WRITTEN SUBMISSION FROM FIONA TOWNSLEY

I would like the information provided with this letter to be included as my views on some of the issues that affect Gypsy Travellers for the Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee.

I was asked recently if the way my family is treated would be different to none Travellers living in a house. I feel the information I have provided shows Gypsy Travellers are seen, talked about and treated as second class citizens to day just the same as they were 30 years ago.

Fiona Townsley
5 June 2012
The Scottish Parliament
Equal Opportunities Committee

Finding a site
Double Dykes and along the bank of the River Almond has been a camping ground
where Travellers have lived for over a hundred years. In the past Travellers have lived in
bow tents, wooden cabins/ huts and caravans in this area of Perth. Many of the Travellers
that have stayed in and around Perth in the past have been prosecuted.

Newspaper from the 60s on, have many articles about Travellers being charged with
trespass. One article said at a part known as Double Dykes one person had camped on the
"recognised camp at Double Dykes for 40 years."
Another article said there were more than 20 prosecutions for Perthshire tinkers for
camping without permission. (No 1) My parents and grandparents were some of the
Travellers prosecuted for camping on Double Dykes in the past.

Since the 1960s, the local authorities were talking about making the Travellers
encampment at Almond Bridge a permanent site with facilities. A memo from the council
planning to county clerk in 1964 says “I have given some consideration to the problem of
finding a site for tinkers. The only one which I consider that meets all the requirements as
to distance from Perth, services etc. Is an area of land lying along the south bank of the
River Almond” “the land is ruff and is used from time to time by families of tinkers” it
goes on to say that “the site is a prominent one and therefore some planting of trees
would be essential to screen the vans and tents from public view.” (No 2)
A letter between Perth council and Argyll council (No 3) later in 1964 says “there is a
problem in this county of providing suitable accommodation for all of the tinkers who
require it.” many tinkers still living in poor conditions and the council have been
endeavoring for some time to provide additional accommodation or camp. The greatest
difficulty has, however, been experience in finding ground in respect of which there are
no objections from farm owners of the ground or the owners of the adjoining ground.
While many owners raise no objections to tinkers living on their land so long as they are
in the position to have them removed if they so think fit, it is a different matter when an
owner is asked to provide a site for permanent housing accommodation or a camp for
tinkers. This letter goes on to imply the plan of the council was to build a stepping stone
of accommodation to get Travellers into standard council houses.

In November 1976 the Perthshire Advertiser states: last winter on the road for Travelling
folk, it goes on to say Perthshire Travelling people are about to face another winter of
cold and discomfort on the road but it could be their last as the answer is to provide an
adequate number of sites equipped with all necessary facilities and services.
It took the local Authorities another 6 years to build a site at Perth for Travelling people.
In 1980 the government was now providing 100 percent grants for sites.
Travellers argued there was a need for two types of sites, permanent for Travellers who lived in Perth and temporary for those who came here for the berry season or just passing through. A number of families were staying at different campsites around Perth one of the newspapers at the time said there was more than a hundred Travelling families camped around the Perth area. The council need to move the Travellers to make way for the new road and this put pressure on the council to find a site.

There was a number of places looked at but Double Dykes had a long history of being a camp site used by Travelling People. The people of the industrial estate and the residents at the near by village of Ruthven field protested they didn’t want Travellers in their area (No 4) they were forgetting the Travellers lived here before there was an industrial estate and Double Dykes was a camping ground for over a hundred years.

One Councillor said “his fear was that other councillors would vote in favour of the proposed site, to avoid having it in their ward”. (No 5)

Most of the objections made against the proposed site were racist. I have listed some of the comments made in the objections.

“Is the local population going to be swamped by the tinker element?” (No 6)

“Where are the children of these families to be educated? Not the village school I trust? Obviously they would have to be transported to bigger schools so once again the hard pressed rate payer has to fork out” (No 6)

We have just complete a 21,000.00 renovation to a house at Ruthvenfield crossing, and it is now occupied by two of our best workers. They have expressed the opinion that if a “tink encampment” is situated on their doorstep they will no longer want to stay there and will seek employment plus housing elsewhere” “who will be prepared to live on the doorstep of this eyesore” “Obviously if this Traveller’s site goes ahead, no decent person will want to live close by” (No 7)

The council prevails and they would be chased back to where they come from, or even further if possible the thought of them there permanently causes the deeps dismay and horror.” (No 8)

I read these comments and it is strange to think these people are talking about me and I was only nine years old at the time. One of my brothers and a sister was born at Double Dykes in the 60s when my parents lived on the campsite.

In the last 30 Years attitudes have not changed, in 2007 we need a decent site for the residents of Double Dykes and found the same racist prejudice still exists. (See page 8)
The Scottish Office provided a one hundred percent grant to build a site for Travelling People and Double Dykes was eventually built in 1982 and made an official permanent Travelling Peoples site. A number of families were staying at different campsites around Perth. There was around 60 families camped on the ground that was to be the western bypass. 20 families were told they could get a pitch on the site and had a place to live when many others were still under the threat of eviction and had no where to go. Now that the council provided just 20 pitches they could evict and move on the other families, some of these families are my relatives.

A Perth council committee paper from 1982 says “the contract period is thirteen weeks and the site can therefore be expected to be complete in early November. This timing will allow 20 families to be accommodated before the winter.”

This paper up until here has a concern for the wellbeing of the Travelling People given them a home for the winter but it goes onto say “and will considerable ease the problem of removing the Travellers from the line of the Perth Western Bypass before construction is due to begin.”

The council was aware there were more than 20 families and they need more than 20 pitches.

At that time and today local authorities are supposed to have a policy of none harassment especially when the councils’ are not providing enough sites/pitches in the past councils’ were encouraged to meet pitch targets for their area, many councils’ did not meet their pitch target like Perth council. In 1984 Perth was still 55 pitches short of meeting the pitch target of 75. Perth council later said they had agreements with private site owners to set aside pitches for Gypsy Travellers and included these pitches as part of meeting the pitch target. A report by Save the Children in 1997 called Racial Discrimination on Caravan Parks show this was not the case (No 10). Perth council did not consult with private site owners and the site owners did not retain pitches on their sites for Travelling people this meant Perth only had the 20 pitches at Double Dykes caravan site 15 years later and this is still the same today.

Double Dykes Caravan Site is just out side Perth. When it was built it was in a rural area, the Inveralmond Industrial Estate was some distance away which meant that the site was still surrounded in fields on three sides and the River Almond at the other, along the road a few hundred yards or so is the small village of Ruthvenfield. Double Dykes was one of the few sites in Scotland that started off in a place preferred by Travellers.

Today at one side of the site there is an industrial unit containing a haulage delivery firm (DHL). Over the last few years there has been planning applications for 1,350 housing estate, more industrial units and retail parks. Over the last several years racist comments and abuse has been shouted at the site by people passing on the near by path and the road. Tenants have raised their concerns with the council and police.

In 1982 when the Travellers moved onto the site it was December and very cold, some of the amenity units water pipes were frozen and some of the amenity units were flooded with burst water pipes. This was still an improvement as we were one of the 20 families who got a pitch and were no longer threatened with eviction and being put onto the road on a very cold December.
A pitch consisted of a concrete slab, to accommodate one caravan, a stoned drying area, a portable utility unit and a shed.
The site had a fence around it with a high mound of earth with trees and shrubs planted around the perimeter to screen the site from the road. The warden's office is at the gate. The tenancy agreement says that you are only supposed to have one caravan irrespective of size but many of the families that moved on the site had two or more caravans to accommodate the larger family with children. From the very first day the site opened the caravan site was overcrowded
Despite all the objections the caravan site run well for the first few years and the council was showing off their showpiece site.

In the 1990s a second site at Creiff was proposed but after a 1,008 signed petition the decisions was taken the site would be too close to existing houses so the plans were abandoned. (No 11)

On Double Dykes tenants felt the electricity was high there was over crowding on pitches and repairs on the site were none existent, the only time anything got repaired was when the tenants repaired it themselves.
The portable units on each pitch had a 5 year life span and were supposed to be replaced after 5 years but tenants had to use them for 10 years by this time they were falling apart. The lack of repairs, cold and dampness was causing mould and fungus to grow inside the units. Many of the units chip wood flooring had falling out and tenants had to repair the floors themselves with ply - boards or there would just be a hole down to the concrete slab.
Years of complaints by residents and grant funding again from the Scottish Office made it possible for the units to be upgraded.

