



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Gypsies and Travellers

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Welsh Assembly Government



Background



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- Policy developed independently across different service areas
- Inherited policies from former Welsh Office
- Gypsy Traveller policy had not evolved
- EOC report “Review of Service Provision for Gypsies and Travellers” recommended audit of existing sites
- 2004 Welsh Assembly Government commissioned Pat Niner to establish the accommodation needs of Gypsies Travellers in Wales



Accommodation Needs of Gypsy Travellers – Niner Findings

- 30 sites in Wales, providing 440 pitches
- 19 sites owned by Local Authorities providing just under 380 pitches.
- Most LA sites are located within the north & south Wales costal strips or in south Wales valleys
- £3 million expenditure over 5 years

Accommodation Needs of Gypsy Travellers – Niner Findings



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- Existing network of LA sites generally not fit for purpose
- Welsh sites located near industrial or commercial land and experience problems in their surrounding areas
- Many LA sites in Wales are so intensively occupied that they compromise fire safety standards and generate other health and safety concerns

Accommodation Needs of Gypsy Travellers – Niner Findings



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- No overall strategy for Gypsy Travellers in Wales
- Policies developed in isolation
- Gypsy Traveller views are not well represented in the policy making process
- Specific needs of Gypsy Travellers not always considered

Accommodation Needs of Gypsy Travellers – Niner Findings



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- **No Welsh guidance on Gypsy Traveller Site Design or Site Management**
- **Site residents are licensees and as such they have significantly fewer rights than social housing tenants**

Policy Framework



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- Gypsy Traveller team– act as an all Wales coordinator to champion the views of Gypsies and Travellers
- £1 million refurbishment grant for existing sites – exceeds Niner’s recommendations
- 2007-08, an additional £700,000 was secured
- A total of £1.7 million awarded for the refurbishment of 9 sites across Wales

Policy Framework



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- Draft Site Design Guidance
- Draft Site Management Guidance
- Engaged with Local Authorities, site managers and site residents
- Partnership working, build links within the community
- Realistic documents
- Drafts to be issued for consultation

Policy Framework



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Housing and Regeneration Bill

- Ensure Welsh provisions in the Housing and Regeneration Bill
- Not full security of tenure
- Align the rights and responsibilities of Gypsy Travellers with those on park home site
- Mobile Homes Act 1983 (ECHR Ruling)

Policy Framework



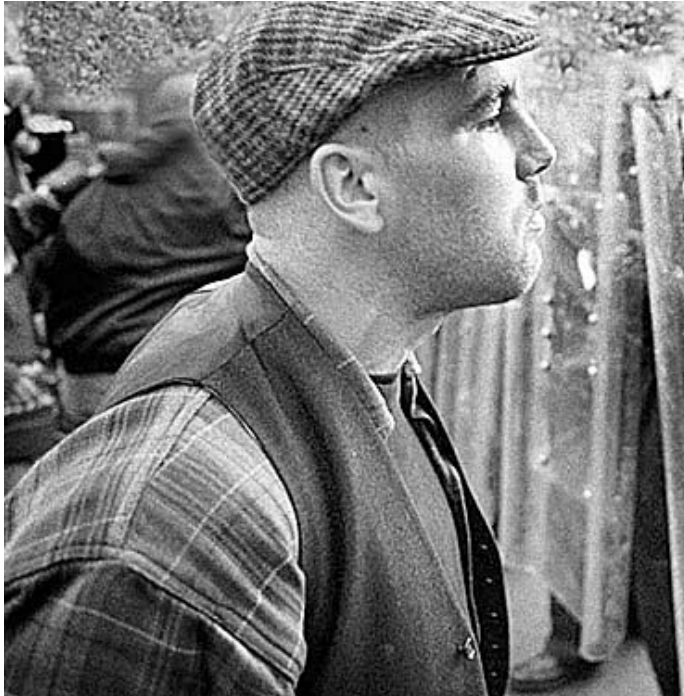
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- Focussed on accommodation – knock on effect for accessing services
- All Wales Gypsy Traveller Strategy
- Accommodation
- Planning
- Health
- Education

