



## **Irish Traveller Movement in Britain**

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# ***Wheels in Motion***

Issue 3, November 2010

[www.irishtraveller.org.uk](http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk)

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### ***Director's Welcome***

*Greetings from ITMB! This is a very special edition of our newsletter, as we are delighted to be celebrating the tenth year anniversary of ITMB. To mark this, we are putting together a special supplement outlining the history and achievements of ITMB.*

*At the moment, we are very busy preparing for the launch of the report for our Economic Inclusion project, along with our Annual Conference both taking place next month. The conference promises to be our biggest yet with a fantastic programme of speakers and workshops lined up!*

*We also have a number of new staff joining the organisation, and I would like to welcome Sean Risdale who is our new London communities and partnerships officer, Sabrina Fahey, who is working on our PQASSO implementation, Tracey Mullin who is joining our research team, and Tracy Sherlock, an intern.*

*Finally, if you have not already done so, don't forget to get your ticket for the conference, as they are selling out fast!*

***Yvonne MacNamara,***

***Director, ITMB***

# Policy Corner

Since the last policy update in July, the policy team have been exceptionally busy in responding to the challenges brought about by the new political climate.

In relation to national policy, and specifically with regard to accommodation policy related to Travellers, ITMB have made various policy submissions to national Government consultations including the Department for Communities and Local Government Select Committee.

One of the submissions relates to the inquiry on the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies, in which ITMB have expressed concerns about the effects of this in relation to Traveller site provision.

Another submission has been made by ITMB in relation to the enquiry on the Localism bill, where similar concerns have been raised about the implications of decisions being taken at local level where planning decisions related to Travellers are likely to be opposed.

ITMB have also issued a statement in response to comments made by Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and local Government. Copies of all submissions and policy updates are available from our website.

At the International level, ITMB is also producing a Shadow Report to the UN in relation to the committee examining CERD. In producing the shadow report, ITMB will seek to provide clarification to the CERD committee on Traveller issues, in its examination of the UK Governments 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> periodic report submitted earlier this year. Associated with this, ITMB have set up an expert steering committee which will guide the development of the report and we are also consulting closely with a number of individuals and organisations in compiling the evidence for the various policy areas addressed in the report.

If anyone is interested in inputting into the report, please feel free to contact us to discuss further at [policy@irishtraveller.org.uk](mailto:policy@irishtraveller.org.uk)

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## Traveller Economic Inclusion Project Report launch in Houses of Parliament

The Traveller Economic Project (TEIP) is nearing completion with the final report being launched in the Houses of Parliament on 18<sup>th</sup> November. The

project, which is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and started in July 2009, has researched 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 report shows the vibrancy and strength of Gypsy and Traveller communities and provides insights into how and why these populations have economically and socially adapted and survived despite the wide-spread

antagonism of wider society. It will also seek to link the life strategies of the projects interviewees to the wider national policy context, exploring the impact of policy but also the potential for reform.

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## Gypsy/Traveller census 2011: Stand up and be counted

The next census is of great historical importance for Irish Traveller communities in England and Wales: for the first time, the questionnaire will allow people to mark their ethnic identity as 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller'.

The main reason the census is carried out is to help public sector organisations understand what support services people need – such as school places, health facilities, public transport and emergency services.

When the next census takes place on Sunday 27 March 2011, every household will be asked about the people who live there. Taking part is compulsory: the few who don't could be fined up to £1,000.

The new option for people to tick 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller' has come after many requests from Travellers and support groups. With space on the forms limited, while 20 new groups were considered for recognition in the 2011 census, only Travellers and Arabs were added.

Inclusion of Travellers is vital for the needs of the community to be recognised. According to Eileen Lowther, an Irish Traveller from Leeds:

"The only way we can argue for better services is to make sure they can see and hear us. The best way to do that is to tick the Gypsy/Traveller box in the census in March 2011."

"We carried out our own survey of 1,071 Travellers in Leeds and found out that our life expectancy, on average, is only 50 years. It was a bad shock but at least now the local health people are giving us the attention we weren't getting before."

Some people may be worried about providing personal information, but no personal information will be released for 100 years.

People can complete the questionnaire on paper or online via [www.census.gov.uk](http://www.census.gov.uk). For people on sites, questionnaires will be hand-delivered. A helpline and other support are available for anyone who needs it.

