

CLONDALKIN TRAVELLERS DEVELOPMENT SUBMISSION ON NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK IRELAND 2040

Our mission aims to promote the social, economic, civil, political and cultural rights of Travellers as a nomadic ethnic group within Irish Society. We aim to address the needs of Travellers in the Clondalkin area. It is a partnership between Travellers and non-Travellers working to promote the rights of Travellers as a nomadic ethnic group within Irish society. It is a collective mechanism through which Travellers can collectively address the issues that face them.

ECONOMIC MEASURES

As a result of austerity which was inflicted following Ireland's economic collapse Traveller specific programmes were cut drastically by Government Departments including,

- Traveller Interagency Group activities -100%
- Department of Education Traveller Budget -86.6%
- Department of environment Traveller accommodation -85%
- Department of Justice Equality -76.3%
- National Traveller organisations -63.6%
- FAS Special Initiative for Travellers -50%
- National Traveller Partnership -32.1%
- Traveller SPY youth projects -29.8%
- Health -5.4%

These cuts have had an overwhelming negative effect on services and supports to the Traveller community and have had an adverse effect on Travellers social, economic, civil, political and cultural rights within Irish society.

We strongly recommend these cuts are reversed and adequate funding is reinstated.

TRAVELLER HERITAGE AND CULTURE

The Traveller community were formally recognised by the Government as an ethnic minority group on March 1st 2017 after 30 years of local and national campaigns. Prior to this recognition Travellers were more vulnerable to indirect discrimination in state policy and practice and unable to rely on automatic comprehensive domestic protection, evidenced in October 2016 when the Criminal Justice (Aggravation by Prejudice) Bill was supported and moved to Committee stage without reference to Travellers. Traveller recognition as an ethnic minority group will ensure automatic inclusion in such proposed Bills and in anti-racism and integration policies and initiatives.

Our recommendations

1. Funding to invest in Traveller culture and heritage including Traveller language Cant /Gammon
2. Education system to include a syllabus on the Travelling community's history and current lifestyle including reference to culture and heritage.
3. Political representation within the Seanad – a minimum of one seat should be allocated to a Traveller representative

LIVING WITHOUT FEAR OF PREJUDICE AND RACISM

The ESRI published a report in January 2017 'A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland – Research Series Number 56'. The report confirmed certain groups of Travellers (in terms of gender, age and region) experience particularly high levels of disadvantage in four areas: education, employment, housing and health. The reports findings stated education is key to improving the employment and living circumstances of Travellers. Mr David Stanton, Minister of State for Justice at the Department of Justice and Equality commented: *"This report is particularly timely given that we are currently finalising the new Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. It draws attention in unequivocal terms to the poor outcomes and conditions in terms of education, health, employment and accommodation that Travellers face. We need a sustained effort in partnership between all relevant Departments and agencies and the Traveller community to ensure that these failures are addressed and that Travellers can enjoy the same quality of life as others in our society"*.

The level of racism experienced by Travellers is apparent in poor outcomes in all government departments regarding unemployment, health inequality, low educational attainment, poor and inadequate living conditions. Travellers feel their experiences of social exclusion, marginalisation and discriminatory practices in everyday life is getting worse.

We recommend

1. Government departments and policy makers must include the recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority group in any proposed legislation to ensure Travellers are protected from racism and discrimination.
2. funding to be made available regarding the intercultural education programme 'Yellow Flag Programme' for all primary and post-primary schools to enhance an all-inclusive school environment.

ACCOMMODATION

Travellers are an inherent ethnic minority group whose lifestyle was historically nomadic. The Travelling community have their own traditions, history, language and beliefs and, based on this

culture many (but not all) Travellers want to live in “Traveller specific” accommodation which includes halting sites or group housing schemes where large extended families can live together in clusters. Lobbying by agencies campaigning for Travellers rights to live in accommodation that recognised their lifestyle resulted in the Government passing the Housing (Traveller) Accommodation Act in 1998. This Act places a statutory obligation on Local Authorities to draw up successive four year plans based on consultation with local Travellers on how to meet their current and projected accommodation needs. The Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) is centrally funded by the Department of Environment for Local Authorities to engage with the Travelling community regarding building halting sites and group housing schemes which will ultimately keep the Traveller identity intact.

The delivery expectations of this Act despite the establishment of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee governed by the Minister appointed monitoring body, the NTACC, has not happened. In fact, it has overseen a lack of progress without applying sanctions on Local Authorities. Between 2009 -2013 (the last available data), only 9 out of 34 city or county councils fulfilled their targets for delivery to families in need. The vast majority of Travellers still live in what would be regarded as poor substandard accommodation, with severe overcrowding on sites including a lack of investment in upkeep and maintenance.

Local authorities continue to fail to provide Traveller specific accommodation in accordance with their own targets. The number of Traveller families living in private rented (owned by private landlords) accommodation has increased and the number of families living in Traveller specific accommodation has steadily decreased over the past decade. Travellers have been forced to abandon nomadism

It is imperative Travellers rights to culturally appropriate accommodation of their choice with adequate access to everyday services is fully implemented within the State’s National Planning Framework Ireland 2040. We recommend

- Traveller accommodation should be included within all strategic infrastructure development projects including collective participation from the Travelling community.
- Establish a National Traveller Accommodation Agency to oversee the implementation of Traveller accommodation plans and Traveller appropriate loan schemes.
- Review and reform The Traveller Accommodation Act 1998 and other relevant planning legalisation in consultation with Traveller Organisations.