



## **Irish Traveller Movement in Britain**

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# ***Wheels in Motion***

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## **Director's Welcome**

*Greetings from all at ITMB! We hope you enjoyed our last newsletter- a lot has happened since then. The formation of the new coalition Government has resulted in a shift in the political climate which has brought with it fresh challenges, some of which we have discussed in our newly introduced "policy corner" section of the newsletter which will feature an analysis and round up of current policy developments. We have also celebrated the highly successful Gypsy Roma Traveller history Month- please see the special supplement for details of the various events.*

*Aside from our work at the National level, we have been particularly active at the European policy level in recent months. Associated with this, we have decided to have a European theme for our upcoming Annual Conference in November and are pleased to have secured the support of the Director of Equality at the European Commission as well as the Director of the European Roma Information Office as keynote speakers.*

*I would like to say a warm word of congratulations to two of our staff – Cassie Marie McDonagh and Amy Ward who have both secured funded places on the ERRC Human Rights summer school in July/Aug in Budapest. We wish them well on the course and eagerly await their report in the next newsletter!*

*Finally, I would like to say a huge thank and sad farewell to Phil Regan, our London Partnerships officer, on behalf of all of us here at ITMB. Phil has worked with ITMB for the past 18 months developing out work within the London regions and has been key to establishing our profile and ensuring the voice of the Traveller communities are heard and represented. We wish him all the success in his future endeavors.*

*Yvonne MacNamara, Director, ITMB*

## Policy Corner

In analysing the effect of the new Coalition Government and specifically the Secretary of State's broader policies in relation to Gypsies and Travellers, there is a great deal of ambiguity at present. Their policy in relation to accommodation is seemingly unclear and may be interpreted in both a positive and negative light.

In the Coalition's programme for government they clearly state their intention to 'radically abolish Regional Spatial Strategies' and 'radically reform the planning system...based on the principles set out in the Conservative Party publication *Open Source Planning*'. Such a policy means that Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments (GTANA's) would also be abolished.

However, the Conservative paper also states that: *'Local authorities have a role to ensure the provision of suitable authorised sites to tackle genuine local*

*need for their area in consultation with local communities'*.

So while RSSs (and allocation of Traveller site provision) are being scrapped and other planning requirements may meet the same fate the Coalition have acknowledged the fundamental need for sites for Gypsies and Travellers. They have also recognized that enforcement action should not be taken unless there are sufficient authorised sites in the local area.

For the Conservatives to honour their pre-election pledge to 'provide stronger enforcement powers' they first need to develop a stronger policy on allocating, planning and supplying pitches for the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Without such a policy the Coalition Government will only exacerbate the issue of unauthorized Traveller sites causing further hardship for the Gypsy and Traveller community and further undermining community cohesion.

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## Advisory Group Meeting

The first meeting of the newly reformed advisory group, which guides the policy work of the organisation, took place in June, in which we welcomed many newly recruited members to the group.

The first meeting was intended to provide both an induction to ITMB and an exploratory session of what the group

hopes to achieve in the coming year. The policy team provided presentations on what the organisation has been doing to date and then went on to summarise the main achievements of the previous advisory group.

Following this, there was an open debate in which the main areas of concern highlighted were accommodation, education and general

discrimination issues that the group would like to focus on. The group concluded by agreeing on a plan of action in terms of outcomes which they would like to achieve including lobbying and engagement with policy makers.

It was also agreed that the policy team would arrange for both media training of the advisory group and also training from the House of Commons on participating at select committees. The

group also revised the terms of reference and set house rules for the governance of the advisory group.

The next meeting will take place in September.

If you require further information on the advisory group, please contact our policy team Mairead or Matthew at [policy@irishtraveller.org.uk](mailto:policy@irishtraveller.org.uk)

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### European Policy News

- **Poverty Conference** ITMB attended a conference in Brussels organised by the European Roma Information Office on "Fighting Roma Poverty, Ensuring Equality". The conference enabled ITMB to raise the profile of Irish Travellers with policy makers including senior representatives from the European Commission, UN and other NGO's.
- **Human Rights Activist training** Two of our young Traveller activists working at ITMB have both been accepted onto a highly competitive funded European Human Rights summer school organized by the European Roma Rights Centre which received over 70 applications for 20 available places on the course. The Summer School will take place over 10 days in Budapest providing participants with a unique chance to immerse themselves into the theory and practice of human rights, minority rights and non-discrimination, taught by human rights experts. The intensive programme includes a variety of social activities allowing participants to network with each other. The main goal of the school is to develop the capacity of a new generation of GRT human rights activists to use international and domestic human rights instruments and mechanisms to advance their rights, domestically and internationally, to combat discrimination from grassroots to governmental levels.
- **European Court of Human Rights Training** ITMB has been awarded places on the European Court of Human Rights training course specifically on challenging GRT legal issues. The training will be given by the Judges from the Human Rights Court and will take place in Strasburg in September. The training is organised by the Council of Europe and will include lectures on utilising the European Convention on Human Rights together with a moot trial exercise.

