Since the General Election in May brought the ConDem coalition to power the political landscape has already radically shifted for Gypsies and Travellers. Chris Whitwell, Director of FFT, looks at post-election changes to Government policy and initiatives, and the effect of potential future legislation.

Now that the dust has settled after the General Election we are beginning to see something of the direction in which the new Coalition Government is taking us – and some of the signs are extremely worrying for those concerned with bringing about an equal, fair and just society. For Gypsies and Travellers one of the most immediate concerns has been the scrapping of the £30 million grant earmarked for local authorities to enable them to bring forward new sites and refurbish existing ones. This, coupled with moves to criminalise trespass and to curb the submission of retrospective planning applications could have a profound impact on the 25,000 or members of the travelling communities who still have no authorised site on which to place their home but who face a continual process of eviction after eviction.

There are other dark clouds on the horizon and, just perhaps, one small ray of sunshine to give some hope for the future.

First, the clouds though. The whole ‘localism’ agenda being pedalled by the Coalition may well serve to prevent the implementation of developments that, although unpopular locally, may be strategically necessary in the wider interests of society. In the past regional planning bodies have provided something of a strategic overview to ensure that each local area is meeting its responsibilities in terms of land allocations. This will no longer be the case and it is difficult to see how in future the system will deliver those unpopular but necessary land use decisions.

These fundamental issues of the need for a strategic overview are also being played out in the fields of healthcare and education. The ideology of the ‘Big Society’ may well have benefits for the better off majority but it could well leave those who have no effective voice - the poor, the marginalised and the ‘chronically excluded’ – even further behind, with fewer choices and poorer life outcomes.

And the small ray of sunshine? The move away from local authority Gypsy site provision might just spark off an interest in other, and better, ways of developing and providing sites to meet the current shortfall. There is growing interest in the idea of Community Land Trusts where land is held by the Gypsy/Traveller group themselves on a cooperative basis. There is also the intriguing possibility of self build options with part of the development costs of land being met by the ‘sweat equity’ of the Travellers themselves. Such options could deliver smaller, privately owned sites, more suited to the needs of Gypsies and Travellers than large Council run sites.

And in these difficult times, let’s face it, we have to hang onto something to be optimistic about!
Health and Wellbeing

Project Contacts

For more information about national health policy initiatives:

Zoe Matthews
heal.fft@gypsy-traveller.org

Gemma Challenger
gemma@gypsy-traveller.org

I thought since we now have a change of Government and are faced with the prospect of ongoing and harsh budget cuts, that it is important to think about how this might impact on the health inequalities faced by many Gypsies and Travellers. Something that is much talked about at FFT is the concept of ‘Chronic Exclusion’, by this we mean that there are certain groups of people who for a whole multitude of reasons do not enjoy the same rights and choices as the majority of us.

The Labour Government did much to improve the health of the nation, which is something that we have all benefited from on the whole. However, what it has failed to do is to redress the growing divide between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’. In other words the gap is getting bigger. This theme was reaffirmed by the recent findings of the newly released National Audit Office report on health inequalities (Tackling Inequalities in Life Expectancy in Areas with the Worst Health and Deprivation, 2 July 2010). It has come as no surprise to third sector organisations working in the inequalities field. It is not only in health outcomes that the inequalities gap continues to widen but in various other areas, all of which contribute of course to our health and wellbeing.

We believe that the attempts of successive Governments to implement initiatives aimed at achieving greater equality, widening choice and participation, and empowering communities have tended to work reasonably well for the majority but have left certain groups totally untouched. It is essential that when we talk about better community engagement, that we recognise that this should be inclusive of all communities, not just those who are in the fortunate position of being organised enough, wealthy enough and well enough to engage with NHS mechanisms. As a result these people – the ‘Chronically Excluded’ - can become even more marginalised and excluded, even more disempowered with less personal choice and poorer life outcomes.

However, many of these chronically excluded people are already linked into specialist services who outreach and support their often multiple and complex needs. If the Government is serious about a fully inclusive health service, we need to support these people to have a voice and become involved.

