. There is certainly no sign that they are being catered for in a proper way.

Maybe the witnesses could answer some of those questions.

Mr. David Kelly: On the engagement, I am not sure if I understood. In terms of the engagement between the Travellers and the officials, we have the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, NTACC, and then we have the local traveller accommodation consultative committees, LTACCs. The NTACC would undertake periodic engagement with the local Travellers to get that link between the national engagement and what is happening on the ground to understand some of the issues. We mentioned in the opening statement reviewing the guidelines for the LTACCs and that is being progressed to try to make that structure work better on the ground. There are structures there to facilitate engagement,

both at the local level and at the national level, and then the link between the LTACCs and the NTACC.

In relation to the losses of accommodation, that is built into the Traveller accommodation programmes, TAPs, in that the TAPs are looking at the accommodation needs of Travellers in the area. If accommodation is lost, that needs to be factored into future need. The TAPs look at the current need of Travellers but they are also intended to look at projected future need with family formations, etc. Where properties are lost or they know they will be lost, they need to be factored into future projected need.

In relation to Dunsink, we engage with all of the local authorities. I attended the hearing on Dunsink and we listened to the concerns. We will continue to engage with Fingal. We do not have an application in at present for any capital projects from Fingal but we have had investment from Dublin City Council in that area. We heard the concerns at the previous hearing and we will continue to engage with Fingal in relation to Dunsink and the needs. We will be very supportive of any capital application.

In relation to Avila estate, there is ongoing engagement. We have been told there are a number of options being looked at in Avila. We approved funding of €2 million for Dublin City Council for three new houses in May 2026. There are also proposals to allocate a number of homes in a planned Kildonan development to Travellers from that area, so I note that Dublin city is looking at a number of options.

The last question was on the caravan loan scheme. We are very supportive of local authorities. The caravan loan scheme has worked well. It is affordable. We have allocated €320,000 to Fingal this year. It is a good scheme because it is affordable. The repayments are discounted and linked to differential rents, so it is a discounted loan. We have increased the maximum loan up to €80,000. I suppose that is aimed at ensuring that people can access a loan that is sufficient to buy a quality property. This arose over the years. The loans previously were not sufficient to buy properties that were of a sufficient quality. You could not keep them warm in the winter, for example. The €80,000 is equipping people with the financial capacity to buy a higher quality product. We are happy that the caravan loan scheme is being utilised.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: I thank the Cathaoirleach and the Deputy. The first thing I would say is that most local authorities are meeting their targets in terms of social housing and they are also well under way with their TAPs and delivery in that regard.

To answer the Deputy's question about what the consequences are, as everybody would know, the delivery and the performance of local authorities is discussed every month in front of the elected members and we are accountable to the elected members on a monthly basis in an open forum. If, for whatever reason, targets are not being met or progress is not what it should be, I suppose the consequences are we have to address that at our monthly council meetings.

As regards the caravan loan scheme, it is a scheme that local authorities administer. It is very much a demand-led scheme. If the demand is there, the loans are given out. I suppose it is what it is. We will facilitate that and help people with that in any way that we can to explain the process to them, take them through it, help them with the application process, etc. Our Traveller liaison officers would be versed in that and give any assistance that we can in explaining the process to people.

The geographical distribution of Traveller accommodation is always an issue. There are some areas where demand might be lower than others and then there are areas where, even with that demand, we have to be cognisant of the social cohesion and the distribution so that there is not an over-concentration. That is the same across all forms of housing; we do that with social housing as well. We have to be careful that we are building sustainable communities. Just because you can do something does not mean you should. There are other locations and it has to be an equal distribution based upon demand. Sometimes, we achieve that. Sometimes, there are difficulties beyond our control that we cannot achieve that but local authorities do their best on that.

Deputy Dessie Ellis: There was one other thing. I was curious about the Department's engagement. There is supposed to be a new scheme in Cork for building units for Traveller accommodation. I am curious as to whether the Department has had any input into that and whether that is a feasible scheme that could be carried on elsewhere.

Mr. David Kelly: Is it Spring Lane?

Deputy Dessie Ellis: We had a presentation about it. They are supposed to be new-type units that they have planned.

Mr. David Kelly: There was a significant project in Cork. There were, I suppose, long-standing issues with the Spring Lane site in Cork.

Deputy Dessie Ellis: Yes.

Mr. David Kelly: The Department granted stage 2 funding of €17.9 million to Cork City Council in January 2024 for the redevelopment of Spring Lane. That will accommodate ten to 12 families. There is an adjacent site, called Ellis Yard, which is also going to be developed for group housing. It will accommodate ten to 12 families as well. We have worked closely with Cork on this. The scheme is badly needed because the conditions on the site are not good. The funding and the development of the site by Cork City Council is one of the important capital projects we are looking at. We would see that as a really important project. There are between ten and 15 families on the site being provided with social housing in a new development by Cork City Council. Spring Lane would be a key project in Cork.

Mr. Gerard O'Sullivan: On the caravan loan scheme in Dún Laoghaire, we drew down €225,000 in 2025 and we are on track to do something similar this year. That would be the amount that we got.

An Cathaoirleach: I call Senator O'Reilly.

Unfortunately, we still appear to be having technical difficulties and cannot hear the Senator. I wonder whether it is a local issue. We have tried a number of things. We will move on to Deputy Connolly.

Deputy John Connolly: I thank our guests for their presentations and attendance here today. I have some queries on the content of the opening statements. The CCMA tells us there are currently 20 Traveller-specific housing projects being progressed across 12 local authorities, with the potential to deliver 126 homes. When the CCMA says the projects are being progressed, it mentions stage 1 and stage 2 approval. Is that pre-planning?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: Yes. Stage 1 approval is preliminary. Stages 1 and 2 are before the planning process. Generally, it is after stage 2 that a project goes for planning approval, or the planning consent process, and stage 4 is where approval is given to appoint a contractor to carry out the works.

Deputy John Connolly: Am I right in saying that the Department is responsible for stage 1 approval?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: Currently, the Department is responsible for all four stages of approval. My understanding is that other forms of capital housing now have a single-stage approval process and that Traveller accommodation, if I am correct, will be moving to a single-stage process in the near future.

