



Friends, Families and Travellers

March - May
2009

This racism must stop!

On 17 November 2008 the Daily Express carried a front page article under banner headlines ' Families must sell land for Gypsy Campsites' accompanied by an editorial in the inside pages. We consider that the article itself was inaccurate and misleading, implying that local Councils would be compulsorily acquiring land in order to provide Gypsy and Traveller sites, and the accompanying editorial seemed to us to be blatantly racist in tone. It characterised Gypsies as tax dodgers and criminals and, in our opinion, might well be considered as amounting to incitement to racial hatred. We reported the matter to Sussex Police (as we are based in Sussex) that same day and were told that it was a matter for City of London Police, the area where the Daily Express is based. When we first tried to report the matter to the City of London Police we were referred to the Metropolitan Police, and when we contacted the Metropolitan Police they referred us back to the City of London Police. Are you following the story so far?

After several weeks had

passed with no further contact we telephoned the City of London Police again and were told that the papers had been sent back to Sussex Police and that we should contact them. Sussex Police told us that the City of London Police had notified them that the matter had been referred to the Press Complaints Commission. We challenged this since it didn't seem quite right that the responsibility for investigating an alleged crime should be referred to an unaccountable third party, and we were told that the matter would now be dealt with by the Public Protection Unit of the City of London Police. (This is beginning to sound like something from that old Esther Rantzen TV programme 'That's Life' for those old enough to remember).

The City of London Police then told us that they had referred the case to the Crown Prosecution Service for advice as to whether there was sufficient substance for a prosecution. We told the police that we thought this action to be premature

because the police investigation had still not been properly completed. For one thing we had in our possession, evidence that the Gypsy community feels 'vulnerable and threatened' as a result of the newspaper articles. We have now forwarded these documents to the police but we have yet (as at the beginning of March – some 15 weeks after the article appeared) to hear what they are doing about our complaint.

Meanwhile other newspapers, and several local authorities, now appear to be considering it as open house for discrimination against Gypsies and Travellers. Some Councils are now being openly defiant against the requirement to provide Gypsy and Traveller sites in their area, and some populist newspapers are quick to endorse and champion this negative approach.

We cannot believe that such venom would be levelled against any other minority ethnic group

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Influencing National Health Policy

We are currently working quite closely with the Department of Health (DoH), trying to develop work which will support Government led initiatives by joining it up to local and regional projects. We are concerned that changes and directives from the DoH will not be sufficient to improve health outcomes without a strong community development thrust from the bottom.

Currently the DoH have commissioned a Primary Care Service Framework for

Gypsies and Travellers which will be a set of guidelines for Primary Care Trusts to work with Gypsies and Travellers. This has in part been influenced by a legal responsibility to consult with communities regarding the commissioning processes (Section 242 of the NHS 2006 Act) Part of our current drive at the health project, will be to work with Gypsies and Travellers to support them to be involved in the consultation process. Given that

commissioning is increasingly being done at a local level, it is essential that Gypsies and Travellers are part of this process.

The DoH are currently working with a mortality statistic which estimates that Gypsies and Travellers have a life expectancy of 25 years below the national average. This is worse than we originally believed and is really quite shocking.

Health and Wellbeing Project

For more information about national health policy initiatives:

heal.fft@gypsy-traveller.org

Mental Health and Wellbeing

I am the new Community Development Worker for Mental Health and Wellbeing while Jazka Atterbury is on maternity leave.

(Jazka has beautiful baby twins boy and girl – congratulations!)

Since coming into post in October, I have met with many of the Community Mental Health teams in West Sussex, along with the Social Inclusion Director for the Primary Care Trust, Andy Porter.

Following from these we will be delivering cultural

awareness training for the teams and doing the same with the Child and Adolescent teams.

I am also helping put together a Community Development Worker event on January 29th at the Civic Centre in Crawley, to mark the work that is being done around mental health with the BME communities in the South East. FFT will be holding a stall there and some of our staff and volunteers will be speaking at the event.

I am also developing a Mental Health and Wellbeing practitioners guide for working with Gypsies and Travellers, which will be free to download from our website shortly, and some information cards for members of the Community on mental and emotional health, such as the link between Food and Mood, and how to use medication safely and effectively.

Lisa Bruton

For more information about mental health and wellbeing phone:

Lisa 07919 597 798

*or email:
lisa@gypsy-traveller.org*

This Racism must stop!

cont. from front page

without a huge public outcry. And let's look again at the facts. There are some 25,000 travelling people in this country who have nowhere to stop 'legally' because there is a national shortfall of around 4,500 pitches. The Government has told us that we need 3 million new

bricks and mortar homes over the next decade - so if we were to provide just one new Gypsy/Traveller pitch for every 650 – 750 new bricks and mortar homes the shortfall would be met.

