

# Follow up inquiry into the provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers

February 2025

## 1. Background

1. This is a follow up to the Local Government and Housing Committee's August 2022 report: [Provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers](#).
2. We made 21 recommendations, all of which were accepted by the Welsh Government in its response to the Committee's report.<sup>1</sup>
3. The report and its recommendations were debated in Plenary on 23 November 2022.<sup>2</sup>
4. In June 2023, Travelling Ahead wrote to us questioning the Welsh Government's progress in implementing our recommendations.<sup>3</sup> They stated: "To our knowledge not one of the recommendations in your committee's report has yet been actioned".
5. In line with our Sixth Senedd Strategy to "persist in order to make a difference to the delivery of local government and housing in Wales" and to "view inquiries as live issues", we agreed to hold further scrutiny sessions with the Welsh Government to monitor progress in implementing our recommendations.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Welsh Government, Response to the recommendations from the Local Government and Housing Committee report: Provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers](#)

<sup>2</sup> Plenary, RoP, 23 November 2022, item 8

<sup>3</sup> [Letter from Travelling Ahead, Follow up on Inquiry into the provision of Gypsy and Travellers sites, 16 June 2023](#)



**6.** During our first follow-up scrutiny session, the Minister for Social Justice at the time, Jane Hutt MS, on 5 October 2023, said that “there’s been very slow progress” and despite the availability of funding, “plans have not progressed”.<sup>4</sup>

**7.** On 7 February 2024 we agreed to undertake a short follow-up inquiry to gather the views of stakeholders and members of the community on progress by local authorities and the Welsh Government on provision of sites.

**8.** Further background information relating to the inquiry can be found on our [website](#).

### Evidence gathering

**9.** On 3 October 2024, we held oral evidence sessions with:

- Gypsies and Travellers Wales
- Welsh Local Government Association (“WLGA”)
- Jane Hutt MS, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Whip (“Cabinet Secretary”).

**10.** We received written evidence from:

- [Trudy Aspinwall, TGP Cymru: Travelling Ahead Advocacy Service](#)
- [Allison Hulmes, Romani and Traveller Social Work Association](#)
- [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)
- [WLGA](#)
- [Welsh Government](#)

**11.** On 5 December 2024, we held a hybrid focus group with eight members of Gypsy and Traveller communities across four Senedd regions. A summary of the key issues raised is available on our website.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 5 October 2023, paragraph 94

<sup>5</sup> [Local Government and Housing Committee, Note of focus group, 5 December 2024](#)

## 2. Our key finding

**12.** It is clear from our follow up inquiry that very limited progress has been made in meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The lack of progress was particularly evident from our focus group with members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.<sup>6</sup> There was consensus amongst contributors that they have seen very little to no progress being made in terms of site development and maintenance since last engaging with us in 2022; neither has there been any improvement in engagement from local authorities. We are deeply disappointed that this is the case and want to see this rectified as a matter of urgency. Progress should have been made. The Welsh Government has a responsibility to tackle inequalities experienced by one of the most disadvantaged groups in our society. We ask the Cabinet Secretary to provide a detailed update on progress in implementing each of the recommendations made in our original report.

**Recommendation 1.** We recommend that the Welsh Government provides an update on progress made against recommendations in our 2022 report on the provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers.

## 3. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA)

### Gypsy and Traveller caravan count

**13.** Data published in October 2024 on Gypsy and Traveller caravans, pitches and sites shows that on 18 July 2024, there were 1,282 caravans in Wales, with 1,095 (85 per cent) on authorised sites. Of those on authorised sites, 60 per cent were on socially rented sites (local authority), with 40 per cent on privately funded sites.

**14.** Data on unauthorised sites shows that:

- 89 caravans on unauthorised sites were on land owned by Gypsies and Travellers, accounting for 7 per cent of all caravans;

---

<sup>6</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, Note of focus group, 5 December 2024

- 98 caravans (8 per cent of all caravans) were on unauthorised sites on land not owned by Gypsies and Travellers;
- This equates to a total of 187 caravans on unauthorised sites, a 24 per cent increase since July 2023, when there were 151 caravans on unauthorised sites.
- The number of unauthorised sites increased from 39 in July 2023 to 53 in July 2024
- In relation to actual pitches available in Wales, as of July 2024, there were:
  - 466 pitches on sites provided by local authorities in Wales.
  - 464 were residential pitches, while 2 were transit pitches.
  - Six local authorities reported having **no pitches** available.
  - Pembrokeshire, Cardiff and Neath Port Talbot had the highest number of pitches.
  - Torfaen was the only local authority to report any transit pitches, both of which were recorded as vacant.

