

## The Highland Council

### Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee - 3 December 2014

Agenda Item	11
Report No	CPE 42/14

#### Update on Gypsy/Traveller services

#### Report by the Director of Community Services

##### Summary

This report provides an update on service delivery for Gypsy /Travellers. It includes statistical information on roadside encampments in Highland during 2013/2014, an update on proposals for a temporary stopping site, and a progress report on permanent site provision improvement. In addition to a summary of education activities and outcomes for 2013/2014, the report also includes summary findings from the recent independent Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment and an update about the national policy context for Gypsy/Travellers.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Under the Equality Act 2010 the Council has published a set of equality outcomes of which two specifically relate to Gypsy/Travellers:
- Improvements to the life chances and experiences of Gypsy/Travellers living in Highland. **Protected characteristics: Race**
  - Children and Families who have experienced interrupted learning including Gypsy/Traveller Children and children from military families are better supported. **Protected characteristics: Race**
- 1.2 In addition to these equality outcomes and the Single Outcome Agreement commitment to tackle hate incidents and crimes, the Council currently delivers the following specific General Fund services to Gypsy/Travellers:
1. Management of unauthorised roadside encampments
  2. Permanent site provision and management
  3. Planning and development of site provision
  4. Provision of education and care services for children and adults
- 1.3 This report provides an annual update in connection with these services for 2013/2014.
- 1.4 An update on the national policy context and direction for Gypsy/Traveller service provision is set out in section 8.

## 2. Roadside Encampments

- 2.1 Multi-agency guidance and procedures for managing roadside encampments is available on the Council's web-site.

[http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/6384/policy\\_on\\_managing\\_unauthorised\\_camping](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/6384/policy_on_managing_unauthorised_camping)

- 2.2 This guidance is based on current Scottish Government guidance and sets out the specific role of each Council service and multi-agency partner in relation to collaborative management of roadside encampments.
- 2.3 The guidance sets out responsibilities for initial and ongoing communication between Council services and multi-agency stakeholders.
- 2.4 The role of Community Services extends to co-ordination of case-conferences for complex or high risk encampments.
- 2.5 **Appendix 1** provides details of 51 reported roadside encampments during 2013/2014. Of these 34 encampments were in Inverness and surrounding area, notably at commercial locations. The purpose of the majority of these encampments is economic, with work reasons being cited as the primary motivation by encampment group members.
- 2.6 The remaining 17 reported encampments were at traditional stopping places across Highland including Alness, Ardesier, Kyle, Grantown, Auchtertyre, Skye, Tain and Lochaber.
- 2.7 Of all encampments, 14 encampments were on Council-owned land, while the remaining 37 were on land in private ownership. In a number of cases land ownership details remained unconfirmed.
- 2.8 During 2013/2014 there were 3 evictions from land in the ownership of the Council.
- 2.9 Collecting and monitoring information about roadside encampments continues to improve knowledge and understanding of the motivation for encampments. This evidence and wider research indicates that roadside encampments tend to demonstrate cultural or economic expression rather than direct accommodation need, though there are nonetheless a small proportion of households with no settled accommodation.
- 2.10 Experience in co-ordinating proportionate management responses on a case by case basis continues to evolve. This was demonstrated during 2014/2015 in response to a number of high profile and high visibility encampments in Inverness city.
- 2.11 In relation to these high risk encampments there was agreement to improve waste management responses in conjunction with enforcement action.
- 2.12 The volume and location of encampment activity during 2014/2015 is included in the recent Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment which has been posted on the Members' bulletin. Summary findings of this research are noted in **Appendix 2**.

### 3. Site Management

- 3.1 The Council has 4 permanent sites providing 47 pitches for Gypsy/Travellers. The following table shows the weekly rent charge for a pitch and hard standing, the pitch provision, the number of voids, the number of re-lets and the percentage void rent loss on the non-HRA revenue account for each site for 2013/2014.

Site	Pitch weekly rent	No. of pitches	Void in year	Relet in year	% void loss
Longman	87.51	18	17	12	27.72
Spean Bridge	61.70	15	4	5	1.34
Kentallen	61.70	7	9	2	46.31
Newtonmore	63.45	7	3	1	39.84

- 3.2 Supply was buoyant at Longman and demand was steady. The void rental loss relates to unlettable periods arising from improvement works rather than low demand.
- 3.3 Two pitches remain unavailable for occupation at Longman during 2014/2015 because of recurrent tidal flooding for which a solution is being sought. These pitches have been temporarily removed from the 2014/2015 rental register.
- 3.4 Spean Bridge operated at almost full capacity last year with a low turnover of pitches able to meet some limited new demand. This stability is a continuing trend from previous years at this site.
- 3.5 The Kentallen site was abandoned in 2013 and subsequently vandalised. The high void rent loss is a result of this event. A number of pitches have been returned to use and further work is planned.
- 3.6 Newtonmore has not operated at full capacity since a planning change of use from seasonal to year round opening was agreed in 2011. There has been limited change of residents since this time and turnover relates to short-term lets of the remaining vacant pitches in response to seasonal demand.