The Health Team continue to outreach and support many Gypsies and Travellers across Sussex, an essential part of our work! However, we also need to ensure that we do not let the good work that has been achieved by FFT, other Traveller organisations and by the many Gypsy and Traveller activists, lose momentum. We are always keen to hear from any Gypsies and Travellers who would like to become involved in their Local Involvement Networks (LINKS). Please contact FFT if you are interested.

Zoe Matthews

An Awards for All grant of £9,936 is enabling us to have a fun and full packed holiday activity programme until April 2011. The funding is covering a series of 6 weekly dress making courses starting in mid October for 12 young people, motor safety and maintenance for 24 young people with off road obstacle courses in partnership with young drive, an animal project looking at the different ways young people can work with animals, swimming lessons, and accredited courses in kayaking, canoeing, archery and team building exercises including raft building, high wire and obstacle courses.

We have also recently received some funding from Mid Sussex Well Being grant to run a pilot football team with the Brighton & Hove Albion’s. This is intended to start at the beginning of September until the October half term on a weekly basis.

For more information about Young People’s Projects:

clare@gypsy-traveller.org
Case Work Update

Abbie Kirkby reports the on the case work she and Michelle Buck have been handling at FFT in recent months.

As far as the national casework goes, we have opened 39 new cases since April. 16 of these cases are with Romany Gypsies, 19 have been with Irish Travellers and 4 with New Travellers.

A lot of these cases are in the South East (21), and with 6 cases in the Midlands, 4 in the South West as well as cases in the East of England and the North East and North West. Some of the issues that we have been dealing with are problems with the Police, problems on sites or accessing them, planning issues, housing issues, accessing grants and education.

In addition to the recently opened cases we are also working on cases from before April – some cases are quite complex and involve a lot of work over a long period. We are always happy to deal with any queries you have or to help you if you need any assistance with a particular problem you may be facing – please contact us on our national advice line 01273 234777.

Health Community Development Worker’s Update

Jazka and Lisa report on their work in the community and give an update on the training they have delivered and what is in the pipeline

Through our work in the Health Promotion Team at FFT over the past 2 years it has become clear that Gypsies and Travellers have real problems accessing healthcare. In particular people living by the roadside and with no proof of address or ID find it very hard to register with GP Surgeries, get second appointments or be referred to other health care services like Occupational Therapists and Community Support Workers. Many people we support have told us stories of being refused short-term GP registration, of not being given proper support to ask for referrals and not understanding information about medications and treatments. Travellers have also experienced prejudice and discrimination from NHS staff and there seems to be a general misunderstanding of Gypsy Traveller culture amongst health workers.

We have carried out lots of awareness training with NHS healthcare teams over the past 2 years and are now focusing our effort on GP Surgeries. Over the next 3 months we will be putting together a research and recommendations report on GP healthcare in Sussex. The report will give good and bad examples of access to GP surgeries with anonymous case studies of people’s experiences. The report will also make recommendations to Primary Care Trusts and GP Surgeries on how to ensure Gypsies and Travellers have equal access to healthcare and also include Best Practise examples of GP Surgeries and outreach services that work well across Sussex. If you have had a good or bad experience with your GP Surgery including reception staff, nurses and information about your surgery or have been unable to register with your local GP Surgery then get in touch with Jazka Atterbury at FFT in Brighton.

We are also developing a series of resources for Travellers on Wellbeing and emotional health topics – such as bad nerves, baby blues, eating problems etc. We will be producing leaflets, a CD and also a book, all on Wellbeing. We are doing this in partnership with community members and Wellbeing practitioners.

For more information about the national helpline: www.gypsy-traveller.org abbie@gypsy-traveller.org michelle@gypsy-traveller.org Tel: 01273 234777 Helpline open: Weekdays 9-5pm (except Wednesdays)

We are also continuing our work in our 2 local prisons. With the FFT Reaching Communities team, we are co-organising, with Travellers from within the prison, an event for Gypsy and Traveller History month in HMP Ford. This is to raise awareness of Gypsy Traveller culture within the prison and also provide a day of celebration for Traveller inmates. In HMP Lewes, we will be taking part in a research survey on the BME inmates within the prison and use this information to improve their Wellbeing services.

