

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF GYPSY/TRAVELLERS

£2 Million Capital Investment in Gypsy/Traveller sites: Impact Report

SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of projects delivered by local authorities as part of the 'Improving the Lives of Gypsy/Travellers' national action plan, to make immediate improvements to the quality of life for Gypsy/Travellers living on permanent sites.

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INTRODUCTION

In October 2019, COSLA and Scottish Government published the joint action plan – 'Improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021'. During the development of the plan members of the Gypsy/Traveller communities highlighted the need for more and better culturally appropriate accommodation to be made available and for existing sites to be improved. In response to this, COSLA Leaders and Scottish Government agreed to deliver immediate improvements to the quality of life for residents living on public sector sites, and to establish longer term work to improve the quality and provision of accommodation for the communities.

As part of this commitment, Scottish Government made available a one-off investment of up to £2 million to enable local authorities to take direct action to raise standards. This had a focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable groups including older people, disabled people and children. It was agreed that the improvements that were to be made, had to be over and above the minimum site standards. Crucially, it was agreed by Leaders that service providers would work with residents living on sites to ensure the funding was used to make improvements that are a priority for residents.

This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by councils and outcomes achieved. The report is based on information provided by local authorities and their local assessments of the achieved impact. We will seek feedback on the report and on the project achievements from the communities perspective through an open event after publication. Learning from this event will inform COSLA's ongoing support to councils in improving participation in site design and development.

It is important to note that in many local authority areas the delivery period for the projects was longer than the timescales initially intended. This was particularly due to the impact of Covid 19 on communities and on local authority capacity to deliver capital works and the desired community engagement. In addition, the UK Exit from the EU has impacted on the cost of building materials and in some cases created delays to the delivery of supplies.

Despite these challenges, local authorities have developed and delivered a range of capital projects using the £2m to improve the quality of life on sites and strengthen engagement with residents. The report summarises work undertaken in each local authority that provided a return to COSLA as of 09 March 2022.

£2M CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND

Nineteen local authorities in Scotland currently provide permanent accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers and were eligible to receive an allocation of the £2m funding. All of the eligible authorities claimed their portion of the funding. Local Authorities received an allocation of £10,000 per site and an additional percentage according to the number of pitches provided. A summary of their allocations is provided in the table below.

Local Authority	Allocation
Aberdeen City Council	£ 78,561
Aberdeenshire Council	£ 140,991
Angus Council	£ 82,594
Argyll Community Housing Association Ltd (funding available via Argyll and Bute Council)	£ 108,726
City of Edinburgh Council	£ 90,660
Clackmannanshire Council	£ 70,495
Dumfries and Galloway Council	£ 140,991
Dundee City Council	£ 90,660
East and Mid Lothian Council	£ 74,528
Falkirk Council	£ 70,495
Fife Council	£ 231,651
Highland Council	£ 237,618
North Ayrshire Council	£ 74,528
Perth & Kinross Council	£ 124,858
Scottish Borders Council	£ 50,330
South Ayrshire Council	£ 261,32
South Lanarkshire Council	£ 132,925
Stirling Council	£ 82,594
West Dunbartonshire Council	£ 90,660
Total:	£ 2,000,000

It was agreed as part of this approach that Local Authorities would undertake work locally to develop improvement plans in line with the outcomes agreed by COSLA Leaders, with the local approach reflecting the principles agreed by Leaders. An outcomes framework was developed to help to guide engagement and spending decisions. It was agreed that the fund should be used to achieve the following:

- Improved quality of life for residents of Gypsy/Traveller sites
- Improved facilities or access for people with protected characteristics or additional vulnerabilities, including older people, disabled people and children
- Immediate improvements to site quality, which benefit Gypsy/Travellers quickly and have a sustained impact

- Improved relationships between the Local Authority and site residents and learning from and about community engagement approaches that have worked to develop and agree projects
- Improved confidence within the Gypsy/Traveller Community that the Action Plan will result in change and that they have meaningful influence over decisions that affect them locally

COSLA provided support to local authorities in the development of local plans, including providing feedback and advice on plans or practical support with engagement with residents. Local Authorities were asked to log work undertaken locally to evidence the impact of the work, for example noting key developments, decisions taken with residents and authorities and outcomes from meetings to supplement evidence from capital plans. COSLA produced a record of local progress and achievements.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The funding has been used to deliver a diverse range of projects. Some of the key achievements are described below:

- Physical improvements to facilities on sites including new flooring, bathroom and kitchen fittings to improve the quality of people's homes
- Adaptations to ensure that older people and residents with mobility issues are safe in their homes
- Play facilities for children and young people to improve their wellbeing on sites
- Community learning facilities to strengthen access to learning opportunities and other services and to create spaces for the community to come together
- Landscaping to improve the appearance of sites and enhance wellbeing
- Security measures to help residents feel safer in their homes
- Digital projects to improve communication and access to the internet on sites
- Improvements to address fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

To support local delivery of projects, COSLA met with councils in 2020 to discuss how they could usefully assist councils and support effective engagement with site residents. The programme of events developed included meetings with Gypsy/Traveller liaison officers, exploratory and information gathering with individual councils and national events.

COSLA chaired a national event 'Delivering best practice – Improving Gypsy/Traveller sites' hosted by COSLA's Community Wellbeing spokesperson, to support local engagement with site residents; share information about the funding and the principles and explore participatory approaches as well as learning from recent site development projects.

