

Friends, Families and Travellers

Jan 2007

Travellers Advice Project

FFT has been awarded three years funding by the Big Lottery for a project to build the capacity of other advice agencies in the South East to work with Gypsies and Travellers.

We will be organising seminars for advice agencies such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Shelter, and Race Equality councils as well as health agencies such as Mind

and Sane to help them access and work more with Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Our first seminar is on 5 January 2007 at the Government Office of the South East, and is aimed at Housing Associations. The seminar will cover issues facing Gypsies and Travellers living in housing, and also be aiming to encourage

Housing Associations to bid for the money available to build new sites.

The Advice & Information Unit at FFT has also been re-named and incorporated into the Traveller Advice Project. Our existing staff member Emma Nuttall is Project Manager.

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Slow progress on site provision

It is twelve months now since the publication of the much heralded planning circular 1/2006 and progress towards achieving the site provision so urgently required to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers remains desperately slow. Despite the availability of Government grant aid to refurbish existing local authority sites or to provide new ones the take up by Councils seems disappointingly low. Thus, whilst local authorities

may be forced under the new Circular to consider the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in their development plans, there does not seem to be sufficient of a 'stick' to make them actually do anything positive. The 'carrot' of Government grant aid only works of course if local Councils are prepared to take a responsible, and responsive, approach towards their new duties. On the other hand it does seem to be the case that, where local authorities are

dragging their feet or otherwise failing to make suitable provision, the chances of planning applications by Gypsies and Travellers being won on appeal are increasing.

Light on the horizon is that for the first time there is a systematic attempt to quantify the need for Gypsy and Traveller sites. All over the country Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments are being carried out which will feed

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The Gypsy and Traveller Unit at DCLG is currently consulting on draft guidance on site management and site design.

If you would like to respond to this please call the unit 0207 944 8127 or see their website www.communities.gov.uk

Travellers Advice Project cont

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Our caseworker Clare Bingham has, as ever, a heavy caseload, and is currently working on: challenging intentional homelessness decisions for Gypsies and Travellers trying to re-access housing from unauthorised encampments; accessing grants for Travellers moving into housing from the roadside; and problems on sites and in housing amongst other issues. Emma is also carrying out casework: homelessness applications; accessing housing and sites; and planning applications for

private sites.

FFT hosted a consultation meeting for Gypsies and Travellers in the South East, with George Summers (Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Gypsy Unit's lead in the South East), Michelle Banks (Head of the Gypsy Unit) and planners from the South East England Regional Assembly. We will host another meeting on the 12th of February. These meetings are part of the DCLG's commitment to consult regionally with Gypsies and Travellers, and part of their programme to tackle issues such as site

provision regionally. The DCLG have employed an officer with a Gypsy and Traveller remit for each of the following regions: the South East, the South West and the Eastern Region, as these are the areas with the highest numbers of Gypsy and Traveller caravans in England.

We also attended a stakeholder meeting at the DCLG in London on the 19th October. Issues discussed include the new Animal Welfare Bill, planning, site closures and site management and design.

New Animal Welfare Rules

DEFRA is publishing a new Animal Welfare Bill, which contains a code for tethering and transportation of animals. The regulations will be brought in on 5 January 2007, but will not apply until 5 January 2008. For more information see www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/bill. The Bill is aimed primarily at big animal transporting companies, but it will have an impact on ordinary people. Issues that will affect Gypsies and Travellers include the fact that certificates of competence will be needed to transport horses, if more than one

person is transporting more than one horse. One person transporting one horse will not need a certificate of competence.

Drivers or attendants responsible for the transport of farmed animals, horses and poultry over 65km will be required to hold a certificate of competence by 5 January 2008. Skills and knowledge to be assessed include: general conditions of transporting animals, journey planning, animal husbandry and feed needs, and animal behaviour amongst other issues. The certificate of competence will be

awarded once an independent assessment of knowledge of the above has been made.

The Bill will also simplify and consolidate the law relating to animal fights. It will make it an offence to distribute films of animal fights made in England and Wales.

The tethering code may also impact on Travellers, though we have been told by DEFRA that the code is just basic good sense/good practice

FFT Office Visits.

Please note that due to space constraints we can no longer offer and informal drop-in service at Community Base. You can however make an appointment to see a caseworker between the hours of 10.00am – 4.00pm on Monday, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Planning Officer Report

For those that remember me its nice to be back and hello again. For those who don't know me I was involved in setting up FFT in the run up to the Criminal Justice Act in the early 1990s and ran FFT as its first coordinator until 1997/8 when Alex so capably took over. I've been working part time as FFT's Planning Officer since the end of this summer trying to come to terms with the implementation of the new planning system and with how councils are implementing Circular 1/2006.

