**It’s there, it’s gone, it’s back again – funding for new site development**

When the new “Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme 2016 to 2021” prospectus came out on 13th April this year, I’m sure that many of us were surprised to see that all mention of funding for Gypsy/Traveller sites had disappeared. This was particularly surprising given that the previous programme (“Affordable Homes Programme 2015-2018”, published in January 2014) had included a paragraph (Para 219 under “Other groups of forms of housing”) which covered funding for the “provision of traveller pitches”. Admittedly this did not take the form of separate funding and it was for the provision of new pitches only, but it did at least state in the Prospectus that the provision of new pitches was a legitimate form of Affordable Rent provision “that could be included in 2015-18 Affordable Homes Programme bids”.

We raised the issue of this baffling disappearance both via direct contact with DCLG and through the Quarterly meetings of the DCLG/NFGLG GTR Liaison Group, At the June meeting Baroness Williams of Trafford stated that the Government would continue to support funding of further pitches, The Civil Servants present acknowledged however, that the prospectus did not currently make provision for the funding of traveller pitches (i.e. where the funding would come through was something of a mystery) but explained that discussions were ongoing within DCLG to formulate a plan to consider funding for pitches, with advice to be submitted to the Housing and Planning Minister. We returned to this issue in our September meeting but no further concrete information was available (although, informally, I was told that moves were afoot).

So far so bad, but now for the good (ish) news. At our meeting last week (15th December) we were informed by DCLG that “traveller pitch” funding is to be restored to the current programme via an Addendum to be produced in January 2017. As with the previous programme this funding will not be “ring fenced” and, as we know from bitter experience, just because it may be possible to bid for funding to develop new sites/provide new pitches doesn’t mean that that will necessarily happen. On a more positive note though, at least funding for new pitches is back in the frame.

Adrian Jones, Policy Officer, National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups