

Managing Unauthorised Encampments of Gypsy/Travellers in Angus - Consultation Report

The table below represents all the feedback received from the consultation from all sources outlined in section 6.3 of the associated report. Information has been redacted where appropriate.

Comment
<p>I, along with many others, have no issues with the Traveller community—so long as the law is upheld by every individual and the Traveller Code of Conduct is adhered to. Every community, including the Traveller community, should be held to the same legal and civic standards as everyone else.</p> <p>The concern I do have is that many of the sites where Travellers have set up often appear to disregard these rules and the agreed-upon Code of Conduct.</p> <p>According to Angus Council's own guidelines, Travellers are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep groups small Respect the land they park on and nearby residents Keep animals under control, including minimising noise from barking dogs Dispose of litter and rubbish responsibly, using council-provided black bags Dispose of animal and human waste hygienically Avoid fly-tipping and ensure all waste is disposed of at licensed sites Follow the Highway Code for safety Avoid starting fires or burning rubbish on-site Keep noise from generators to a minimum to prevent nuisance <p>However, in my personal experience, many of these rules seem to be broken at most sites I have seen. Local residents frequently raise complaints with the council and express their frustrations on social media, yet these issues often go unaddressed. By the time Travellers leave a site, it is frequently left in a poor state.</p> <p>I want to stress that this is not about unfairly targeting any group—it is about fairness for everyone. If these rules and laws are not upheld and enforced, it creates an unfair situation for the wider community. Everyone should be free to live as they choose, provided that the rules in place are followed. Angus Council must ensure that these regulations are properly enforced so that our country remains clean, fair, and respectful to all.</p>

Travellers should be subject to the same conditions and obey the same rules as the rest of us in the Caravanning, Motorhome and campervan community. Why should they get special consideration when many tourists would spend more money locally.

I don't mind traveling people but it angers me when the council treats them differently to the wider none travel community , and they can't say they don't because they do especially with these sites they set up in with no prior permission and get away with it , if it were none travels we would have been made to move away and stop any work being done , I'm meaning the St Cyrus one especially , that one angered a lot of Aberdeenshire and Montrose people. Treat us all the same you seem to be scared of them

There needs to be a distinction made between law abiding travellers and people portraying themselves as travellers who constantly disregard the law. This has been evidenced at Edzell especially last year when vehicles with [REDACTED] delivered a caravan to the Muir and had to physically break down barriers to gain access. The Police couldn't do anything because [REDACTED]. This is a blatant disregard of the law then someone occupies the caravan and are untouchable. Open campfires are literally despite the Fire Service advising against it, yet they are untouchable. [REDACTED] Against not on blatant disregard for the law it's also showing no respect for anybody else. Those people are not true Travellers, and a distinction must be made.

The document is lengthy yet comprehensive.

Is there a response times to respond to any concerns?

The welfare visit checklist seeks to gather a lot of information. Is there a need for all of the information and what will be done with it?

The link on the supporting paperwork section does not work.

If the families do not adhere to the code of conduct, how quickly will Angus council take action to move them, and will they stay in Angus Council area?

I understand that your hands are tied by Scottish Govt legislation. I can see that the Council are trying to do what they can.

It is unfortunate that you cannot assist local businesses/landowners with clean ups or assistance towards legal costs.

The policy rightly states "... improving the lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller communities is a significant human rights commitment and tackling the deep-rooted inequalities will help us deliver the fairer Angus, and Scotland, we want. It then defines, "Unauthorised encampment are places where a person camps (in vans, trailers or any other moveable accommodation) on land

that they do not own, and where they do not have permission to reside. This then places Angus Council in conflict with its own practice in allowing motorhomes at Inchcape Park. There, the land is not owned by the motor homeowners, and they do not have permission to be there out with the small section designated for campervans. That's not to say motorhomes should not be allowed at Inchcape Park. You cannot have a set of rules governing the Gypsy Traveller community and a practice that turns a blind eye to others. Angus Council needs to resolve the issue of the overspill of the site that they operate at Inchcape Park in tandem with their Gypsy Traveller policy. The Equalities Act 2010 Sect 149 places a statutory duty on Angus Council to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other conduct that is prohibited by the Act. The Equalities Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regs 2012, Reg 5 details how Angus Council must assess both POLICY and PRACTICE so that it meets its statutory duty under the Act. The practice of allowing persons to stay at Inchcape Park, separate from the proposed policy for the Gypsy Traveller community needs to be assessed as there appears to be an unfairness and possible breach of the Equalities Act in terms of discrimination.