### 4. Site Improvements

- 4.1 In addition to ongoing day to day revenue repairs at sites there is an annual non-HRA capital budget of £113k for site improvement works.
- 4.2 In 2013/2014 this was targeted at the upgrade of amenity blocks and infrastructure at the Longman site with some funding re-directed to Kentallen for reinstatement of pitches at this site.

4.3 The programme of works within budget for 2014/2015 will provide for :-

<b>Newtonmore</b>	Electric meter upgrades Gutter cleaning and general site repairs
<b>Longman</b>	Refurbish three chalets/bays Fencing, road and hard standing repairs Reinstate one of the flooded bays
<b>Kentallen</b>	External decoration to cover graffiti General site clearance Fence repairs
<b>Spean Bridge</b>	Road and hard standing repairs

4.4 Resident satisfaction with the quality of site provision and management was measured by Craigforth Consultancy in 2012 and reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator in 2014 as part of the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC). This showed that 70.83% of site residents were satisfied with site provision in 2012.

4.5 Satisfaction ratings were updated in 2014 as part of the Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment. The average satisfaction level across the four sites was 70%. This research also included customer feedback on site improvement priorities. The full report is posted on the Members' bulletin with summary findings set out in **Appendix 2**.

## 5. Temporary Stopping Places

5.1 The former Housing and Social Work Committee agreed to consider the feasibility of temporary stopping place provision following the identification of this need in the Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2010.

5.2 A Temporary Stopping Place is an authorised temporary site at a location which reflects travelling patterns and helps manage the volume of unauthorised encampment activity.

5.3 In this model chargeable services and facilities are provided to meet a time limited need. Sites are generally small with provision for 3 – 6 caravans. Typically such provision consists of a cold water supply, waste disposal facilities, porta-loos and co-ordinated waste management arrangements.

5.4 Five potential sites for stopping places were subsequently included in the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan consultation in 2011. Two sites (Torvean Quarry and Longman) emerged as suitable options for which there are outstanding community objections. These are being considered by Scottish Government under the public local inquiry process.

5.5 In the meantime, temporary stopping places remain a land use option at these 2 sites, subject to continued evidenced need for this type of provision, identification of investment resources and planning permission.

## **6. Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment**

- 6.1 Craigforth Consultancy was commissioned to undertake an independent Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment in summer 2014. This research also incorporated a satisfaction survey on permanent site quality and a consultation on future site investment priorities.
- 6.2 The full research report is available on the Members' bulletin. The summary is attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 6.3 The accommodation needs assessment will form part of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment to help identify priorities and target investment for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation provision in Highland's next Local Housing Strategy.
- 6.4 In relation to permanent site provision the research finds that in general terms there is sufficient projected supply to meet projected demand over the next five year period. Nonetheless there is a mismatch at a local level in relation to Skye/Lochalsh which evidences demand but which has no accommodation provision.
- 6.5 The research also reports findings on travel patterns and unauthorised encampment activity. This evidences opportunities to help manage unauthorised encampment activity by means of transit or stopping place provision on travel routes into Inverness from the south and north east in particular. There is collaboration potential with other local authorities in this regard, most usefully Moray and Grampian as well as Tayside, Perth and Kinross, and Fife.

## **7. Education**

- 7.1 The Highland Practice Model continues to effectively develop positive relationships and increased engagement. During 2013/14 there was an increased number of children on a school roll in any one week compared to previous years.
- 7.2 Overall, contact was made with 58 families and 139 children during the year. 120 (86%) children were on a mainstream school roll in 26 schools in Highland. Of these children 14 (12%) were in nursery provision, 96 (80%) were in primary and 9 (8%) in secondary.
- 7.3 Of the 19 children who were not on a mainstream school roll, 4 (21%) were provided with alternative provision when in the area. Another 6 (32%) had support during the school year and 9 (47%) children either did not engage, or were only in the area for a short period of time and support arrangements were not able to be made.
- 7.4 Families report a positive response to the support available and the achievements of their children. There is a positive trend of parents informing schools when they are moving out of the area and when accessing their next

school. This helps the continuity of learning and supports improved record keeping and records transfer.