So what is the difficulty? Gypsies have been part of

our community for over 500 years so isn't it time they were accepted as part of our community, rather than being treated as outcasts? The Government, the police, local authorities and the media must call a halt to the hysteria and racism and show some real maturity and leadership.



Policy and Training update

Scottish Gypsy Travellers-finally recognised as an ethnic minority.

Despite Romany Gypsies in England being recognised as an ethnic minority since 1989 and Irish Travellers in England, recognised since 2000, Scottish Gypsy Travellers have until late 2008 not been recognised as an ethnic minority in Scotland. After years of campaigning by Scottish Gypsy Travellers and their organisations an Employment Tribunal case was taken last year, and on 20 October 2008 Judge Hosie delivered a ruling in case number S/132721/07 (MacLennan-v-Gypsy Traveller Education and Information Project) stating that the wealth of evidence suggesting that Scottish Gypsy Travellers meet the necessary conditions to constitute an ethnic

minority group was simply too great to ignore. The judge stated in summing up "Having satisfied ourselves, therefore, that the two main characteristics set out by Lord Fraser in *Mandla-v-Dowell & Lee* (1983) 1 All ER 1062, House of Lords, were satisfied in varying degrees, we arrived at the view that Scottish Gypsy Travellers have 'ethnic origins', with reference in particular, to Section 3 (1) of the 1976 (Race Relations) Act and that they, therefore, enjoy the protection of the Act". This now means that Scottish Gypsy Travellers can challenge racism and discrimination they may face in a court of law.

Editors code of practice

We, along with Joe Jones of Canterbury Gypsy Support, have met with the Society of Editors to discuss newspapers' reporting of Gypsy and Traveller issues. We met with the Secretary who is the author of the Editors' Code of Practice and discussed the balance between free speech, and the negative reporting of Traveller issues. The Secretary agreed to reflect on these issues, and to give a presentation to the Committee.

Empty Plots

We have called upon the Gypsy and Traveller Unit at Communities and Local Government (CLG) to carry out an

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For information on our policy work email:

fft@gypsy-traveller.org

For information on training email:

sarah@gypsy-traveller.org

Domestic Violence

We shall be running a training seminar on domestic violence and the Travelling community in London in April. The date is yet to be set, but please keep an eye on our website as we will post it there very soon

Policy Update cont.

audit of empty plots on local authority Gypsy/Traveller caravan sites in England, as we are aware of many empty plots that are unusable and which local authorities will neither

refurbish nor let. These empty plots are empty homes and we believe they should be brought back into circulation as a matter of utmost priority. We feel an audit would highlight the true

extent of the situation. We at FFT alone are aware of 85 empty plots on sites. Unfortunately CLG are reluctant to carry out an audit, however they have stated that they may be able to include

and publish information about empty plots in the bi-annual Gypsy caravan count figures. We therefore hope this information will be made available in the information to be published for the 19 January 2009 count.

News from the Traveller Law Reform Project

The work of TLRP

TLRP is in the process of looking for funds to continue its work, as its current grant money comes to an end in the Spring. The Policy Development Worker, Richard Solly, will be leaving the Project in March. (For many years he has been working to challenge British-based multinational mining companies over their destruction of lands and livelihoods overseas, and this work has expanded so much that he cannot continue to do both jobs.) The work which Richard has been doing to service the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform will continue to be done by existing staff at TLRP member groups FFT and the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain, with voluntary help

from Richard where necessary. Richard will also continue with another network concerned with Gypsies and Travellers – see the item on Church Network for Gypsies and Travellers.

Planning Bill

The Planning Bill was debated in the House of Lords Committee in October. The Government withdrew its worrying proposal to introduce 'Local Member Review Bodies' which would have allowed some types of planning appeal to be dealt with by local councillors rather than the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG). This proposal may well have caused extra problems for Gypsies and Travellers seeking permission to live in a caravan on their own

land. The Government also made assurances, in response to concerns raised by Baroness Whitaker, that where a planning appeal cannot be reasonably argued and understood by all parties through a written process, an oral hearing or an inquiry would continue to be available. CLG publish criteria for deciding what form a planning appeal should take, and the Government acknowledges that in appeals which raise extraordinary issues relating to the status of the appellant or the need for or availability of accommodation and the appellant considers it necessary or intends to be legally represented, an enquiry may be the most appropriate procedure. (These assurances are contained in a letter from Baroness Andrews, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at CLG, to Baroness Whitaker,

dated 16 October 2008.)

New legislation

Among the new Bills announced in the Queen's Speech in November are several which may be of particular interest to Gypsies and Travellers, whether because they look promising or seem to present a threat. Thanks to Andrew Ryder of the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain for this list.