**15.** The Equality and Human Rights Commission told us that there has been very little progress in terms of site provision in Wales, despite the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 placing statutory duties on local authorities.<sup>7</sup> According to Gypsies and Travellers Wales:

*“We have seen the provision of some pitches in some areas, but there's still nowhere near the need being met at all... the 2015 GTAA's evidenced a need for over 350 pitches. So, I've done a Freedom of Information Act to see how far we are to meeting that. I've only received seven responses, but I think there are about 35 pitches from those seven responses, and four areas have zero pitches. So, although there is some work under way, I don't think we're anywhere near to meeting the need”.*<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Written evidence, [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

<sup>8</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 6

**16.** We also heard that people are living on pitches that are “really overcrowded” and often have to present themselves as homeless to be able to secure a pitch when one becomes available.<sup>9</sup>

## GTAA process

**17.** [Part 3 of the Housing Act 2014](#) makes provision for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA) to be carried out every five years by all local authorities in Wales. The last review period was due to end on 24 February 2021, but was extended by a year following the pandemic.

**18.** In a letter from Travelling Ahead in June 2023, it stated that the GTAA review process had come to a “complete standstill” and that this was “impacting on planning and developing new sites or the planning of transit provision”.<sup>10</sup>

**19.** In August 2024, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed that “all Cycle 2 GTAAs have been approved”.<sup>11</sup> The Welsh Government’s written evidence notes that the “next cycle of GTAAs would cover the period 2022-2027”, and local authorities will be a required to submit a new assessment by February 2027.<sup>12</sup>

**20.** We previously recommended that the Welsh Government assesses whether the GTAA process is the most appropriate and effective way of assessing the accommodation needs of the travelling community.

**21.** During our focus group with members of the community, one contributor said that many people did not take part in the GTAA as they did not understand what the survey was for and this contributed to the GTAA identifying a lower number of plots than what was needed. For example, one contributor explained that, without building any additional sites and spending any money, the local authority has managed to meet its shortfall of 23 pitches by approaching family-run, private site owners (that they previously objected to) and offering them extensions to their sites, which are only accessible to their immediate family members. According to the contributor, if these pitches are not accessible to all

---

<sup>9</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 12

<sup>10</sup> [Letter from Travelling Ahead. Follow up on Inquiry into the provision of Gypsy and Travellers sites. 16 June 2023](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice. Trefnydd and Chief Whip. 14 August 2024](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Written evidence. Welsh Government. Local Government and Housing Committee. 3 October 2024. paper 2](#)

members of the Gypsy and Traveller community they should not be counted in the GTAA.<sup>13</sup>

**22.** Pembrokeshire County Council raised similar concerns:

*“we're also very aware that the people who put the applications in are not necessarily those who were identified as actually having that short-term need by the GTAA. So, numerically, we've ticked the box, but in reality it might be that it's actually different people who've brought the applications forward to those who had the need.”<sup>14</sup>*

**23.** According to Monmouthshire County Council, GTAAs need to be done on an “ongoing basis”, noting that “the need in the areas changes all the time”.<sup>15</sup> Flintshire County Council agreed that undertaking assessments every three or five years does not reflect the “transient nature of the families who move into the area without notice, who acquire land at short notice.”<sup>16</sup> They went on to say:

*“the GTAA shouldn't necessarily be the panacea to decision making from all agencies. It should enable an informed decision and encourage that dialogue between the families, the planning agents, the local authority and the wider community. But, at the moment, I think we're almost using the GTAA to reinforce a planning decision that doesn't necessarily put the families at the forefront of the decision-making process.”<sup>17</sup>*

**24.** Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council also called for a system that allows reviewing the figures annually or continuously to reflect the households coming into or moving within an area.<sup>18</sup>

**25.** The Cabinet Secretary told us that the Welsh Government is reviewing the GTAA process and guidance, but that they believe that “the framework is appropriate at this stage.”<sup>19</sup> They are also looking at monitoring and escalation, to

---

<sup>13</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, Note of focus group, 5 December 2024

<sup>14</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 134

<sup>15</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 112

<sup>16</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 119

<sup>17</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 119

<sup>18</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 124

<sup>19</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 265

allow a more “robust process” for when the GTAA content or analysis is not considered robust enough.<sup>20</sup> A Welsh Government official explained:

*“We’ve spent a lot of time to try and build relationships with local authorities so that it’s a partnership working together to look at what they have in their GTAAs and how we can help them to meet those needs and meet those duties...then there’s a very critical piece of work that this review needs to bring into play, which is around discussions with community members themselves, particularly those who are more transient in nature, and understanding what their needs are from the GTAA process.”<sup>21</sup>*

## Transitory provision

**26.** The GTAAs are meant to assess both the residential (permanent) need for sites and pitches, as well as transitory provision (those travelling through and requiring stopping places). During our inquiry in 2022, the lack of transitory provision was consistently highlighted as an issue.

**27.** The latest data from the [Gypsy and Traveller caravan count](#) (July 2024) shows there are two transit pitches available throughout Wales. This figure has not changed for the best part of a decade. The Welsh Government’s [Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan](#) sought to create a “national network of transit provision” in Wales, with a target to create at least 5 pitches “in both North and South Wales” by 2025.