MECOPP works extensively with the Gypsy/Traveller community across Scotland. Our work has shown that members of the Community Experience significant issues in regard to discrimination, a lack of adequate culturally appropriate accommodation and a poor communication with the community by public bodies.

In regard to the contents of the Angus Council policy on managing unauthorised encampments, we have noted the following:

We support 4.3, 4.4. and 4.5 of the policy and would note the importance of positive engagement with members of the community. It is important that Council staff approach this in a manner that is culturally sensitive and avoids taking negative stereotypes. Angus Council may wish to consider staff training on cultural competency.

Regarding the Code of Conduct, we would query the requirement to 'keep groups small'. This is extremely subjective, and many members of the community live within extended family groups. We are concerned that this might be utilised to unfairly penalise the community and would suggest providing a more definitive figure in the Policy. We are also concerned with 4.8 B and C Code of Conduct. 'Unacceptable harm' could also be viewed in a very subjective manner, and we would argue that there should a reasonable threshold in this regard. We maintain concerns that unreasonable complaints about encampments causing environmental and economic harm which are unfounded being utilised to institute legal proceedings. Similarly for 4.8 C for public use and enjoyment of land, this could potentially include any location, and we believe reasonable thresholds should be put in place. There could perhaps be a list of land compiled that would meet the above criteria as part of this policy. Alternatively, improved definitions of what constitutes 'unacceptable harm', 'environmental harm' or 'economic harm' should be provided. This could then be communicated with the community.

In regard to Section 6 on Consultation and Communication, MECOPP would suggest that meaningful attempts to consult with the Gypsy/Traveller community on this policy before being enacted. We did receive a request from the Council regarding this but felt that it did not provide realistic timeframes to organise or provide the necessary resources. This should be undertaken with a more collaborative approach.

We welcome the provision of the leaflet shown on Appendix 3. We do feel that the Policy does miss the point in terms of some of the barriers and challenges faced by the Gypsy/Traveller community in Scotland. Members of the community face significant issues with capacity of culturally appropriate accommodation in general. The number of pitches across Scotland has reduced by 14% between 2009 and 2019. MECOPP has argued that work should take place to increase the capacity of culturally appropriate accommodation through increased local authority provision and supporting members of the Gypsy/Traveller community through the Planning Process. Consideration should be given for both sites that provide permanent and temporary provision.

Further details can be found on the following briefing paper produced by MECOPP:

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62f4f5fa696d570e19a69429/t/6790c934b2d25f3f90a5d7cb/1737541940844/MECOPP_GT_Briefing_sheet_03.pdf Another option that we would urge Angus to consider is 'negotiated stopping' which has been piloted. This would make a significant improvement both in outcomes for the Gypsy/Traveller community as well as reducing any friction with the settled community in the area. More details can be found at <https://www.cosla.gov.uk/news/2020/september-2020/councils-to-provide-improved-services-to-gypsytravellers-living-roadside>

Why do the people making the mess and who don't adhere to the laws making others people's lives a misery pay the price?

What about OUR right as individuals and as a community not to have these people rock up with their [REDACTED] [REDACTED] along with leaving a mess behind. They don't clean up, they leave areas littered with used [REDACTED] and nothing is done. It's truly pathetic. You don't protect the victims of these travellers one little bit. Yet another pointless bunch of words.

Angus council rules state that travellers should -

Keep groups small

Respect the land they park on and nearby residents

Keep animals under control, including minimising noise from barking dogs

Dispose of litter and rubbish responsibly, using council-provided black bags

Dispose of animal and human waste hygienically

Avoid fly-tipping and ensure all waste is disposed of at licensed sites

Follow the Highway Code for safety

Avoid starting fires or burning rubbish on-site
Keep noise from generators to a minimum to prevent nuisance

If the travellers and council could actually abide by/enforce these rules, then that would be a start.