The new Circular has as its aim to ensure that there is proper planning provision for Gypsies and Travellers and requires local councils to make allocations in their new plans. These allocations will be decided on the basis of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's) which have been recently or are currently underway. According to the government 80 per cent of local authorities have started assessments. In the South west, South East and East partial reviews of the regional plans are underway and next year regional Planning Boards will start the process of allocating pitch numbers to each planning authority. The

local authorities will then have to start on the process of identifying sites for potential development. The Government's stated aim is to make substantial provision within a three to five year period. To do this councils should start identifying sites very soon and few seem to be doing this so far.

My job is principally to respond to various planning consultations coming out from councils and it has been quite a steep learning curve. Concerns are already arising about how the system will work, not least the capacity for delay within the system and also continuing under-provision.

Major concerns centre around a number of issues, not least the base data on which the GTAA's rest. Most seem to use the caravan counts published by the Department of Communities and Local Government as their starting point. These counts are known to be unreliable and in some places seriously underestimate the numbers of caravans that exist. Undercounting was common in the past when councils undercounted to allow them to claim designated status under the old 1968 Act. Designation allowed them

to evict Travellers camping by the roadside more easily. The problem is that no one is systematically reviewing the counts, although some GTAA's have revealed undercounting. For example the Cornwall GTAA has revealed the existence of about 100 caravans in the Restormel District on one site and the existence of several other sites in the district when the official caravan counts published up to January of this year reported near zero counts for 2005 and previous years. The January count in 2006 shown in the GTAA showed a total of 115 caravans but the published statistics from DCLG still showed a zero count! In how many other council areas will this pattern be repeated?

There are concerns about the compatibility and approach of the GTAA's although work has been commissioned by the DCLG to look at how they will be reconciled so that the Regional Planning Boards will be able to make their decisions about pitch allocations.

Councils who have a pressing need in their district are supposed to take action ahead of district allocations. Few so far seem to be doing

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"The January count in 2006 shown in the GTAA showed a total of 115 caravans but the published statistics from DCLG still showed a zero count!"

Planning Officer Report cont

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.. this. I would be grateful for any comment about this. Some councils are indicating that they will be looking seriously at giving permanent planning permissions to sites which have only temporary permissions; and perhaps also looking at giving planning permission to sites without it but which they tolerate. This all relates to private sites. Many councils seem reluctant to get actively

involved in providing public sites although some discussion has taken place with Housing Associations who may be able to develop and manage new public sites. FFT is keen that this occurs and suggests that major developments for housing may be suitable locations. Councils should, in our view, enter into section 106 agreements with developers to ensure that land is made available (the same way that

affordable housing is being developed).

There is thus a lot going on and we would like to encourage members to feed back to us any information on their local area and planning issues. It would probably be sensible for any Travellers who want a site to make their needs known to the council and people who own land that they think would make a suitable site to make this known to the council.

Contact the Planning Officer:

Steve Staines
FFT Planning
PO Box 223
Ely, Cambs

Slow progress on site provision cont

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....into Regional Planning Strategies and inform the detailed development plans of local authorities. Many of the Needs Assessment studies have been criticised for lack of Gypsy and Traveller involvement and participation, and this throws a question mark over the accuracy of some of the data collected but it does at least represent a step in the right direction.

We know though that safe and secure accommodation is one of the most basic of human needs and that the shortage of authorised sites contributes

significantly to the marginalisation, social exclusion, poor health and low life expectancy of Gypsies and Travellers. This is a shameful situation that must be brought to an end as soon as possible. We cannot afford to wait until the slow machinery of local authority planning processes produces results in ten years or so, we need action now!

All Gypsy and Traveller groups and organisations, and all those who are fighting for the human rights of Gypsies and Travellers, must work together to demand -

- A moratorium on evictions until satisfactory site

provision has been put into place.

- Interim arrangements for the identification of suitable 'tolerated' sites until the needs for the provision of permanent and transit sites can be met.
- Action by Government and the Housing Corporation to facilitate the active participation of Gypsies and Travellers themselves in identification, design and provision of sites.
- Cessation of the practice of stopping up access to green lanes and verges and other informal sites that have provided a network of short term stopping places for traditional Travellers for decades.

"We cannot afford to wait until the slow machinery of local authority planning processes produces results in ten years or so, we need action now!"

News from Zoe Matthews: Health Improvement Manager

We are now well into the next phase of our project which is about FFT working with East Sussex County Council and Sompriti in partnership following Government money from Invest to Save 8.

Although this is a local project in East Sussex around engaging Gypsies and Travellers to take up the services that they may be entitled to, it applies to Gypsies and Travellers nationwide.