The event included presentations from City of Edinburgh Council and the third sector organisation, MECOPP who outlined good practice approaches to delivering site improvements and work in partnership with site residents. Public Health Scotland (PHS) also lead a session on utilising place-based approaches and COSLA's Participatory Budgeting team provided a workshop on effective participation methods. Follow up meetings after the event were organised to support progress in the design of local engagement and site development plans. Local authorities were put in contact with one another and an additional follow-up to the national event was held with PHS advising on use of the Place Standard.

COSLA worked closely with ALACHO and Directors of Finance to clarify the impact of Covid-19 on delivery of engagement with residents and capital works and to understand the implications on local capacity to deliver, changing needs for supporting engagement and residents' likely priorities for spend.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

The public health crisis unavoidably impacted local delivery and engagement with residents on the allocation of the £2m fund. Local Authorities' focus shifted to providing support to the Gypsy/Traveller community during the pandemic as part of local resilience plans. This meant that a number of Local Authorities started engagement with Communities but were unable to progress projects as quickly as intended. In some cases this was due to temporary redeployment of staff and refocusing of local officer duties to support the Covid-19 response. Social distancing guidelines led to the majority of local authorities experiencing delays in the ability to progress regular face to face engagement with site residents and there were wider challenges for councils in terms of planning for their staff capacity, and budgetary impacts of Covid-19 on planned works.

A further concern developed regarding barriers to digital engagement having a negative impact on the quality of resident engagement in capital investment plans, and subsequently the timescales for delivery (i.e., processes taking longer to deliver as additional steps had to be taken to ensure they were inclusive and accessible, as well as in line with public health guidelines). An additional risk was that the ongoing requirement for local authorities to prioritise their response to the public health crisis had an impact on commissioning and delivery of capital works.

Equally, public health risks created by the virus and changes in residents' needs and requirements resulted in changing priorities for the spend, which required to be

considered as local authorities looked to allocate the funds with residents. Procurement of suppliers and access to supplies and workmanship also proved to be delayed in some instances due the pandemic. This was compounded by the impact of the UK Exit from the EU on the cost of building supplies and delays to capital projects.

The Covid-19 pandemic also impacted progress of COSLA activity to support councils and local delivery. COSLA officers' work also necessarily focused on supporting local authorities to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, including work to develop the Gypsy/Traveller 'Impact Group', which helped to identify the public health impacts and risks of Covid-19 for communities living on sites and roadside. We also directly supported local authorities' responses to roadside encampments including the provision of sanitation.

FUNDING IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Despite these unforeseen challenges eight authorities have now completed their projects and seven authorities will have completed their projects by July 2022. Two local authorities have planned works and are investing in significant redesigns and developments of their existing site. They will be using their allocation to support provision as part of this. We are waiting for updates on project outcomes from two local authorities.

The projects have so far made tangible improvements to sites, strengthened the foundations for future engagement with residents and further emphasised the importance of good quality accommodation for the health, wellbeing of communities and positive relationships with local authorities. In a number of cases additional investments above and beyond the Scottish Government fund have also been made to improve the sites.

One local authority had identified other sources of capital funding for the site and instead used revenue funding to provide Community Learning and Development Worker for children and adults on the site. They provide both adult literacy classes and homework support for children and young people at an on-site community facility that is also maintained by the local authority.

Funds have also contributed to broader local authority upgrades and investments. In one local authority, funds have contributed to a fibre upgrade to supply fast, reliable and price inclusive broadband/ Wi-Fi services to all pitches. During COVID-19 this allowed families to stay connected throughout the broader Gypsy/Traveller community.

Local Authorities have also used a variety of different engagement methods to work with residents, which have been ongoing, exploratory, and ensuring accurate information gathering. Differing engagement processes have included:

- Using the Place Standard Tool
- Face to face meetings and phone calls with residents
- Survey and consultations
- Information boards used in public areas
- News letters
- WhatsApp and private Facebook pages

The rest of the report provides more detail and examples of the projects delivered in each local authority area.

WIDER INVESTMENTS AND FUTURE PRIORITIES

There is an ongoing need for investment in the maintenance and improvement of existing public sector sites, many of which are older stock and were not originally designed to meet the changing needs of the communities. They continue to require more significant investment if we are to achieve our goal of improving the quality of the existing public sector sites and providing more pitches and new site provision across Scotland.

Since the announcement of this fund, the Scottish Government has since established a £20m Gypsy/Traveller accommodation fund which will be supporting joint investment with local authorities over five years. Together with residents and with input and advice from third sector organisations and community representatives, work will be undertaken to develop and deliver a number of capital projects over the next five years. We will be working to draw on learning from these projects to test and finalise an Interim Site Design Guide, which has been produced by the Scottish Government to help to ensure that they meet the needs and aspirations of Gypsy/Traveller communities now and for the future. COSLA will also support work with local authorities to strengthen the use of Participatory Budgeting approaches to the design of future sites. Work will be undertaken, drawing on the learning from these projects, to establish the future policy and funding models needed to ensure more and better accommodation is in place to meet community needs.

In addition to this, work will be undertaken by Scottish Government in 2022 to help to strengthen the collection of data on Gypsy/Traveller accommodation Housing Needs and Demands (HNDA) and COSLA will produce new research with third sector partners on Gypsy/Travellers views, experiences and needs for roadside and transit provision. COSLA will also evaluate learning from local authorities who piloted the 'Negotiated Stopping' approach to managing encampments. This and other joint work to Improve the Lives of Gypsy/Travellers will deepen our learning about what works to improve site provision and build stronger platforms for the participation of residents in future site design and development.



DESCRIPTION OF WORKS COMPLETED

COSLA developed and impact and monitoring framework, based on the principles agreed by Leaders, for completion by local authorities during the progression of works. Local Authorities submitted the first information return to COSLA in August 2021. Further requests for updates and final outcomes from the projects were requested in February 2022. Local Authorities were encouraged to also capture the views and input of residents.