Mr. David Kelly: The Department is reviewing that at the moment. There is some work to do on it, but we are trying to reduce the number of gateways for local authorities.

Deputy John Connolly: I have to be honest. I get frustrated when I see duplication. Are the local authorities responsible for this? What is the necessity for continued departmental approval through the four stages? I mean that in relation to housing generally as well as Traveller-specific accommodation.

Mr. David Kelly: The Department is accountable in relation to expenditure on housing. Traditionally, the four-stage process was about ensuring value for money, etc. What we are doing on housing is moving towards more standardisation. We have standardised guidelines for social housing. In the past, very expensive projects would have come in and the Department, which is accountable to the Committee of Public Accounts in terms of expenditure, would have had to make changes on value-for-money grounds. We are now trying to move to a single stage. One of the issues we are looking at is moving towards standardised housing. There is a design manual with standardised floor layouts for social housing. We are moving to the stage where there will be a single-stage process for all applications for standardised housing.

Deputy John Connolly: I am moving slightly off the specific topic of Traveller accommodation, but I want to stress something Mr. Taaffe has noted. Local authorities are responsible to their elected members for expenditure as well. I see this as duplication. I see this as part of the problem in terms of delivering housing in that it is taking too long for projects, including for Traveller-specific accommodation, to go from concept to departmental approval and then through the planning process. I am aware that the planning process might play a part somewhere in stages 1 to 4 but it is slowing down the development of accommodation and housing. It is frustrating.

I acknowledge that the Department is accountable for public expenditure to the Committee of Public Accounts. So are local authorities. They are equally accountable and probably more so because they are in front of their elected representatives on a monthly basis and more often if strategic policy committees are included. We need to do more to streamline, as I have said to the Minister. It is taking too long to bring projects to fruition. This relates to public housing and also Traveller-specific accommodation.

To return to the original question, are all 20 projects at the pre-planning stage? Do all 20 have to go through the planning process?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: I do not have the exact details on the 20 projects. They would be at various stages. I imagine some would have planning permission and are at the detailed design, tendering or works stages. They would be at all stages along the process from stage 1 to stage 4.

Deputy John Connolly: So, Mr. Taaffe is not sure either as to how many involve existing properties undergoing thorough refurbishment and how many involve entirely new sites.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: They could be new sites or extensions to existing sites with new units added.

Deputy John Connolly: Okay.

I also want to ask about something that, in fairness, Mr. Taaffe's contribution acknowledges. I am not sure if the other contribution does. It is the elephant in the room. Many of us are alluding to it in our commentary. I am referring to the difference between what is projected in the presentations today and the information and evidence we receive from members of the Traveller community about the standard of accommodation. One of the first pieces of work this committee did following its formation was to examine the whole issue of Traveller health and why members of the Traveller community had poorer health outcomes than the general population and, in particular, poorer outcomes than the settled community. There are many determinants but the evidence of the Traveller community seems to be that the most significant determinant is accommodation: a lack of accommodation and poor-standard accommodation. I suppose the witnesses can sense we are somewhat frustrated when we see reports about works, stages and approval processes but do not see the same picture in the data coming from representatives of the Traveller community or the groups working on their behalf.

Mr. Taaffe acknowledges that there are long-standing barriers to the provision of Traveller-specific accommodation. I realise it is not fully within his remit, but in his experience of working with local authorities, have those barriers been successfully overcome in many places?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: They have. The issue is that there is a lot of fear of the unknown, both in the settled community and in the Traveller community, when it comes to tailoring accommodation to people's needs and fitting a programme and project around those. It takes longer to do that, to secure buy-in and to gain trust in the fact that we will try to build what we design. Some of the issues are outside our control and are related to the planning process and third-party objections. The environmental complexity of some of our sites is also very significant because we are dealing with many legacy issues. For example, some transient sites or halting sites would have been built near landfills or in what are now understood to be flood-plains. That makes the refurbishment or relocation of those sites, or works on them, even more complex. Complexity equals time. The more complex a project is, the more time it takes to get through those processes. From what I see in developing capital programmes, the complexity of the analysis and consultation required with all stakeholders, including the residents for whom the works are intended, surrounding residents and other stakeholders involved in the planning process, is growing all the time. It is becoming harder and harder on some sites to do the work we want to do. That is not to say we are not trying our best to do it.

Local authorities are working flat out delivering all forms of housing, including private homes, starter homes and affordable houses, and also social houses. We are operating in a complex environment. All of our programmes, whether they are regeneration programmes,

capital programmes or those related to road resurfacing – you name it – are at capacity or absolutely maxed out at the moment. The construction sector is also maxed out at the moment. We would be looking for tenders from contractors to do refurbishment works on houses on all forms of accommodation. It is a struggle to get people to do work for us, or even to price it. When they do price it, getting a price you can stand over is also a difficulty.

Deputy John Connolly: On a related note, Mr. Taaffe recognised and outlined very well the complexity involved in developing Traveller-specific accommodation and also other projects. He noted that there were also complexities involved in regenerating long-established or legacy sites. If Mr. Taaffe were to compare two projects – one involving refurbishment and potentially the expansion or extension of an existing site and one involving the development of new Traveller-specific accommodation on a greenfield or brownfield site – which would be considered less complex?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: The refurbishment is less complex because there is an existing set of residents you can engage with. This is something with which I am directly familiar. If you engage with residents, they will very quickly tell you what the issues are on the site and what needs to be rectified. Very quickly, within a few hours of discussing the matter with residents, you can get to the bottom of what needs to be done. It is then a case of seeking the funding and getting the contractor to do the work. There are difficulties with getting contractors to do work, and that applies across the board on all of our programmes because of the capacity in the construction sector. However, refurbishment is probably the most straightforward type of work.

Extensions to existing sites can be complex. There is that fear of the unknown and, in order to remove that fear, we need to have a definite plan as to who will be occupying the new sites. On the new sites it is about consultation with any existing residents and allaying any fears they might have. In my experience, that is not particular to any group we are trying to house; it is across all housing schemes in this day and age.