If you think that you could be entitled to these services or feel that you would benefit then please contact your nearest Council for details. Adult

Social Care provides the following services:

- Residential Care – Older People
- Respite Care – Carers
- Meals on Wheels – Physical Disability
- Home Care – Learning Disability
- Day care - Sensory Impairment
- Equipment – Mental Health
- Adaptations
- Disabled Parking Badge

You may also be able to receive Direct Payments to purchase these things for yourself.

If you live in East Sussex and are from a Gypsy or Irish Traveller background we are looking for people to participate in a series of workshops that are about developing a 'toolkit' around 'Cultural competency' for the East Sussex County Council. This is your opportunity to teach the Council about your way of life. Lunch will be provided and there will be a small payment to cover all expenses.

Phone Zoe Matthews on 01273 234796 if you are interested.

Many Thanks and Best Wishes for the New Year,

Zoe

If you know of any Health visitors out there working with Gypsies and Travellers who are not employed by a PCT, could you let us know at the Health Project.

Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Project

In April of this year the Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition was dissolved. Some of the member groups of the Coalition have re-formed to continue to lobby for Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform. These groups include Friends, Families and Travellers, the Gypsy Council, the Irish Traveller Movement, the London Gypsy and Traveller Unit (LGTU), and the

Canterbury Gypsy Support Group. We will be appointing a policy development worker, who will be based in London at the LGTU, and who will work closely with the All Party Parliamentary Group for Traveller Law Reform to lobby for positive changes in the law for Gypsies and Travellers, such as security of tenure on sites.

On 30 January Julie Morgan MP, who is the chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Traveller Law Reform is staging a launch of a private members bill entitled 'The Caravan Sites and Security of Tenure Bill', at the Houses of Parliament.

Membership subscriptions

Membership subscriptions are due for renewal on 1 April 2007

In 2006 we decided to change things so that all memberships run from 1 April to 31 March each year. This means that we do not have to chase members up for renewal of their subs at different times of the year according to when they joined but can do this all in one go. As a result some members will have had a 'subscription holiday' for most, if not all, of 2006/7.

This is a reminder though to say that all subscriptions are due for renewal on 1 April 2007. Membership for

individuals costs just £10 per annum (£5 unwaged) and for organisations £25. To renew your subscription for 2007/8 just send a cheque (payable to FFT) for this amount to –

Suzanna King
Friends, Families and Travellers,
Community Base,
113, Queens Road,
Brighton
BN1 3XG

Members of FFT receive a copy of our quarterly newsletter giving news about Gypsy and Traveller issues and the work we are doing, and are able to attend and vote at our Annual General Meeting.

Through being a Member of FFT you are also supporting our work to progress the cause of Gypsies and Travellers through casework, capacity building and campaigning.

IF YOU ARE NOT YET A MEMBER SIGN UP NOW AND HELP US TO TACKLE THE DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION THAT GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS FACE ON A DAILY BASIS. IF YOU ARE ALREADY A MEMBER TRY TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO JOIN US AND HELP US TO BRING ABOUT REAL AND LASTING CHANGE.

Our subscription form can be found on the back page of this newsletter and on our website

Teach the Teachers

The Community Education and Capacity Building Project (CECBP) Known as: Teach the Teachers! Funded by the Commission for Racial Equality (2006-2007).

The project aims to help connect young Gypsy Travellers to "new professionals". This term is used to describe new teachers, youth workers and all those who are becoming involved in Young Gypsy Traveller work under the Every Child Matters agenda. Many 'New Professionals' have had little or no experience of the Gypsy Traveller culture.

We are using the experience gained from the Cyberpilot project, to create a multi media CD ROM and website, that will enable Gypsy and Traveller Young People to tell 'New Professionals' about Gypsy Traveller culture and lifestyle, how the young people want to be seen and treated. This project has no agenda, and will therefore be led by the needs and feedback of Gypsy and Traveller Young People.

****Who can be involved?***

The project was for all Gypsy, Traveller, Show and Fairground Young

People, on the road, in sites, or housed. Aged between 6-16 years old, located in England, Wales and Scotland. The project works with state or home educated Young People.

Tell us what you think via our website:
www.gypsy-traveller.org/cyberpilots/teach_the_teachers .
See the contributions that have already been made.

Email Tammy at tammy@gypsy-traveller.org

Or call 07941 860736

..“we are normal people leading a normal life. we are the same as everyone else. we want to be treated fairly. just like everyone else. we want people to understand we are no different to everyone else and if they are kind to us we are kind to them. we are nice people. people just dont understand us...”

Young Gypsy Traveller, Cyberpilots website

Traditional Site Survey

The convergence of the needs assessment process with the implementation The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 offers opportunities to safeguard and develop the Traditional Site Network which has sustained nomadic dwelling for millennia.

See 'Green Lanes as an accommodation resource for nomadic people' at www.gypsy-traveller.org

It is from within the context of Traditional Site Loss that the present crisis in accommodation

can best be understood. To raise awareness of the role of cultural solutions to the present crisis, a survey of Traditional Site Loss has been initiated.