The team organising the census hopes that Irish Travellers will not only complete the census for the sake of their families, but be proud to tick the box marking their ethnic identity.

For more information, visit [www.census.gov.uk](http://www.census.gov.uk) or you can find out more information from ITMB.

### ITMB Advisory Group lunch and training in the Houses of Parliament

On 16<sup>th</sup> September some of the ITMB Advisory Group travelled to the Houses of Parliament for lunch with members of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller All Party Parliamentary Group and training on Parliament and Select Committees.

Following their morning meeting, where education, health and the development of a women' forum were discussed, the Advisory Group travelled to the Houses of Parliament to meet Rory Stewart MP (member of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller APPG) and Tony McCullagh from the Irish Embassy.

Over lunch, Advisory Group members discussed a broad range of issues affecting Traveller communities across

Britain. Subjects such as education and accommodation were highlighted by the group as key areas for the Coalition Government to address. Advisory group members stressed that the hardships and disadvantages many Travellers face would not improve unless the Government and MP's gained a better understanding of the issues affecting the community on the ground.

After lunch the Advisory Group received training on the workings of Parliament and more specifically on the various ways public and community organisations can input into the decision making process. The eventful day ended with a brief tour of the Houses of Parliament and an Advisory Group photo outside the Palace of Westminster.



Advisory group members above, at the House of Commons, with ITMB staff and Alasdair Mackenzie from Parliamentary Outreach team.

# European Policy News

## Traveller Coalition

The inaugural meeting of the British and Irish Coalition of Travellers took place in Dublin in October.

The coalition is formed from national organisations from both Ireland and the UK and has been set up with the intention of ensuring closer co-operation between both countries in raising awareness of, and inclusion of Travellers at the National, European and International level.

At the first meeting, the steering group for the coalition discussed the direction of the coalition, the terms of reference and objectives which the group would like to achieve.

The coalition has also arranged a meeting with a senior official from the European Commission, Belinda Pyke (Director of Equality) who will meet with a delegation from the coalition to discuss Traveller inclusion.

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## European Court of Human Rights training



Yvonne MacNamara, Joe Browne and Mairead Moore debating in the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights

A delegation from ITMB was awarded places on the Council of Europe/European Court of Human Rights Legal training course for Roma

which was held in Strasbourg in September.

The course considered the various mechanisms that were available to legal activists in bringing legal cases related to Roma and Travellers and an opportunity for the participants to form a pan European support network.

Specifically, it focused on the European Convention on Human Rights but also considered additional mechanisms at the International level including through the use of the European Social Charter.

The participants on the course also had the opportunity to sit in on the heated Debate on the Roma expulsions in France at the European Parliament and the participants took part in a moot exercise inside the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights.

## UK Demonstration of European Solidarity



The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain organised a protest in front of the French Embassy in London on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> September, in condemning the recent ill treatment of the Roma in France.

The demonstration was part of coordinated protests taking place simultaneously across Europe which were called by the European Network Against Racism.

In leading the UK demonstration, ITMB intended not only to condemn what is happening in France (and worryingly similar situations which have come to light in Italy and Hungary) but in doing so, ITMB wished to raise awareness of the wider repression facing the GRT communities across Europe, including the UK, by standing in solidarity as one united GRT voice.

Around 70-100 demonstrators took part in the protest, which was also attended by National organisations including

United Against Fascism, Amnesty International, the Socialist party and Socialist Workers party activists. At the end of the protest a delegation handed in a petition of over 300 signatures to an Official at the French embassy.



You can also still the ITMB petition at [www.petitiononline.com/ITMB](http://www.petitiononline.com/ITMB).



Demonstrators at the solidarity protest

For more details of the UK solidarity campaign, please contact the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain.

# Liberal Democrat Fringe Event

range of policy areas including accommodation, health and education.

A number of the attendees at the fringe event commented that their opinions and perceptions of Travellers and their situation had changed after speaking with ITMB at the event. We hope that this will translate into positive actions at the national and local level by these people we spoke to.



ITMB hosted a fringe event entitled “*Travellers and the Coalition: New challenges, new solutions*” at the Liberal Democrat National conference which took place in September in Liverpool.

The event provided ITMB with the opportunity to engage with local, regional and national Liberal Democrat politicians, in raising awareness of how the Coalition policies are affecting Travellers living in the UK.