Deputy John Connolly: In Mr. Taaffe's experience, has that situation deteriorated? Was it easier many years ago?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: No, it is about the same. As local authorities, we have become better at engaging and knowing what form of engagement is appropriate. We are better resourced to do it and we have more experience of doing it, so it is actually better now.

Deputy John Connolly: Can I make a comment and ask for a response? I think Deputy Ó Muirí mentioned the satisfaction within the Department that the moneys are fully drawn down every year for capital expenditure. If one assesses the figures, however, €125 million over six years is about €21 million per year. In 32 local authorities, that is about half a million per year. I know there is greater demand and needs in certain local authorities but one wonders about the sufficiency of that figure. I know that the funding provided to the Department is a political decision. In terms of local authorities coming looking for capital funding, does it exceed it exceed the Department's annual budget?

Mr. David Kelly: In general, the answer is "No". I mentioned in the opening statement that it is important that there is significantly more Exchequer expenditure on providing housing for Travellers than is included in the Traveller-specific accommodation budget. There is more than one billion euro in social housing funding when one includes the local authority capital

programme and the AHB capital programmes and the majority of Travellers are being housed in houses funded under those capital schemes.

My colleagues might wish to come in on this but if we have significant additional funding requests in a year, it is open to us to seek supplementary funding. Generally, over the past number of years our budgets have been sufficient to meet the demand for projects coming in from local authorities. We keep that under review. If we had a major surplus of schemes above our capital funding, we would go and engage in the Estimates process. Over the past number of years, the capital has generally been sufficient or has been fairly close to matching demand. It is absolutely something we keep under review. If we had a whole load of projects we could not approve, we would be looking for additional funding in the Estimates process.

Deputy John Connolly: In his opening statement, Mr. Kelly referred to commitment "alongside the programme board's ongoing projects...". This goes back to the point made by Deputy Ellis. When Mr. Kelly says "...the Department continues its broader commitment to improve Traveller accommodation", is he talking about increasing the capacity of Traveller accommodation? Is the Department trying to improve the actual standard of the accommodation that will be developed and that which people are currently living in as well?

Mr. David Kelly: It is providing new accommodation, providing refurbishment for existing accommodation and also providing funding to ensure standards are maintained on sites. In addition to the capital funding, we provide current funding to support caretakers, for example, and general maintenance. It is a combination of capital funding and current funding to ensure sites are maintained and kept to a good standard.

Deputy John Connolly: Is the only body that has some oversight of the standard of current accommodation in Traveller-specific accommodation at the moment, particularly halting sites, the elected members of the local authority?

Mr. David Kelly: The local authorities are responsible for the-----

Deputy John Connolly: Would the only oversight of that be from the elected members?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: That is fair to say. Ultimately the chief executives, me included, are responsible for the standard of accommodation, but the oversight is the monthly meeting with the councillors. We are also responsible to the LTACC and the representative bodies we engage with and who we are answerable to.

Deputy John Connolly: On that point, in one of our final sessions before the summer we had a number of representatives from a local authority. I cannot remember which one; my apologies.

An Cathaoirleach: It was Wexford.

Deputy John Connolly: Was it Wexford? Yes. They spoke about how the LTACC did not function appropriately. They mentioned a tradition or policy in Wexford whereby the chairperson of the LTACC was changed every year. The mayor of the county, the cathaoirleach, was the chairperson of the LTACC. They felt that was not a good model of operation in that the person changing every year did not provide continuity. People were coming into the role unsure or uncertain of what the committee was doing. From Mr. Taaffe's perspective and that of the body he represents, one of the things a number of us around the table felt was that perhaps

the LTACCs would work better if there was possibly a non-elected representative as chairperson with a term of a number of years.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: That is something we can look at. Off the top of my head, ultimately the decision to make that change would rest with the elected members of the county council, because it is a committee of the county council. If that is something the Traveller representative bodies believe should happen, we can bring it to the councillors as a suggestion and see what their opinion is.

It is important to say that while the chair of the committee may change, the officials in the housing section stay the same and they are the people who are operationalising the work of that committee and providing the secretariat, so there is continuity there.

Deputy John Connolly: My recollection was that the members of the Travelling community who were here at that meeting did not feel the meeting was being attended by the director of housing. That is my recollection of their contribution.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: It might not always be the director of housing; it could be the senior executive officer in housing and it could be the administrative officer in housing allocations as well. There would be representation there. To be fair, it is important to realise that the director of housing has a huge remit that also covers the community sections and he or she might not always be able to attend the meetings. We would always have an overview and always have a senior member of the housing staff, or multiple members of the housing staff, at those meetings.

An Cathaoirleach: Before I bring in Senator O'Reilly, Deputy Ó Muirí can come in very briefly.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: Specifically on that point, the other thing they mentioned about the meetings was that they would have travelled halfway to a meeting of that group-----

Deputy John Connolly: Five minutes away.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: They would be five minutes away and would get a notification the meeting is not happening, that it has been cancelled. It should not work like that, to have that lack of professionalism with a group like that. There should be a professional approach to those meetings. What would Mr. Taaffe say to that?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: Absolutely, I agree 100%. I do not know the individual circumstances of that were but I will look it up because that is not the way we normally operate and it is not the way I would expect us to operate.

Deputy Naoise Ó Muirí: I thank Mr. Taaffe.

An Cathaoirleach: I call Senator O' Reilly. Unfortunately, we are not hearing him. Sorry about that. I call Deputy Rice.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: My apologies for missing the opening statements. I had a parliamentary question to ask the Minister for foreign affairs in the Dáil so could not be here. I would like to start where I always do, which is by sending out my very serious concerns about the State's violation of the human rights of Travellers, particularly their right to accommodation and housing. They are not just concerns I have; they have been set out by many domestic and international human rights bodies, including the European Committee on Social Rights, which

is part of the Council of Europe, which found that the State is violating Travellers' rights under the European Social Charter. I found it interesting this morning when there was reference made to Spring Lane and the long-standing issues but no reference to the violations of the rights of the child, as identified by the Ombudsman for Children. I would appreciate and like if Departments and the Government would talk more in terms of human rights and a rights-based approach and the violations of the rights and seriousness of the issue, instead of referencing things as long-standing issues when we have evidence and reports by the independent Ombudsman for Children that say the rights of the child have been violated. We need to use stronger language and the Government needs to take a stronger approach.