## Traveller Economic Inclusion Project Update

This summer the Traveller Economic Inclusion Project (TEIP) continues its research to find out the mechanisms used by some Gypsies and Travellers to secure economic inclusion (that is set up a business or get into paid/professional employment).

The project, which is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and started in July 2009 has reached its second phase of field research and is now in the process of conducting follow up seminars and feedback sessions with the over 100 interviewees who participated. Interviewees have been able to further participate and influence the project report.

The TEIP report is interested in both the positive and negative aspects of Gypsies and Travellers economic experiences.

In contrast to other studies carried out which have predominantly focused on

the negative aspects of Gypsy and Traveller lives, the TEIP has focused on what is 'working' for the community and how good practice can be further supported and disseminated.

The report hopes to show the vibrancy and strength of these communities and provide insights into how and why these populations have adapted and survived despite the wide-spread antagonism of wider society. The TEIP has sought to link the life strategies of the interviewees to the wider national policy context, exploring the impact of policy but also the potential for reform.

The research team is presently evaluating the potential impact of the new Coalition Government's policies on the economic and social inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers. This report therefore seeks to promote a change agenda by following the traditions of Action Research.

The Traveller Economic Inclusion Project and its final report are due to be completed by November and will be launched at the House of Commons.

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## Media Group and ITMB media strategy

In March 2010 ITMB established a Traveller Media Discussion Group to focus on how Gypsies and Travellers are treated in the media and inform the development of ITMB's media strategy.

National organisations sitting on the group include the Media Trust, Equality

and Human Rights Commission, Press Complaints Commission, Runnymede Trust, Communities and Local Government, Traveller Law Reform Coalition, Friends Families and Travellers and the Irish Chaplaincy.

The purpose of the group is to supply expert advice on how to combat inaccurate and offensive media coverage of the Gypsy and Traveller

communities and promote positive and accurate reporting of the community.

The Media Group has also informed ITMB's media strategy which is presently being developed. Supported and guided by specialist advice from the Media Trust the media strategy aims to influence the media in two main ways.

Firstly, through the development of an online media monitor and an easy to use complaints procedure the ITMB's media strategy will enable community

members and organisations to analyse and respond more effectively to questionable media coverage.

Secondly, by disseminating positive and accurate news stories on Travellers through national and local media channels, ITMB will promote fairer more realistic media coverage of the community. The effectiveness of ITMB's media strategy will be monitored by the media monitor enabling us to observe changes in the number of positive and negative stories in the media.

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## London Traveller Support Network

Following a conversation with a number of organisations and front line staff, ITMB became aware of the need for an informal support network for individuals working for Gypsy Roma and Irish Traveller organisations.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2010, the inaugural meeting of the forum took place, delivered by ITMB with presentations from Action for Advocacy and the British Institute of Human Rights. A total of 25 organisations came together to share experiences and expertise, identify areas of support, and network.

Participants explained the very real need for support. It is too often the case, particularly in non-Traveller specific organisations, that the Traveller worker is the only one involved in working with Gypsy, Roma or Irish Traveller families. In effect the organisations knowledge and understanding of the community is contained in that sole member of staff. Participant's experiences were that this

can be a lonely place to be, particularly when seeking advice or support from managers. As people on the day described, there is a need to share information, gain advice and be supported by *"people who understand the community, its' culture and issues."*

Part of the forum was dedicated to hearing from Action for Advocacy and British Institute of Human Rights, on the skills and understanding that both these organisations, can offer to supporting practitioners working with Traveller communities. These information sessions were received exceptionally well and it was decided by participants that this would be an ongoing part of the forum.

The establishment of this forum was well received by attendees, with most agreeing to attend four forum meetings per year. The next date is scheduled for the 12<sup>th</sup> July at the ITMB offices.

## **Project snapshots: Concerns about Meriden**

Protest of development on the privately owned site in Meriden continues. Irish Traveller Movement in Britain was contacted by residents on the site in question. Discussions revealed a high level of fear and anxiety from residents concerning their perception of racist behaviours, including intimidation and harassment, on the part of the protestors.