**28.** Travelling Ahead noted in its written evidence that:

*“Most of the GTAAs that we are aware of, now signed off, did not find a need for transit provision, many spoke about using the ‘negotiated stopping’ model as an alternative but without, to date, providing much leadership or commitment to making this a reality.”<sup>22</sup>*

**29.** The WLGA, in its written evidence, said that it was made aware that the Welsh Government intended to commission “additional research to make recommendations in relation to transit provision”. It continued by noting that:

---

<sup>20</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 268

<sup>21</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 269

<sup>22</sup> Written evidence, [Trudy Aspinwall, TGP Cymru: Travelling Ahead Advocacy Service](#)

*“Officials confirmed that the current GTAAAs from individual Councils do not provide a sufficient evidence base to support recommendations for the establishment of an effective network of transit sites provision.”<sup>23</sup>*

**30.** The Cabinet Secretary’s written evidence noted the feedback from local authorities that indicated a need for a “national evidence base” to understand the movement of Gypsies and Travellers “both in and out of Wales and in and out of local authority boundaries”. As such, the Welsh Government has started a procurement process for an organisation to undertake this work alongside the community.<sup>24</sup>

**31.** We heard that Flintshire County Council does “mapping exercises” around locations that are frequented on more than one occasion, “to understand whether there’s a reason why the families themselves present in those locations”.<sup>25</sup> However, whilst there is an evidence base to say that there is a need for transit site provision, we heard that securing planning permission and site capital grant funding is “a laborious task”.<sup>26</sup>

**32.** According to Gypsies and Travellers Wales “liaising with the Gypsy and Traveller community and finding out from them where they think they would be needed would be the most valuable information” in terms of planning transitory provision.<sup>27</sup> They went on to say that there are still Gypsies and Travellers that “like to continue the travelling tradition in the way they’ve always done” but noted that this is “a lot more difficult now and a lot more stressful”, due to constantly being asked to move on, the lack of waste disposal and toilet facilities, and backlash from wider communities. They said:

*“it’s very difficult to dispose of your rubbish—it’s difficult for people living in houses to dispose of their rubbish because of restrictions, let alone when there’s not provision to dispose of your rubbish, if that makes sense.”<sup>28</sup>*

**33.** We heard that some local authorities, although “very few”, provide rubbish disposal services and that community members would be happy to pay for

---

<sup>23</sup> Written evidence, [WLGA](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Written evidence, Welsh Government, Local Government and Housing Committee, 3 October 2024, paper 2](#)

<sup>25</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 137

<sup>26</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 138

<sup>27</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 37

<sup>28</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 40



rubbish removal and the provision of toilets.<sup>29</sup> One such example is Anglesey. We heard that they work with the community locally and with Gypsies and Travellers travelling through Anglesey to prepare a temporary site where they tolerate encampments. They explained that it is not a permanent site and not sufficient in the long term, but they are able to work with the community ahead of time to ensure that the site is prepared for them and facilities provided.<sup>30</sup>

**34.** The Cabinet Secretary told us that there are seven transit pitches in Wales “but we need sites”<sup>31</sup>. She went on to say that “the assessment of transit needs is crucial to the GTAAs”<sup>32</sup> and that they need a Wales-wide look at what transit sites are needed.<sup>33</sup>

**35.** The Cabinet Secretary said that it is very encouraging that Anglesey has come forward with an application for funding for a negotiated stopping site, adding that negotiated stopping places could help with addressing the need for transitory provision.<sup>34</sup> However she recognised that local authorities feel that they “need to have proper transit provision—sites and pitches as well.”<sup>35</sup> We heard that the Welsh Government is therefore procuring an independent organisation to undertake research on transitory provision and will “make it absolutely critical that whichever organisation is awarded that contract understands that they will need to involve community members”.<sup>36</sup>

## Our view

**36.** We previously recommended that the Welsh Government assesses whether the GTAA process is the most appropriate and effective way of assessing the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The current GTAA process is too rigid – accommodation needs should be reviewed on an ongoing basis and local authorities should ensure meaningful engagement with Gypsies and Travellers so that assessments actually reflect their accommodation needs.

**37.** We are unclear whether the GTAA process and guidance is being reviewed given that the Cabinet Secretary told us that the framework is appropriate at this stage. We therefore reiterate our original recommendation that the Welsh Government should review whether the GTAA process is the most appropriate

---

<sup>29</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 54

<sup>30</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 142

<sup>31</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 284

<sup>32</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 285

<sup>33</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 286

<sup>34</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 287

<sup>35</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 290

<sup>36</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, RoP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 293

and effective way of assessing the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. As part of this the Welsh Government should set out how it will improve engagement with Gypsies and Travellers to accurately assess accommodation needs.

**Conclusion 1.** As part of the Welsh Government's response to Recommendation 1 of this report, it should provide an update on what steps it has taken to review the GTAA process including any steps taken to improve engagement with Gypsies and Travellers.