Below provides a narrative summary of the engagement processes and projects undertaken.

ABERDEEN CITY – CLINTERTY TRAVELLERS SITE

Aberdeen City Council reported two types of consultation being completed to support decisions about the allocation of fund on the Clinterty site. This included direct conversation with families and issuing letters sharing the overall decisions being taken forward. Decisions were further developed through consultation with the Community Learning and Development worker on site and input from the site manager.

Two key themes were taken forward from consultation:



Community learning:

The first identified a need for revenue spending as a priority, due to the tenants and children's direct request to enhance the existing work taking place by Community Learning and Development in the form of an extra day staffing per week, now in place, and progressing SVQ's with some of the children as well as holding homework clubs for school children and providing input for adults experiencing literacy issues.

Various meetings with residents, the site manager and CLD were carried out and works were agreed to update toys and equipment for learning and development; new cookers, microwaves and cooking utensils were purchased to be used by residents and children on site for cooking classes and early learning equipment and new furniture was purchased to modernise the community centre and ensure a place where people want to learn and meet.



Landscaping/environmental:

Residents highlighted improving both the entrance area to the site and the area surrounding the community centre through both areas being tarred and new plant pots and hanging baskets installed.

Covid 19 restrictions resulted in essential maintenance work only being possible creating a delay in progress. Although staff are now at full capacity the site is due to close in July 2022 for refurbishment resulting in a plan for this work to be carried out at the same time, and while the site is closed.

Immediate improvements to site quality, which benefit Gypsy/Travellers quickly and have a sustained impact

A modernised community centre ensuring a place that people wish to learn and meet

ABERDEENSHIRE – AIKEY BRAE and GREENBANKS

For both sites two forms of engagement work were outlined, regular surveys and ongoing informal feedback from the Gypsy/Traveller community in discussion with the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer and Site Assistant. Engagement was and continues to be ongoing with views and suggestions being taken on board and acted upon where possible to influence the improvements on the sites.

Improvements identified through engagement were:



Children and young people:

Provision of playground equipment and educational playground markings in place for the children; and a storage unit, with base, to store educational, play resource.



Landscaping/environmental:

A belt of trees around the perimeter of the site to act as a windbreak and contribute to the carbon footprint.

Bee and insect friendly flowers provided outside of the site and planters installed.

The above works are expected to be completed by March 2022 with the delay being a result of limited availability of materials, equipment, and staff and a suitable time identified for planting.



Digital Access:

Access to free Wi-Fi to benefit children for helping with education, young people and adults to help with addressing doctor and health appointments, benefits claims and online shopping



Information Sharing:

Free standing notice board





Community cohesion:

Picnic Benches and seating to facilitate and encourage interaction and socialising



Security:

The provision of a height restricted barrier, in addition to the original wooden gate to restrict access to the site, making it more secure and safe, particularly for the children on the site

An additional security light installed at the opposite end of the site

Fence erected at the previously open end of the site to discourage public access

Anchor points on each pitch for additional security in high winds



Services:

An additional water standpipe/tap at two metres distance from the existing tap to take account of social distancing.

Additional works completed out with the capital fund involved the chalet provision on Greenbanks site being upgraded, to meet Scottish Government minimum standards, including solar panels funded by a grant from Scottish Government Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes (ABS) 2021/2022. Solar panels are also to be fitted at the office in Aikey Brae.

<p>Improved confidence within the Gypsy/Traveller Community that the Action Plan will result in change and that they have meaningful influence over decisions that affect them locally</p>	<p>Seeing positive and practical outcomes from engagement, consultation, surveys and discussion and knowing that suggestions and wishes have been taken on board helps to promote improved relations, trust and confidence in the local authority</p>
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ARGYLL AND BUTE, ARGYLL COMMUNITY HOUSING ASSOCIATION- DUNHOLLIGAN and BAY VIEW TRAVELLER'S SITES

Engagement on the Dunholigan site was carried out through socially distant, in person consultation. This involved speaking to every tenant, describing the works, and agreeing the specification.

Senior Management allocated three resources from Housing and Property Services to ensure committed works were completed to resident's satisfaction with engagement activities being scheduled to ensure that the residents were aware of new contacts and how they could help improve the operational functioning of the site.

Progress with engagement on the Bayview site took longer to achieve due to a medium term site issue. This was resolved and initial consultation took place and drawings produced for a further consultation session to be completed.



Services:

- Large quantities of waste material from several parts of the site and around the boundary area were removed, in partnership with social enterprise All Cleaned Up Scotland. In total 3.6 Tonnes of waste was removed from the site
- The local authority used this as a further opportunity for tenants to clear out any unwanted items or waste from units, with the main aim of reducing fire risk in the areas found to be heavily cluttered
- Supply and fix poles to drying area

Before:



After:



Security:

- Improved lighting
- Improvements to fencing and gate access to the pitches



Children and young people:

- New access to the play park and fit a new self-closing gate.



Landscaping/environmental:

- Clear garden area to West of site to enable it to be used and maintained by the community
- Landscaping to the site including tree planting.



Amenities:

- Repurposed vacant amenity units for the residents to use

Initial consultation was carried out with residents on the Bayview site following delayed progress due to encampment issues. Initial drawings were produced to influence a further consultation session.

Some minor works have been completed on the Bayview site and contractors are expected on site w/c 14th March 2022 to complete all of the environmental improvements agreed with residents.