The portable units were replaced in 1992/3 with the breeze block utility units that are still on site now. The site warden and council consulted with tenants on what was need for the upgrading of the utility units, tenants felt that they should be built more in keeping with housing standards, insulation and heating to keep them warm and hopeful cold, dampness and mould free. Their should be two doors on the out side of the unit one leading into the kitchen area and the other leading into the bathroom for hygiene purposes.
The council drew up a design for the amenity units taking into consideration what the tenants said.
When the amenity units were half built tenants noticed that the design was not the same as the one agreed and they went to the caretaker with their concerns. The council advised they had taken a decision to change the plan but did not tell the tenants.

The caretaker's officer was rebuilt at the same time as the amenity blocks. The council prepared a list of works for the amenity units and the caretaker's office. At the end of this list for the amenity blocks, the council has wardens unit, as amenity units also incorporating cavity wall insulation, sheet vinyl floor covering and internal plaster finish to block work (No 12). Not on the list the caretaker's toilet and kitchen area was in separate areas of the office and did not open onto one another. There was skirting board around the walls and the light switches were of a white plastic not like the metal switches
tenants used that were prone to condensation and rusting. The council provided better conditions for the site manager to work in, than they did for the Gypsy Travellers living on the site.

Tenants were decanted to two different areas of the site and some went into the field at the back of the site where several families shared one toilet and a kitchen sink. As most people know, 1993 started with very bad flooding for Perthshire. The River Almond burst its banks and the site was flooded. Residential caravans and tourers were stuck in the field at the back of the site making it impossible to move them. A few of the tenants decanted on a separate part of the site made it out with their tours into the industrial estate for the night with some families sleeping in vans and cars because they had lost their homes in the flood. The following morning police arrived saying the Travellers had to move as the industries were complaining about them being their given no consideration to the fact the site was underwater. Some of the tenants moved back along to stay on the pathway adjacent to the site until all the flood water subsided and contacted the council and asked them for help. The site warden at the time advised tenants not to go back into the site as it was a health hazard. While the council were doing all that they could for housing tenants who were affected by the flood the council were refusing to visit Double Dykes and tenants had no option but to move back onto the site and start the cleaning process themselves.

January 19th 1993 News paper clipping. ( No 13 ) Travellers cry out for help 11 of 18 caravans were damaged one woman said she contacted the council they said they would come up but they didn’t, water was 7-8 feet over the site mud covered the whole site, a caravan of an 84 year old man and a woman about the same age was uninhabitable. A skip was moved 20 feet with the force of the water and hit a car. One woman said that they were only given half an hours warning to get the caravans out. Travellers want help to clean up if not compensation. At least someone should come out to look. My parents lost their residential caravan in the flood.

In 2002 I was in the library doing research when I came across flood news updates that the council was providing to the tenants in housing during the floods of 93. 2002 was the first time tenants of Double Dykes caravan site saw these newsletters. One of the newsletters says, caravan site at Gowans Terrace site is now fully operational a rough piece of ground has been transformed into a fully serviced caravan site in the space of four weeks thanks to the dedicated efforts of the housing department staff. Credit is also due to the environmental health department staff who cleaned and prepared the caravans ready for occupation. ( No 14 )
Not one Traveller form Double Dykes was allowed to stay on these sites or in the caravans the council provided for housing tenants (none Travellers). Years and years of trying to get sites for Travellers and the council can provided a site, the caravans and make sure they are ready for tenants to move in, in the space of four weeks for housing tenants. Council updates mentions all of the council property affected by the floods including their holiday site at Aberfeldy yet the council does not motioned the Travelling peoples site at Double Dykes. We were still being ignored by the council. ( No 15 )
On May 14th 1996 a Newspaper article branded Perth Council as ‘Nazis’ after a failed eviction bid. Mr. and Mrs. Lowther from Kinross are talking about the way the council have treated them. The Lowther family are Gypsy Travellers, they bought an existing caravan site and allowed Travellers to stay on the site. The council said the caravan site was not compatible with the residential area yet Mr. and Mrs. Lowther could show the caravan site was a holiday caravan site belonging to none Travellers since the 60s and never had any problems until a Traveller family bought the site. Now the council wanted to close the site down. The council went to the extent of getting the police involved and charging Mr. and Mr. Lowther and the other residents for living on an existing caravan site.

In the late 1990s and early 2000 the council proposed to make an existing caravan site at Abercarniney a permanent caravan site for Travelling People. The local Church of Scotland and a 600 signed petition went against the site being changed into a site to accommodate Travelling People. The site again was abandoned. (No 16)

I feel is this was not Gypsy Travellers and another ethnic minority, it would not be allowed that people could sign a petitions saying they don’t want Black, Asian or Chinese people living near to them or in their community but this is happening to Travellers.

In 2001 and 2002 my family contacted the council for a disability adaptation for an elderly family member. Fighting to get the adaptation started a campaign to improve the conditions on Double Dykes caravan site and to address the inequalities being faced by tenants.

A letter was written to John Swinney MSP in January 2002 signed by the tenants of the site explaining the poor conditions we live in. In February he wrote back thanking us for the letter but explained the site is not within his constituency so he passed it on to Roseanna Cunningham MSP. A few days later there was an article in the local newspaper saying “Travellers site rent rise anger” our local councillor Dave Scott is saying “they don’t rent a house they rent a toilet, washroom and slab of concrete they pay £46.76 a week the highest rent for a house is going to be £43. 97 so they actually pay £3 pound a week more for a slab of concrete than the best house in Perth.

In 2002 Community Scotland did an inspection of Double Dykes caravan site and found the site conditions so bad they arranged for a photographer to come back and take photographs of the amenity blocks and the site. Due to the lack of insulation which was provided for the caretakers office and not the tenants’ toilets and kitchen the units mould and dampness was again a big problem. The report found the facilities on site fell well below the recommended standard for housing. The woman from Community Scotland advised tenants that this would be the turning point and things were about to change for the better for the Travelling community. In a letter to Perth and Kinross council Community Scotland advised “although we hope you found our report useful over all, it is not our intentions to attach priority to the suggestions made in the report. We feel that the case study organizations will better placed to determine priorities, taken into account priorities beyond services to Gypsy Travellers.” (No 17)
Travellers are always talked about and treated like second class citizens. It didn’t matter how bad the conditions on a Travellers site were it is expected that everything or anything should come before the wellbeing of Travellers who also have elderly, disabled and children within the community.

My family complained for years and contacting the CAB, MSPs, Councilors, Scottish Public Service Ombudsman and the CRE about the way Gypsy Travellers are treated. In 2006/7 the Scottish Executive made 3 million available for new sites and existing sites. The Scottish Executive said councils’ had to show they consulted with tenants to qualify for grant funding. Tenants on Double Dykes attended a number of meetings with the council to put together a funding bid but in the last couple of months before the bid was to be submitted the council refused tenants to attend the meetings.

Just before the bid was to be submitted to the Scottish Executive the council invited tenants along to a meeting where they showed they had changed the plans to reduce the site from 20 permanent pitches to 16 permanent pitches and 4 transit pitches. The council also changed the site plans and located half the chalets in the wrong place on the pitches. Tenants were advised by the council if we did not accept this we would miss out on the funding. Tenants contacted the Scottish Executive and raised their concerns. The site went back to 20 permanent pitches and the Scottish Executive approved the funding on the condition tenants would have to accept high rents to pay back the loan from the council to meet their part of the funding. During the time tenants were band from meetings many mistakes were made, chalets were not properly insulated, the heating type was wrong for the chalets, the plans installed half the chalets in the wrong place. The council did not learn form mistakes made in the past. This year, 2012 the council installed gas heating into all the chalets to help with the problem of condensation and mould in half the chalets on the site and again the council increased the rent.