**38.** We heard that the Cabinet Secretary is looking at monitoring and escalation when the GTAA content or analysis is not considered robust enough. We welcome this work and hope that it progresses at pace. As part of this, we hope that the Welsh Government will also consider how it monitors local authorities' implementation of the GTAA findings. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide sites and this should be enforced by the Welsh Government.

**Conclusion 2.** As part of the Welsh Government's response to Recommendation 1 of this report, it should provide an update on how it monitors and ensures local authorities' compliance with the GTAA process and the implementation of GTAA findings.

**39.** Given the lack of transitory provision in Wales, it is unsurprising that this was a common theme in our original and follow-up inquiry. The Cabinet Secretary told us that there are seven transit pitches available in Wales however the latest data shows only two pitches. We would be grateful for clarity on this issue.

**40.** We are surprised that most of the GTAAs did not find a need for transit provision. We therefore welcome the Welsh Government's intention to commission additional research to make recommendations in relation to transit provision and we would be grateful if the Cabinet Secretary could provide more information about this research, including timescales. We are concerned that it may be a very long time until we see sufficient transitory provision in Wales. Given that it is much needed, we would like to see this work progressed at pace. It is also imperative that the voices of Gypsies and Travellers are heard as part of this work to ensure that the development of transitory provision meets their traveling needs.

**Recommendation 2.** The Welsh Government should provide the Committee with the latest data on the number of transit pitches in Wales and update us on

how it intends to increase transitory provision in Wales including how it will ensure that the needs of Gypsies and Travellers are met.

**41.** We were interested to hear about the negotiated stopping sites in Anglesey and believe that this is a concept that should be explored and rolled out further, provided that it works for community members. Although we do not see it as replacing the need for permanent transitory provision, the Welsh Government should work with local authorities to ensure the provision of temporary sites whilst we await a longer term solution. As part of this, the Welsh Government should work with local authorities on waste disposal solutions to avoid costs and other issues.

**Recommendation 3.** The Welsh Government should work closely with local authorities and members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities to deliver additional temporary negotiated stopping sites. All negotiated stopping sites in Wales must provide appropriate waste and sanitary services.

## 4. The Gypsy and Traveller Sites Capital Grant

**42.** The Gypsy and Traveller Sites Capital Grant has been available to local authorities in some form or another for over 15 years. The grant is there to support the development of new sites, and can also be used by local authorities to refurbish existing accommodation and amenities on local authority sites.

**43.** We recommended in our 2022 report that the:

*“Welsh Government should explore all possible options for funding Gypsy, Roma and Traveller accommodation, including whether the criteria for the Capital Sites Grant should be broadened to allow local authorities to purchase land for the development of new sites and how funding could be used to support the development of private sites.”*

**44.** The Cabinet Secretary noted in a letter to us in August 2024 that a change to the grant criteria had been made, which could now also be used to “purchase land for sites”, with guidance issued to local authorities in April.<sup>37</sup> A copy of the [guidance published by Monmouthshire County Council](#), notes the following:

---

<sup>37</sup> [Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip, 14 August 2024](#)

*“In exceptional cases land acquisition may be considered, but land remediation costs and feasibility studies are ineligible. This includes, amongst other things, costs arising from investigating or rectifying former mine workings, landfill or archaeological digs.”*

**45.** We heard that the Romani and Traveller Social Work Association is pleased that the grant can now be used to buy land.<sup>38</sup> However, not all witnesses were aware of this development.<sup>39</sup>

**46.** One focus group contributor noted that the only way members of the Gypsy and Traveller community can live in North Wales is on a local authority site. They called on the Welsh Government to help with funding private sites, to enable people to live on their own land, instead of funding sites through local authorities only, especially as local authorities have stopped Gypsies and Travellers from being able to live on the road. One contributor asserted that “we should be owning, running and managing these sites. We need to be in charge of our own lives.” Other contributors agreed that their living situation would be far better if they were able to own and manage their own sites.<sup>40</sup>

**47.** In response to whether they had any thoughts on the way that local authorities are able to use funds to support the development of sites, Gypsies and Travellers Wales called for more support from the Welsh Government to help local authorities identify land for development:

*“One of my thoughts is the difficulty in securing land and the length of time it takes to do that. So, I imagine that would impact on using the grant, if it's difficult to get that land in the first place, or if it takes so long. There seems to be a real problem identifying suitable land for some local authorities, despite them really trying to identify that land. So, I think that's definitely something Welsh Government could offer support with.”<sup>41</sup>*

### Applications for the Capital Sites Grant

**48.** On 16 January 2023, the Equality and Social Justice Committee asked the Cabinet Secretary about the drawdown of the Sites Capital Grant for the previous

---

<sup>38</sup> Written evidence, [Allison Hulmes, Romani and Traveller Social Work Association](#)

<sup>39</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 201

<sup>40</sup> [Local Government and Housing Committee, Note of focus group, 5 December 2024](#)