7.5 Further information on [Gypsies, Travellers and interrupted learning](#) is available on the Council's website. Detailed monitoring is reported to Education, Children and Adult Services Committee.

## **8. National Context**

8.1 The Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee has undertaken 2 recent inquiries focussed on the experiences of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland.

8.2 The first published in 2012 focussed on [Gypsy Travellers and Care](#) , while the second published in March 2013 looked at [where Gypsy Travellers live](#) .

8.3 In response the Scottish Government announced intentions to develop a national strategy and action plan for Gypsy/Travellers in order to demonstrate leadership to help tackle prejudice and discrimination.

8.4 As part of this national strategy COSLA and the Scottish Government are currently developing a briefing for elected members designed:

- to raise awareness about Gypsy/Travellers, their way of life, cultural traditions and sensitivities.
- to empower elected members to deal with any issues that may occur in their local area involving Gypsy/Travellers.
- to provide information on the rights and responsibilities of elected members in relation to the legislative framework and the role of elected members in enabling access to services and participation in society.

8.5 In addition work is in progress to develop national guidance for stakeholders to support implementation of the Equal Opportunities Committee recommendations at a local authority level.

8.6 This includes a planned review of the current Scottish Government guidance on unauthorised encampments and a proposal to develop minimum standards for site accommodation provision.

8.7 In terms of the quality and cost of Gypsy/Traveller site provision new regulatory indicators were introduced under the Scottish Social Housing Charter provisions contained in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010.

8.8 The Council reported its performance on site quality and cost to the Scottish Housing Regulator in May 2014 as part of the inaugural Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

- 8.9 The Scottish Housing Regulator has since announced a national thematic inquiry into the standard of services and rental charges at Gypsy/Traveller sites because of marked variations in the returns provided by social landlords.
- 8.10 The Scottish Government are to consider inclusion of the new proposed minimum site standards in the next review of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, anticipated to be 2016.
- 8.11 Following publication of the Scottish Government's proposed national strategy and action plan there will be an opportunity to consider actions and report back to Members.

## 11. Implications

- 11.1 **Resources:** There are future resource implications for site investment and site provision. These will be reported to Community Services Committee through non-HRA Capital and Revenue reporting and monitoring arrangements.
- 11.2 **Legal:** There are new regulatory outcomes and indicators for Gypsy/Traveller site provision introduced by the implementation of the Scottish Social Housing Charter in 2012 under provisions in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 11.3 **Equalities:** There are specific equality outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers published within the Council's Equality Scheme under provisions in the Equality Act 2010.
- 11.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever/Gaelic:** There are no implications.
- 11.5 **Risk:** There are risks from non-compliance with legal, regulatory and SOA expectations.
- 11.6 **Rural:** There are no specific rural implications.

### Recommendation

Members are invited to consider the content of this report.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 18 November 2014