Improved confidence within the Gypsy/Traveller Community that the Action Plan will result in change and that they have meaningful influence over decisions that affect them locally

Partnership working between the community, the council and related stakeholders with ongoing engagement was used to determine the best strategy for communication and the medium to be used to ensure all residents' voices were heard

CLACKMANNANSHIRE – WESTHAUGH GYPSY/TRAVELLER SITE

Resident meetings prior to funding commitment had raised the issue that site security improvements were required, with the need for fencing improvement along the boundary of the site identified. This was developed through two forms of engagement being carried out, via Microsoft Teams Virtual Interaction and monthly outdoor site meetings in line with COVID-19 regulations.

After deliberation with residents, it was decided that the following improvements would be completed:



Landscaping/environmental:

- A mixture of metal system fencing and timber fencing to improve the security and appearance of the site. The site was measured for works and a contractor appointed. Risk assessments, safe systems of works and construction phased plans were agreed and completed



Security:

- Security Risks were discussed with residents during site visits by Property Services and the Housing Service. The issue of the CCTV system being outdated was raised and that the residents would feel safer if this was rectified. A new CCTV system was investigated and tendered by Property Services to include 5 cameras covering the full site with particular emphasis on the entry to the site
- A camera with Automatic Number Plate Recognition was installed to help monitor site traffic and visitors
- Fencing improvement along the boundary of the site



Digital Access:

- As part of the council's commitment to digital inclusion, the site was to receive Fibre upgrade to supply fast, reliable and price inclusive broadband/ Wi-Fi services to all pitches. Residents agreed that this would help improve communication and be an overall great benefit. It was noted that during COVID-19 this allowed families to stay connected throughout the broader Gypsy/Traveller community. A feasibility report was conducted, and a tender process completed. The specification was a new access point to all pitches, improving the current system



Fire safety:

- After joint visits with the fire service and residents' further measures were put in place to upgrade the fire safety of the site. Butane canister holding units were fabricated to help reduce the risk of source of ignition with completion planned for

February 2022. Fire protocols were also updated to ensure safe access and egress in the event of a fire

Additional works carried out beyond the capital fund and through Housing Revenue Account included:



Fixtures and fittings:

- During monthly site visits a resident advised property services of issues regarding ingress and egress of the fitted bath. Several elderly residents reported that these were a slip hazard. Property Services and Housing Services agreed that the affected properties would have baths changed to shower trays with a lower profile of step. This would help tenants in the short term until the full plan of upgrades was committed to by the council administration

As part of the council's ongoing sustained commitment to the site, plans were investigated on how to improve the entire site as part of a capital project improvement plan. Residents were engaged through consultation with the view of upgrading existing facilities and infrastructure.

Feasibility studies of land adjacent to the properties were conducted to determine if suitable to build on for new units. The findings of these surveys were compiled with other related data into a report for the council committee and elected members to determine the route of action and have been used to form the basis of a successful grant offer from the Scottish Government for full site improvement.

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY – THISTLE GROVE and BARLOCKHART PARK

Capital improvement works were agreed with the residents following a number of years of limited investment when the site was within the General Services Fund. A survey was carried out pre lockdown assessing the views of the tenants on site. Initial plans were to follow these up with a number of meetings to agree the priorities. However, with the pandemic, this exercise was done remotely and informed the committee report. Face to face consultation was carried out with site residents when restrictions allowed on their preferred options regarding improvements to the site and amenities.

Improved quality of life for residents of Gypsy/Traveller sites

Residents have confirmed through a consultation process that they are happy with the outcomes

From consultation the following works were agreed by residents:



Landscaping/environmental:

- Replace fencing along the rear of five pitches with new 1.8m timber fencing
- Cleared shrubbery from the boundary along 12 pitches to allow better feeling of space
- Installed a secure gate leading to the old bungalow pitch
- Removed the remains of old fencing in the old bungalow site to open the area



Security:

- Installation of additional CCTV to cover the rear of the site to provide enhanced security for families



Energy/fuel efficiency:

- Installation of smart meters using the same management system as Barlockhart Park to allow residents to top up power 24hrs a day without leaving the pitch



Services:

- Improve bin collection enclosure at the site entrance
- Colour coded signage to assist with recycling bin collection dates.



Fixtures and fittings:

- Replacement floor coverings for 15 units
- Internal and external decoration to 15 units



Pitches:

- Increase the size of one pitch to be capable of siting 2 caravans for family with an identified need
- Install bollards to prevent inappropriate parking next to one pitch and site entrance completed

The anticipated completion date for the outstanding works is unknown at present due to continued spend of the outstanding funding including new gates at procurement and tendering issues related to COVID 19 and Brexit. If a successful tender does not come back for decoration and flooring the Council has other works under consideration to the front of every pitch at Thistle Grove. An extension until July 2022 would allow the Council to work out issues with delays as previously described and ensure that site occupants are fully engaged and are happy with how the budget is being spent.

DUNDEE CITY – BALMUIR WOOD

A consultation strategy was adopted to ensure that the residents were involved in spending decisions. Initial survey questionnaires were completed by residents (past and present). A survey questionnaire to other local authorities was carried out regarding what facilities they have on their sites to assist the process. Social media platforms were used to reach out and further engage with the Gypsy/Traveller community. A meeting was arranged for all current residents in line with current restrictions due to Covid-19. Information and analysis was shared, and an action plan developed and agreed to progress the most popular choices of improvement works.

All participants were given several options as a starting guide on how best to spend the additional funding and were given an opportunity to input their own ideas:



Landscaping/environmental:

- The overwhelming view was that the funding should be spent on fencing around each individual pitch which would fully enclose each pitch. Further consultation was planned with the residents of the site to pick the fence type once we have these options available



Community cohesion:

- The residents second most popular choice was that if there were sufficient funds remaining, then it should be spent on a community facility for the site

Although Covid-19 caused delays to the consultation process, issues with the supply of materials and the chosen contractors experiencing staffing shortages due to staff self-isolating, leading to a change in the estimated completion date; all works were complete.