For more information about Health Development work:

Lisa Bruton lisa@gypsy-traveller.org Jazka Atterbury jazka@gypsy-traveller.org
Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month 2010- What a Month!

Gypsy Roma Traveller History 2010 (GRTHM) was the best ever! With events celebrating Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history and culture taking place throughout the country in the month of June.

The fair was opened by Patrick McCarthy an Irish Traveller facing eviction from Smithy Fen (Cambridge)....and the Chairman of South Cambridge District Council and the local district councilor and it was blessed by the Gypsy church by Billy West, and this was followed by a song from singing Sarah!

Everyone loved the event as it was peaceful...self policed...and run by an Irish Traveller!

My Big Fat Gypsy Fair will take place again in October in Milton Country Park in Cambridge, over the weekend of 23 and 24 October, so see you there!

To see a short film of the Fair see the notice board of the FFT website www.gypsy-traveller.org.

As the regional co-ordinator for the East of England for the last 3 years for Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month this year I decided to move away from putting photos up in Council offices and do something bigger, better.

The result was a very special 1960's type of a Gypsy Camp. 3, 500 people over 2 days...fields of vintage trailers, horses, a market...photo exhibition by Joseph Jones, the AGM of the Gypsy Council on the Saturday...Gypsy Council stall of books (Thomas Acton)...Jacqueline Bolton (Ormiston) did flower workshops for children...Eastern final of Travellers got Talent....
A tribute to Michael Gavin - activist, father and friend

I would like to pay tribute to Michael Gavin, a local Irish Traveller Activist who recently died after a long and brave battle against cancer, aged just 48 yrs old. I was lucky enough to know Michael for ten years, having met him when our daughters met at Primary school. Michael was a good friend and mentor to me. He educated me about the history and present day situation of Irish Travellers and Romany Gypsies, and opened my eyes to a whole new world that I had previously been largely unaware of. I worked with Michael for over two years helping out with the grass roots group he had founded called ‘Gypsies and Irish Travellers’ and we used to travel to the Gypsy Traveller Advisory Group together where I had the unique opportunity to see him in action raising the Sussex Police’s awareness about Gypsy and Traveller issues.

Geoff Foster Equality & Diversity Liaison Officer at Sussex Police said of Michael: “He challenged us and educated us but at all times he did it in a constructive, supportive and professional manner.”

I witnessed Michael having to be surprisingly insistent that equality is not something you have to earn, or that only some members of society can expect, and that Gypsies and Travellers should also be afforded equal rights because they too are members of the diverse communities we live in.

Michael’s widow Michelle continues to support and work with all Gypsies and Travellers in her capacity as full-time Caseworker at Friends, Families and Travellers.

Michael, you were a dear friend, God Bless You and may you rest in peace.

Liz MacPherson

Sussex Gypsy Traveller Advisory Group (GTAG) celebrates GRTHM

GTAG is an independent police advisory group in Sussex whose objective is to reduce tensions between the police and Gypsies and Travellers. They celebrated GRTHM by putting on a day of celebration and music at Brighthelm Community Centre on June 12th.

Michael Gavin was a founding member of GTAG whose presence was sadly missed by all

Photo by Geoff Foster – Equality & Diversity Liaison Officer – Sussex Police
Clearwater Gypsies celebrate GRTHM in Arundel

Greg Yates and family celebrated GRTHM with a wonderful warm welcome to their exhibition of Romany crafts and memorabilia at Arundel in Sussex.

Greg is also a Trustee of FFT.

Clearwater Gypsies mission:

“To fulfil the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers and to promote conditions for their social inclusion”

www.clearwatergypsies.com
Tel 07770 499589

PHOTOS BY GEMMA CHALLENGER, FFT

All Party Parliamentary Group for Gypsy Roma Travellers

On 7th July 2010 the Inaugural meeting /AGM of the All Party Parliamentary Group, serviced by the Policy Officer for the Traveller Law Reform Project (Lucy Beckett), was held in the Palace of Westminster. The Agenda included the election of Officers and discussion of main issues.