It was welcome to see that the written statement provided, and I was surprised to see this, states, "addressing Traveller accommodation is a priority for the Government and for the Department". I think there would be Travellers throughout the country who would be surprised to hear that addressing Traveller accommodation is a priority for the Government. I do not think I have ever heard the Taoiseach talk about it in the Dáil. I do not think I have heard the Minister for housing talk very much about it, or other senior Ministers. I do not think the evidence I have seen with my own eyes in terms of the living conditions on some of the sites across the country would indicate that it is a priority for this Government or the Department. If it is, we should all be very concerned.

I am interested to know how the Department and the Government are demonstrating that this is a priority, including through what actions and what level of investment. What are we doing to make that very significant statement real in people's lives?

Mr. David Kelly: Supporting Traveller accommodation and the delivery of housing is a key Government priority. We see record levels of investment. I mentioned in the opening statement that since we introduced the ethnic identifier in the summary of social housing assessments, we can ascertain that most members of the Traveller community prefer standard housing, and most Traveller households are being accommodated in standard housing. With the investment in the housing programme and social housing, we are delivering the highest numbers of social housing since the foundation of the State. There is very significant investment in housing and social housing. That is supporting the increased delivery of housing for Travellers. We have been increasing the capital budget for Traveller-specific annually and looking through the work of the programme board. There has been the establishment by the Government of the expert group to look at issues impacting on Traveller accommodation and a programme of work through the programme board to address those issues. There is a range of commitments, including funding commitments, to support the delivery of Traveller accommodation, both current and capital funding. The range of issues shows the priority it is getting in the Department.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: With respect, I have visited Traveller accommodation where people do not have running water. People were using outdoor Portaloos. There are places where roads are blocked off and there is limited access - out of sight and out of mind. We talked about it here at a previous meeting regarding Dunsink Lane and the footpaths, playgrounds and public lighting. In some cases, State services can provide them with only very basic services. One man said the postman does not even deliver post to his accommodation any more. These are really dire living conditions. I think Mr. Kelly will have to accept that Travellers have the most dire living conditions of any group in Irish society. People are living in appalling conditions,

not for one or two years but over their entire lives, intergenerationally, and have been failed by the State time and again. I really hope it is a priority for the Department and the Government because it should be. As I said at the start, international human rights bodies are saying they are violating the rights of Travellers. The independent Ombudsman for Children has set out that the rights of children are being violated. These are very serious findings of human rights violations and need to be taken more seriously by the Department and the Government. I hope this is a change of approach.

On Traveller homelessness, the opening statement gives us data from 2025. Traveller homelessness was a significant challenge in that year. What is the data on Traveller homelessness for this month? We are in September 2026. I was surprised to see that the data we got was for 2025 when we are most of the way through 2026 at this stage. What is the latest data on homelessness?

Mr. David Kelly: We publish monthly homelessness data and the latest report is for July 2026. The ethnicity covers adults. A total of 11,860 adults were in homeless emergency accommodation in July and there were 378 Travellers in that group. That is 3.2% Irish Travellers among the 11,860.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: What about Traveller families and children?

Mr. David Kelly: The ethnicity data relates to adults. A total of 3.2% of the adults identified as Travellers. This question came up earlier. I mentioned that the provision of ethnicity data is voluntary, so the figure could be understated. Of the ethnicity provided, 378 Irish Travellers are included in that number.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Why do we not have data on Traveller children when the Ombudsman for Children has found that the State is violating Travellers' rights to accommodation? Why do we not have data on families and children when we know there is a serious issue with family homelessness?

Mr. David Kelly: At the moment we do not collect the ethnicity of children but it is something that the Minister has asked us to look at in terms of ethnicity.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Why does the Department not have that information if it is a priority for the Department and the Government?

Mr. David Kelly: Children do not present to homeless services on their own. They present as part of a household. The ethnicity of the parents is obtained but we do not collect the ethnicity of children. We can certainly look at identifying the numbers. We know, for example----

Deputy Pádraig Rice: If the Department has the identifier for the parents, the children will be part of the same ethnic group.

Mr. David Kelly: I do not have the data. It is something we can look at.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: If addressing Traveller accommodation is a priority for the Government and the Department, I suggest it should start collecting data, publishing data and having robust data. If the Department cannot measure it, then it cannot address it. It is a real failing that we do not have up-to-date data on Traveller family homelessness. It urgently needs to be addressed.

Mr. David Kelly: We work closely with the local authorities. One issue we are aware of with families is that we have a shortage of large properties in some local authorities. There are some large Traveller families and one issue we sometimes have is a shortage of larger properties for local authorities to allocate. I mentioned that in the longer term local authorities are developing housing delivery action plans and looking at ensuring that the delivery matches the need. If we have large households with a four- or five-bed need, we build them into the programme, but in the short-----

Deputy Pádraig Rice: If the Department gathered the data on Traveller families, it would know the size of the families and then it could plan and provide them with housing, but it did not do that. It did not gather the data on Traveller children and families. Therefore, no plans were made and Travellers have been failed.

Mr. David Kelly: I have to inform the Deputy. Local authorities collect the data. They are responsible for the social housing list in their own area. They know who is on the housing list. They know what the housing need is. The housing delivery action plan is to be prepared under departmental guidance to require local authorities to deliver housing in accordance with the need. There is no gap here whereby people are not being housed because we do not know who is there. We know who is on the housing list. We know who is homeless and what their housing need is. We are working very closely with the local authorities-----

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Mr. Kelly could not tell me how many homeless Traveller families there are.