EAST AND MID LOTHIAN – OLD DALKEITH COLLIERY

Consultation was carried out between the local authority and site residents with works being agreed March 2021. Following consultation with residents, it was agreed the money should be used to improve the site visually, provide play equipment for children and allocate a small sum for the installation of mailboxes on site. East Lothian Council's Amenities Services visited the site to provide indicative costs and prepared drawings to ensure the views of Gypsy/Travellers were interpreted correctly going forward. 'Before' and 'during' photos were taken to enable progress / improvement to be captured visually.

3 projects were agreed from consultation:



Landscaping/environmental:

- soft landscaping – 4 panels of artificial grass to be installed in the central area
- 8 large corner planters to be planted up with hardy evergreen flowering shrubs
- 15m planted bed to be placed at the site entrance and
- 2 x 6m beds in the parking area
- 13m planting area at the top of the site
- 4 vegetable planting areas
- gardening tools to be made available for use by residents and
- seating area installed



Children and young people:

- Play park and equipment – a large area of wasteland has been cleared for a play area
- an area of hardstanding for a shed, for a range of indoor and outdoor play equipment
- seating / picnic areas to be provided



Services:

- Mailboxes to be installed for residents

Works were unfortunately halted due to a high level of onsite vandalism in May 2021 resulting in a hold on further spend at the current time. Investigation has identified a significant cost out with the capital fund being required to bring the site back to minimum standards. A business case is being prepared to inform forward planning for the site.

CITY OF EDINBURGH

<p>Immediate improvements to site quality, which benefit Gypsy/Travellers quickly and have a sustained impact</p>	<p>The size and massing of trees around the site was an issue for the residents so a tree survey was carried out. It recommended that a number of trees were removed to reduce the likelihood of them falling into the site and to remove the noise issue from some trees rubbing against each other. The trees were removed and one of the community benefits being explored is to replace them with trees which will not grow to such a size and will increase the bio-diversity of the area.</p> <p>The completed re-design of the site allows for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each pitch to be fenced in a manner chosen by the community to suit their lifestyle and the pets they have. The existing fencing is dilapidated and more suited to a cattle market.• Removal of the electricity meter block has freed up more space for the pitches.• Installation of a new gas supply will remove the need for the old gas cylinders which took up space on the pitches and froze during cold weather.
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The local authority are progressing a major site redevelopment and will be using their allocation of funding as part of the planned works. The engagement process initially began in 2018 with work taking place in partnership with residents, representatives from Housing and a commissioned architect to co-design a redevelopment of the site based on the lived experience of residents. The Covid pandemic altered the way communications and design meetings took place with the residents and MECOPP supported the residents to appropriate hardware to facilitate Teams meetings.

The project has continued to progress through officers maximising the COVID pandemic lockdown period, as agreed by residents, to complete the administrative phase of the programme to prevent further delay. Council officers prioritised completing planning approval, the Building Warrant consent and procurement process during this time.

There is a commitment to deliver the project through the Council's Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme. Originally, the project scope was to modernise the existing amenity blocks. This included new roofs, rainwater goods, new render, new windows and doors and an internal fitout. However, through consultation with the community the authority jointly agreed to explore potential to take a whole site redevelopment approach. Through a considerable period of design development and engagement with the community, progress has been made to a point where the project will now be delivered to

include new chalet s and amenity blocks across the twenty pitches, a new community hub and site office, also new permanent utilities, roads and pavements into the site

<p>Improved confidence within the Gypsy/Traveller Community that the Action Plan will result in change and that they have meaningful influence over decisions that affect them locally</p>	<p>Residents have shown that they are committed to the changes which they identified. The members of the housing team and their architect have listened to the requirements of the residents and adapted the design of the site to suit them.</p>
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Planning and building warrants have been granted, the contractor appointed, and design team meetings have taken place via Teams to iron out any issues.

The small site size, inadequate and dated services, and the opportunity existing to alter the layout of the pitches, working around the residents would have been very problematic.

The pandemic led to a surge in demand for static homes and chalets to the extent that the lead in time for new chalets increased by at least a year. The decision was made, in agreement with the residents that it would be easier and quicker for the contractor if the site is cleared before the contractor takes possession. This has led to the expense of re-housing residents in temporary accommodation and storing unrequired possessions for the 6 month off site period as of 1st April 2022, site handover to the contractor on 18th April and anticipated completion by 22nd August with residents returning to site thereafter.

Due to the pandemic creating an increase in costs across the construction industry the chalet manufacturer has increased the cost of their chalets. This has had an unforeseen impact on the overall cost of the scheme. It is anticipated that the Final Account will be agreed with the contractor shortly after Practical Completion of the works.

<p>Improved relationships between the Local Authority and site residents and learning from and about community engagement approaches that have worked to develop and agree projects</p>	<p>Improvements to the site have been talked about for years because of the issues to do with the utility blocks which were cold and mouldy. There were also issues to do with the electricity supply as it was not designed to meet the demands that current usage was putting it under. The site was becoming run down and the residents did not believe that it would change.</p> <p>The obvious commitment from the City of Edinburgh Council's employees involved in this project, and their availability, has given the residents the confidence to engage with their landlords to ensure that this project will come to fruition within the timeframes agreed.</p> <p>The part time on-site manager has worked with the residents to get to where we are today</p>
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FALKIRK

The Local Authority began initial discussion in early 2020 prior to COVID 19 with tenants and residents' group. The original intention was to hold a consultation exercise before Christmas 2020 and then progress any works agreed upon although this was delayed as many of the site residents were elderly and shielding during the COVID pandemic which made it inappropriate to progress without their input and therefore ensuring fair representation.