<sup>41</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 47

financial year. An official noted that the full capital budget had not been utilised.<sup>42</sup>

**49.** Ministerial written evidence provided to the Committee ahead of its last scrutiny session with the Cabinet Secretary in October 2023 provides a breakdown of disbursements of the grant over the past four years:<sup>43</sup>

Year	Allocation	Disbursement	Notes
<b>2020/2021</b>	3,500,000	1,213,416	Disbursement this year was heavily affected by COVID.
<b>2021/2022</b>	3,500,000	2,540,026	Affected by COVID and staff shortages
<b>2022/2023</b>	3,690,000	0	Affected by staff shortages
<b>2023/2024*</b>	3,190,000	N/A	Financial year not complete so disbursement not available.

**50.** Data on disbursement for 2023-24 was not available at that time, however, subsequent budget scrutiny by the Equality and Social Justice Committee on 22 January 2024 with the Cabinet Secretary heard:

*“There have been no applications from local authorities across the whole of Wales for capital funding in this financial year [2023-24].”<sup>44</sup>*

**51.** After several years without applications coming forward from local authorities, the Cabinet Secretary confirms in her letter in August 2024 that there have been 12 bids received within the current financial year, with a further round of bids expected.<sup>45</sup> Additional evidence from the Cabinet Secretary notes that 12 awards have been made to 10 local authorities.<sup>46</sup>

**52.** The WLGA noted in its written evidence that the work undertaken by the Welsh Government to:

<sup>42</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, [RoP](#), 16 January 2023, paragraph 63

<sup>43</sup> [Written evidence, Welsh Government, Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 October 2023, paper 3](#)

<sup>44</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, [RoP](#), 22 January 2024, paragraph 118

<sup>45</sup> [Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip, 14 August 2024](#)

<sup>46</sup> [Additional evidence, Welsh Government, Local Government and Housing Committee, 14 November 2024, paper 9](#)

*“review, update and clarify some aspects of the capital grant funding guidance has already had the positive effect of supporting a significant increase in the number of applications from Councils.”<sup>47</sup>*

**53.** Flintshire County Council described the process to secure the sites capital grant funding as “quite arduous”<sup>48</sup> and called for it to be “simplified”<sup>49</sup>. He said:

*“The challenge we have is the additional documents that you have to provide to support a simple process saying, 'We need x to deliver y, and this is how much it's going to cost.' Sometimes it can be very arduous and probably puts us off maybe being a little bit more innovative in our applications because there are so many steps to the process with additional information being provided that that is a problem. And it's also around the window of when the funding is available. For me, it's a 365-day need, and if we identify that something needs to be done, we shouldn't be restricted as to when we can actually make that application based on the window being available for the grant.”<sup>50</sup>*

**54.** The Cabinet Secretary explained that the guidance was changed “as a result of feedback from local authorities about the fact that they needed to be able to purchase land”<sup>51</sup>, and that “the word 'exceptional' is not as rigid as it may sound”.<sup>52</sup>

**55.** According to the Cabinet Secretary it would be “inappropriate” for local authorities to spend the grant on “a site that needed a lot of remediation, land remediation, or feasibility study costs.”<sup>53</sup> Given the “limited pot”, we heard that the Welsh Government wants the money spent on new pitches and good-quality facilities for the community. Despite this they did acknowledge the need to look again at the criteria for the grant.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Written evidence, [WLGA](#)

<sup>48</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 170

<sup>49</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 172

<sup>50</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 170

<sup>51</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 314

<sup>52</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 315

<sup>53</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 314

<sup>54</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 318

---

## Condition of sites

**56.** The condition of local authority sites emerged as the main theme during our focus group with community members. Contributors shared examples of varying degrees of disrepair on sites and described issues with pollution and rat infestations. The impact of these issues on the physical and mental wellbeing of those living on site was raised by a number of contributors, with one explaining that it “destroys people’s lives.”<sup>55</sup>

**57.** Local authorities were accused of allowing sites to deteriorate before resolving the issues. Contributors asserted that local authorities should have taken greater care of the sites from the outset. Unlike on a council estate, where there is a maintenance schedule and programme, that is not the case with local authority owned traveller sites. Some contributors called on local authorities to provide maintenance schedules for each site.<sup>56</sup>

**58.** The Romani and Traveller Social Work Association told us:

*“It is not acceptable and, in our view, inconsistent with human rights and the ambitions of an anti-racist Wales by 2023 that families, including children, elders and those with a disability, continue to live in unsuitable and unhealthy accommodation/sites. Whilst some of the work to repair refurbish accommodation/sites may fall under the grant, the timescales to achieve these is inconsistent with the needs/human rights of community members living under these conditions.”<sup>57</sup>*