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Appendix 1

Roadside Encampments 2013/2014

Date	Location	Landowner	stated area connection	Reason for Camp
April	Behind Homepage, Inverness	TEC Services	Elgin	work
April	Opposite Burger King, Inverness	Inverness Estates	Perth & Oban	work
April	Behind Homepage, Inverness	TEC Services	Perth	work
April	Car Park Archive Centre, Inverness	EC & S.	Manchester	work
April	Fort George car park	Historic Scotland	Manchester	work
April	Farmers field, Dores Rd.	Private owner	Manchester	work
May	Opposite Burger King, Inverness	Inverness Estates	Oban	hospital visit
May	Picnic area at Davoit T.I. Office	Inverness Estates	Newcastle	work
May	Tain Links	not known	not known	Holiday
May	Tain Links	not known	not known	Holiday
May	Fearne Drome	not known	not known	visiting family
May	Kinlochmore Cemetery	THC	not known	holiday
May	Ind. Est. Grantown.	TEC Services	Aberdeen-shire	work
June	Foreshore at Ardersier.	Ministry of Defence	Stirling	work
June	Archive Centre, Inverness	EC & S.	Dyce	work
June	Dingwall Business Park	not known	not known	Holiday
June	Opposite Burger King, Inverness	Inverness Estates	Perth	work
June	ASDA staff car park, Inverness	ASDA	Elgin	work
June	Torvean Quarry	EC & S.	not known	work
July	Aultbea Picnic area	not known	not known	work
July	Opposite Burger King, Inverness	Inverness Estates	France	not known
July	Viewpoint near Luib	not known	not known	not known
July	Lay-by near Broadford Cemetery	Transerve	not known	not known
July	Torvean Quarry.	E.C.& S.	Tain	Holiday
July	Overflow car park st Fort George	Historic Scotland	Tain	work
July	Opposite Burger King, Inverness	Inverness Estates	Elgin	holiday
July	Milton of Culloden	Private owner	Tain	Holiday
August	Torvean Quarry	E.C.& S.	Perth	holiday
August	By Dingbro	H & P	Manchester	work
August	Aultbea Picnic area	not known	not known	Holiday
August	Catalina Point, Alness	not known	not known	Holiday
August	Foulis Ferry	not known	not known	Holiday
August	Ardersier Foreshore	M.O.D.	Fife	work
August	Grass by MS Centre, Inverness	Common Good Fund	Warrington	work
August	Opposite Burger King, Inverness	Inverness Estates	Falkirk	Holiday
August	Dalcross Ind. Est.	Housing and Property.	Warrington	work
September	Roundabout at Homepage, Inverness	Inverness Estates	Oban	Holiday
September	Fort George car park	MOD	west central scotland	holiday
September	Ardersier Foreshor	MOD	not known	holiday
October	Dalcross Ind. Est.	H & P Highland Council	Warrington	work
October	Opposite Burger King, Inverness	Inverness Estates	not known	Holiday
November	Opposite Burger King, Inverness	Inverness Estates	Essex	work
November	Behind Homepage, Inverness	TEC Services	Perth	work
January	Behind Homepage, Inverness	TEC Services	Perth	work
January	Unit 24 Dalcross Ind. Est.	H & P Highland Council	Manchester	work
January	Milton of Culloden	Private owner	not known	work
February	Behind Dingbro, Inverness	H&P Highland Council	Manchester	work
February	Opposite Burger King, Inverness	Inverness Estates	west central scotland	holiday
March	View Point, Auchtertyre		not known	work
March	Lochalsh Business Park, Auchtertyre		not known	work
March	Milton of Culloden	Private owner	Oban and Perth	work



## Highland Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment - SUMMARY FINDINGS

Below we summarise the key points emerging through the study in terms of the size and profile of the Gypsy/Traveller population in Highland, Gypsy/Travellers' views and investment priorities for accommodation provision in the area, travel patterns and potential for transit site or stopping place provision, and our assessment of Gypsy/Travellers' accommodation needs over the period 2014-19.

### **1. In terms of *the size and profile of the Gypsy/Traveller population:***

We estimate the Gypsy/Traveller population in Highland to be around 415 individuals across 130 households. While this is a small proportion of the resident population (0.2%) the 2011 Census indicates that Highland has the third largest Gypsy/Traveller population in Scotland in terms of share of the total population.

Gypsy/Travellers on Council sites account for around a fifth of the total population, and those on roadside encampments around a third. However, the largest group of Gypsy/Travellers live in bricks and mortar housing, nearly half of all Gypsy/Travellers in Highland.

The Gypsy/Traveller population differs in profile when compared with Highland's total resident population. This is particularly evident in age profile; the Gypsy/Traveller population has a younger age profile and relatively small population of older people (65+). Available evidence also shows a larger household size for Gypsy/Travellers – 3.0 to 3.5 persons per household compared to 2.3 persons per household across the Highland population as a whole.

### **2. In terms of *Gypsy/Travellers' views on permanent site accommodation provision in Highland, and investment priorities:***

Gypsy/Traveller accommodation options in Highland comprise four Council sites providing a total capacity of 47 pitches, although not all were available for occupation at the time of the study, including the currently inactive pitches at Kentallen Park. This is in addition to bricks and mortar housing provision and roadside encampments.

Across all active sites, tenant views were most positive on the size of Council sites (the number and size of pitches), security of tenancy and site layout. Views were generally least positive in relation to availability and quality of onsite facilities, although safety & security was also poorly rated for the Longman site.

Site residents were generally positive on the quality of their site provision; two thirds of participants were satisfied with their site overall. There remains around 3 in 10 expressing dissatisfaction with their site.

Dissatisfaction was significantly higher for the Longman site (2 in 5 tenants dissatisfied), and this appears to have been driven to some extent by concerns regarding management of safety and security on the site.

Upgrading of existing onsite facilities and/or provision of additional facilities were by some margin the most commonly suggested priority for investment – primarily provision of fences to pitches, repair to pitch surfaces, and improvement to amenity blocks.

### **3. In terms of *travel patterns and potential for transit site or stopping place provision:***

Available data shows an average of 52 unauthorised encampments per annum, with activity peaking during the June to August period. The size of encampments varies widely, but most consist of 3-6 caravans.