Regarding the child and family homelessness action plan, which is due to be published-----

An Cathaoirleach: Sorry, Mr. Taaffe wants to come in on that previous point.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: Just to clarify, local authorities know exactly who is on their homeless data. We know exactly how many children are homeless by local authority at any one time and how many are in emergency accommodation. We know exactly how many of those self-identify as Travellers.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: So, can Mr. Taaffe tell me how many homeless Traveller families there are in the State right now?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: I cannot tell the Deputy that because I do not have that data now------

Deputy Pádraig Rice: He cannot.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: -----but that does not mean the data does not exist. I can tell the Deputy-----

Deputy Pádraig Rice: The data Mr. Taaffe gave us in his opening statement is from last year.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: I can tell the Deputy that for Wexford County Council, my own local authority, we have the data - absolutely live data - on how many children and adults have identified as Travellers. If the Deputy asks me that, I can get him that information. Any local authority can. To suggest that we do not know the data is not correct.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Mr. Taaffe could not provide it to me. What he might do is write to the committee with updated information on how many Traveller families are currently

homeless, how many homeless Traveller children there are in the State and how that data is gathered, measured and published. He might write to the committee with that information.

Regarding the child and family homelessness action-----

Mr. David Kelly: Sorry, I do not have that data-----

Deputy Pádraig Rice: We have just been told that we have it.

An Cathaoirleach: Mr. Kelly has indicated that the local authorities have it.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: We have just been told that the data is available by each local authority. The Department can gather it from local authorities, compile it, send it to the committee and tell us how it is being published and shared nationally. The witnesses can work together on that between the local authorities and Departments.

An Cathaoirleach: I presume the CCMA can provide it.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Via the Department, because it is a priority for the Department and the Government, so the Government can do it.

Regarding the child and family homelessness action plan, which is due to be published, how will addressing Traveller accommodation as a priority be reflected within the plan? Will there be set actions for Traveller families and children within that forthcoming action plan?

Mr. David Kelly: The plan is being finalised. I would be happy to brief the Deputy when the plan is finalised.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Will there be specific actions?

Mr. David Kelly: We are examining a range of measures. I was finishing a point a moment ago. One of things we are examining is providing dedicated funding for acquisitions where we do not have sufficient supplies of large properties. Dedicated funding is available to local authorities to purchase homes. That is one of the issues we are looking at in addressing family homelessness and ensuring the delivery of appropriate Traveller accommodation for those who require Traveller-specific will continue to be addressed.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Will Mr. Kelly give us an update on the national Traveller accommodation authority and where that is at?

Mr. David Kelly: The Housing Agency is undertaking a review on the Department's behalf and we are expecting a report on that in the coming weeks.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Will the Department have that recommendation from the Housing Agency before the end of the year?

Mr. David Kelly: The review, yes.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: We know this has been called for by the European Commission against Race and Intolerance, ECRI, and the expert group, and it is a key recommendation of the Housing Commission. I would appreciate if the Department could update the committee once that report comes in a couple of weeks because it is important. We have seen extensive delays in this regard. The recommendation dates back a couple of years, if I am correct. It has

not been progressed at speed. I wonder what the delay is. Maybe the witnesses could tell us more as to what has caused the delay in advancing that recommendation.

Mr. Patrick O'Sullivan: We have explained previously to this committee that the previous chair, Professor Eoin O'Sullivan, did significant work on it, but there was no consensus. That caused the significant delay because there was no consensus on the part of the representatives from the Traveller community organisations and the local authorities in particular. As there was no consensus, the chair changed and the new chair decided to give this meaningful consideration further meaningful consideration. He initiated the report with the Housing Agency. The area it is examining is complex. We are confident that we will have that report within weeks. It will not necessarily be for public consumption. It will be for the programme board to consider the report and then the chair must decide whether he can secure consensus on the detail in that report and decide on an ultimate recommendation that can be implemented. That will have to be decided in the programme board in the first instance.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: I am looking forward to hearing more on that, hopefully before the end of the year.

An Cathaoirleach: Does that mean the report cannot be presented at this committee?

Mr. Patrick O'Sullivan: That is correct. It is for the consideration of the programme board in the first instance. Once its consideration and processes are complete, I do not see any reason for the report not to become a more public document. The programme board must consider it in the first instance, however.

An Cathaoirleach: It might be longer than-----

Mr. Patrick O'Sullivan: Yes, it will be subsequently in time.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: In the context of the national policy framework and how we plan for Traveller accommodation, how are set targets, strategies or actions for Traveller accommodation integrated within national housing plans?

Mr. David Kelly: The Traveller action plan sets out a five-year plan for the delivery of housing across the various different housing typologies. For example, if a local authority knows that a certain number of households want Traveller-specific accommodation, that is built into the capital delivery of Traveller-specific accommodation. If a certain number is looking for standard housing, that is built into the capital programme. Local authorities need to know so they can deliver standard housing and the housing sizes and typologies required. They are spread between Traveller-specific and standard housing. There are different capital streams between local authorities, AHBs and the Traveller-specific capital funding.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: How are specific intersectional groups, such as disabled Travellers, children, people at risk of homelessness or eviction and single parents, catered for? What consideration is given to them?

Mr. David Kelly: It is linked to the housing need. If we go back to the housing delivery action plans, local authorities need to make provision for those intersectional issues. We have people with disability needs and those who require aid-friendly housing. We have that intersectional issue. Local authorities might have Travellers with disabilities, and they factor them into their programmes. The housing delivery action plans are being revised. Guidance

was sent out this year and local authorities are working on revised five-year plans at the moment. They will include issues like disability, household size, such as large households, and older people who require aid-friendly housing. All the different needs beyond standard housing are being addressed.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Mr. Kelly is saying that Travellers' needs are being addressed by local authorities within the housing delivery action plans.

Mr. David Kelly: There are two elements. There are the Traveller action plans, which set out Traveller housing over the five-year period, and then we have the housing delivery action plans. Housing delivery action plans will include the various housing typologies.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: I have heard from representatives of the Traveller community that these housing delivery action plans often exclude Travellers. They have not been integrated.