The event was extremely successful in attracting a substantial number of the conference delegates, who spoke with ITMB staff and Advisory group on a wide



## Navigating 'Big Society'

**"You can call it liberalism. You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility. I call it the Big Society."**

**David Cameron: 19 July 2010**

The summer has seen some very drastic shifts in the Government's approaches to society. One of the key areas of conversation among the Third Sector has been what exactly the 'Big Society' is and what will it mean to the sector. ITMB has been concerned with the general impact of this strategy proposed by the CON-DEM alliance, but we have been very interested to find how it will impact issues of equalities and more particularly how Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities will be affected.

To address our concerns, ITMB has undertaken a great deal of analysis and research on Localism and Big Society.

ITMB have issued an official statement of our position. In this statement, we note that ITMB is not adverse to the localism and decentralisation agenda. However, ITMB believes the Governments' existing proposals will not address the severe shortage of Gypsy and Traveller sites. Localism and decentralisation also pose the danger of increasing inequality within and between communities with disadvantaged groups such as Gypsies and Travellers potentially suffering from even greater exclusion.

Big Society and Localism are coming and they will play a major role in the lives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the years to come. We must therefore continue the dialogue, to develop strategies to engage with these changes. Therefore we hope that everyone who wishes to explore how the Decentralisation and Localism Bill could present both opportunities for and obstacles against Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers achieving greater equality in their local areas will join us at the Workshop: **Big society and localism: what it means for Travellers** at our upcoming National Conference on 19 November.

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## London Plan Protest

ITMB participated in a peaceful protest organised by LGTU which took place outside City Hall against the Mayor's decision to abolish policy 3.9 of the London Plan related to Traveller site provision.

The protest was a huge success with over 100 Travellers turning up to stand for their rights and show they were opposed to the actions of the Mayor.

It is unknown whether the demonstration will get the reaction that we wanted but we left that day feeling we made it clear we are Londoners to and Mayor Boris Johnson was our Mayor and we would not be ignored.

## Project snapshots:

### Mediators Training: Increasing awareness

In July, ITMB, along with Helen Blow of Astern (a conflict resolution company), provided the Midlands Mediation Network with an opportunity to extend their knowledge of issues facing Gypsy and Travellers in the UK. The Midlands Mediation Network has been going for 11 years and brings together mediation providers, from both the public and private sector in the West and East Midlands.

This event provided these mediators, who work in a wide range of areas, to become more familiar with some of the general cultural and historical issues of Gypsy and Traveller life. This general awareness was coupled with a number of case studies that the mediators reviewed.

Midlands Mediation asked for this training in order to better equip them to engage in mediation involving Gypsy and Travellers. The practical elements and issues raised in the case studies allowed the participants to become familiar with examples of specific types of conflicts which could arise in relation to Gypsies and Travellers and appropriate ways of handling such situations.

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## A GATE opens in Hertfordshire

When Irish Traveller Josephine O'Driscoll saw a gap for Traveller services in her home town of Cheshunt she got in touch with the capacity building team at ITMB and since then has been the driving force behind the setting up of a the Gypsy And Traveller Empowerment (GATE) group in Herts. To make sure it represented the full Gypsy Roma and Traveller populations of this vast county Josephine has been holding meetings across Hertfordshire and has managed to get interested people from both Irish Traveller and Gypsy communities to take part as well as representative from statutory services too.

The meetings, chaired by Josephine and supported by ITMB, have been dynamic and praised from all attendees as being fun but also getting things done. The whole group worked together to create a name for the group that was catchy but representative. The group develops further at each meeting and has high hopes for Gypsy and Traveller services in Hertfordshire to be run and directed by the communities they support. Josephine, who is honing her skills through the ITMB NOCN Community Development qualification, has expressed her desire for GRT communities to make their own decisions with the slogan 'Nothing about us, without us'. This will be at the core of the Herts. GATE group as it grows, develops and fulfils its potential.

## ITMB 'Who we R' Youth Forum



The 'Who We R' youth Forum is a group of young Irish Travellers living all around London, some are housed and some are living in sites. They are between the ages of 12-16 and are facilitated by staff members at ITMB. Since the formation of the youth forum, there have been a number of fantastic projects which the group have been working on.

One such project the forum got involved with, involved the production of a film with the Jewish Museum about stereotypes from all communities and cultures which is to be launched at the end of October and will be shown thereafter in the Jewish Museum in Camden.