**59.** We heard calls for local authorities to be able to use the Sites Capital Grant to maintain sites.<sup>58</sup>

**60.** The Cabinet Secretary told us that “a lot of the grant funding that's going out this year is for refurbishment, rather than for new sites” but that it’s the local authority’s responsibility to maintain sites.<sup>59</sup> A Welsh Government official added:

*“I think we would prefer that those facilities...are maintained and kept up to scratch, rather than left to deteriorate to the*

---

<sup>55</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, Note of focus group, 5 December 2024

<sup>56</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, Note of focus group, 5 December 2024

<sup>57</sup> Written evidence, Allison Hulmes, Romani and Traveller Social Work Association

<sup>58</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, ROP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 209

<sup>59</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, ROP, 3 October 2024, paragraph 322

*point where they are not fit for purpose and then need capital investment, otherwise we're putting a lot of capital investment in replacing like for like.”<sup>60</sup>*

### Our view

**61.** After several years without applications coming forward from local authorities for the Sites Capital Grant, it was good to hear that the fund is now being utilised. We hope that the Cabinet Secretary is monitoring use of the funds to ensure that progress is being made in terms of site provision and quality of accommodation, and to ensure that the development or refurbishment of sites meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

**Recommendation 4.** We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out how it is monitoring use of the Sites Capital Grant to ensure that funds are being used appropriately and address the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Wales.

**62.** We welcome that the criteria for grant applications has been broadened to enable the purchase of land for the development of new sites. However we were concerned that local authorities providing evidence to us were not aware of the extension to the criteria. We also note that the change in criteria is for the purchase of land in ‘exceptional cases’.

**Conclusion 3.** We would be grateful if the Cabinet Secretary could clarify the types of ‘exceptional cases’ in which the Sites Capital Grant can be used to purchase land, and how she intends to ensure that local authorities are aware of the updated criteria.

**63.** We heard calls for the Sites Capital Grant process to be simplified and more flexibility provided in terms of what the grant can be used for. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged the need to look again at the grant criteria.

**Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the Welsh Government reviews the criteria and application process for the Sites Capital Grant to ensure that it is effectively utilised by local authorities to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

**64.** We note that the grant cannot be used to maintain sites, and that the Cabinet Secretary believes that this should remain the case. However we were extremely disappointed to hear about sites in states of disrepair and the impact

---

<sup>60</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, R.O.P., 3 October 2024, paragraph 323



of this on the physical and mental wellbeing of those living on such sites. Local authorities need to prioritise the maintenance of sites and ensure that maintenance work is undertaken in consultation with the people living on them. If the Sites Capital Grant criteria is not amended to include maintenance, the Welsh Government should set out how it intends to work with local authorities to ensure that maintenance work is carried out on sites.

**Conclusion 4.** We would be grateful if the Cabinet Secretary could clarify whether the rent paid by Gypsies and Travellers living on local authority sites is ringfenced for site maintenance and improvements, and where is this income allocated within local authority revenue budgets.

**Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should set out how it will work with local authorities to ensure that Gypsy and Traveller site maintenance is undertaken, and how it will tackle local authorities' failure to maintain and improve those sites. As part of this, it should consider how local authorities fund and prioritise Gypsy and Traveller site maintenance.

**65.** We note that members of the community would like to own and manage their own sites and called on the Welsh Government to help with funding private sites. We believe that the Welsh Government should explore how the Sites Capital Grant could support the development of private sites.

**Recommendation 7.** The Welsh Government should explore how the Sites Capital Grant could be used to support the development of private sites.

## 5. Anti-racist Wales Action Plan

**66.** In June 2022, the Welsh Government published its Anti-racist Wales Action Plan ("ArWAP"). The Plan sets out numerous actions for the Welsh Government to implement with the aim of making Wales an anti-racist nation by 2030. Among the actions to be taken, several relate to the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. Its core action is to:

*"Recognise that safe, culturally appropriate accommodation is necessary in order for individuals to flourish in other parts of their lives and to address the lack of site provision and poor quality of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in Wales, the Welsh Government will, among other actions:*

- *commission a three-year pilot programme to provide independent, trusted advice to those seeking to develop private sites;*
- *review the current funding policy for Gypsy and Traveller sites, and assess its effectiveness;*
- *re-draft the Gypsy and Traveller Sites Guidance, to ensure that the design and location needs of communities are better reflected in the document.”*

**67.** In June 2023, Travelling Ahead told us:

*“not one of the actions in the ARWAP [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan] relating specifically to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller accommodation and other areas have been progressed.”<sup>61</sup>*

**68.** The Romani and Traveller Social Work Association also said that “most actions...have not been progressed”.<sup>62</sup>

**69.** The Cabinet Secretary’s letter to us in August 2024 said that the ArWAP has been “undergoing a refresh” and that officials have been working with the community to “discuss the revised actions and plans to deliver them”.<sup>63</sup> However, the Romani and Traveller Social Work Association said:

*“These ‘stakeholder’ consultations seem to have taken place without a transparent process to ensure that the ‘stakeholders’ are the right ones.”<sup>64</sup>*

