WRITTEN SUBMISSION FROM ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

1. Details about your sites, including size, facilities, age, location, management arrangements, rent costs and provisions made for residents' temporary absences (e.g. to travel for the summer)

There are 3 official sites in Argyll & Bute, located at Dunoon, Lochgilphead and Ledaig (north of Oban, near Benderloch). These 3 sites were formally owned by Argyll and Bute Council but are now owned and managed by Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) following the transfer of all Council housing (including official sites) which also took place during November 2006. The sites provide 31 pitches in total. The capacity at Lochgilphead has been reduced by 1 unit due to the provision of a community/play portakabin. Current rent for a pitch is £42.13 and rents rise in line with ACHA rent increase each year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name/Location</th>
<th>Pitches</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Torlochan, Dunoon</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Opened in 1984. Upgraded in 1996. Patterns of residence in the past highly variable. Extended family has occupied site long term; Scottish Traveller population. Length of residence therefore typically 1-2 years. Site Office: Amenity Blocks: kitchen, bathroom, toilet; separate store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ledaig, Oban</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Site opened 1990/91. Settled site based on one extended family: Scottish/Gypsy Traveller population. Length of residence mostly 2-9 years; Site Office: Amenity Blocks: bathroom, utility and storage; Portakabin for play/health/education being considered. Site/tenants association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 31

Further details of these official sites, management arrangements and policies for provision of housing services to Gypsies/Travellers is contained in ACHA’s “Gypsy Travellers’ Strategy 2012-2015” which is attached as appendix 1.
2. Details of any proposed sites

At the present time, neither the Council nor ACHA have proposals to create any new site. A dedicated study of Gypsy/Travellers’ accommodation needs carried out in 2007 and reviewed for the Argyll & Bute Housing Need & Demand Assessment in 2011, indicated that the existing sites are considered sufficient for permanent travelling community. A proportion of the travelling population are also seeking allocations to mainstream housing.

3. How you determine where and what size sites should be

N/A

4. If you have no sites, what the reasons are

N/A

5. Details of any existing/planned temporary or halting sites in your authority area

The research into Gypsy/Travellers’ accommodation needs indicates there is no requirement for temporary or halting sites. Unauthorized camping occasionally occurs, mainly in the Cowal or Lomond areas, but is not perceived to be a significant issue and is dealt with on an ad hoc basis.

6. How often and by what process you review the need for more pitches/sites

The last comprehensive assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies/Travellers was carried out as part of a consortium of local authorities across West Central Scotland in 2007. Argyll & Bute Council also reviews and updates evidence from the national Twice Yearly Count (where available) as well as analysis of the HOMEArgyll common housing register which mainstreams applications from this group and treats them on an equal footing with all other waiting list applicants. The HNDA and LHS identify no current need for further pitches or sites.

7. How you identify, record and address any complaints about sites, e.g. size or facilities

As per ACHA’s Gypsy Travellers’ Strategy, complaints from this group would follow the standard procedure for any other tenant or applicant.

8. In building and maintaining sites, how you consider the impact of the site location on, for instance, access to health and education services and/or public transport links

The sites are all located within reasonable distance of a main local town and provide easy access to facilities such as schools and health services if required. Most site residents tend to prefer a degree of remove from other families (including other Traveller families) while those seeking closer integration can and do apply for permanent housing within the community. The Council also provides dedicated
outreach health services for this client group in partnership with NHS Highland. More recently, these outreach workers are also liaising with Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project (MECOPP) who are providing specific services to Gypsy/Travellers in Argyll and Bute too.

9. How you monitor private sites and how disputes between their owners and tenants are managed

N/A. There are no recorded private sites within this authority.

10. How unauthorised sites are managed and by what criteria they are so classified

Historically, periodic summer encampments appear to have averaged around 10-12 households over 4-6 years. There is some local knowledge of possible sites used for encampments in the Cowal, Oban, Lochgilphead, Campbeltown, Mull and Helensburgh areas but no formal records are maintained and anecdotal evidence suggests the incidence of unlawful encampment is minimal, and is mostly short stay and reportedly well managed. The Council implemented a policy on the management of unauthorised encampments by Gypsy Travellers in 2005, prior to stock transfer, when dedicated Travelling Person Officers within the Council’s housing services would attend reported encampments with local police liaison officers. More recently, post stock transfer, the Council’s involvement has been on an ad hoc and informal basis and any encampments on Council amenity land, forestry or private sites, or roadside verges are generally dealt with by officers from different services such as Roads & Amenities (local Streetscene area teams) or Environmental Health.

11. What policies and staff awareness raising/training on Gypsy/Travellers you have

Currently, there are no specific staff awareness policies or dedicated training on Gypsy Travellers however our outreach health workers, whose remit includes this client group, are involved in generic training and do attend relevant awareness raising events.

The Council has an Equality & Diversity Scheme in place, in line with national legislation and guidance, which sets out its commitment to promote equality and to tackle discrimination and which describes its activities in this regard. All plans, policies and strategies are subject to an Equality Impact assessment process and in recent years the Local Housing Strategy, the previous Homeless Strategy, and the Housing Information & Advice Strategy refer to the consultation carried out with Gypsy Travellers for the joint West Central Scotland study. Under the new public sector equality duty, the Council is developing its equality outcomes. The needs of, and issues for, gypsy travellers are being considered as part of this process and are statutory requirements for the Council as the strategic housing authority when updating its Housing Needs & demand assessment and the LHS.
12. Information about your Gypsy/Traveller liaison officers, including whether the post has a shared remit and whether site managers undertake the role

Following transfer of the official sites from the Council to ACHA, the role of the former dedicated Travelling Person Site Managers has been removed and the association has implemented a generic remit for their housing staff which is in accordance with national policy and guidance on mainstreaming equalities. However, the council and NHS Highland’s joint outreach workers do have a shared remit for direct liaison with Gypsy Travellers and homeless persons, as well as looked after children.

Allan Brandie  
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Argyll and Bute Council  
6 July 2012