Engagement was later carried out with residents through regular meetings being held to advise of progress of works and ensuring the residents were heard and feedback given on the progress of works requested.

By using the place setting exercise residents confidence to participate in consultation activities and voicing their wants and needs developed, resulting in the identified works of:



Landscaping/environment:

- Improvements to the external elements of the site such as tree trimming to improve the look and facilities on the site



Services:

- The installation of the electricity card meter means that residents have access to purchase these cards at all times, and not just when the officer is on site. This means that they do not have to travel to another location to purchase them in an emergency



Community cohesion:

- Improvements to common room; comfortable seating, microwave, aesthetic improvements, crockery etc to allow for comfortable and effective social use of the room

Further works identified are to be progressed into 2022/23:



Digital Access:

- Installation of Wi-fi and associated running costs, with work currently ongoing with corporate IT team to progress this



Security:

- Installation of barrier entry to site was requested by residents during consultation and currently awaiting technical appraisal by Development Services before progressing.

FIFE – Heathery Wood, Thornton Wood and Tarvit Mill

Two forms of engagement took place through all three Fife sites:

1. Spend opportunity was raised with Tenants Groups on all 3 sites
2. A tenants survey was completed across each site

Discussions took place with residents on all three sites about environmental improvements. As all sites are rural and are surrounded by open countryside. Residents wanted to prioritise fencing and landscaping as an improvement in areas not affected by the development of new pitches in coming years. Residents indicated that rubbish often gathered on sites due to them being open / exposed etc.



Landscaping/environmental:

- Fencing and landscaping within areas not to be affected by the development of new pitches and chalets in coming years
- New boundary fencing across the site
- Clean up of levels of rubbish across site
- Metal fencing installed around the site

There were significant issues due to Covid 19 in undertaking participation and getting costs for work on the sites and in gaining materials for fencing. Costs were agreed and contractor appointed for fencing and environmental clean up.

HIGHLAND – SPEAN BRIDGE, NEWTONMORE, KENTALLAN PARK and LONGMAN PARK

Highland Council carried out various methods of continued engagement across each site via regular Tenant Participation Officers visits allowing longer term engagement/involvement to be nurtured in the form of:

1. Place Standard engagement events
2. Consultation on site re-design
3. A site Newsletters (incl. 'you said / we did' feedback)
4. New community information boards on all 4 sites installed
5. Whats App information exchange group
6. Family and children activity engagement
7. Regular Tenant Participation Officer visits and Whatsapp info exchange group established with residents
8. Assessment on barriers to engagement highlighted lack of digital access therefore four residents were provided with digital devices

The result of consultation was a range of improvement priorities being agreed:



Landscaping/environmental:

- Environmental improvement works completed; dumped vehicles etc removed
- Additional rock face protection



Amenities:

- Trialling installing wetwalls to reduce condensation within amenity units
- Waste tank improvements
- Anchor points
- Shed provision
- Improved chalet plumbing
- Amenity unit improvements to reduce condensation
- Additional bathroom facilities
- Drainage/waste tanks improvements
- Amenity blocks improvement to reduce condensation
- Additional parking area
- Drainage improvements
- Outside taps installed
- Improved bathroom



Security:

- New perimeter fencing to prevent passing fly-tipping
- Enhanced lighting being provided.
- New security barrier installed
- Improved lighting



Services:

- Bus shelter provided



Children and young people:

- Removed unused play equipment
- Purchasing of play equipment for older children
- Creating additional play area for younger children
- Gathering and play area

Delays to some of the works resulted from pandemic restrictions and several improvements to pitches and units being on hold due to potential of substantial improvements being taken forward; and / or are dependent on decisions regarding changes to provide 6m spacing on pitches.

For works affected by site redesign proposals, extension required until information is known about the viability of redesign and / or funding.

Further works in Highland involve a Gypsy/Traveller Partnership Group having been set up and meeting regularly. The group involves representatives from a range of services, partner organisations and with links to the Gypsy/Traveller community via MECOPP. Its purpose is to establish a plan of actions which will improve the lives of Gypsy/Travellers in Highland and drive these forward. Priorities being explored mirror those in the national delivery plan.

The Local authority applied to Scottish Government Accommodation fund for 2021 – 2023 and had planned to complete works as part of a full site refurbishment. As a result quotes for works are currently pending, hoped to be received in the near future.

Before:



After:



NORTH AYRSHIRE – REDBURN GROVE

North Ayrshire Council Tenant participation team facilitated engagement with the residents' group at Redburn Grove. Following consultation, the group identified works that the tenants wanted prioritised to enhance the site and these were progressed.



Amenities:

- New, attractive kitchens have been fitted in each amenity block

Before:



After:





Security:

- Gates and fencing for each pitch to add security and make the pitch safer for families with children and pets
- Upgrade main doors to amenity units for additional security and warmth



Landscaping/environmental:

- Removal of black rubber surface – replace with artificial grass - Contract awarded
- Gates and fencing
- Upgrade main doors to amenity units for additional security and warmth

PERTH and KINROSS – DOUBLE DYKES and BOBBIN MILL

In order to conduct Place Standard surveys to ascertain how the funding could be best spent resident engagement was carried out through:

1. online meetings
2. phone calls
3. email and text
4. follow up 'talk-about's' mapping and online

Residents determined the scope and look of the Happy Cabin and were regularly updated and involved in the ongoing design of a Happy Cabin meeting space, new outdoor gathering areas, paths and seating. The design and purpose of the new Happy Cabin and siting of the Cabin were agreed with manufacturer site visits and quotes/sizes allowing agreement of the type of building.