Chair-Andrew George MP
Secretary-Lord Eric Avebury
Vice Chair-Baroness Janet Whitaker
Vice Chair-Caroline Lucas MP
Vice Chair-Lord Tim Boswell

The Group agreed to confirm the Policy Officer – Lucy Beckett-TLRP as the ‘staff’ to act as the Group’s secretariat in a personal and unpaid capacity, to service the Group, be a researcher, and provide briefings for members.

The meeting counts as the first AGM of the new Parliament. The Group elected the name APPG for Gypsy Roma Travellers. Broad themes for future agenda items were agreed.

The APPG GRT is Registered with the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, House of Commons.

The APPG GRT is included on the Approved List

The APPG GRT will be committed to addressing the social inclusion of Gypsy Roma Traveller communities, improving community relations, and tackling accommodation issues. The APPG GRT is also committed to forging cross Party consensus so that all parliamentarians can work together to achieve the aims of the Group.

Meetings will be held on confirmed dates.
Noticeboard

Free Event Giving Legal and Planning Advice For Gypsies and Travellers

Thursday 16th September
3pm to 7pm
Little Chalfont Village Hall, Cokes Lane, Little Chalfont HP8 4UD

Talks by Barristers from Garden Court Chambers Advice surgery with professional independent planner

Activities for children & Refreshments provided

Book a place, if possible, or for information and directions ring Julia on 01865 798673

Land for Sale

8.5 acre derelict industrial site in countryside close to Bristol. Water and electricity on site. Hilltop position, lovely views. 12,000 sq feet derelict buildings, some roads, mainly rough pasture. Entire site has planning certificate for industrial use. 2 miles to village, schools, shops, medical centre. Offers please. Email michaelineng@aol.com for details.

“No Gypsies Served”

Miriam Wakerly has recently published her second novel, No Gypsies Served.

The novel is a sequel/prequel to Gypsies Stop There. Both have been well received by reviewers, and below you can see some of the reviews and find out where you can purchase the book

"Wakerly's books do a wonderful job in helping to promote understanding where there is ignorance and tolerance where there is bigotry. I recommend them heartily." Sue Cook, BA, DLitt, Broadcaster and Writer

“A vivid and imaginative interrogation of human relationships in the context of the relations between Travellers and English country people, and a worthy sequel to Gypsies Stop Here.” Thomas Acton, MA, DPhil (Oxon), FRSA, OBE Professor of Romani Studies, University of Greenwich

You can order the book from Waterstone's or other bookshops, www.amazon.co.uk or www.strongmanpublishing.com or order it from your local library. http://miriamwakerly.blogspot.com

“The Right to Roam” by Dualta Roughneen

“The Right to Roam - Travellers in the Modern Nation State” examines the right of nomadic groups to maintain a way of life that is contrary to the drive toward sedentarisation and modernisation. For Travellers in Ireland, restrictions on the freedom to maintain a travelling lifestyle have consequences for members of the travelling community. "The Right to Roam - Travellers in the Nation State" explores the impact of recent legislation such as the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 2002 on Travellers in modern Ireland and whether progress driven by sedentary society should be required to include the needs of nomadic groups.


The course content includes, planning law, security of tenure on official sites, evictions from unauthorised encampments and homelessness law relating to Gypsies and Travellers. For info see www.shelter.org.uk/training

Stand Up and Be Counted, Make Your Voice Heard!

The next census, taking place in March 2011, will be of great historical importance for Traveller communities in England and Wales. For the first time ever, the census questionnaire will allow people to tick their ethnic identity as a Gypsy or Irish Traveller.

The census collects information about the whole population every ten years to show what support and services different communities need. The results are used, for example, to help plan school places, health facilities, public transport and emergency services. It's so important that Gypsies and Irish Travellers fill it in next March and tick the box to mark their identity so that the community and its needs will be recognised.

It's a big chance for Gypsies and Irish Travellers to stand up and be counted.

For more information, look at this article on the Gypsy History Month web site: www.grthm.co.uk/feature-census.php

Or go to the census web site at www.census.gov.uk

Tariq Khwaja / Director / TK Associates UK Ltd / tk-associates.com
tariq.khwaja@tk-associates.com
T: 01932 224 212
M: 07833 336 271
F: 01932 220 876
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.