Children, Skills and Learning Bill

Mostly applying to England, it calls for more flexible school inspections and a new pay negotiation body for classroom assistants. Schools will be required to work together to tackle bad behaviour and be given powers to search pupils for alcohol,

drugs and stolen goods. The bill also promises an apprenticeship place for every suitably qualified young person by 2013.

Equality Bill

Applying to England, Scotland and Wales, the bill promises to simplify and harmonise discrimination law.

Health Bill

Mostly applying to England only, this bill offers a new NHS Constitution, setting out the rights and responsibilities of patients and staff. It extends the remit of the Local Government Ombudsman to look at complaints from people who have arranged their own adult social care.

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill

This bill applies mainly to England, with some parts applying to Wales and very little to Scotland and Northern Ireland. It places a duty on councils to 'promote democracy' and monitor local economic conditions; makes it a legal duty for them to respond to petitions; and demands the setting-up of a National Tenant Voice to ensure tenants' views are 'central' to housing decision-making.

Welfare Reform Bill

Aimed at creating

'incentives' for people to return to work and 'consequences' for those who do not, this bill applies to England, Scotland and Wales. It promises more sanctions against people who do not attend job centre interviews and work-focussed interviews for the over-60s. It also requires 'work-related activity' from those receiving Employment and Support Allowance. The bill would abolish Income Support and move all people onto Jobseeker's Allowance, if they are well, or Employment and Support Allowance, if they are sick.

Church Network for Gypsies and Travellers (CNGT)

CNGT is a small inter-Church network of Christian clergy, pastoral workers and others who work with Gypsies and Travellers. It was set up in 2004. The aim is to share information with each other and support each other in trying to ensure that Gypsies and Travellers receive better support from the Churches and that there is better understanding of Gypsies and Travellers among church members. CNGT has held 'roadshows' in Maidstone, Cambridge and Wickford to bring together interested church members with Gypsy and Traveller speakers who can explain more about matters affecting Gypsy and

Traveller people. The hope is that these events can be held around the country to raise awareness, reduce prejudice, and enable church members to feel supported in their work. A roadshow is being planned for Suffolk later this year.

CNGT currently involves clergy and others from the Church of England and the Baptist, Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches, but is open to members of any church who are happy to work with all the others.

You can contact CNGT via Richard Solly on 07929 023214 or at richardsolly@gn.apc.org.

TRLP can be contacted at::

*TRLP,
6 Westgate Street, London
E8 3RN.
Tel: 07956 450916*

*Email
info@travellerslaw.org.uk*

*Website:
www.travellerslaw.org.uk*

Noticeboard

Young Romani Voices Anthology

UH Press at the University of Hertfordshire has a long history of publishing books about Gypsies and Travellers which are informative and supportive of the Gypsy and Traveller community.

We want to publish a collection of new writing by young Gypsies and Travellers (in fact by anyone of full or part-Romani/Gypsy/Traveller heritage under the age of 25), to record their experiences and give voice to their hopes and fears. We would like to hear from Gypsies and Travellers from all over the UK and Ireland ~ with accounts of their everyday lives, extraordinary experiences, their successes, their disappointments -writing which will tell people about their way of life, why it's special and what they would like to change. The writing can be non-fiction, fiction or poetry.

Deadline for submissions is 31st July 2009.

For details of how to send in a piece, and for full terms and conditions, please see our website, www.herts.ac.uk/uhipress

Or contact Jane Housham on tel. 01707284681

Land and Buildings For Sale

Four cottages with full disabled access and facilities, a large 3/4 bedroom executive new bungalow and car park for 20 cars or 5-6 caravans, situated in Staffordshire on a main a road behind secure gates and railing fence. According to planning consultants this would make an ideal site for Travellers - all enquiries to: riche.1@zoom.co.uk

Land For Rent or Sale

Cambridge Area. Fully Licensed. Hard standing with electricity and washroom, shower and toilet and plumbed in for washing machine. For further information please ring Major on 07961 552533.

Caravan Wanted

Got to be big enough for 3 people and between £150 and £250. Please contact:

minniegirl.parker3@googlemail.com

Give your views on how security of tenure should be implemented

The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 will give residents on local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites the same

rights and responsibilities as residents living in similar accommodation, such as private Gypsy and Traveller sites and park home sites, including improved 'security of tenure'.

The Communities and Local Government Department are asking for your views, by 19th December, on how this should be put into practice. You can download the consultation paper for free from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/implementingmobilehomesact> - this also gives details on where to send your comments.

You can order free hard copies of the consultation paper by phoning: 08701 226 236 or emailing: communities@capita.co.uk quoting the title, product code 08GTU05521 and ISBN: 9781409804703 with your address and telephone number.