The site layout of Double Dykes, and the distinct four sections of chalets, gave an opportunity to enhance the outdoor areas in each section of the site. Meetings with 22 residents evolved around the siting and design of the Happy Cabin, where with the other outdoor spaces would lead to more integration, opportunities to meet, for others to come to the site and meet up; for residents to have a central point. Before the cabin was delivered, the outdoor spaces were given new paths, seating, improved drying greens that bring together residents in a series of open meeting spots.

The Bobbin Mill site sits in a woodland setting without scope for storage and outdoor meetings together. The residents proposed that a small cleared area could be enhanced to contain a storage building which also had the capacity to be a meeting space. There were logs, bicycles, gardening paraphernalia throughout the site that are now stored securely; meetings for the residents outside but within the area of a small indoor seating zone.



Landscaping/environmental:

- New paths
- open spaces made for sitting and meeting



Services:

- new drying areas with fencing, has provided better use of grassed areas for families, and will fit in with the Happy Cabin layout for a more cohesive use of the whole site



Community cohesion:

- Happy Cabin community space
- The residents proposed and designed a new storage unit combined with an indoor/outdoor meeting place, with decking for cultural meetings on site
- Sympathetically designed panelled wooden building would serve the residents need for a bespoke storage space but also an outdoor meeting space for cultural gatherings

Further discussion has taken place with residents on Double Dykes regarding the remaining amount of funding and further projects identified by the residents will be implemented by the end of June 2022.

Improved quality of life for residents of Gypsy/Traveller sites

Using Place Standard, surveys undertaken on this small woodland site enabled the building design fit in with the look of the woodland and the chalets and promoted cultural gatherings

SCOTTISH BORDERS – INNERLEITHEN

Tenants raised concerns over two areas of improvements:

The condition of certain elements of the Gypsy/Traveller amenity block resulting works to:



Amenities:

- Improvements made to hot water & heating to each unit on site
- Replacing heating, new water heaters and new flooring within the amenity block

The difficulties in accommodating the same number of families within the site area available for the parking of caravans during the ongoing Covid 19 restrictions resulted in works to-



Security:

- Fencing erected to provide security & privacy to site for resident
- Surfacing of an existing grass area to enlarge the overall site available
- Hard surfacing throughout provides better access for accessible users
- Improved & extended tar areas for additional caravans. Site is now cleaner in all weather conditions

All works were completed apart from replacement of flooring due to supplier delay in completion ability to complete. Completion is expected by 31 March 2022.

Security and privacy fencing:



SOUTH AYRSHIRE – HUDSTON REID-LEA

Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer and representation from the Council's Grounds Maintenance service carried out a socially distanced on-site consultation with site residents to explore and design landscaping options for the site.

Further consultation took place with residents to discuss options for other priorities. A range of landscaping and horticultural plans were developed with site residents for the Hudston Reid-Lea site to introduce facilities for sustainable food production, enhanced biodiversity, and an improved natural aesthetic for the site.

Contact was made with Local authority in-house Property Maintenance Service Lead to scope out plans and costs for additional items highlighted by permanent site residents, previously highlighted to improve current site provision.



Landscaping/environment:

- Supply and installation of water feature (shallow type rill) for resident's fowl
- Ground preparation and planting out of wild flowers and consecutive spring bulbs
- Supply and planting-in of trees around parts of the site





Sustainable food production:

- Provision of raised planters for growing vegetables
- Design and build of chicken coop on site to protect fowl during night-time, and better enable production of free-range eggs for their owners
- Supply and fitting of outside taps to each residence to support horticulture activity



Community cohesion:

- Design and build outdoor benches and tables to support outdoor community activity



Cultural activity:

- Renew 2 dog kennels to improve aesthetic of site and provide added comfort for animals.



Security:

- Installation of a mix of 1.2m and 2m high timber fencing along its boundary. Works were identified as the residents' No1 priority by our Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer via phone consultations with site residents



SOUTH LANRKSHIRE – SHAWLANDS CRESCENT and SPRINGBANK PARK

From the beginning of this project, residents were involved in determining the need and specification of the new communal facility.

This was, and continues to be, discussed in detail through a range of resident meetings and follow up newsletters.

Residents have been involved in the majority of decisions for the new facility, ranging from the building design through to the furniture & equipment to be placed within it.

Once open, residents will manage how the facility is used, with key holders and timetables established to enable services and community groups access.

Immediate improvements to site quality, which benefit Gypsy/Travellers quickly and have a sustained impact

As the funding was added to enable the delivery of an existing project, installation was able to be delivered quickly



Community cohesion:

- New community facility - Designed in conjunction with the residents, the facility comprises of main function room, a separate office, kitchen, storage and accessible toilet
- Internal finishes
- Furniture
- Digital equipment, including a television, laptop and printer
- External large, terraced area at the front with views across the rest of the site
- Ramp and step access leading from the main road on the site

There were delays in completion resulting from contractor supply and delivery issues with the material shortages faced by the supplier being out with the council's control. Further delays were caused during transportation with Police Scotland unable to facilitate an escort for the abnormal load due to COP26 commitments.

To mitigate the delay to residents, the council negotiated with the supplier to install a temporary facility. This continues to allow community events and services to take place and enable preparation for how these groups and services will run once the permanent facility is up and running.

This project is almost complete with the new facility on site and finishing touches being added. The new facility was delivered and installed on the site in late 2021 and utilities and connections are complete and anticipated to be open to residents from the end of March 2022.