Gypsies on the site have expressed concern over numerous incidents that have occurred, including racist intimidation and harassment. They have highlighted the protestors have shown symbols, including a swastika, and have been heard using racial slurs.

In addition the Gypsies on the site have faced a continual invasion of their privacy as their fellow residents of Meriden have set up a guard on their driveway and watch their comings and goings, including according to the

residents, using binoculars and cameras to better observe the Gypsy families in their day-to-day activities.

In addition this 24 hour observation is accompanied by noise and drinking through the night until the early hours, only increasing during the World Cup. This is seen as invasive and problematic the nearby Gypsy residents. Thus far the police of Meriden have been put into a situation where they have to place officers in order to maintain the peace and watch over these protestors who are occupying the road beside the site.

ITMB has undertaken working with local authorities, Gypsy residents and other local and national organisations in an attempt to facilitate a situation that actually protects and defends the Human Rights of the Gypsy Residents of this site. It is planned that this joined up working will help to facilitate the lessening of tensions and lower the levels of intimidation and racial harassment the Gypsy Residents feel they have face.

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## **Travelling Girls Coming Together in Nottingham**

Since 2008, Nottingham Connexions and partner organisations have been successfully working with a group of over 20 young Traveller women from the area. The current projects that have been running are being delivered again

by Learning Works for Young People (Nottingham City Council) and are funded by the ESF.

Over the years there have been some excellent increases in literacy and numeracy. The young women have recently taken part in arts, make-up and hairdressing tasters, visiting the Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire

and taken part in healthy eating sessions etc. In doing so, learners have acquired time-keeping skills and an insight into other cultures.

It is hoped that through working with Nottingham's new Gypsy and Traveller community group and facilitating the development of their own Young Women's Gypsy and Traveller group they may develop new independent funding streams as the current funding may end.

ITMB has arranged to help support these young women and their organisation in many ways. Initially we held a meeting between some of the participants and ITMB staff members.

In addition, this initial meeting included discussions around training needs and desires that ITMB can facilitate.

ITMB along with the participants and Connexions, have discussed ways in which ITMB can offer strong support mechanisms to help these young women work towards their own independent organisation that can work alongside the other community group in Nottingham and at the same time work with local agencies and organisations towards these young women's development as future leaders of the Traveller community.

The young women have decided to take on a more active role in this year's **Gypsy and Traveller History Celebration Event** (July 10<sup>th</sup> in Burwell 13:00-21:00. Contact Kelley Parker at Framework (0115 9509586) for more information).

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## Another successful Cultural Awareness session delivered.

As part of the National Health Service Pacesetters Project, Irish Traveller Women in north London have been working with the maternity team at the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead. There have been lots of consultation sessions exploring ways of improving services for Travelling Communities.

It was soon realised that training and information would have to be given so both groups could develop together and aim for the Pacesetters targets of improving equality and diversity for all stakeholders.

In late June two members of the ITMB Advisory Group prepared and presented

a comprehensive session on Cultural Awareness looking especially at health statistics. With the facts and figures backed up with personal accounts this is one of the best ways to deliver training allowing participants of the training to face their preconceptions.



With a PowerPoint presentation, open floor questions and an activity to engage participants, the 2 hour session provided over 15 women working in the maternity department an insight into the life of Irish Travellers.

There was a broad range of staff from the maternity department from consultants to receptionists all eager to ask questions to the 2 presenters who were ready and willing to respond frankly. The thought provoking presentation was shocking to the group and motivated many to ask lots of questions.

All involved agreed they could have continued for much longer than the allotted time but the training left them well informed and looking forward to putting their newly acquired skills into use within their individual roles.

Within the Royal Free Hospital steps have been taken to improve cultural awareness, to see both the positive and negative aspects of cultural differences so that services can be improved for both Traveller Communities and those who work with them. The ITMB looks forward to continuing this successful work on the Pacesetters project.

### What is Pacesetters?

Pacesetters is a national programme focussing on partnership working between local communities, the NHS and the Department of Health. Local Communities who experience health inequalities arising from discrimination have been focused on and this has been Gypsy, Traveller and Roma groups across the country. Working with Strategic Health Authorities and Trusts, the programme's overall aim is to deliver equality and diversity improvements and innovations resulting in:

- Patient, service user, staff and community involvement in the design and delivery of services: and
- Reduced health inequalities for patients and service users alongside working environments that are fair and free from discrimination.

### Women's Forum

We are currently in the process of setting up a Traveller women's forum, if you are interested in getting involved please contact Amy, at [amy@irishtraveller.org.uk](mailto:amy@irishtraveller.org.uk).