**70.** Of the recommendations within our original report that were time-sensitive, was the need for the Welsh Government to provide an update on arrangements for an independent and trusted advice service for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. The Welsh Government noted in its response to the Committee recommendations that the procurement process for such a service would be “progressed over the next three months”.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, Travelling Ahead noted that it had managed a specific advocacy and advice service since its inception,

---

<sup>61</sup> [Letter from Travelling Ahead, Follow up on Inquiry into the provision of Gypsy and Travellers sites, 16 June 2023](#)

<sup>62</sup> Written evidence, [Allison Hulmes, Romani and Traveller Social Work Association](#)

<sup>63</sup> [Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip, 14 August 2024](#)

<sup>64</sup> Written evidence, [Allison Hulmes, Romani and Traveller Social Work Association](#)

<sup>65</sup> [Welsh Government, Response to the recommendations from the Local Government and Housing Committee report: Provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers](#)

but that such a service was “not likely to be re-commissioned before March 2024”.<sup>66</sup>

**71.** The Cabinet Secretary confirmed that the Welsh Government has awarded a three-year contract to Travelling Ahead to provide advocacy and support to families from September 2024.<sup>67</sup>

**72.** Focus group contributors maintained there had not been any improvement in the way local authorities engage with Gypsy and Traveller communities, with one contributor describing “*hatred toward Gypsy people.*” Some contributors explained that local authorities will often “*shy away*” from visiting sites and will instead use organisations like Travelling Ahead and Gypsies and Travellers Wales as a conduit through which to engage with communities. We also heard that Council officials will often fail to attend scheduled meetings with community members. Some described being treated as “*outcasts*” and “*second class citizens*”, whilst others maintained that local authorities have “*no interest in Gypsies.*”<sup>68</sup>

**73.** Gypsies and Travellers Wales told us that “there's still widely held racism and discrimination towards Gypsies and Travellers” and a lot more work needs to be done to ensure that the wider community understands about Gypsies and Travellers and their needs.<sup>69</sup> We heard that local government has a role to play in allaying fears and breaking down barriers:

*“You see these protests against sites and it's just racism and prejudice; it's just unacceptable. Where do these fears stem from? What are they so worried about? That needs to be addressed. I definitely think local government could play a part in that. If those fears didn't exist, I think it might be a lot easier to get planning permission and get these sites built and get this community's needs met, which is long overdue.”<sup>70</sup>*

**74.** With regards to the pilot programme to provide advice to those seeking to develop private sites, Gypsies and Travellers Wales said that she was “not really aware of what is going on with it”.<sup>71</sup> Likewise, representatives from the WLGA

---

<sup>66</sup> [Letter from Travelling Ahead. Follow up on Inquiry into the provision of Gypsy and Travellers sites. 16 June 2023](#)

<sup>67</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 276

<sup>68</sup> [Local Government and Housing Committee. Note of focus group. 5 December 2024](#)

<sup>69</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 49

<sup>70</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 91

<sup>71</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 63

---

were not aware either.<sup>72</sup> Gypsies and Travellers Wales said that access to people with expertise in planning is “really needed”, adding that so many issues would not happen if Gypsies and Travellers could access planning support that was tailored specifically to their needs.<sup>73</sup> When discussing the difficulties securing planning permission for their land during our focus group, several contributors described being obstructed at every stage. One contributor explained that Gypsies and Travellers were not allowed to contribute or share their point of view during council meetings and called on the Welsh Government to hold councils to account “and fine them.”<sup>74</sup>

**75.** The Cabinet Secretary confirmed that the pilot has not yet been commissioned<sup>75</sup> and that it will be procured in the next financial year.<sup>76</sup>

**76.** The Cabinet Secretary told us that the refresh of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan is being developed with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, stakeholders and local authorities, and that they want to focus more on delivery of tangible outcomes for the community.<sup>77</sup>

### Our view

**77.** We understand that the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan is currently undergoing a refresh. We were pleased to hear that the Welsh Government has been working with the community to discuss the revised actions and plans to deliver them. However we were very concerned to hear witnesses say that not one of the original actions relating to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller accommodation had been progressed. Given this, we would like the Cabinet Secretary’s assurance that this “refresh” is meaningful and that these communities will finally see progress.

**78.** We were deeply concerned to hear during our engagement with community members that they felt hatred towards them from wider communities, but also from local authority officials. Nobody should be made to feel as outcasts and second class citizens. We urgently need to see an improvement in the way local authorities engage with Gypsy and Traveller

---

<sup>72</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 223-226

<sup>73</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 63

<sup>74</sup> [Local Government and Housing Committee, Note of focus group, 5 December 2024](#)

<sup>75</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 335-336

<sup>76</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 340

<sup>77</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 348

communities, in the hope that this will also improve the wider community's understanding of the needs and way of life of Gypsies and Travellers.