Mr. David Kelly: The delivery action plans include some aspects of Traveller-specific accommodation and all aspects of standard housing. They include local authority capital schemes for standard housing, AHBs and group schemes. The housing delivery actions plans do not include bays, caravan loans, the housing assistance payment, HAP or the rental accommodation scheme, RAS, which are included-----

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Why not?

Mr. David Kelly: They are not capital delivery. HAP and RAS are solutions in the private market. They are not capital delivery by a local authority.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Anything like bays-----

Mr. David Kelly: New Traveller bays and refurbishments are included in the Traveller action plans but not the delivery action plans.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: They are capital projects.

Mr. David Kelly: They are capital projects but they are already included in the Traveller action programmes.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: There is a separating out and siloed approach.

Mr. David Kelly: Not necessarily. There is a distinction. Group housing is included because it is a house. Mr. Taaffe might wish to come in on this point.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: They all form part of our housing capital programme. The Traveller accommodation programme is a subset of our housing strategic delivery plans or the housing delivery action plans. They work in tandem. They are not separate. As the geographical distribution and type of housing are more specialised than general social housing, they are formed in a different plan. That plan allows us to tailor the demand versus the programme to meet that demand.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Given the failures, we need a change of approach. Traveller accommodation should be integrated in our strategies, action plans and targets. We should have a single approach. There should be integration of the needs of Traveller and homeless families, as well as those intersectional groups I mentioned, including disabled Travellers and people at risk of homelessness. If this is a priority for the Department and the Government,

then it needs to become a priority within the housing delivery action plans at a local authority level. If it is a priority for the Department, the Government and the Minister, then it is unacceptable for the Department to say it is a matter for the local authorities. That level of prioritisation should be reflected in every strategy and action, including the forthcoming action plans that were mentioned earlier.

There is a lot of work to do. We have generations of neglect and historic underinvestment. As I said, international bodies have found that this State is in violation of the rights of Travellers and Traveller children when it comes to accommodation. That needs to be urgently addressed. I hope that message is heard loud and clear by the Department and local authorities.

An Cathaoirleach: We have some written questions from Senator O'Reilly, which I will read. I would be grateful if the witnesses could respond.

With regard to financial allocation, there is €26 million available for Traveller accommodation in 2026. How much of this funding was committed to completed jobs and projects in progress? Additionally, what mechanisms, protocols or oversight are put in place to ensure the full allocation is delivered rather than returned or left unspent?

Mr. David Kelly: We do not make allocations. I mentioned earlier that we used to make allocations to local authorities at the start of the year. Now, however, funding is provided to local authorities based on demand for projects. That includes capital projects for new schemes or refurbishments. The spend is provided to local authorities based on demand, rather than allocations. That means money is not left on the table.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: There are quarterly meetings between housing capital teams in local authorities and officials in the Department where all aspects of the housing programme, including the social housing programme, affordable housing and the Traveller accommodating programme, are discussed in order that there is an interaction with the projected progress and spend on a project. That allows the Department to ensure the allocation will not be returned.

An Cathaoirleach: The Senator has a follow-up question.

If funding is not being completely drawn down, is the issue a lack of funding or the capacity for local authorities to develop or deliver projects?

Mr. David Kelly: From the Department's perspective, the funding has been fully drawn down in the past six years. If the funding was not drawn down, it would be a matter of a lack of suitable projects eligible for funding because the funding is there to allocate.

An Cathaoirleach: On several occasions, the witnesses referred to difficulties in planning, issues with procurement and environmental disruptions. I am curious to know what the average timeframe would be from the identification of a Traveller accommodation need to a Traveller family actually moving into a completed home.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: From the identification of a site to effectively giving a family keys to a new property or a new house, by the time you have gone from initial feasibility to preliminary design, planning, detail design, tender and construction, allowing for a construction period of a year and a half and a six-month planning process you could be talking about anywhere between three and four years to get through that process.

An Cathaoirleach: As a follow-up, if a project takes several years, at what point is a delay considered unacceptable? Who is responsible for pushing the project's quick completion?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: This is where the whole monitoring of projects comes through between both the Department and the local authority on a project-by-project basis. It is really up to the local authority as the sponsoring authority of the project to make sure it gets through those processes. There are circumstances beyond our control where, for example, planning might be delayed in terms of referrals to An Coimisiún Pleanála where there could be objections, threats of judicial review etc., or there could be needs for redesign based on environmental considerations. Sometimes those issues are outside of your control or you cannot plan for them and they can add significantly to project timelines.

An Cathaoirleach: Mr. Taaffe mentioned there are currently 20 projects across 12 local authorities specifically created to assist the Traveller community, all with the potential to deliver 126 homes. Of these homes, how many does he expect will be completed by the end of 2027?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: I do not have that figure to hand. I do not have the full details. I imagine that the bulk of them would be delivered by 2030 in the programme, or a little bit earlier.

An Cathaoirleach: On Traveller-appropriate accommodation, Mr. Taaffe suggested that the CCMA's current system values culturally appropriate accommodation for the Traveller community. I am curious how the proper authorities determine what kind or kinds of accommodation a particular Traveller community would want or need. Does the current system have the flexibility to alter forms of accommodation depending on the needs and preferences?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: Yes, absolutely, and that comes through the LTACC and the provision of choice. Through the representative bodies and engagement at a local level we would have a very good idea of what people's first choice would be, whether it be social housing, halting site accommodation or group housing. That is why the focus in the Traveller accommodation plans and in the LTACC is to get that choice and to ensure the delivery matches the particular needs. We have a pretty good system there to understand what people's first choices, if you like, are.

An Cathaoirleach: Mr. Taaffe has described the Traveller liaison officers as being a critical bridge between local authorities and Traveller families. Do the authorities have an appropriate number of officers to meet increasing demand? Are there national standards for liaison officers or are provisions determined locally?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: Yes, we have a good network of Traveller liaison officers and it is a mixture of both. There is the standardisation nationally but also the tailoring locally as to what their role is and what their priorities are. It should always be a balance. One-size-fits-all does not work but there should also be a sharing of best practice and a network of Traveller liaison officers, which does work. A combination of both, actually, is what we would recommend.

