

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD**

Date: 5 December 2007

Subject: **Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant - Funding Allocation**

Report of: George Summers, Gypsy and Traveller lead  
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**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Regional Housing Board advise the Secretary of State that it recommends the bids for Gypsy and Traveller grant funding are supported.

**Purpose of the Report:**

To seek the Board's view on the most recent bids received for Gypsy and Traveller grant funding.

**Key Issues:**

A summary of the bids received is set out in Annex A. These have been scrutinised by the CLG's consultants for value for money and deliverability.

If the present applications are supported this will leave £0.452m additional funding (subject to end of year flexibility) available for the 2008/09 bidding round.

## **I. Background**

1.1 The Government is taking action on a number of fronts to address the problem associated with shortages on pitches for Gypsies and Travellers. There are three separate strands to this:

- Strengthened powers to take swifter enforcement action against illegal encampments.
- Introduction of new arrangements, supported by funding, for identification of appropriate sites within local plans where there is a demand.
- Stronger powers to tackle anti-social behaviour.

1.2 The region has a key role to play in the second of these through inclusion of the needs for Gypsy site provision in the South East Plan. This is being addressed through a partial review, where work is nearing completion on a series of needs assessments across the region.

1.3 The Government has made available £10 million to the region to support proposals for new pitches or for refurbishment of existing ones in 2006/08. There have been four bidding rounds during this period and it is expected that future funding will be announced shortly. It is expected that the next bidding round will be in March 2008. Ministers' decisions on which bids to support are informed by assessments of viability, value for money and deliverability undertaken by independent consultants and advice from the Regional Housing Board.

1.4 A total of £7.7 million has so far been allocated for schemes in the region in the first three bidding rounds. Therefore £2.3 million is available for allocation in this final round, with requests for £1.848m so far received. If these are approved this will leave a balance of £0.452m available to allocate in the next bidding round (March 2008) (subject to carry forward).

## **2. Regional Housing Board Role**

2.1 The Board's role is to establish that the bids are responding to identified need, and where bids exceed available funds, to prioritise bids.

2.2 Communities and Local Government (CLG) have employed independent consultants (Dearle and Henderson) to carry out technical assessments of the bids to ensure that the bids are:

- Comprehensive and include all the necessary information (including on the evidence on the need for the provision).
- Viable and sustainable.
- That costs are reasonable (recognising that costs of new sites can vary significantly from location to location due to site preparation work etc.).
- Deliverable.

2.3 The advice that CLG Ministers are looking for (from the RHB) is primarily around prioritisation, which has not so far been an issue in the South East, and how the bids match the evidence of need across the region.

In advance of the completion of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs) the available evidence is patchy - the only consistent data is from the 6-monthly counts of unauthorised encampments in the region and pitch occupation levels.

- 2.4 When the GTAAAs are complete they will provide a much clearer picture of the priorities in terms of the parts of the region with the greatest need and the balance between requirements for permanent and transit sites. This will then be reflected in both the South East Plan.
- 2.5 RHB members will have the benefit of an initial briefing on the outcome of the GTAAAs at a forthcoming workshop.
- 2.6 The RHB's role is an advisory one; decisions on which schemes to fund are taken by CLG Ministers. The Board does not have any specific responsibilities in terms of delivery of schemes or for any issues that arise during scheme development. Successful applicants are required to provide monitoring information to the CLG on the progress of the scheme and problems of completion. The CLG undertakes monitoring to ensure schemes are completed on time and authorities are accountable for individual projects.

### **3. Consideration of October 2007 Bids**

- 3.1 A total of 11 bids have been received in the present bidding round. Bids cover provision of 24 new pitches and refurbishment work on 10 sites with 89 pitches. The total funding bid for is £1.848m, which will leave £0.452m. Subject to end of year flexibility this should be available for the next round due to commence in March 2008. A summary of the individual applications is provided in Annex A.
- 3.2 The majority of the funding requests received is for refurbishment work and reflect the ability of local authorities to contribute 25% of funding required. 100% grant funding is available for new provision. Two applications (Tunbridge Wells and Buckinghamshire) are for additional funding to increase the grant received to enable them to meet new standards set following the publication of CLG Guidance on Gypsy and Traveller site design and management.
- 3.3 The Brighton and Hove application requires additional information and approval is requested subject to that being satisfactory.
- 3.4 The CLG consultant's assessment was not available at the time of writing this report. A brief overview will be available to Members at the December meeting.

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