



Irish Traveller Movement in Britain Newsletter Issue 4 2008

Education - New Opportunities and Challenges

The Education and Skills Bill is passing through parliament. The Bill introduces a requirement for young people to remain in education or training until they are 18, beyond the current leaving age of 16, and creates a duty on young people to participate and on parents to assist their children to participate.

This new law was discussed by the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain advisory committee. It was felt that it could create some difficulties for Travellers who may prefer to work and learn within their own families or for those Travellers who had dropped out of school at an early age and who might find it hard to return to formal education. However, it was also argued that there could be some positive opportunities that could help young Travellers find work and develop new skills.

Find out More - The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (ITMB) has produced a policy paper based on discussions with the ITMB Advisory Group, officials in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and other experts.

The paper provides:

- A statement of principles on education around which the ITMB can campaign.
- A set of policy proposals which the ITMB believe are important to raising the educational inclusion of Travellers.

Visit <http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/policy/policy-submissions>

More Sites for the East of England

The East of England Regional Assembly has agreed to proposals for 1187 pitches for the East of England, during the debate on the proposals on the 25/1/2008 there was some opposition but the proposal was eventually backed by a majority. The Cambridge Evening News quoted an Irish Traveller Movement (ITMB) spokesperson as saying prior to the debate:

"If there is a fair and balanced discussion at the East of England Regional Assembly then hopefully a fair decision will be reached which will set a course for the Traveller sites that are needed. Gypsy and Traveller children also have difficulty accessing education opportunities and other services because of a lack of sites. For the wider community more

sites mean they can be saved the cost and inconvenience of unauthorised encampments and developments”.

There have been warnings though from some councils that they will launch legal challenges to their pitch allocations.

The proposals are now open to public consultation. It is feared that many people from the settled community will demonstrate their opposition. The ITMB urges Travellers and their friends and support groups to input into this consultation and support the need for more sites – use the ITMB draft submission for the East of England consultation to help make your views known.

Visit <http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/policy/policy-submissions>

Dale Farm High Court Case ‘Call for Rethink on Evictions’

From the 11th – 15th February the Dale Farm Traveller site case was heard in the High Court. Many supporters and well wishers attended a rally to support the Travellers.

The Judge Mr Justice Collins expressed concern about forced evictions and called for a rethink on these. The judge is expected to reach a decision after the Easter break.

The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain believes that an eviction at Dale Farm Traveller Site should be avoided. If Travellers are forcibly evicted many families will find themselves on the side of the road. This will impact negatively on their access to services and general well being but also cause inconvenience to the settled community.

It would be more humane and financially prudent to let Travellers remain where they are or to relocate the Travellers to temporary sites until Basildon Council has identified the 81 pitches it has been instructed to find by the East of England Regional Assembly.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) is sponsoring the first ever Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month, an art competition, concerts, exhibitions and a range of other events are planned to take place across the country. The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain is planning a number of activities. Let us know if you have any traditional skills like tin smithing and peg making or stories and pictures about your family’s past, that can feature in our event in June.

Lord Andrew Adonis minister at the DCSF has strongly backed the event and stated:

‘I have endorsed a national Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month in June – the first will be in 2008. This will offer us all the chance to raise awareness and explore the history, culture and language of these communities, which is not usually included in the curriculum for all pupils. We can challenge myths, tackle prejudice and be in a position to offer a balanced debate about the issues. We will all be able to celebrate the richness that Gypsy, Roma and Travellers communities bring to our everyday lives through their many and varied academic and artistic achievements.’

For more information on this event and details of a national poster competition visit:

<http://www.grtleeds.co.uk/GRTHM/meeting.html>

London Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment

The London GTANA has been completed. The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain was a member of the steering group for the London GTANA. We felt it was vital that the GTANA report accurately reflected the accommodation and service needs of Gypsies, Irish Travellers and Roma in London and involved community members in the assessment exercise. The Irish Traveller Movement has done its utmost to achieve these goals.

The ITM has drafted a written response to the GTANA which sets out:

- The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain Position on GTANAs
- Some Important Aspects of the London GTANA
- Recommendations for Revision to the Report
- Where Next? What needs to be done in light of the GTANA

Our written response is available to Travellers and support groups in London.

Please email info@irishtraveller.org.uk

Advice surgery

The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain is developing an advice surgery to help Irish Travellers and their support groups. Staff will be available to give advice on:

- Securing funding for small groups
- Developing organisations.
- Organising local campaigns

Visit the ITMB website for more details or email office@irishtraveller.org.uk

Gypsy and Traveller Law

The second edition of 'Gypsy and Traveller Law' by Chris Johnson and Marc Willers has been published by the Legal Action group. The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain believes the book is an essential tool for anyone working for and with Travellers. To find out how to purchase the book visit: www.lag.org.uk

Visit the ITM website <http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/>
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