## Irish Traveller Movement in Ireland celebrates 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday



(From L to R: Maureen Ward, Brigid Quilligan, Yvonne MacNamara, Michael Ridge, Breda Mahoney, Damien Peelo, Mairead Moore and Jim O'Brien)

A delegation from ITMB including Trustees and staff members attended the recent AGM of the Irish Traveller Movement in Dublin.

The AGM and conference covered a number of key themes including the issue of ethnicity, education and youth amongst others.

The conference provided the opportunity for us to engage in fruitful debate with our Irish counterparts on areas including

the way forward for Ireland in achieving ethnic minority status by sharing our own experiences of achieving the same status in the UK.

At the AGM, ITMB put forward a motion for the Irish and British Traveller Movements to cooperate more closely in the European context in forming a strategic lobbying partnership. The motion was met with unanimous support and we look forward to working more closely with our Irish counterparts in the coming months.

We would also like to congratulate ITM on their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary for all the successes and advances they have achieved to date in Ireland.

**The conference also showcased the Premier screening of the play entitled "The trailer of Bridget Dinnegan" set on a site, which addresses a number of issues confronting the family including bereavement, relationships and suicide. The reaction to the play was overwhelmingly positive.**



## Loss of legal Aid for the Community Law Partnership

ITMB have been shocked and dismayed by the recent news that the Community Law partnership, incorporating the specialist unit working on Traveller and Gypsy cases based in Birmingham has lost its social welfare law contract for legal aid. Unless the Community law Partnership can successfully appeal against this decision they will have to close as of October.

This decision represents a crucial blow due to the pioneering achievements which the centre has been involved in, in leading the fight against injustice to Travellers and Gypsies at the Appeal Court and Supreme Court including the Doherty Case and SSEFRA cases.

Aside from these landmark cases which have changed the legal landscape in relation to Gypsies and Travellers, the CLP has also changed local authority practice on eviction of unauthorised encampments and helped hundreds of Gypsies and Travellers to obtain planning permission. The CLP was at

the forefront of the campaign to bring in Security of Tenure on local authority sites.

On a practical level, the partnership has been available for informal chats and provided invaluable assistance to organisations such as ourselves across the country in sharing their unrivalled expertise on the law relating to Travellers and Gypsies. They also provide a 24/7 telephone advice service, available in emergencies which as far as we are aware, is the only service of its kind in the UK relating to Traveller and Gypsy legal assistance.

If you would like to show support for the CLP appeal, the best way would be to draft a letter outlining what they have done to assist you and why this vital service should not be lost.

Please send your letters of support to Chris Johnston, his email is: [chrisjohnson@communitylawpartnership.co.uk](mailto:chrisjohnson@communitylawpartnership.co.uk) or you can also telephone him for further information 0121 685 8595.

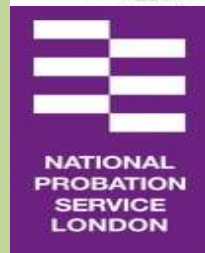
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### New Personnel:

#### Amy Ward- Sessional worker

Amy joins us as a sessional worker and will be working on various areas of our policy and capacity building. In particular, she will be heavily involved in our policy in relation to women and health, and will also be working on our human rights and media work. Amy has a degree in law and has volunteered for many human rights organisations and charities in London and in Ireland.

We are funded by:



## Vacancies

### Communities and Partnerships Co-ordinator

We currently have a vacancy for a Communities and Partnerships Co-ordinator. Please see our website for further details of the post.

### ITMB Staff:

**Director:** Yvonne MacNamara  
[Yvonne@irishtraveller.org.uk](mailto:Yvonne@irishtraveller.org.uk)

### Capacity building team

Grace O'Malley [grace@irishtraveller.org.uk](mailto:grace@irishtraveller.org.uk)  
Dr Scott Philips [scott@irishtraveller.org.uk](mailto:scott@irishtraveller.org.uk)  
Julie Joyce [Julie@irishtraveller.org.uk](mailto:Julie@irishtraveller.org.uk)

### London Partnerships

Phil Regan [Philip@irishtraveller.org.uk](mailto:Philip@irishtraveller.org.uk)

### Policy and research Team

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### Floating Support Officer:

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### Operations Manager:

Radmila Vujnovic [radmila@irishtraveller.org.uk](mailto:radmila@irishtraveller.org.uk)

If you would like to make any contributions to our next issue or simply to make a comment on this policy newsletter, please get in touch:

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