Another project they came up with concerned the design of a survey to find out how the general public view Irish Travellers. After designing the survey, the youth forum asked people in and around Camden town questions about their perceptions of Travellers and their way of life.

Overall, there was a number of interesting answers to the survey and the youth forum was pleasantly surprised by some of the positive responses. The youth forum are hoping to build upon this survey and conduct a bigger survey in the future with a greater number of people interviewed in different areas in order to be able to get a wider picture of the general public's opinion and perception of Travellers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The information that was given is confidential and will be used to inform and shape our services.

Recently, the youth forum has also been involved in designing the cover for the Economic inclusion project which was a really creative and productive session. It was fascinating to see the young people's point of view of economic inclusion and to see the designs they came up with.

Some of the members from the forum have been contributing towards an intercultural evening event working with other groups such as Brighter Futures and young Voices to learn more about each other and celebrate diversity in culture.

# First Aid Course



In partnership with the British Red Cross and ITMB, Irish Traveller women from across London came to the Resource Centre on Holloway Road to complete a full day of first aid training.

Almost all the ladies involved were mothers, and to compliment the maternity training at the Royal Free Hospital that the women has been involved in, the group decided to complete the course – Save a Life – Infant and Child.

The group used dummies and role play to learn how to stay calm and use life saving techniques to help a child in danger. The women who attended spanned different generations and could see it would help with their children and grandchildren.

The techniques were easy to remember and pass on too. Everyone who completed the training received a handy wallet size certificate to keep on them as proof of the capacity as a trained first aider. It came in a British Red Cross branded wallet with a fold up First Aid reference to refresh the tips and techniques learnt on the day.

Some of the group had completed first aid courses before but with the help of Jonas, the trainer, everyone learnt some new skills in an area that is always developing.

The training was filmed to be part of the DVD for our joint Pacesetters project with the Royal Free hospital. Everyone involved had a great day and we'd like to thank Jonas from the British Red Cross for such fun and interesting training.



*In this month's newsletter Martin Hassan, who is one of the participants on our Community Development programme, writes about his journey of discovery in tracing his linguistic heritage ...*

### HOW I DISCOVERED MY INDIAN CONNECTION



My name is Martin. I grew up in idyllic Malvern in Worcester. The only ethnic minorities I knew of, were my own Romanichal family members, but nobody else could tell what we were because unlike our travelling cousins, we lived in houses, albeit several in the space of a few years (my father could never shake the inbuilt need to travel, and why should he have anyway?). We

never spoke another language in public and what I was exposed to was the usual smattering of Romani words mixed in with a somewhat colloquialised semi-west country English. At an early age I learnt not to expose my non-Gypsy schoolmates to our “dialect” (as my gran called it), it was our thing and it was private.

When I was eleven years old my father decided we were all moving to Handsworth in Birmingham. My mother cried for weeks when we arrived there but the first thing that struck me was the fascinating diversity of the place which exposed me to so much rich culture-and I liked it.

My first epiphany about who I was, hit me on my first day at school when my Indian classmates tried to “teach” me some words in their language. Wow, I understood most of them and I remember asking them if they were Indian Gypsies! When they said no I replied “but you must be otherwise how do you know our language?” I think they were as confused as I was! Why did a white kid know and speak an Indian language? Why did Indian kids know and speak Romani, albeit in a strange way?

And thus began my journey of discovery, I immersed myself in books, to look for anything I could find on Indian languages, and then I discovered a revelation, “The Northern branch of the Indic languages consists of.....Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi,

Kashmiri, Mirpuri and Romani”!!!! What was that, Romani is an Indic language?

I had to know more, so I searched and searched, and I found an etymological dictionary of Romani written by an Indian man. It listed every Romani word he could find and gave its link to Punjabi or Hindi, or even Sanskrit. This discovery opened up a whole field of fascinating links with my British Asian classmates that I never knew existed.

Learning how Punjabi and Urdu speakers constructed sentences using

these words helped me tremendously to begin my learning in how to construct wholly Romani sentences using our words without blending them with English, without knowing it I had begun a language revival from my own living room!

**Martin Ricky Lee Hassan (ITMB Community Development participant)**

**Tracey Sherlock, who is another one of our participants on the community development course, gives us an insight into her placement with us in the ITMB London office.**



Hi my name is Tracy Sherlock I have only recently started my placement with the ITMB but I have been involved with the organisation for a few months now in a voluntary capacity. I am on the

accredited community development course and I also work as an intern alongside participating in the course.

