

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Dear Jocelyn,

During plenary on 24 September, you asked how many Gypsy and Traveller sites were needed in Wales. I have since spoken with my officials and I am able to expand upon my answer.

Current estimates for the need for additional Gypsy and Traveller sites are not robust enough to be accurate. In 2006, the Welsh Government commissioned Pat Niner to undertake a piece of research on the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Wales. This report estimated a need for up to 250 permanent pitches and 100 transit pitches by 2011. Since the report was published, sections 225 and 226 of the Housing Act 2004 were commenced, requiring Local Authorities to undertake Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs). The first raft of these assessments suggested a Wales-wide need for approximately 326 permanent pitches and additional transit pitches. However, the methodology and comparability of these GTAAAs has been criticised by various organisations.

Therefore, a new requirement for Local Authorities to undertake GTAAAs was included in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, replacing previous duties. This will lead to all Local Authorities following a similar methodology to assess Gypsy and Traveller pitch needs and GTAAAs will need to be submitted for Ministerial approval. The draft Undertaking Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments guidance is subject to consultation until 21 November 2014 and can be found at the following link:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/equality/gypsy-traveller-accommodation-assessments/?lang=en>

All 22 Local Authorities are required to undertake and submit a new assessment to Welsh Ministers by the end of February 2016. When this process is completed I will have a far more accurate picture of the number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches required in Wales.

However, the actual number of sites and the type of ownership arrangement will be for the Local Authority to decide through the Local Development Plan process. Local Authorities should have regard to the Welsh Government's Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Wales guidance when deciding how many pitches should comprise a site. This guidance is also currently subject to consultation and can be found at the following link:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/equality/draft-designing-gypsy-traveller-sites-consultation/?lang=en>

I recognise new legislation and guidance will not solve the issue of an undersupply of pitches on their own. Yesterday, the Minister for Finance and Government Business announced an extra £2m for 2015/16 for the building and refurbishment of Local Authority Gypsy and Traveller sites. The Welsh Government Sites Capital Grant will support up to 100% of the capital costs of developing new sites where need has been identified.

Regards
Lesley

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