In 2007 for the work to start to install the chalets tenants were supposed to be decanted off the site. The council offered their site at Aberfeldy, but when a Traveller tried to book a place she was refused because she was from Double Dykes caravan site. The Central Scotland Race Equality Council also phoned the caretaker of Aberfeldy site who said he had no places on the site for tenants of Double Dykes to decant to. The council contacted private sites but in many cases the council said they came across prejudice from other site owners and managers to accommodating people from the Gypsy Traveller community. Another decant option was an area at the end of Arran Road Industrial estate which required planning permission. Travellers have stayed on this site in the past as an unauthorised encampment have suffered from racial abuse and stone throwing at the caravans. The tenants of Double Dykes raised these concerns with the council but as the area at Arran Road was only a temporary measure to get our own site upgrade tenants agreed to this decant site.

The Travellers of Double Dykes found that nothing had changed in the last 25 years, listed below are some of the planning objections from 2007.
“Who will ensure that the dumping of rubbish and the roaming of dogs are kept under control – which if you visit Double Dykes it is an obvious problem.” (No 18)

“This site will be right next to the main A9 and will be an eyesore for people entering and leaving Perth – hardly a good advert for the town.” (No 18)

“We have subsequently taken measures to prevent their influx by creating an earth barrier around our property and Perth and District Council erected a road barrier. These measures have been successful in recent years. It is therefore hard to understand why the council should now choose to invite the Travelling People to move into this area having worked with us in the past to prevent them moving in and disrupting the local community” (No 19)

“We have been endeavoring to expand our estate in Arran Road Place and it is clear that the presence of the travelling people’s site will discourage any potential tenant from setting up business in this area.” (No 19)

“If a site is needed for Travelling people it should be located well clear of established communities and in an area where they can freely enjoy their own way of life without conflict” (No 20)

In the newspaper it says “residence and business owners are among those slamming the proposal. Alleging it will lead to more thefts, vandalism and litter” (No 21)

One woman who work on the site as a volunteer for Perth and Kinross Council wrote to the newspaper in defense of the Travellers saying “I can’t help feel if this story were to be reported as happening in another country, we would all feel shocked, but it is always hard to see when injustice is taken place in our own neighbourhood” (No 22)

The temporary decant site at Arran Road was turned down.

Several tenants from Double Dykes and a member of the Central Scotland Race Equality Council attended the planning meeting and were shocked and discussed at the comments and anti Traveller attitude showed at this meeting. One newspaper article gives a brief example of what was being said at the meeting. One councilor who chairs Perth and Kinross councils Community Equalities Advisory Group said “Four years ago my first action as the newly – elected member for North Muirton concerned an unauthorised invasion by travelling people of the area close to Riverside Church ... and it took weeks to effect their removal and a great deal of council time and money to keep the area under control.” (No 23)

I am a Traveller, and I will always be the first to say there is bad and good within the Traveller community just the same as any other community, but if you were again to replace the word Traveller to Asian or Black there would not be just one woman raising her concerns in the newspaper. There would be an outrage by the same elected members
making a show at being politically correct, yet they are openly apposed to Gypsy Travellers in their area.

Councillor MacLellan moved to have the decant site refused basically on the grounds that the site was at the end of an industrial estate, there would be problems with traffic and the presence of Travellers would have a negative affect on the business within the estate. Double Dykes has been at the end of a bigger industrial estate at Inveralmond for the last 25 years. Also during the planning meeting a private site owned by Travellers was refused retrospective planning permission for 4 additional pitches.

I and another tenant of Double Dykes attended a meeting at the police station along with Richard Pitts from the Central Scotland Race Equality Council to ask if the police could stop councillors and businesses for inciting their anti Traveller comments. The police said there was nothing they could do to stop people from stereotyping all Travellers as thief’s, and antisocial vandals.

Travellers continue to camp on the unauthorised site at Arran Road, in 2012 there were more complaints in the newspaper about Travellers camping in this area.

Double Dykes was upgraded in 2007/8 and the rents went up again. There is very little difference in having the chalets on site, the main one is having an inside toilet.

Doubling up on pitches today is very common with the council still the 55 pitches short 30 years after the site opened. This is not taken into account the growth in the Gypsy Traveller community over the last 30 years, or the detrimental impact doubling up has had on the site and the community.

Perth and Kinross council are still saying they are committed to providing more sites but at the same time they are putting up the barriers to gaining these sites.

Today’s newspapers regularly have article about unauthorised encampments, nothing has changed and most Travellers that have grown up on Double Dykes have gone into housing.

Living on sites, How sites are run, what happens if you want to report any problems on site.

For me being a Traveller living on site it has been very stressful. Site management is very poor.

Over the years I have written countless letters, to the council, councilors, MSPs, CRE and the Ombudsman. I have also visited the CAB many times, I have never given up trying to change things for the better for the Travelling community but some Travellers do give up and go into housing. I don’t think we would have got as far as we did, without the help and support from the Citizen Advice Bureau.

Most of the time I was taken up complaints on behalf of my family and the other tenants on the caravan site. I would get tenants to sign petitions for things like, better living standards on the site, to get disability adaptations, getting an independent electricity supplier so we didn’t have to go through the council. Tenants would regularly complain to me about the council and about the caravan site being run down or vandalised. Most of these problems were due to poor site management and an attitude form the council that
poor site standard was good enough for Travellers and any site problems, was not a
problem because as Travellers that’s the way live.
I was doubling up on my parents pitch for years as their daughter and carer and I was
regularly reminded by the council I was not a tenant because I didn’t have my own pitch.
Part of the fight to change things on the site was to get as much information as possible
on council’s policies, procedures and management. The only way I found I could get
information about the running and management of the site from the council was going
through the Data Protection and FOI. Many times I was refused information but when
others phoned, like the CAB, they would be given the information. I spent an afternoon at
the council office writing out a copy of the site license, because the council said, they
were not, allowed to photocopy it, yet the CAB was sent a photocopy of the same license.
When a group of Travellers and I were complaining about the conditions of the amenity
blocks the Head of Repairs said, if we were not happy with the conditions, and wanted
something better we should put our name on the housing list and get ourselves a house.

After years complaining tenants only found out in 2003 the council had a complaints
procedure and form advice from the CAB and the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association I
made a complaint to the Ombudsman.

The council never logged tenant’s complaints so the Ombudsman said I would need to
complain again to the council and show I went through the council’s complaint
procedure. After 2 years complaining to the council I still could not show I reached the
end of the complaints procedure. In a council letter to the Ombudsman dated 31st March
2005 it says, they failed to deal with my complaints under the council complaints
procedure. I was at that time in constant contact with various council officers, voluntary
agencies were attending meetings they also were pursuing answers to issues I raised. The
extent they were pursuing these issues meant it was impossible to answer the issues
within a formal and rigid complaints procedure. The failure of the councils procedure was
considered and they (the council) considered and the view was taken that on-going
meetings with me and the wider Gypsy Traveller Community was the councils preferred
way to action and address the issues.

During this time I was attending meetings with the council and asked for complaints to
go on the agenda for the meetings but this was refused by the council.

In 2005 as the chair of the tenants association I continued contacting the CRE and the
Ombudsman and since 2005/6 the council has applied the unacceptable action policy
against me. Every couple of years the council renew the policy. This is part of the
ongoing harassment I have been suffering from the council, in the past I have been
threatened with eviction; I have been refused an interview for a job as the site manager.
Some of the people I have contacted for help like - CSREC and the council’s own
Equalities Officer suffered harassment and threats for taken up complaints on my behalf.
A CAB employee was accused of stirring things up because they provided us with advice
on our rights. The council says I am not and never have been officially on the
unacceptable actions policy they only apply the procedure.

What happens if you want to report any problems on site?
I would like to say the council’s complaints procedure is a joke but there is nothing funny in the stress I have suffered over the years. I have included a couple of examples in the way Perth and Kinross council deals with my complaints.

Attached is a copy of a minute from 2002 (No 24), I have highlighted an area where the council is saying they are delaying repairs on the site due to underpayment of electricity. The area manager for Perth council goes on to say on page 2 “she acknowledged problems regarding the adjustment of electricity meter and reported that residence had been consulted regarding police involvement”.