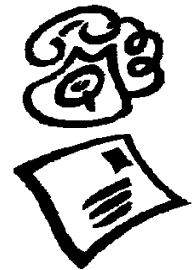
The information we are collecting is as follows:

1. Location by County
2. OS Map reference (4 digits, longitude and latitude)
3. Brief description of site (e.g. green lane, deep verge, common or no-mans-land)
4. Approximate date of closure
5. Brief description of method of denial

We do not seek to gather information on active sites at the present time. We understand that this may expose them to the risk of closure or over usage without the appropriate protocols and safeguards in place.

We encourage readers to pass this information on to enable other Travellers to contribute their own experiences to the survey process

We anticipate publishing the results of this first phase in six to nine months time.



FFT Noticeboard

Shelter Gypsy and Traveller Law Course.

Two-day introductory course.

Trainers: Marc Willers, Chris Johnson and Angus Murdoch.

London 7-8th Feb 2007
Fees Standard £300+ VAT.

Discount £250 + VAT
www.shelter.org.uk/training

The Robert Barton Trust, a community advice centre based in Glastonbury, is carrying out an extensive survey of

Travellers, Settlers and Low-Impact dwellers living, or passing through, Somerset. We are also carrying out a film project to run hand-in-hand with the survey. Both projects are aimed at getting the voices of Travellers heard; their experiences, their needs and their dreams. We aim to publish a booklet, as a result of the survey, and to take the film to schools, colleges, statutory agencies and gatherings, with the purpose of informing, raising awareness, challenging discrimination and, hopefully, to inspire people. If you would like a

copy of the survey and/or to be filmed, at your home, talking about your experiences as a Traveller, then please contact either Simon, Sioux or Nikki on 01458 833797.

Free College Taster Day
10th March 10-4pm,
Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA). A taster day to experience college courses that are available for Gypsy and Travellers, including floristry, health skills, brick laying and more.

Please contact the FFT office for more details.

Telephone Helpline for Travellers

0845 120 2980

This advice line is open between
10.00am - 1.00pm and
2.00pm - 5.00pm,
Monday to Friday.

Travellers can speak directly to experienced advisers on questions of eviction, planning matters, issues involving official caravan sites and other matters.

It is run by the Travellers Advice Team at the Community Law Partnership.
The service is funded by the Legal Services Commission.

Friends, Families and Travellers

Community Base
113 Queens Rd.
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 3XG

PHONE:
01273 234 777

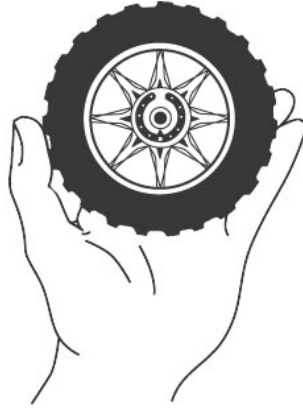
FAX:
01273 234 778

E-MAIL:
info@gypsy-
traveller.org

We're on the Web!

See us at:

**www.Gypsy-
Traveller.org**



Friends, Families & Travellers was

established in response to the passage through Parliament of the 1994 Criminal Justice & Public Order Act. It has since grown into a nationally recognised voluntary organisation which serves the whole spectrum of the Traveller community, both traditional and new, settled or on the road.

The majority of work promoted by FFT is

carried out by an Advice and Information Unit based in Brighton and covers evictions, harassment, planning, employment, benefits, education, health, civil rights, discrimination and legal representation. The Unit is also active in research, monitoring, mediation and policy development at local and national levels.

In 1999, FFT was one of five organisations short listed for the Human Rights Award, part of the UN International Day of Human Rights.

FFT became a company limited by guarantee (non-profit voluntary organisation) no. 3597515 and a registered charity in 2005, no. 111 2326.

FFT is run by a Trustee Board made up of Trustees elected by the membership.

If you believe that all members of society should have the right to travel and to stop without constant fear of persecution because of their lifestyle: JOIN FRIENDS, FAMILIES AND TRAVELLERS NOW!

I would like to join Friends, Families and Travellers. I understand that this will enable me to vote at the Annual General Meeting, attend Management Committee Meetings and receive copies of the newsletter.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

Waged - £10.00 Unwaged - £5.00 Organisation - £25.00

I do not wish to join FFT, but please accept a donation towards the work you carry out
Please state if you wish to remain anonymous.

I do not wish to join FFT, but would like to receive newsletters (subscription costs as above)

Please make cheques payable to FFT and return to: FFT, Community Base, 113 Queens Rd., Brighton BN1 3XG.
All membership information held by FFT is confidential and will not be made available to others without your consent.