Gypsy/Traveller encampments take place across most parts of the Highland area, but the largest volume of activity is focused in the Inverness & Inner Moray Firth and Skye areas. There are quite diverse motivations for encampments across these locations – employment (Inverness and Skye), visiting family (Inverness) and holiday (all areas). Many families have a long history of travel through the Highland area and consider this “home”.

Gypsy/Travellers travelling in Highland are most likely to have links to other parts of Highland, Central Scotland and England/Wales. There are also well established travel routes particularly with Moray and Grampian, and Tayside/Perth & Kinross/Fife.

Housing Services currently take the lead liaison role with Gypsy/Traveller encampments, and this approach is generally working well with the liaison role significant in enabling other services to link in with Gypsy/Traveller families.

Also in terms of access to services, provision of services such as education and health/nursing for Gypsy/Travellers appears to be structured around existing service bases. Provision is at a much higher level in the Inverness area than for example the Skye, Spean Bridge and Lochaber areas. This indicates a mismatch with the distribution of the Gypsy/Traveller population across Highland, and likely patterns of service need.

The study has identified a number of challenges for management of unauthorised encampment activity across Highland. The most significant relate to the types of encampment (more visible locations, larger and longer-term encampments more difficult) and waste management (in terms of service impact, cost and cause of community complaints).

Levels of Gypsy/Traveller encampment activity suggest a potential role for transit site or stopping place provision in Highland - to provide safer and more sustainable stopping locations and to reduce the negative impact of encampments. The study identified a range of concerns regarding the likely effectiveness of transit sites (and to a lesser extent stopping places), but there remains a substantial group of Gypsy/Travellers who felt there is scope for this kind of provision in Highland – and who would wish to use such provision.

Concerns raised around the effectiveness of transit sites or stopping place provision highlight the importance of design of this provision, and an overview of Department of Communities and Local Government guidance on selection and design of sites is appended to this report. In addition, collaborative working with other local authorities may add significant value to the planning and delivery of any transit sites or stopping places in Highland. Travel patterns identified through the study suggest that this could most usefully involve Moray and Grampian, and Tayside/Perth & Kinross/Fife authorities.

#### 4. In terms of *Gypsy/Travellers' accommodation needs in Highland over the next 5 years*:

The Table below provides an overview of each element of the needs assessment calculation. The key points of note are:

1. There is an estimated **50-65 Gypsy/Traveller households requiring site accommodation over the next 5 years**. This is expected to be focused on Inverness and Lochaber, but also includes accommodation needs at Newtonmore and Skye:
  - o Inverness area            20-25 households
  - o Newtonmore area        5-7 households
  - o Spean Bridge area      15-17 households
  - o Lochaber area            5-10 households
  - o Skye                         5-6 households
2. There is an **estimated surplus of 0 to 20 pitches** over this period (0-4 per annum) on the basis of projected supply of pitch vacancies.
3. This suggests that, **across the Highland area as a whole current levels of site provision are likely to be sufficient to meet needs** over this 5 year period. However, available evidence suggests that the balance between likely future need for and provision of accommodation is quite different at an area level:
  - a. A projected surplus of site provision in the Inverness area, potentially such that the Longman site may experience difficulty filling vacant pitches. As noted earlier, there may be a case for transit site or stopping place provision in Inverness.
  - b. Need for and provision of Gypsy/Traveller accommodation is likely to remain broadly in balance in the Newtonmore and Lochaber areas.
  - c. There is an estimated need of 5-6 Gypsy/Traveller households for Skye over the next 5 years, and no current provision in the area.

**Table 1: Summary estimate of Gypsy/Traveller accommodation needs in Highland 2014-19**

Component		Estimate
	a	Waiting list demand for Gypsy/Traveller site provision
		14
PLUS	b	Without settled accommodation wishing to stay in Highland
		8
PLUS	c	Households in unsuitable accommodation
		2
EQUALS	d	<b>CURRENT (BACKLOG) NEED</b>
		<b>25-30</b>
PLUS	e	New households forming over next 5 years
		5-10
PLUS	f	Households falling into need over the next 5 years
		20-25
EQUALS	g	<b>TOTAL NEED OVER 5 YEAR PERIOD</b>
		<b>50-65</b>
MINUS	h	Expected supply of Gypsy/Traveller site pitches
		65-70
EQUALS	e	<b>NET SHORTFALL/SURPLUS IN SITE PROVISION</b>
		<b>0 to +20</b>

(Craigforth November 2014)