The council in 2002 accused all the tenants on site of tampering with the meters and threatened to call the police. I complained to the council at that time about the comment as we had been complaining about the high cost of the electricity on site for years. After 5 years of complaining and being placed on the unacceptable action policy, a letter dated the 22nd October 2007 (No 25) apologises for the length of time it has taken to respond to my complaints. Page 2 under Electricity (No 26) says “this investigation also found that the site warden at the time has set the tenant’s meters at different tariffs so that tenants were not paying the same amount for their electricity supply” “unfortunately there is no way of identifying when the site manager altered the tariffs on each meter.”

The council refused to do repairs and threatened all the tenants with the police for an action committed by the site manager and it took 5 years for the council to respond to my complaint.

I do not believe the council would accuse a street full of housing tenants (none Travellers) of tampering with the electricity meters and use this as an excuse for not doing repairs on the street. I have said before, there is good and bad in every community but the comments from the council is racist stereotyping that if there was a problem with high electric on the site all tenants must have tampered with the electricity meters.

In a letter dated the 22nd October 2007 on Page 4 under Aberfeldy Caravan Site, this is another area of where the council contradicts what they are saying “the tenants of Double Dykes were not refused the use of Aberfeldy caravan site for decant purposes” then the letter goes on to say “However, additional information from yourself and others, including Richard Pitts of the CSREC, they have highlighted that some Double Dykes residence attempting to book into the site found that they were unable to do so due to the inappropriate attitude of Aberfeldy site staff.” (No 27)

Council letter dated the 11 April 2007 (No 28), I made a complaint in 2002 and continued complaining for 5 years and in 2007 I got a response to my complaint and an apology for the length of time it took the council to respond. In 2004 I made another complained about allocations and minutes not being minuted properly to reflect what was actually said, and in 2007 I got a response reflecting the comments Mr. Frazer said in a council meeting. I was eventually allocated a pitch after spending two years doubling up on a pitch and during this time there were four empty pitches on site.
My understanding of the complaints procedure is 20 working days to respond to a complaint. Why, because I am a Traveller living on a site does it take on average 5 years to get form start to finish of the councils complaints procedure. This is time consuming stressful and exhausting, I feel the council applies this approach to complaints to wear people down so they will drop the complaint.

Over the last few years I have been complaining to the council about another matter that is site related. Over a year ago I took my complaints to the Ombudsman and the council placed me on the unacceptable actions policy again. Part of my complaint to the Ombudsman was the council’s complaint procedure. The Ombudsman sent me a letter saying I had not reached the end of the council’s complaints procedure and I would need to complain again to the council. I put in my complaints to the council again in November last year. The council started the complaint at the first stage of the complaints procedure. I got a first stage response in January and I asked for the complaint to go to the next stage. After several weeks the council sent a letter asking what part of my complaint did I want to go to the next stage? I responded by saying all of my complaint. After several weeks the council sent me another letter asking what part of my complaint do I want to go to the next stage. Again I said all of my complaint. This has been going on for months and I have contacted the Ombudsman again to say I can’t get the council to put my complaints to the next stage on the complaints procedure.

Councils are aware when they are dealing with the Gypsy Travellers community that there is a high level of reading and writing problems. It would be very difficult if not impossible for most Travellers to follow the endless run a round and barriers the council puts up to Gypsy Travellers complain about the way they are being treated.

**Tenancy agreement**

The council consulted tenants about the new tenancy agreement. Tenants wanted the tenancy to be like the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement thinking this would give us more rights. But the tenancy agreement for Double Dykes is still in draft 5 years later and it is not a secure tenancy agreement. The council also has discretion over the tenancy agreement, meaning it gives the tenants no rights.

I did not want to sign the draft tenancy agreement in 2008 but the council got me to sign the agreement by taking the keys of my chalet from me. The council said I would not get the keys back and the pitch would be taken from me if I did not sign the draft agreement. I phoned the council’s solicitor and complained as we were still in consultation about the agreement. The councils solicitor agreed she would not sign an agreement headed draft or sample but said I would need to if I wanted the keys of my chalet. I still have this draft tenancy agreement today.

I thought a tenancy agreement was a legal and binding document between me and the council, given each party the legal right to make the other party uphold their part of the agreement. But when a tenant takes up any part of the agreement to the council, the council says it is within their discretion whether or not to implement the tenancy agreement. Most tenants on Double Dykes are signed up to a sample or draft tenancy agreement since 2007/8.
Does the site have a site manager?
Double Dykes has had several site managers over the years. I don’t feel there is a need for a site manager on a one family site. Double Dykes is a mixed site and it is essential to a well run site to have a good site manager. Double Dykes is not a well managed site. This may not be the fault of the site manager at Double Dykes but the fault of the council. I always get the opinion that our manager has very little say on what happens on the site and he has to run everything through a council office. I feel this has weakened his role as the site manager; tenants don’t see him as having authority and don’t respect his role. Site rules for the tenants and the council should be clear and visible in any site office. The tenants or site manager should be able to point to rules or be provided with a CD to advise tenants of the rules and responsibilities of both the tenants and the council.

What do I think would make a good site?
Good strong management of a site where there is a proper enforceable tenancy agreement.
A lot of sites are run down and neglected through poor site management. It also makes me angry that people look at Gypsy Traveller sites and see the mess and all the Travellers get the blame when it only takes a few bad tenants to take down a site and the community. A good tenancy agreement would ensure all tenants have the same rights and treated the same. There would not be a discretion within the tenancy agreement for the council to opt out of their responsibility as landlords. There is a lot of confusion when the council takes the discretion that this part does not apply today but may apply tomorrow but not again the following day.

A site with a good site design, over the years we have seen many expensive mistakes made on Double Dykes, the Scottish Advisory Committee on Travelling People used Double Dykes in one of their reports as a site design for new sites yet no one asked tenants what we thought of the site design, or if the site was affect and user friendly.

Using services that are for everyone.

The Ombudsman
Where a local authority has discretion over the tenancy agreement or any other agreement the Ombudsman can not find maladministration or make a decision where the local authority has made a discretionary decision.
COUNTY MAY GIVE TINKERS A ‘HOME’

Sunday Express Reporter

TINKER families in Perthshire may soon have a permanent camp site where they can live without fear of being told to "move on.”

Tomorrow the county council will be asked to approve a plan to lay out a site beside the River Almond, two miles from Perth, and equip it with basic services.

The recommendation follows a claim that for the past 10 years the council has failed to meet its obligations in relation to tinkers.

Searching

This claim, it was disclosed yesterday, was made at a private meeting of the council’s landward health committee, when several members alleged that a permanent camp should have been provided long ago.

Recently there have been more than 20 prosecutions against Perthshire tinkers for camping without permission or living in temporary camps in conditions which broke health laws.

A council member said yesterday: “The housing committee has been searching for years for a suitable camp site, or even a site for tinkers’ houses. But as no one seemed to want tinkerers permanently on or near their land, it has been very difficult.

A tinker said: “Many of our traditional stopping places have been barred to us, so it would be fine to have a camp. I hope this won’t be just another promise that comes to nothing.”
PERTH AND KINROSS COUNTY COUNCIL.

Date 19th August, 1964.

MEMORANDUM

From The County Planning Officer

To The County Clerk

Tinkers' Encampments

I refer to your memo of 23rd July and I have given some consideration to the problem of finding a site for tinkers. The only one which I consider meets all the requirements as to distance from Perth, services etc. is an area of land lying along the south bank of the River Almond and between the trunk road A.9 and the railway embankment.

The land is rough almost waste land and is used from time to time by families of tinkers, possibly without the consent of the owners - Mansfield Estates. Therefore should the area be acquired by the County Council, properly fenced and controlled or operated by them it might be in the owners interest to sell it for the purpose. A public water supply is nearby and drainage should not represent a very great problem. I believe the footpath that passes through the site is possibly a right of way and this would require to be diverted round the perimeter of the fenced off area. At present the tinkers gain access over the road fence at the bridge, a proper access with satisfactory visibility for vehicles entering and leaving would be necessary. This could be sited some 30-50 yards on the Perth side of the bridge. As far as trunk road interests are concerned the new access would not be welcomed but it could be claimed that it is regulating, to some extent, what already exists.