This is the last day of consultation on an important policy on an issue which generates literally hundreds of social; media posts and dozens of emails and phone calls to councillors and yet this appears to be only the 9th publishable comment submitted? Perhaps this online form of public consultation is ineffective? I agree with the carefully considered submission from MECOPP and the concerns raised therein. In essence this policy seems very one sided, it's more reactive enforcement than proactive accommodation. My understanding is that there is a travelling season and travelling families visit particular sites that are part of their history and oral tradition. No part of the policy seems to require Angus Council to be proactive and identify these sites and ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken before any works are done on those sites: surrounding the traditional site at the North end of Edzell Muir with boulders is one example of a failure in countering discrimination. Section A of The Checklist to be completed by the visiting Housing Officer shows complete lack of understanding of Travelling Families Culture concerning traditional sites. Going to Balmuir is not an appropriate option. There should be a clear commitment in the policy, if there is no longer a dedicated Traveller Liaison Officer, to ensure the Housing Officers involved in initial visits are specifically trained and advised by organisations like Conyach on the cultural background of travelling Families. There should be a commitment to educate and engage Community Councils on the cultural and equality issues involved and engender a better level of understanding in the resident community. There is a presumption in the policy that visiting travelling families are acting as one. If there are disparate families arriving at a site then there needs to be guidance for council staff who are monitoring the site for frequency of recurring visits. "Keep groups small" seems far too simplistic. How can one extended family group control another arriving on the site? Have Angus Council officers consulted with Conyach or any other advocacy group, or the many Angus Residents with travelling traditions in their heritage, to inform the effectiveness of this policy, before it goes before Communities Committee?

St. Christophers Community this morning with the aim of talking to tenants regarding the – Managing Unauthorised Encampments of Gypsy / Travellers Policy Consultation. We had the opportunity of talking to five tenants regarding Angus Council updating their policy in line with Scottish Government. Below are some comments from the tenants:

- Feeling the council are very hard on travellers
- Not a lot of camps for travellers
- Residents not happy the council are putting any traveller in the community. In the past the travellers knew who was coming in.
- Some sites turn travellers away.
- As long as travellers tidy up after them. Some travellers just leave a lot of rubbish behind and make the place untidy. It is these travellers that give travellers a bad name.

Whilst I do greatly appreciate being involved in the revised policy, as a business owner I simply do not have the time to read, compare current and proposed policy, etc, therefore I do feel that in order for AC to support local businesses that have had issues with [REDACTED] travellers, there needs to be a clear inclusion of the following:-

- 1) You will no doubt be aware that Dave Doogan MP, raised concerns with AC over the current policy, which was very one sided and really not fit for purpose, and having reviewed other council policy on such (P&K and Highlands), it was clear that AC approach was different.
- 2) AC to state what the current and proposed policy changes actually are, we simply don't have time to review 25 pages of policy!
- 3) We need a specific policy for [REDACTED] travellers on purpose-built business parks and such businesses must have much improved support from AC over this. (please review to the last 20 years communication, where we still have to battle several times a year for AC to take onboard our concerns with little action taken to address)
- 4) We need a long-term plan and policy for [REDACTED] this has been on-going for several years, we are a business park not an [REDACTED] traveller's site and we need the relevant support from AC to maintain this, negate from customer complaints, and security concerns where [REDACTED] travellers relocate to [REDACTED].
- 5) We need clear call to action timescales stated in the policy with specific stipulation on business parks, at the end of the day we are operating on a purpose-built business park, where each business owner should be confident at promoting their business every single day of the year and not having to have a constant battle with AC over out-dated and unfair council policy. This should be a priority for AC and would prove such support to local businesses, who are employing local employees, paying business and council tax rates, supporting local shops and the local economy, where the [REDACTED] travellers bring nothing but [REDACTED] activities, you only need to look at the standards of work they do in the area and no doubt the increase in [REDACTED] during this period in question. As I say I do appreciate being involved in this, but we need clear [REDACTED] traveller policy inclusion for business parks along with relevant timescales in order AC can be held accountable for efficient actions where required.