

Jane Hutt MS
Minister for Social Justice
Welsh Government

23 February 2023

Dear Jane

Gypsy and Traveller Sites Capital Grant

We were concerned to learn during our scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget that the funding allocated to the Gypsy and Traveller Sites Capital Grant for 2023-24 is lower than in previous years. As you know, we recently undertook an inquiry into the provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers. As part of that inquiry, we visited a number of local authority sites and saw for ourselves that some sites are overcrowded and in urgent need of maintenance or refurbishment. We are therefore surprised that the allocation for the grant has not increased to enable local authorities to improve existing sites and develop new ones.

We were even more surprised to note in your letter to the Equality and Social Justice Committee that there has been no spend from the capital grant during this financial year and none is forecast to occur before the end of March. We are concerned that the underspend may be a consequence of a lack of consultation with communities on the improvements and facilities they need. During our inquiry we heard that engagement is too often tokenistic and we fear that the underspend in this area is evidence of that, as there is clearly a need to improve existing accommodation and provide more pitches, including transit ones.

We recently received correspondence from a local authority stating that they have two sites in desperate need of redevelopment and asking for financial support to undertake the work.

It is deeply worrying and frustrating that the funding is available to make positive progress to address some of the issues relating to the provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers in Wales, but that it is clearly not being used. It is also concerning that some local authorities may not even be aware of

the grant or where to seek support. This is a stark illustration of why we decided to undertake work on the provision of sites in the first place and unfortunately suggests that this is not a priority area for the Welsh Government and local authorities. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency and investment must be made in the delivery of sufficient and suitable accommodation for some of the most marginalised in our communities.

You will be aware that in our report on the draft budget, we made a joint recommendation with the Equality and Social Justice Committee that the Welsh Government should urgently set out the reasons for the lack of progress on use of the Gypsy and Traveller Site Capital Grant and how it plans to work with local authorities to ensure take up of this important fund. Further, the Welsh Government should clarify what will happen to the unspent £3.690 million from the 2022- 23 Budget, and confirm that it will be allocated to actions within this area.

In addition to responding to the above recommendation, as it has been six months since we published our report on the provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, we would be grateful if you could provide an update on the Welsh Government's progress in implementing the 21 recommendations made in the report.

As a Committee we are committed to monitoring the implementation of our recommendations and to undertaking follow-up scrutiny in relation to the provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, which is a priority area of work for us.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

Yours sincerely



John Griffiths MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.