The site is a prominent one and therefore some planting of trees would be essential to screen the vans and tents from public view. It is anticipated however that if the site is under the control of the County Council it would be conducted in a better manner than generally takes place at present. I have shown the area of land outlined red on the plan which I attach herewith and suggest that it might be submitted to the Committee for their views.

I might add that I have on two occasions raised the matter informally with the Factor of the Estate but have not obtained a definite answer as to whether the land would be available for the purpose.
20th October, 1964.

R.T. Blair.

H/A 3

A. D. Jackson, Esq.,
County Clerk,
County Offices,
Lochgilphead,
Argyll.

Dear Sir,

Housing of Tinkers,

I have received your letter of 16th October.

There is a problem in this County of providing suitable accommodation for all of the tinkers who require it. A number of years ago the Council acquired and converted a large wooden building into four two-apartment houses for tinkers. The accommodation was sub-standard but the scheme was an experiment. These houses have been continually occupied by tinkers since they were provided. The weekly rent is a nominal one of 5/-.

The Council also converted an old building which had previously been used as a casual ward into housing accommodation for a tinker family. A close liaison is maintained with the Church of Scotland representative for the tinker families in the letting and re-letting of these houses.

There are, however, still many tinkers living in poor conditions and the Council have been endeavouring, for some time, to provide additional accommodation or a camp. The greatest difficulty has, however, been experienced in finding ground in respect of which there are no objections from the owners of the ground or the owners of adjoining ground. While many owners raise no objections to tinkers living on their land so long as they are in a position to have the tinkers removed if they so think fit, it is a different matter when an owner is asked to provide a site for permanent housing accommodation or a camp for tinkers.

The Scottish Development Department have been kept informed from time to time of the result of the Council's consideration of this problem. For your information I enclose a copy of a letter of 13th May to the Department, together with a copy of the plan referred to therein. A copy of the Department's reply of 2nd June is also enclosed. The Department were informed (1) that implementation of the suggestions made in the Department's letter would have the effect of raising the proposed houses for tinkers to the standards laid down in the Housing Handbook for houses for general needs,
(2) that the Council had not adopted the type plans referred to in my letter of 13th May to the Department in order to achieve economies in the cost of constructing the houses, but because they felt that a house which would be somewhere between a standard Council house and very sub-standard accommodation was the answer in order that the tinkers could gravitate from their present accommodation into accommodation which was likely to be more acceptable to them — and later into standard Council houses, (3) that it was thought by the Council that the provision of standard Council houses for tinkers might prejudice the success of the experiment and (4) that the Council would doubtless be prepared to provide standard Council houses for the tinkers if the Department thought that that was what should be done. A copy of the Department’s reply of 6th July is also enclosed for your information. I have no doubt that the Council will be prepared to erect standard houses for tinkers on suitable sites throughout the County if the major problem of acquisition of ground can be overcome.

Meantime the Council are continuing their search for suitable sites for tinkers’ houses — but with little success. A site has, however, been found for a tinkers’ camp. There is a possibility of the owner selling the ground and there appear to be no objections from the owners of adjoining land. If the Council succeed in providing such a camp it will help, but the ultimate aim must be, I feel, to provide housing accommodation for tinkers.

I hope that the Council’s experience in dealing with this matter will be of some assistance to you.

Yours faithfully,

County Clerk.

E/.
RB/TH.
The demonstrators pictured outside the new FMC plant at Inveralmond during Tuesday’s visit by Scots Secretary, George Younger.

Villagers to fight travelling site plan

ABOUT 20 locals from the Ruthvenfield area staged a demonstration to coincide with Tuesday’s opening of the new FMC plant at Inveralmond by Scots Secretary George Younger.

They were opposing Perth and Kinross District Council’s proposals for a travelling people’s site at Double Dykes.

Mr Younger, however, was inside the plant for a morning preview before the other official guests arrived and the initial impact of the demonstration escaped his notice.

The demonstrators have formed an action committee under the chairmanship of Richard Buchanan, 14 Tarry Row, Ruthvenfield. He outlined 10 points on why the Double Dykes site was unsuitable for travelling people.

Dealing first with industry and jobs, Mr Buchanan pointed out that the site would be a deterrent to new industry; vandalism on the estate would become worse; loss of visual appeal would result on a prestigious estate; health and hygiene would be at risk from roaming dogs; the site would be the thin end of the wedge, with a need to accommodate more families becoming a restriction on estate expansion.

As far as the local community was concerned, they had already suffered from travellers in the past and their arrival on a permanent site would result in more harassment. There was a general fear, especially from pensioners, and it was also felt the amenity of the area as a walk and picnic site would drop.

The action group are also concerned that the local school would be swamped, with the prospect of travelling families moving in with a number of children.

“If 20 families came here it could lead to another 80 children attending our school,” pointed out Mr Buchanan. “It is a one-teacher school, catering for about 17 pupils at the present time.”

“We had to do something to let Mr Younger know how we feel about this thing,” concluded Mr Buchanan. “We feel that it will be a tyranny of the majority who will vote for this site to keep it away from their own communities.”

The proposal for a site for travellers at Double Dykes has still to come before Perth and Kinross District Council’s development control committee.
A meeting last night at Ruthvenfield School, on the outskirts of Perth, at which the district council put their side of the argument for establishing a permanent campsite for travelling people at Doubledykes, less than half a mile from the small community, ended with local people still determined to stop the move and Councillor Jim Proudfoot equally determined to press ahead with the scheme.

Councillor Proudfoot pointed out that although the district council's policy had been to house travelling people, Government pressure had forced them to look for a site.

The first site the council had suggested, at Tulloch, had not met with the approval of the Scottish Secretary's advisory committee, and Doubledykes was an alternative.

Mr John Smart, director of environmental health, Argyll District Council, told the meeting three years ago his district council were in the very same position with a proposed site for travelling people.

They pressed ahead with it, however, and he said that since it was established there had been no vandalism and the children had integrated into the local school.

Slides of the site and the site at Tayock, Montrose, were shown, and Mr Smart added that a community room had been built where the children were able to do their homework and adult education and adult literacy classes held.

"We have shown in Argyll that it works," he said.

"The housing department have no problems and, incidentally, the site makes money as rents more than cover the costs."

Unc. vinced

However, neither Mr Smart's description nor the slides convinced local people, many of them by now had decided on Doubledykes. There were those who claimed that all such people should be sent to a permanent site and that the council should withdraw the proposal.

Mr Smart said that during which the travelling families had been camped at Inveralmond and he claimed that far from increasing there had been a reduction in crime.

However, Mr John Jones, who has premises on the Inveralmond industrial site, claimed there had been an increase in crime since the travelling people came there, but said that now when matters were reported police did not come up to investigate.

Mr Ken Simpson said that while the photos shown of the Argyll and Angus sites were quite good he wondered if the sites would look as attractive in five years' time.

£800 repairs

Mr J. Bryden said what concerned him was not what went on in the site, but what went on outside.

He added that he was speaking after 15 years of experience including two break-ins and a considerable amount of damage.

He said he had eventually to cut down an orchard, not because the fruit was being stolen but because they behaved as outlaws," he said.

Mr Cormie stressed that the site, if approved, would be limited to 10 caravans and that the district council would be in a position to select people for it.

"I think we have enough information to select good and reliable people," he stated.

Fear

Councillor Hamish Young said he was totally against the proposals but added that one of his fears was that other councillors would vote in favour of the proposed site, to avoid having it in their wards.

However, he said obtaining planning permission from the district council was only one of the hurdles the proposals had to face.

Councillor Proudfoot concluded the meeting by saying he was confident that, if the site came into being, in 10 years' time the locals would see their fears were not justified.
Dear Sir,

We wish to protest in the strongest possible terms about the siting of the proposed Tinker Encampment at Double Dykes. As we are taking up residence in the area very shortly we would like to make the following points:

(a) Although there are only twenty van stops how many families will occupy each caravan?

(b) Is the local population going to be swamped by the tinker element?

(c) If the Council decides to go ahead with this ludicrous plan is there any guarantee that it will stop at twenty caravans?