An Cathaoirleach: Regarding land availability, housing affordability and availability is already a big concern in Ireland. Is there sufficient land availability for Traveller accommodation or is it a struggle to find publicly owned land? Are Travellers ever placed on privately owned land? Would the council ever anticipate the CCMA's request to the Government seeking to make additional State land available for Traveller-specific accommodation?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: The correct identification of a suitable site for Traveller accommodation is complex and it is multifaceted. We would not ever do it on private land. Our preference would always be to purchase the land and provide a permanent project on that site utilising capital funding from the Department. It can be challenging to find suitable sites for a myriad of different reasons and sometimes the most efficient solution is an extension of an existing site. In terms of land supply, we would have sites that would be available for either new sites or extensions and we would also look to integrate into areas around. We would not really separate land for one cohort. The overall land supply for our overall targets is something that is challenging. It is not a funding issue. It is the identification of sites and appropriate sites for local authority housing, and local authority housing solutions in its broadest terms is always something of which we need to be very cognisant. Particularly with the housing delivery action plans now, it will identify gaps in areas where we need to buy and acquire more land, and that process is ongoing. Local authorities have access to a land acquisition fund. The funding of land purchase is not really an issue; it is the identification of suitable sites.

An Cathaoirleach: The next question is Cavan-related. From the CCMA's perspective, what particular challenges do smaller or rural counties face in delivering Traveller accommodation? Are the current funding and planning arrangements sufficiently responsive to those challenges? How can the Government ensure Traveller families in rural counties such as Cavan have the same access to appropriate accommodation?

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: It is a challenge. It is a challenge as regards resources and the ability to find suitable sites. That goes back to the finding of suitable sites that meet the needs of the particular families who want to be accommodated, that are appropriate for their needs and that we can get through the planning process. That is always challenging but it is challenging in terms of social and affordable housing as well. It is the whole housing piece. You are down to having good zoned land and well-serviced land in terms of local facilities like schools and shops, as well as harder infrastructure like water and wastewater. Really, what we are talking about here is a subset of the overall challenge of delivering housing across the State.

An Cathaoirleach: The Senator has additional quick questions. From Mr. Taaffe's experience working with local authorities, what does he think is working particularly well at the moment in Traveller accommodation? This is one probably for Mr. Kelly.

Mr. David Kelly: I think probably one of the newer innovations is the caravan loan scheme and it has been very successful. There were deficiencies in the previous scheme in terms of affordability. The increase of the caravan loan scheme to €80,000 and the preferential arrangements are working quite well and there has been strong demand.

An Cathaoirleach: What would Mr. Kelly say is the biggest improvement we have seen in Traveller accommodation over the last number of years?

Mr. David Kelly: The funding has been increasing steadily over the last few years and we have been seeing full drawdowns, so we are seeing more investment, which is positive. As the Deputy said, there are still improvements to be made. More investment is still required but the continued commitment to funding will ensure we have the capital available to address those deficient sites.

An Cathaoirleach: Mr. Kelly mentioned the importance of working with Traveller communities. What has he found to be the most effective way of engaging with families when developing accommodation?

Mr. David Kelly: That the LTACCs are in place. Mr. Taaffe can probably talk about the detail at the local level. It was mentioned earlier. Some of them undoubtedly work better than others. In our engagement we see there are really good relationships but as mentioned earlier there was a lack of satisfaction in others. As part of the work of the programme board, we are developing new guidance for the LTACCs at the moment and they will continue to be important in providing that forum for engagement at the local level.

An Cathaoirleach: Are there examples of local authorities that Mr. Kelly thinks are doing particularly good work in this area that could serve as a model for other authorities? Wexford is excluded, of course.

Mr. David Kelly: There are a couple of projects in Galway which are progressing at the moment. They are doing quite well in terms of capital delivery, but there are a few local authorities progressing capital projects.

The spend is there. The drawdown has been made, so local authorities are drawing down funding.

An Cathaoirleach: This is the final one. In your opinion, how essential is it to have Traveller representatives involved from the very beginning of an accommodation project?

Mr. David Kelly: That may be more a question for Mr. Taaffe but I think the LTACCs provide that consultation.

Mr. Eddie Taaffe: It is absolutely essential. It is a prerequisite to do that and to build that trust with representatives of the community and then to deliver on that trust and to work together. That is what we do on any of our refurbishment projects or any of our new projects.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator O'Reilly for those questions and the witnesses for the responses.

I will be the final contributor. In relation to the LTACC, I have some experience as a former cathaoirleach of Wexford County Council. By and large, I do not think they are working to their potential. As a cathaoirleach coming in for a year, I was barely finding my feet when I was gone again. We will be bringing a recommendations on this from this committee. The evidence we received, not just from Wexford but in fact from any county representatives who came before us, was that they were not happy with the structure, nature or operation of the LTACCs. One of the examples we had was of a person who was due to attend and, five minutes before she arrived at the building, having travelled from the far end of the county, the meeting was cancelled. I have seen it myself. In my experience, the seriousness that we need to bring to LTACCs is not there. It is not a question of pointing the finger of blame. We need to be more serious and more structured in how we go about our LTACCs. If we can do that, we can bring all sectors along with us in terms of interaction with the Department or the local authority. It has to be teased out by the members but one of the proposals is for the chair of an LTACC to have a five-year term alongside that of the local authority. That person need not necessarily be an elected member. There are challenges and pressures that an elected member could come under. That, of course, will be for the members to decide. A further proposal is that there

would be an almost statutory basis for meetings. At the minute, meetings are called, cancelled, deferred and abandoned and it really is not doing any good to anybody - not the Department, the councils or the membership of the LTACCs. From a more structured point of view we will be bringing these recommendations and we will seek an open mind on it. It is not to trip up or interfere with anyone. It is to have a more structured approach to the interaction between the LTACCs, the Departments and, of course, the local authorities.