In my role as intern, I am involved with helping to facilitate the ITMB youth forum, who are working on an economic inclusion art project at the moment. I have also recently been overseeing the ITMB media monitor, which keeps a record of all racism in the media related to Travellers and I will soon be moving on to work on the health project

I appreciate the opportunity I was given on the community development course and within the organisation because it is something I believe in wholeheartedly and I believe it is something worth fighting for. The Irish Traveller Movement has given Travellers like me so many opportunities to develop and it does make a big difference in all of our lives. **Tracy Sherlock**

## Cassie's trip to Budapest

Two members of ITMB, Cassie-Marie McDonagh and Amy Ward, were successful in gaining funded places on the ERRC Human Rights summer school in Budapest which took place in August, this month Cassie writes about her experience...



In July 2010, Amy Ward and I took part in the ERRC funded Human Rights Summer School for Gypsy Roma and Travellers which took place in Budapest.

Working within an organisation which directly works with Irish Travellers and being from the Irish Travelling community myself, I am used to experiencing discrimination and racism on a regular basis.

One thing I noticed through participating in the course, related to the fact that the GRT communities across Europe experience the same hatred, discrimination and Racism, but in a more direct and explicit form than in the UK. This is sometimes easier to deal with as at least you know where you

stand, in contrast with the UK, where the discrimination is more indirect and harder to prove.

This is why I felt it was such a brilliant course for me to attend the activism course as now I am more aware of my Human Rights and as a result, I am more determined than ever to insure everyone from the GRT communities are aware of their Human Rights and how to challenge them when their rights are being violated.

I met some inspiring people whilst in Budapest. Most of the other participants that attended the Summer School were from the Romany community but there was also two other Irish Travellers taking part in the course which helped me a lot. This is because there were some initial difficulties as at first I felt that some of the other participants did not feel the relationship or the link between Gypsy, Roma and Travellers which was hard as Travellers comes under the generic definition of the Roma term used in Europe.

However, by the end my feelings had changed and so had theirs as they got to know us and to find out more about each other. Ultimately, we found that their culture was no different from theirs.

I made some really good friends whilst at the Summer School and by the time we were leaving it was decided we would no longer address ourselves using the term Gypsy, Roma or Travellers, as we would simply call our self's our people. Overall it was a great experience and it has encouraged me to learn more about my rights and let others know there is a standard of life we are entitled to.

**Cassie Marie McDonagh**

## Personnel

### New staff joining ITMB:

#### **Sean Risdale -Communities and Partnerships Co-ordinator**

Sean joins ITMB as the communities and partnerships co-ordinator in London. Sean joins us from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission where he was employed as a policy advisor/ regional manager. Sean also has a wealth of prior experience in the community and voluntary sector.

#### **Tracey Mullan- PhD researcher**

Tracey joins our research team at ITMB as part of her ESRC funded PhD on Traveller evictions where she is specifically looking at gender related issues. Associated with this, Tracy will undertake some of her PhD training and supervision at ITMB. Tracey is a solicitor specialising in the planning law field.

#### **Sabrina Fahey – PQASSO co-ordinator**

Sabrina joins ITMB where she will be working on our PQASSO level 2 implementation. She has vast experience of office administration and system implementation. Sabrina has worked for many years in the voluntary and community sector.

#### **Tracey Sherlock and Martin Hassan- Community Development Interns**

Tracy and martin are employed as interns at ITMB undertaking their placement here, in conjunction with their participation on our accredited community development course.

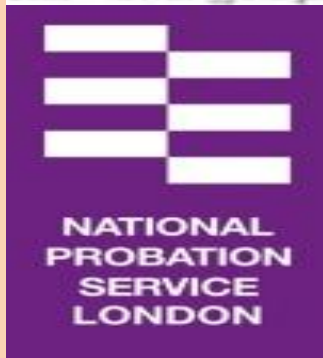
## Classified

# FILL THIS SPACE

### **For Sale/Wanted, Events and General Notices**

ITMB are developing a classified section to the newsletter, in which adverts can be placed related to events notices, items wanted or for sale. These adverts are free to Community members to advertise and for all other organisations and individuals, advertising rates are negotiable. Advertising space is also available for the classified section of our website. Please call the office for further details.

**We are funded by:**



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