(d) Where are the children of these families to be educated? Not the village school I trust? Obviously they would have to be transported to bigger schools so once again the hard pressed rate payer has to fork out.

(e) If these so called "Travelling People" have no wish to live on the majority I don't see why they should be foisted upon a minority.

(f) Finally with the interests of the whole of the Perth area in mind we urge you to reconsider the building of this encampment so near to our showpiece Industrial Estate. Surely this can only discourage further development of this site.

Yours faithfully,

38(1)(b), 38(2)(a)(i)
Director of Planning,
Perth & Kinross District Council,
3, High Street,
PERTH.

Ref. Proposed site for travelling people at Double Dykes, Ruthvenfield:

As the owners of property and land directly adjoining the proposed site, we would like to make a number of objections as detailed below:

(1) We are extremely concerned about the effect on our property in terms of theft, break-ins etc., which will inevitably occur if these people are sited next to our potato store. When they were previously sited there, we had constant problems with boxes being smashed, wood stolen, diesel siphoned from vans etc. Due to their present presence at Inveralmond we are constantly pestered by them, wanting water, to buy scrap metal and rags etc.

(2) We have just completed a £21,000.00 renovation to a house at Ruthvenfield crossing, and it is now occupied by two of our best workers. They have expressed the opinion that if a "tink encampment" is situated on their doorstep they will no longer want to stay there and will seek employment plus housing elsewhere.

This would effectively render this house worthless as we will be unable to find quality workers who will be prepared to live on the doorstep of this "eyesore".

The stores etc., that we have built at Ruthvenfield, at a considerable cost, will suffer a loss in resale value due to the presence of a travellers encampment on adjacent land.

(3) We have plans for further expansion of our potato growing enterprise, but these are dependant on building another shed at Ruthvenfield and also on building further houses for extra workers (adjacent to the present house). Obviously if this travellers site goes ahead, no decent person will want to live close by, and secondly any property improvements/expansion will drop in value due to the presence of this camp. Consequently we have shelved all/
(2)

All plans for this, and instead are looking at our other branches in Angus and Kincardine. This will lead to a loss of employment for the Perth area.

(4) We own the field next to the proposed site and we graze approx. 30 cattle and 20 sheep on this field. From experience of these encampments, there will be the usual "filth", scrap metal and general rubbish which will end up in our field. We don't suppose the town council will be liable for any loss of cattle etc., through them eating rubbish etc.

We would also note that a sheep has gone "missing" in the last five days. We realise that this will have "absolutely nothing" to do with the constant stream of "tinkers" which travel past our field to their present illegal encampment at Inveralmond.

(5) These encampments always have a pack of hungry dogs, and we feel this will be another source of loss to cattle and sheep.

(6) The council has established a very good, well planned industrial estate adjacent to the proposed encampment. Hopefully, in the next ten years the industrial estate will expand further along the Ruthvenfield Road. A lot of money has been spent on landscaping of the estate, and also on trying to attract new firms onto the estate. We feel no firm will be attracted onto the estate if they find that they have a travellers encampment with the consequent theft and filth problems, for a next door neighbour.

(7) We realise that these people have to live somewhere, and we wonder if one of the "do-gooders" on the council would be prepared to make a site available adjacent to their property, in order that they may experience at first hand the social and moral problems caused by these people who are not prepared to contribute financially or otherwise to the well being of the community in general.
Double Dykes Caravan Site

Perth
24.8.81

Director of administration
(Planning Department)

Dear Sir,

I am writing to protest at the plan to site a tink camp at Inveralmond, next to the industrial Estate, on the land which might be needed in the future for development (present rent is over £5000). Any such camp or caravan site would cast a blight on the industrial development of the area, and reverse all your efforts to attract work to empty sites. We, the present tenants, have had to put up with unbelievable filth and all sorts of anti-social behaviour from these vagrants, but have lived in the hope that the law and the good sense of the council will prevail and they would be chased back to where they came from, or even further if possible. The thought of them there permanently causes the deepest dismay and horror.

The council need feel no obligation to make sites for these Layabouts, as all local travelers were housed when they settled in the Barracks car park, some years ago. They have been no problem for some years. These people demanding sites now, are from other districts and should the council acknowledge them as travellers it would be the thin edge of the wedge. In a few years their children (and there are plenty of them) will want to join them in the good life when they grow up, and will be demanding more sites to be made for them when they set up home making.

A firm stand now is needed and no ‘U’ turns from the policy of housing local people. Any other course is a very slippery slope for which there is no turning back. I therefore concluded that £500,000 for tink camp should not even be considered.

I am

Yours faithfully
Double Dykes Caravan Site


TRAVELLING PEOPLE - PROVISION OF SITES - TENDERS.

FILE TCP/4/9(C) ARTICLE NO. 160.

1. Attached is a report dated 22nd June, 1982 by the Director of Technical Services on tenders received for the construction of the site for travelling people at Double Dykes, Perth. Details of the lowest tender have been sent to the Scottish Development Department and it is likely that formal intimations will be received by the date of the District Council meeting that the entire cost will qualify for a 100% capital grant from S.D.D.

2. Members will note however, that S.D.D. allow only for 10% for fees. This percentage leaves a shortfall of £10,489 in the sum available to meet the normal charges made for work done by the Director of Technical Services and S.D.D. have been asked to reconsider the percentage allowable for fees.

3. The Council completed missives with the owner and have entry to the site when necessary. The District Valuer has negotiated compensation at £8,500 exclusive of negotiating fees and legal fees, and these entire costs will qualify for a 100% grant from S.D.D.

4. The contract period is thirteen weeks and the site can therefore be expected to be complete in early November. This timing will allow 20 families to be accommodated before winter and will considerably ease the problem of removing travellers from the line of the Perth Western Bypass before construction is due to begin.

5. The District Council on 23rd June (Article 160) asked that a meeting be arranged with the Scottish Development Department on the subject of the provision of a second site for travelling people at Tulloch. This meeting has been arranged for Monday, 19th July.

6. It is recommended that:

1. Formal approval be given to acceptance of the tender by Forman Construction Ltd., in the sum of £242,871.09.

2. Formal approval be given to the D.V.'s negotiated figure of £8,500 plus fees for acquisition of the site, and

3. Approval be given to the expenditure of £10,489 being the difference between the grant available for fees and the sum normally payable to the Department of Technical Services.

J.E.D. CORRIE.
Chief Executive.

Council Chambers,
Perth.

16th July, 1982.
TCP/4/9(C).
The provision of spaces on private parks has been the cornerstone of the national Pitch Target since 1982. However, from the outset even the Advisory Committee expressed reservations about the suitability of such provision. "Official provision may be a wasteful duplication of facilities if an existing private site meets the needs of local travellers. This is seldom the case, however, and generally we consider that private sites should be complementary to official provision rather than an alternative." Despite this the proportion of private pitches included in the national Target has remained constant over a 15 year period.

In 1995 two private caravan park owners in Perth and Kinross publicly stated that they had not been consulted about the inclusion of their parks in the Pitch Target for the area, nor did they reserve pitches for Travellers. In the North of Scotland large areas of Highland Council (Ross & Cromarty, Caithness, Sutherland, Skye & Lochalsh and Nairn) have no knowledge of 20 private pitches included in the Scottish Office's target for 12 years. Highland Council's Director of Housing wrote to SCF in 1997 "the availability of many of the informal/private pitches used by Travelling people depend very much on the goodwill of the landowner and/or the local community. I therefore do not think it would be in the best interests of the Travelling community for the location of informal/private [sites] to be published or formalised in any way. Otherwise there is considerable likelihood that they will cease to be available to the Travelling community."

In 1996 the Advisory Committee were asked to publish a list of where these 221 pitches were located at a Scottish Office seminar. The audience were told the information was confidential and the site owners did not want it publicly known that they took Travellers. This statement came after the two site owners in Perth and Kinross had confirmed that nobody had asked them if their caravan parks could be included in national Targets!
CONTROVERSIAL plans for a travelling people's site near Crieff have been vetoed by the Scottish Secretary.