Regarding the caravan loan scheme, as I have asked previously, how many other social housing applicants have to apply for a loan to purchase their rented accommodation? We know that the answer is none, unless it is a tenant purchase scheme whereby a person has to be so many years in a house - I think it is ten years now - before they can actually avail of it. As for the notion that we would say to Travellers, "You can have a mobile home but you have to borrow the money for it and we will operate and administer the scheme," is that not a form of discrimination against Travellers? As local authorities and as a State we are providing accommodation but we are saying to Travellers, and only to Travellers, as social housing applicants, "You borrow the money and we will facilitate it through the caravan loan scheme." I know the thrust of the scheme and the merits of it are well placed. However, there are no other social housing applicants in the State who have to borrow the money to purchase their accommodation. I ask the witnesses to comment on that.

Mr. David Kelly: The preferential aspect of the loan is important here, in that the repayments are at a differential rent level. They are actually paying a similar amount that a social housing tenant with the same income would pay.

An Cathaoirleach: At the moment, if someone is going to buy a house, by and large, given the economy we live in, it appreciates from the minute it is bought. When a mobile home, or a wagon as the Travellers call them, is bought and moved into the yard, it is depreciating from day one. It is not beneficial to the Travellers to have a caravan loan scheme, in reality.

Mr. David Kelly: It could be argued that at the end of the loan period they own the property. If someone pays ten years' rent on a social house, they will continue to pay rent on it. I take the Cathaoirleach's points but there is the preferential aspect and the fact that they own the property at the end, whereas the social housing tenant does not.

An Cathaoirleach: One could be paying rent for a mobile home that, after ten years in Ireland's inclement weather, would not-----

Mr. David Kelly: The loan period-----

An Cathaoirleach: -----be an asset that you would be proud to hold up, in my view. It is something need to explore. Do we take a good look at ourselves and say, "Listen, this is discrimination"? Certainly that is the view of a lot of the members of the committee. I understand why it was brought in but the treatment of one sector of the community, in this case, Travellers, compared with the rest of social housing applicants leaves a lot to be desired.

Regarding funding only for accommodation, Mr. Taaffe has mentioned it and we visited the particular site in Wexford. Some great refurbishment work is being carried out. Is the funding that is made available solely for accommodation or can that money be accessed for refurbishment? The works being carried out in New Ross that Mr. Taaffe has sanctioned and overseen will make a huge difference to the tenants and residents of that site.

Mr. David Kelly: The capital funding is for the provision of new accommodation and for the refurbishment of existing accommodation. It is both.

An Cathaoirleach: So it can be accessed?

Mr. David Kelly: It can.

An Cathaoirleach: Okay. Have we looked at modular homes for sites? I refer to the really high standard, efficient, cost-effective homes. Have we looked at those in sites across the country as a replacement for mobile homes that are on stilts?

Mr. David Kelly: Significant work is being done on modern methods of construction, MMC, and in particular work with the NSAI on certification. Members will probably be aware that a planning exemption was introduced with restrictions in terms of the size of a site. Something that is going to be a structure needs to meet building standards, etc. There is a limited number of modular suppliers with the necessary agrément certification, but there is a big focus on Government to support modern methods of construction. We have seen in the standard housing programme that it speeds up delivery. It is consistent with moving towards standardised design and factory construction, so it is a very big focus to look at how we support modern methods of construction. Most of that to date has been panels and timber and steel but as it evolves we will see more modular builds.

An Cathaoirleach: In the context of what we discussed about the caravan loan scheme, we have very fine modular buildings being constructed that would be a far better asset to a person than a mobile home that is depreciating in value from day one.

Mr. David Kelly: These kinds of structures will probably be more in line with group housing than a bay. As we look at construction methods for group housing, we could see all construction methods over time using more elements of modern methods of construction. That could include certain components or it could include a full factory build. Wexford has been using it. We talked earlier about the four-stage process. As we move towards standardisation and MMC, we are seeing much less time being spent on the process and on site, so it is speeding up delivery and providing homes to people more quickly. We are very supportive of it and there is a commitment in the new housing plan to increase MMC use.

An Cathaoirleach: Okay. The commitment is there to look at this.

My final point is in relation to Labre Park, which we discussed here some weeks ago. I think it has gone through four or five different Traveller accommodation programmes. The latest hold-up is that they have now been told it is in a flood zone. It was confirmed by long-term residents that Labre Park has never flooded. There just seems to be hold-up after hold-up on the commitment to refurbish Labre Park. One of our committee members, Senator Flynn, resides in Labre Park. There appears to be obstacle after obstacle being found in relation to the refurbishment of Labre Park.

Can we have any clarity on that?

Mr. David Kelly: There have been problems. The Department has been engaging with Dublin City Council on it. The latest we have is that it is looking at it in two phases. The first is the refurbishment of 18 existing homes and that will include an energy refit. The council

has informed the Department that it will be submitting a funding application for that very shortly. The last piece of work it has to do on that is complete a condition survey of the homes.

The next phase is where we get into delays. Twelve homes are being delayed while options are considered to address the flood risks. I know the site may never have been flooded in the past but with weather events, patterns and future forecasts, these things need to be considered by planners when we are investing in schemes.

An Cathaoirleach: We have had flood zones in place for a number of years and now Labre Park is a flood zone issue.

Mr. David Kelly: I understand it might be related to a development plan. What we are told by Dublin City Council is that the issues were raised by drainage planning as part of the pre-Part 8 and it is looking at investigations to see if additional development can commence prior to the findings of the Camac flood alleviation scheme. It does seem to be complex. I know Dublin City Council is working with local councillors and looking to proceed with the refurbishment works. We will continue to work with the council on it. We can understand the frustration of the residents in Labre Park.

An Cathaoirleach: That is everything. I thank the witnesses for their time today, for attending and for the evidence they brought to the committee. We look forward to engaging again, no doubt, in the coming months and years.

Cuireadh an comhchoiste ar athló ar 2.32 p.m go dtí 12.30 p.m., Déardaoin, an 24 Meán Fómhair 2026.

The joint committee adjourned at 2.32 p.m. until 12.30 p.m. on Thursday, 24 September 2026.