Unauthorised Encampments & Enforcement



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- Emotive issue
- Effective enforcement only possible when there is appropriate provision of authorised sites
- Each Local Authority should have a strategy for dealing with unauthorised encampments
- WAG guidance on managing unauthorised camping

Reasons for Unauthorised Encampments



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- Waiting for a pitch and have nowhere else to go
- Visiting local families for short stay or holiday
- New Traveller desire to live low impact, environmentally friendly lifestyle
- Travelling for economic/employment reasons
- No authorised site – no where to move on

Local Solutions for Local Needs



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Delivering more sites whether public or private is one for local authorities to address, as they have to find local solutions for local needs, albeit in a regional context

Planning For Gypsy Traveller Caravan Sites



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- **Section 225 & 226 of the Housing Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies & Travellers and to plan for these in LDP**
- **Came into force 2007**



Planning for Gypsy Traveller Caravan sites



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Considerations for identifying new site locations

Planning Circular 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites'

- Locations in or near existing settlements with access to local services
- Use registers of unused and under-used land owned by public bodies, vacant or under-used land – use of brown field sites can be enhancing

Planning for Gypsy & Traveller Caravan Sites



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Local authorities should consider when
assessing required level of provision:

- Continuous assessment of unauthorised encampments
- Numbers and outcomes of planning applications and appeals
- Levels of occupancy, plot turnover and waiting lists for public sites.

Planning for Gypsy & Traveller Caravan Sites



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- Status of existing authorised private sites
- Results of the bi annual caravan count

LPA's will have to demonstrate that they have considered this information when determining a planning application. Where permission is refused they will be expected to provide such information as part of any appeal documentation.

EOC comments Feb 2007



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“one of my concerns has long been that some authorities are good at providing, but they bear the brunt of the pressure of providing sites and dealing with their maintenance and so on. It would be fairer on both sides if the location of these sites were shared out throughout Wales. It would also suit the Gypsy/Traveller community, because it needs to travel around all of Wales and does not just go to wherever there happens to be a site”. Lorraine Barrett EOC 28 Feb 07

The Way Forward



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- It is more cost effective to provide a site than to enforce against unauthorised encampments in an area with no permanent site provision and where there is a high number of unauthorised encampments.
- Case Study – Bristol City Council saw their enforcement costs drop from £200,000 a year to £5000 when they built a new site.

££££.....Spend to Save!

New Grant - The Way Forward



- **New Grant for New Sites!**
 - **£1.5 million for 2008- 09**
- **Local Authorities to build new sites**
- **Enables Local Authorities to meet their duty**



New Grant – The Way Forward

- **75% Funding – LA will need to bid**
- **Needs based**
- **Evidence of Accommodation
Needs Assessment**
- **Planning Circular – Sites**
- **Currently developing paper work**

The Way Forward



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- Use the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to promote equality of opportunity for Gypsy Travellers:
 - Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
 - Promote equality of opportunity; and
 - Promote good race relations between people of different racial groups.
- No explicit duty – discretionary power make provision for sites under Caravan Sites Control and Developments Act 1960 (s24)
- Section 225 and 226 of Housing Act 2004

Conclusions



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1. It is imperative to build understanding of the genuine accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers among the settled community.
 - Dispel the myths
 - Councillors as community leaders have a very important role to play in this.
 - Media

Conclusions



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2. Ensure effective consultation between Gypsy Travellers, stakeholder organisations and statutory bodies to support the development of interagency cooperation and to facilitate improved communications, including conflict resolution, at national and regional and local level.
3. There is a need for commitment at senior official and political level at local authorities.

Conclusion



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2007

- Draft Site Design and Site Management Guidance
- Refurbishment Grant
- Sections 225 and 226 of Housing Act 2004
- Planning Circular

Conclusion



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2008

- New Grant
- Refurbishment Grant – New Round
- Launch Guidance
- All Wales Gypsy Traveller Strategy
- Consultation and Partnership Working
- Keep Gypsy Traveller Issues on the Agenda