Mr Malcolm Riffkind, in a letter to Perth and Kinross District Council this week, stated that he recognised the accepted need for a travellers' site in the district and had carefully considered the council's case.

He agreed with the Reporter's conclusion, however, that the proposed development would be too close to existing houses and the adverse effects of the proposed development on them, particularly Station Cottage, would not be outweighed by the public benefits.

The district council had examined a total of 17 sites but all had been discarded because they didn't meet the proper criteria. The search was narrowed down to Highlandman Caravan Site, about two miles south east of Crieff's town centre.

The council planned 20 stands which, along with the 20 pitches at Double Dykes, near Perth, and the 45 available in the private sector, would meet their required target of 85.

The council took the view that the Crieff site met all its criteria, with the possible exception of its proximity to other houses, the nearest of which was just seven metres away.

By 16 votes to 12, the council approved the change of use of the site. Because of strong local objections, however, a two-day public inquiry was held into the proposal last September. It was chaired by Chief Scottish Office Reporter Mr A.G. Bell.

Local opposition to the change of use of the caravan site included a 1,008-signature petition which claimed that it would "totally destroy" the rural structure of the area.

Mr Bell rejected the "disaster scenarios" suggested by opponents of the plan but found that the site was too close to Station Cottage.

"I am unable to accept the council's view that no unacceptable level of disturbance is predictable for the cottage," he stated. "I believe that such a situation would obtain only if management of the site were exemplary and the measures of screening and mounding were able totally to eliminate disturbance at such close quarters.

"That would expect too much of site management and of human behaviour.

"One can only have sympathy with the district council in their search for a suitable and acceptable site," he added. "I consider it a measure of the difficulty of their task that, by a small majority, councillors supported the change of use of an existing caravan site within seven metres of one house and 90 metres of two others."

The benefits which would result from the Highlandman becoming a site were two-fold - a site would be made available in accordance with national policy and, having met their allocated target in site provision, the council need no longer tolerate unauthorised sites.

But Mr Bell added: "I consider the deciding factor in this case is whether the adverse effect of having a site in close proximity to existing dwellings, particularly Highlandman Station Cottage, is outweighed by these public benefits.

"In my view they are not. The proposed development breaches the council's own site criteria by being too close to existing dwellings."

This view was endorsed by the Scottish Secretary.
Furthermore the approved capital expenditure is awarded special section 94 consent outwith the normal Block Allocations. Only the 10% unfunded expenditure (approximately £37,000) will score against Housing Block B (Non HRA) Capital Allocation. The resulting loan charges on this residual capital debt will have ongoing revenue implications and the stance rentals will require to be re-assessed on completion of the scheme in light of the improved facilities provided.

Meanwhile, the officers will continue negotiations with SOED to maximise Capital Grant monies.

**Description of the Work**

**Phase 1 - Temporary Site Facilities**

Relocate 2 No. Utility units in temporary site area and connect to services.  
Relocate 6 No. Storage sheds in temporary site area.  
Install electric supplies to 6 No. caravan connection points.  
Remove mounded access to temporary site and construct hardcore surface.

**Phase 2 - Upgrading 20 No. Amenity Units and 1 No. Wardens Office**

**Note:**  
Phase 2 carried out in 3 No. phased sequences.  
Uplift and set aside on site existing "jack up" Amenity units and storage sheds.  
Demolish and remove brick base walls, steps, etc.  
Construct new purpose built Amenity Units and Wardens Office and connect to existing local water, electricity and drainage systems.

**Amenity Unit comprising:**

Concrete strip foundations and blockwork footings.  
Concrete ground floor.  
Blockwork external walls and internal partitions.  
External rendering.  
Timber pitched and tiled roof.  
UPVC rainwater installation.  
Timber internal and external doors.  
Redwood double glazed windows.  
Ceramic tiled areas.  
Electrical installation and external caravan supply.  
Electric water storage installation.  
Plumbing installation, sanitary ware, kitchen and utility sink unit.  
Floor ducting construction.  
Electric tubular heating installation (anti-frost).  
Painting work.

**Wardens Unit**

*As Amenity Unit, also incorporating*  
Cavity wall insulation.  
Sheet vinyl floor covering.  
Internal plaster finish to blockwork.
Travellers cry out for help

EIGHTEEN FAMILIES at Double Dykes caravan site for travelling people are crying out for help after the floods.

Eleven of the 18 caravans are now uninhabitable as water reached two feet inside, destroying food and soaking clothes and bedding.

One woman said, “We contacted the council this morning and they said they’d come to look but they didn’t turn up.

“It was seven or eight feet all over the site and it just started to go away last night.”

Mud covers the whole site and two of the caravans, which are now uninhabitable, housed an 84-year-old man and a woman of about the same age.

A mini-skip was moved 20 feet with the force of the water into a car, breaking the window.

Another woman said, “We were only given a half-hour warning of the flood and we couldn’t get our caravans out in time.”

No one at the site knows what they can do.

A traveller said, “We’ll just have to do the best we can but we want help to clean up, if not compensation.

“At least someone should come out to look.”
# WORK UPDATE

### PERTH CITY CENTRE HOUSES

Although the majority of houses affected by flooding are located in the North Muirton Area, a number of houses in other areas have also been extensively damaged.

**South Inch Terrace/Inch Head Terrace, Perth**

These houses were the first houses to be flooded in Perth and the Fire Brigade and Perth & Kinross District Council started pumping out these houses on Monday 15th January. A total of 18 ground floor flats require extensive repairs. Two of these houses are owned by the District Council and it is expected that work should be completed in these two houses by mid-April.

**Commercial Street, Perth**

These riverside houses in the City Centre were flooded on Sunday 17th January. It is anticipated that work to the four District Council houses will start on 22nd March and should be completed by 8th April.

**Scott Street/Victoria Street, Perth**

Fifteen houses owned by Perth & Kinross District Council were damaged by flooding in this area. Contracts for the necessary repair work are out to tender at present and it is expected that work will start on 12th April. This work should be completed within a four week period.

### MINOR WORKS PROGRAMME

Work is ongoing to clarify the extent of repairs required on houses in North Muirton which were less badly affected by the floods. It is apparent that many houses will require full or partial replacement of the flooring. Unfortunately in houses where the column has been damaged tenants must be decanted out of their houses for a short period. Tenants will be notified of details of this work when further information is available.

### CARAVAN SITE AT GOWANS TERRACE

The Caravan Site at Gowans Terrace is now fully operational. A rough piece of ground has been transformed into a fully serviced caravan site in the space of four weeks - thanks to the dedicated efforts of Housing Department staff and the contractors.

**Contractors involved were:**

- Donald Menzies Contractors
- Chas Stewart, Plumbers
- John Connaghan Ltd
- Perth & Kinross District Council

Credit is also due to the Environmental Health Department staff who cleaned and prepared the caravans ready for occupation.

**WELL DONE EVERYONE!**

### DROP-IN CENTRE CLOSES

The Voluntary Centre Drop-In Centre for Perth Flood Victims has now closed. Over the past few weeks that the Centre has assisted over 100 local residents to come to terms through its counselling service and other facilities with the enormity of the problems associated with the floods.

Perth & Kinross Association of Voluntary Service are extremely grateful to all the Volunteers from St. Andrews and St. Stephens Church, members of its own Executive Committee, Staff and other volunteers for manning the Centre, offering Counselling Skills and handling in home-baking.

In order to continue to meet the needs of those receiving counselling and to encourage others who may not to date have visited us, a counselling session will be offered every Monday from 12.00 pm - 3.00 pm. Entrance is the main door of The Voluntary Centre, (opposite Drumher Health Centre).

### NORTH MUIRTON RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Three hundred and fifty residents of various parts of Perth attended the public meeting held in the Lesser City Hall on Sunday 14th March. The main speakers were Mr. K. Brown of the Housing Department and Mr. G. Black, Director of Housing for Perth and Kinross District Council.

The speakers gave advice on a number of issues raised, ranging from building standards and current building regulations, to historical information on flooding in North Muirton. Local resident James MacKenzie quoted from a Perthshire Advertiser of 1865 that brough architect, David Cockburn, had reported that there was a danger in building houses on the site at North Muirton. Mr. Black advised residents that the brough architect was talking about the situation at wells in 1865 and work was subsequently carried out to protect the estate.

