

## **Clare Plays Leading Role In Coordinating Public Services For Travellers**

*County Clare, 3rd December 2007*

Minister of State and Clare T.D., Mr. Tony Killeen today described County Clare as one of the country's leaders in terms of supporting members of the Travelling Community.

Speaking at a special event in Ennis marking 'National Traveller Focus Week 2007', Minister Killeen highlighted Clare County Council's approach of consultation and co-operation as a model that was now being applied by other local authorities in addressing the need to coordinate public services for travellers.

The theme of 'Traveller Focus Week 2007' is 'Inclusion'. More than 30 events are taking place across the country to highlight and discuss aspects of Traveller culture such as arts and culture, accommodation, education, building relationships and Traveller youth.

Today's meeting in Ennis featured a progress report on 'The Strategy for Co-ordination of Public Services to the Travelling Community in Clare 2005- 2008', while members of the local Travelling community spoke about their participation in the various programmes initiated under the Strategy.

The Strategy, now in its second year, was developed by means of an extensive consultation process with agencies and Travellers. In total, 23 statutory and local agencies and over 100 members of the Traveller community took part in various working groups around the county.

*"The work that is happening here in Clare is part of an overall national approach to improving the quality of life for travellers in Ireland. In fact, the development of the Traveller Strategy in Clare was a national pilot project",* stated Minister Killeen.

He continued, *"Its conception was in response to the recognition of the need for all agencies involved in the delivery of services to the Traveller community, to work together to ensure quality service delivery, and to achieve the most effective and best possible long term affects for Travellers."*

*"In Clare it was recognised that issues surrounding Traveller Health, Accommodation, Education and Work & Employment were all interlinked and that only by co-operation between all agencies, in consultation with Travellers, could a real difference be made",* explained the Minister.

According to Minister Killeen, *"Clare County Council's approach has now been acknowledged at national level, through the work of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues, set up by the Taoiseach. The group has identified the Clare approach of consultation and co-operation as the model to be applied by other local authorities in addressing the need to coordinate public services for Travellers. The model is now being adopted nationally."*

The Minister, who formerly chaired a Sub-Group of the High Level Interdepartmental Group on Traveller Issues, added, "I am told that significant progress has been made on approximately 80% of the identified actions including the securing of FAS funding for employment and enterprise initiatives, and the creation of Traveller Support Worker positions in two secondary schools in Ennis."

He stated, *"It is of utmost importance that Travellers in Clare continue to be involved in the Strategy by participating in implementation groups or by attending meetings such as this today."*

Minister Killeen concluded by recalling comments made by President McAleese at the Paveé Point 20 Year Anniversary back in 2005.

*"The President said this is a rapidly changing and vastly changed Ireland. The pace of life has suddenly gone from a walk to a gallop and both Travellers and settled people alike have had to try to adjust to all the new pressures and changes that are part of Ireland's economic success story. Never before has there been so much opportunity in Ireland and it is absolutely vital that the Travelling community access and use those opportunities to make a better life all round for the future"*, commented Minister Killeen.

The 'Strategy for the Coordination of Public Services to the Traveller Community in Clare 2005-2008' aims to strengthen the culture and self-governance capacity of the Traveller Community in Clare, while enhancing their quality of life in the immediate and long term.

It also aims to identify and address gaps in the current provision of public services and to coordinate and integrate existing service delivery around the themes of accommodation, health, education, and work and employment.

<http://www.paveepoint.ie/index.html>