**Conclusion 5.** We look forward to hearing what steps the Welsh Government is taking to improve knowledge and understanding of the culture and needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities within local government and among the wider community as part of its response to Recommendation 1 of this report.

**79.** We are disappointed that the pilot programme to provide advice to those seeking to develop private sites has not progressed. We urge the Cabinet Secretary to progress this at pace and update us in three months on progress.

**Recommendation 8.** The Welsh Government should progress the pilot programme to provide advice to Gypsies and Travellers seeking help to develop private sites as a matter of urgency and update the Committee in three months on progress.

## 6. Capacity and resources

**80.** During our original inquiry we heard evidence that local authorities lacked the number of staff needed with the required skills to implement the framework effectively.

**81.** In June 2023, Travelling Ahead highlighted concerns around a “lack of prioritisation of staff resources in this area of work”.<sup>78</sup>

**82.** The Cabinet Secretary accepted there had been staffing challenges within the Welsh Government, and noted during our scrutiny session in October 2023 that “the team has been strengthened and re-established”.<sup>79</sup>

**83.** Gypsies and Travellers Wales told us that the “you can see a real difference in the last year from what it was previously...so, hopefully, it will result in positive outcomes.”<sup>80</sup> It was, however, noted that it would be “great if community members could be in these roles”.<sup>81</sup> The Romani and Traveller Social Work Association said:

---

<sup>78</sup> [Letter from Travelling Ahead. Follow up on Inquiry into the provision of Gypsy and Travellers sites. 16 June 2023](#)

<sup>79</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 5 October 2023, paragraph 97

<sup>80</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 77

<sup>81</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 83

*“This new team has much work to do to establish, trust, deep knowledge of the priorities and in how to properly listen and hear the wide range of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma voices in Wales, as continuity of staffing in this key priority area has been absent.”<sup>82</sup>*

**84.** During the scrutiny session in October 2023, the Cabinet Secretary also referred to the fact that staffing issues were “not confined to the Welsh Government”, noting:

*“I think one of the interesting issues about local authorities is the variation in terms of their commitment to having staffing on this front, particularly in their housing departments. Some local authorities have family liaison teams engaging with communities. Others engage through housing and planning enforcement teams.”<sup>83</sup>*

**85.** The WLGA in its written evidence said that while it welcomes the “recent increase in staffing capacity” within the policy team at the Welsh Government, this additional capacity is:

*“not reflected in the position within many Councils, where finance, resource and capacity constraints across a number of service areas are likely to be one of the barriers to delivery at pace.”<sup>84</sup>*

**86.** During our oral evidence sessions, Anglesey<sup>85</sup>, Pembrokeshire<sup>86</sup> and Monmouthshire<sup>87</sup> councils confirmed that they do not currently have Gypsy and Traveller liaison officers. There were calls for revenue support from the Welsh Government to recruit and retain staff in relation to Gypsies and Travellers.

**87.** The Cabinet Secretary stated in her written evidence that the challenges around staffing and resources will be a focus of the “regular cycle of meetings” between individual councils and Welsh Government officials.<sup>88</sup> In response to whether the Welsh Government should provide revenue support for the

---

<sup>82</sup> Written evidence, [Allison Hulmes, Romani and Traveller Social Work Association](#)

<sup>83</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 5 October 2023, paragraph 100

<sup>84</sup> Written evidence, [WLGA](#)

<sup>85</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 233

<sup>86</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 237

<sup>87</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 230-231

<sup>88</sup> [Written evidence, Welsh Government, Local Government and Housing Committee, 3 October 2024, paper 2](#)

employment of designated officers, the Cabinet Secretary acknowledged the varying positions across local authorities but said that they should view this as a priority as well as a statutory duty.<sup>89</sup>

**88.** In response to calls for the reinstatement of the Gypsy and Traveller forum,<sup>90</sup> the Cabinet Secretary noted that this is part of the actions in the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.<sup>91</sup>

## Our view

**89.** We welcome the recent increase in staffing capacity within the relevant policy team in the Welsh Government, and would like to understand how it reflects the lived experience of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. We would also like to see the reinstatement of the Gypsy and Traveller Forum. We strongly believe that the Welsh Government should be taking all reasonable steps to improve engagement with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

**Conclusion 6.** We would welcome a statement on how the relevant policy team in the Welsh Government reflects the lived experience of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

**Recommendation 9.** The Welsh Government should reinstate the Gypsy and Traveller Forum with urgency.

**90.** We remain concerned about resources in local government. Ensuring that the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers should be a priority for all local authorities, and they should ensure sufficient capacity and expertise to effectively engage with these communities. Given the current variation amongst local authorities, the Welsh Government should work with local authorities to ensure that they have the necessary expertise, capacity and resources to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and to tackle inequalities.

**Recommendation 10.** The Welsh Government should ensure that each local authority has a Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer.

---

<sup>89</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 364

<sup>90</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 110

<sup>91</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [RoP](#), 3 October 2024, paragraph 267