



Irish Traveller Movement in Britain Newsletter Issue 5 2008 Gypsy and Traveller History Month Edition

The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (ITMB) will host a special two day symposium; **'Pavee Céilidh'** to celebrate the richness and diversity of Irish Traveller history and culture. Day one will be an indoor fair, accompanied by music song and dance into the evening; Day two will have a policy focus to discuss and debate the historical and continued social exclusion of Travellers, and find out about the current policy issues. The event will take place June 26 & 27 at the Hammersmith Irish Cultural Centre, London. **Entry is FREE.**

Day 1 to be opened by the Irish Ambassador at 12pm

- Launch of ITMB DVD 'Meet your Neighbours: Irish Traveller Role Models Speak Out' – Julie Morgan MP and Helena Kiely
- Around the Campfire – Traveller history and stories
- Perfect Pitch – workshop to design a perfect site
- Indoor fair – stalls and traditional Traveller games
- Irish Traveller Talent Show
- Film screenings
- Music through the day

For more information and an up to date programme visit:

http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/about_us/noticeboard

Day 2 – 27th June – starting at 9.30 am – finishing at 1.15 pm

Conference - 'Into the Future' Where Next for Irish Travellers

Contributors include:

- Dr Kevin McNamara (former MP/Northern Ireland Spokesman)
- Andy Slaughter MP Hammersmith and Fulham
- Helena Kiely – Irish Traveller Youth Worker
- Breda Doran - The Cambridgeshire Race Equality & Diversity Service
- Lord Alf Dubs – All Party Parliamentary Group Traveller Law Reform

Workshops on :

How Will Sites Be Delivered? - will explore how the Housing Act and Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 together with Circular 1/2006 should deliver the sites and what challenges there could be and how these can be overcome.

Where Next For Travellers? - will look at what cultural changes may take place within the Traveller community, in particular in educational participation, employment, gender roles, cultural promotion and nomadism.

Decent Homes For All! - will explore how new policies and guidance could improve site design and tenant involvement and discuss good practice.

For a more detailed programme visit:

http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/about_us/noticeboard

Free DVD Available

Meet Your Neighbours: Irish Traveller Role Models Speak Out

Few will forget how in 2005 Travellers were attacked in the tabloid press with lurid headlines like 'Stamp on the Camps' and 'Traveller Invaders'. During this time there was an increase in reports of harassment against Travellers.

'Meet Your Neighbours: Irish Traveller Role Models Speak Out' is a DVD produced by the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain which profiles a number of Irish Traveller who have taken on roles such as councillors, school governors and community advocates. The DVD exposes the myths and falsehoods created by the media and shows Irish Travellers to be warm and caring people who are playing positive roles in their communities.

The DVD is free – and is a great resource for teachers and youth workers or Travellers or members of the wider community who wish to learn more about Irish Travellers. Accompanying learning materials will be available on our website.

Campaign Update

Dale Farm Statement

"We welcome the judgement made by Justice Collins and believe that it is right for a forced eviction action at Dale Farm to be suspended and call for the creation of new pitches in the Basildon area under the Government's new accommodation policies for Travellers to be implemented as a matter of urgency. The shortage of Traveller sites was caused by the abolition in 1994 of the duty on councils to provide Traveller sites. We recognise that the shortage of Traveller sites has caused hardship and difficulties for both the Traveller

and wider communities. It is now time for genuine dialogue to take place and we call upon local politicians and the media to make greater effort to foster an environment conducive to such debate. We commend the Essex Fire Brigade Service and Equalities and Human Rights Commission for initiating dialogue and a proposed series of talks between Travellers and Basildon Council”.

Endorsed by:

The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain and other groups and campaigners including the Traveller Law Reform Project and the Rt Revd Thomas McMahon, Roman Catholic Bishop of Brentwood and Rt Revd John Gladwin, Church of England Bishop of Chelmsford, Lord Avebury, Secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Julie Morgan MP, Chair of the APPG on Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform, Baroness Whitaker, Vice Chair of the APPG on Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform.

The above statement has been sent by groups within the Traveller Law Reform Project to Basildon Council with a plea for the council to rethink its decision to appeal against Justice Collin’s ruling.

Complaints lodged after Brent site raid

THE Irish Traveller Movement made a formal complaint against the police, following a raid on a Traveller site in Brent. Over 380 officers from the Met’s firearms unit conducted the night-time raid on the Lynton Close site in Neasden. A mechanical digger was used to break down the wall and families were detained in their caravans as police searched the site. But the raid has been criticised by the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain and the Brent Irish Advisory Service, who both attended the site following the raid to offer support and advice. Yvonne MacNamara, Director of the ITM confirmed they had made an official complaint via the Race Independent Advisory Group about the actions of the police. “The site looked as if a hurricane had blown through it, with mounds of broken glass and damaged caravans. “There are 130 children on that site who were forced to stay up all night. This is a shameful style of policing in the 21st century.”

The full report in the Irish World can be accessed at:

http://www.theirishworld.com/article.asp?SubSection_Id=1&Article_Id=5064

House of Commons Debate on Task Group Report

On the 22nd May a debate took place in the House of Commons on the report by the Communities and Local Government Task Group on Traveller accommodation which was chaired by Sir Brian Briscoe.

Ian Wright MP Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government said:

“The debate comes at a time when we look forward to celebrating Gypsy Roma Traveller history month in June. It is the first such celebration to be fully supported and endorsed by the Government. It will provide a tremendous opportunity for children in our schools to hear

of the traditions of Gypsies and Travellers and how their cultural heritage, passed down through the generations, is often a world away from that popularly perceived. Together with my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Lord Adonis, I welcome the opportunity that we will now have to challenge the myths and to break down the barriers to social cohesion”.

“It is important to put today’s debate into context and to remember that this is not an abstract matter. We are discussing real people here; a proud people who are protective of their cultural identity. They are families with children who sorely need the opportunity for a proper education; and families with elderly relatives who desperately need their elected representatives to champion improvements to health services on their behalf”.

Access the full debate at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm080522/halltext/80522h0001.htm#08052290000002>

Find out more about the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain and the latest programme for **‘Pavee Céilidh’** – by visiting our website:

<http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/> T 0207 607 2002 E info@irishtraveller.org.uk

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