For audio copies please phone as above, or email alternativeformats@communities.gsi.gov.uk, quoting the same details.



Sponsorship Please!

FFT member Twiggy will be trekking in Peru in November in aid of the Teenage Cancer Trust. Twiggy is looking for sponsorship for this worthwhile cause. For further information, please contact Twiggy at

kris_ingarfield@hotmail.co.uk

Save “The Romany Experience”

This is an Urgent appeal to save “The Romany Experience”, a remarkable exhibition of English Romany wagons and life in the New Forest.

This unique collection, put together by English Gypsy wagon restorer Len Smith, currently exhibited by Paulton Park in the New Forest, Hampshire is to be sold at auction on March 18th at the Thimbleby and Shorland auctioneers in Reading.

Greg Yates at Clearwater Gypsies said “We believe that this will mean the

break up and dispersal of the collection, never to be seen again in one place. This would be a cultural tragedy.”

While the park’s owners have said they would consider any serious approach to buy the whole collection time is fast running out.

Ideally Greg would like to find a museum, art gallery or some sympathetic group or collector that would like to own and exhibit this collection.

Alternatively they are

considering the setting up of a charitable foundation to purchase and exhibit this collection of our cultural heritage.

To do this, money would have to be raised to make the purchase. Greg would like to hear from any individual, group, museum or company that would consider pledging fund toward the purchase of this collection, valued at around £300,000. While we realise this is no trivial sum especially in the current financial climate we note that £50 million can be raise in only 5

months for a single artwork when public interest is stimulated, nothing like that amount is required to save this collection.

If you can help or want register a pledge towards the purchase and preservation of this collection please contact Greg at the Clearwater Gypsies through their website at www.clearwaterypsies.com

Cold Calling

At a Communities and Local Government Gypsy and Traveller Stakeholder meeting in Birmingham on 25 March 2008, a representative from FFT attended to discuss the issue of cold calling/doorstep knocking.

We were told that cold calling is not illegal, and the government has no plans to make it so.

If you are cold calling you are legally obliged to provide a seven day cooling off, or cancellation, period. However, if the customer

wants the work done quicker than after seven days, he/she should sign a notice waiving their right to the cooling off period and guaranteeing to pay the agreed amount. Any service that you are providing at a cost of over £35 requires that the trader gives the customer a written notice of their cancellation rights on making the contract.

From Oct 08 these same rules will apply to solicited visits, ie. where the customer has contacted you, as to cold calling, ie when they have not.

No Cold Calling Zones

The Office of Fair Trading has written to local authorities saying that if they set up no cold calling areas they must have good justification in doing this. To designate a whole city, for example, as a no cold calling zone would be unreasonable and hard to justify. To designate a street or area as a no cold calling zone a local authority must have an evidence base of types

of crime to justify doing this, ie the street might be sheltered housing for elderly people who have been affected. An area should be a small one only. The question arises how are no cold calling zones going to be enforced, as cold calling is not illegal?

Friends, Families and Travellers

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Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 3XG

PHONE:
01273 234 777

FAX:
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E-MAIL:
info@gypsy-traveller.org

Charity no. 111 2326
Company 3597515

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.Gypsy-Traveller.org

for information, useful
contacts and more.



Friends, Families & Travellers is a nationally recognised voluntary organisation which serves the whole spectrum of the Traveller community, both traditional and new, settled or on the road.

FFT runs a national helpline covering evictions, harassment, planning, employment, benefits, education, health, civil rights, discrimination and legal representation. FFT is also active in community support, research, monitoring, mediation and policy development at local and national levels.

National Contacts

For more contacts please phone or visit www.gypsy-traveller.org/contacts.htm

Traveller Advice Team (TAT)

0845 120 2980
07768 316755 24hr

Community Legal Advice

0845 345 4 345

Family Rights Group

0800 731 1696

Shelter (homeless)

0808 800 4444

Squatters Advisory Service

020 7359 8814

The Traveller Law Reform Project

www.travellerslaw.org.uk

Travellers Aid Trust

www.travellersaidtrust.org

The Gypsy Council

01708 868986

National Association of Gypsy Women

01325 240033

National Romany Rights

Tel. 01202 893228

Pavee Point

00 353 1 878 0255

Children's Society, South-West

01761 411771

Groundswell

Tel: 020 7737 5500
info@groundswell.org.uk

National Association of Boat Owners

01749 677195

Equality & Human Rights Commission

020 9390000

Planning Aid

01963 230045

Education Otherwise -

enquiries@educationotherwise.org

The Travellers' School Charity

Tel 07717 055378

Roma Support Group

020 7511 5721

If you believe that everyone 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 / or Donation

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.*