Energy efficiency

- Infra-red heating installation

Residents had previously noted that inefficient and ineffective heating within the amenity buildings on the site meant that they were less inclined to use them. To rectify this, officers worked with residents to explore different replacement heating options.

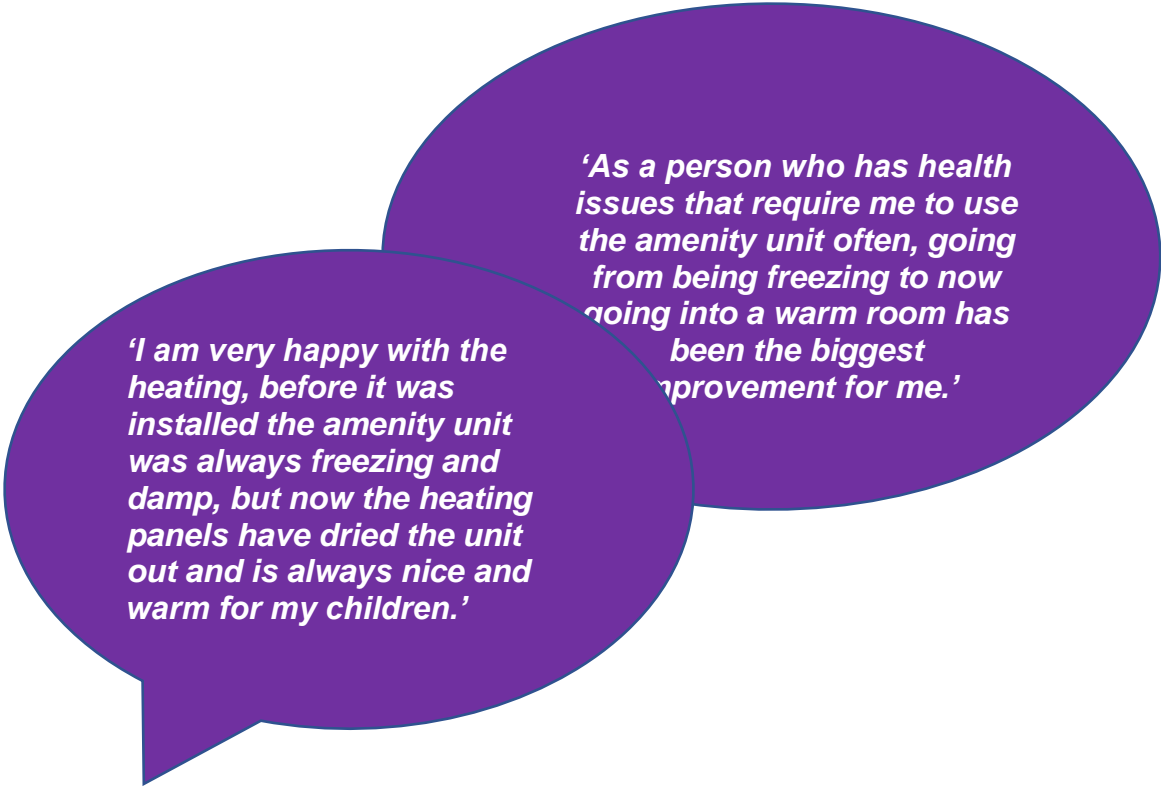
A 12 month pilot project involving the installation of new infra-red heating systems within certain units across council sites was completed, proving successful, and evaluated well

with residents expressing their satisfaction with the new heating. In addition, residents cited an improvement in living conditions within the buildings, resulting in increased use. As such, it was agreed with residents that the replacement heating units would be rolled out to all amenity buildings across both sites.

Once the supplier was procured, the installation took place relatively quickly with a phased installation adhering to restrictions in place as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and being sensitive towards the residents needs and use of the amenity buildings.

Ongoing monitoring of use and costs will be completed by the council and supplier.

The new heating was installed across both sites, with Scottish Government funding covering the costs of the installation at Springbank Park. Residents have confirmed the improvements to their living conditions and quality of life since the new heating systems were installed highlighting how much more useable the space within the amenity buildings is. Unexpected benefits such as the removal of condensation from the bathroom areas has also been reported from officers and residents.



'I am very happy with the heating, before it was installed the amenity unit was always freezing and damp, but now the heating panels have dried the unit out and is always nice and warm for my children.'

'As a person who has health issues that require me to use the amenity unit often, going from being freezing to now going into a warm room has been the biggest improvement for me.'

STIRLING – BRIDGEEND TRAVELLERS SITE

During the period of consultation 16 pitch sites were occupied and 10 telephone interviews were completed with residents on the site. Further consultation took place July 2021 with a response rate of 76.4% which resulted in priorities for future investment. A survey of satisfaction and potential future investment was conducted by an independent organisation.

Findings of consultation were:



Amenities:

- 9 of the 18 amenity blocks being completed with new kitchen including integrated oven and hob and cooker hood
- new bathroom including shower



Energy efficiency:

- upgraded electric heating
- Energy and environmental sensors fitted
- Resident app to monitor healthy of the amenity block



Amenities:

- internal painting and tiling where appropriate
- floor covering throughout



Children/young people:

- Play equipment purchased



Digital:

- Ipads and laptops with mifi distributed February 2021



Security:

- Security camera upgraded and now in use



Services:

- Clearance of rubbish and debris around the boundary fencing complete
- Income Maximisation Officers have been engaging residents and follow up appointments made where appropriate
- Regular Housing Officer visits have taken place to discuss tenancy and any issues arising



For further information or questions regarding the report contact:

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<https://www.gov.scot/publications/improving-lives-scotlands-gypsy-travellers-2019-2021/>.