

APPG for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma views on the Home Secretary's written statement on 'Improving the effectiveness of enforcement against unauthorised encampments'

8th February 2019 | All Party Parliamentary Group for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma

The APPG for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma is completely opposed to the proposed set of additional police measures to evict Gypsies and Travellers outlined in the Home Secretary's statement. The introduction of more police powers is wholly disproportionate, particularly in the light of the huge national shortage of pitches. The government has repeatedly ignored evidence that planning policy continues to fail to accommodate homeless Gypsies and Travellers and that without enough authorised sites to stop on it is ridiculous to implement measures which effectively criminalise Gypsies and Travellers by their mere existence.

If, as Sajid Javid states, 'the government is committed to creating a just and fair country where equality of opportunity flourishes and the life chances of all are enhanced' it must acknowledge the nomadic way of life has been part of British society for hundreds of years and that evicting Gypsies and Travellers from one place to the next has a huge impact on these communities' health and welfare.

Police forces have made representations to the government that more police powers are not required to address unauthorised encampments. The [National Police Chiefs' Council and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners submission to the review](#) states

'The obvious answer to unauthorised development and encampments is the provision of pitches, both public and private, including not only permanent pitches but also transit pitches and emergency stopping places. Additionally there is the concept of 'negotiated stopping''

And further to this,

'In summary, we believe that criminalising unauthorised encampments is not acceptable. Complete criminalisation of trespass would likely lead to legal action in terms of incompatibility with regard to the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010, most likely on the grounds of how could such an increase in powers be proportionate and reasonable when there are insufficient pitches and stopping places?'

In the government's response to the consultation, there is reference to the 'Irish Model' which criminalises trespass in Ireland. It is important to note that this legislation is implemented in line with a statutory duty to provide accommodation for Irish Travellers in Ireland and in fact the 'Irish Model' is not proving to be effective and in breach of human rights as outlined in the [Council of Europe Committee on Social Rights report](#) released in December 2018.

Speaking of the Home Secretary's statement, **Kate Green MP, Co-chair of the APPG for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma** said,

"The police and landowners already have a plethora of eviction powers available and to propose more powers is an assault on the rights and way of life of the thousands of families who will be affected by this. The Government should not introduce additional police powers which target vulnerable groups based simply on a false 'perception' that the rule of law does not apply to Gypsies

and Travellers, and with a clear absence of robust policy measures to create appropriate and sufficient accommodation for Gypsy and Traveller communities. The APPG will continue to make these points forcefully to Ministers.”

About the All Party Parliamentary Group for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma

The APPG for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma provides a forum for parliamentarians concerned about issues facing Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities and seeks to address these issues and challenge inequalities. [Find out more](#).

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Relevant Resources

MHCLG and Home Office announcement, ‘Government announces plans to tackle illegal traveller sites’. [View here](#).

Government response to the consultation on powers for dealing with unauthorised development and encampments. [View here](#).

Response of the Equality and Human Rights Commission to the Consultation: “Powers for dealing with unauthorised development and encampments”. [View here](#).

Travellers Times, “Government says “crack down” on unauthorised Traveller camps imminent”. [View here](#).

Friends Families and Travellers, “Get tough on site provision, not on people with no place to go”. [View here](#).