The committee hope that there will be a good turn out for the next public meeting to be held in the Lesser City Hall on Monday 29th March 1993 at 7.00 pm. A number of speakers have been invited to attend including, Sir Nicholas Fairbairn OC, MP, Mr. Bill Walker MP, Provost Mrs. Jean McConnell, Councillor Mr. Angus Baillie, Mr. Bill Robertson and Mr. Tim Hewitt of the Social Work Department, Ron Ranwick of Water Services Department, Ron Alcock of Tay River Purification Board and Mr. P. Woodyer at the Hydro Electric Board have all been invited to attend also.

You are reminded that completed petitions should be returned to George Simpson (Tel Perth 21868).
AFTER THE FLOODS ....... THE FIRST EIGHT WEEKS

A power of work has been achieved over the past two months - it is felt that it would be useful to re-cap on what has been done.

- houses were surveyed to assess the scale of the problem
- arrangements were made to provide temporary accommodation for all who were rendered homeless by the floods
- safety checks were carried out on all council and private houses to ensure that heating and electrical systems were reasonably safe for use (in total over 1200 houses)
- wherever feasible temporary repairs were carried out to make as many houses as possible suitable for occupation
- whilst all the technical work to the houses was going on, the District Council also undertook the substantial task of mopping up after the flood and removing all of the households effects put out for disposal by residents
- 100 residential caravans were purchased and delivered to Perth over a distance of 300 miles from Hull
- Cleeve Caravan Park has been modified and developed for residential use by 55 caravans
- a completely new caravan site for 45 mobile homes has been created at Gowans Terrace
- the scope of the reinstatement works on the 330 houses which were extensively damaged has been negotiated and agreed with the insurance company
- the contract documents have been prepared and tenders have been obtained on a competitive basis for the first two phases of the reinstatement works totalling 180 houses
- at the time of writing this report around 150 houses have been stripped out by the Council's DLO Department and dried in readiness for the reinstatement works

In addition to the work detailed above, the District Council has also attended to flood damage in buildings in other areas of the District as well as carrying out the normal work of the Council. There has also been major damage to a number of public buildings. Bell's Sports Centre at the North Inch has suffered major damage and the Council's touring caravan site at Aberfeldy has required extensive repairs.

Twenty-One District Council houses in the city centre were extensively damaged and major repairs were required to re-instate sheltered housing at Carpenter Court.

Many Council employees and private contractors have worked very hard in carrying out this work and in many cases individuals have worked over the weekends since the start of this disaster.

In a letter to staff following the flood disaster Mr Harry Robertson, Chief Executive of Perth and Kinross District Council congratulated staff on their efforts, in meeting the challenge of the significant repair task following the floods. "Words are inadequate to express my appreciation for your efforts which made the co-ordination of the huge task in hand much easier" he stated.

ADVICE FOR TENANTS

The Housing Department would like to offer the following advice to tenants.

- Storage of Household Effects
  All household items remaining in houses while houses are being dried out should be "flooded" or aired.
  If tenants have any items to be moved upstairs or to be disposed of, it would be helpful if they could be labelled with this information.

- Redecorating
  Tenants are advised to treat their re-instated houses as new houses and no redecoration should be carried out for 12 months. Contractors are liable to rectify defects within 12 months following the completion of work and redecoration can make any necessary remedial action more difficult.

- Insurance Claims
  It is unwise to settle with your insurance company too quickly - defects and additional damage may still appear.
  It is possible that additional repair work may yet be identified. This may involve damage or removal of items such as floor covering or internal decoration which are covered by the house contents insurance policy held by the individual tenant.

- Laying of Carpets
  Tenants are encouraged to order their new carpets in advance of the work on the house being completed. Information on the dimensions of rooms in houses can be obtained from Housing Department Staff at the Grammar School. This will allow arrangements for laying carpets to be made as soon as the house is ready for occupation.

- Maintain Contact with the Housing Department
  Wherever possible it is preferable if a key could be left with the Housing Department while work is being carried out on the house. If you change your address while your house is under repair, please remember to notify the staff of the Housing Department of your new address. This will avoid any unnecessary delays.

- Dehumidifiers
  Current monitoring indicates that there is little benefit in the further use of dehumidifiers in occupied houses. The most effective means of maintaining dry conditions is to open windows as much as possible, especially in breezy, mild weather conditions.
  If, however, any tenants living in their houses still feel that a dehumidifier would be of benefit in protecting their furnishings or making living conditions more comfortable, the Housing Department will consider making a machine available on a free loan basis. If tenants feel this would help them please contact the Housing Department staff at the Grammar School.

- Telephones
  Tenants are advised to have these disconnected if they are not living at home. Neither Perth and Kinross District Council or contractors can accept responsibility for the cost of any calls made if phone lines are left operational while workmen are in the house.

- Structural Movement
  Reports from tenants of possible structural movement in their houses are being investigated but so far there would appear to be no cause for concern. Brickwork cladding is not structural in timber frame housing, so tenants are urged not to worry about any small cracks which may be seen in brickwork or roughcast.
600 sign petition against travellers' caravan site plan

Susan Nicholson

A PERTHSHIRE kirk is bidding to block plans for the development of a travelling people's site next to the manse, because it would knock £40,000 off the value of the property.

The joint kirk sessions of Fowlis Wester with Madderty with Monzie have also claimed the neighbouring "encampment" would deter parishioners from visiting the minister — and distress those who did.

The objection is one of 63 lodged against a proposed travellers' site at the existing Abercairney Park Caravan Site, near Gilmerton. A petition carrying 600 signatures has also been received.

Councillors will tomorrow consider the proposal, which was drawn-up to meet the pitch target shortfall identified by the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Travelling People. It carries a recommendation for approval from director of planning Denis Munro.

In a letter to Mr Munro, signed by session clerks George Donaldson, David Cameron and Neil Bremner, it's claimed the development would have "serious consequences" for the future ministry of the three parishes.

Fears are raised that parishioners would become alienated from the manse and the kirk forced to dispose of the de-valued property.

"It is impossible to believe that a site containing 12 caravans with their families and animals would not create serious problems for the occupants of the manse and those who seek help here," the letter states.

"Visitors come seeking help, some of them in a distressed state, and the close proximity of the encampment would not only serve as a deterrent to those seeking help, but increase the distress of those who did."

The clerks also claim the manse would be forced to 'move out' as the travelling people moved in.

"Should the proposed site go ahead, it is my professional opinion that the market value of the manse would fall from its present £120,000 to £80,000, and the house, having been declared unsuitable, would have to be replaced with a similar one.

"Normally this would be done by realising the value of the present manse to pay for the new one, but with the value of the present manse having dropped by at least 33%, it means that the local churches cannot provide a suitable manse for their parishes without outside help.

"Should that help not be available, the lack of provision of a suitable manse has serious consequences for the parishes and their future."

Mr Munro, however, finds that the site is the well placed to provide for travellers.

And, subject to the submission of a suitable landscaping plan, he is convinced it would be "extremely well contained" within the site and have no adverse affect on the manse, given that the existing land use is as a caravan park.

"The site is identified as an existing caravan site, it is well enclosed as it sits within an existing quarry with mature landscaping all around and will therefore not cause a detrimental effect in terms of visual amenity," he reports. The proposal will actually improve the existing amenity of the site."

Mr Munro also stresses that the council has a duty to provide pitches for travelling people.

"The Secretary of State has advised the council that there is a pitch target shortfall of 15 in Perth and Kinross, and if adequate provision is not provided, the travelling people have the right to camp on any other council land.

"It is therefore in the interests of the community that the council identifies a suitable site for such a facility."
Double Dykes Caravan Site

The Courier and Advertiser, Wednesday, March 1, 2000

LOCAl NEWS 5

Plans for travellers’ pitch abandoned

By Mike Donachie

A SENSE of relief has swept over many residents of Strathearn after it was disclosed Perth and Kinross Council’s controversial plans for a travellers’ site at Abercairny have been abandoned.

But the council admitted with regret yesterday that county-wide complaints about travellers camping in lay-by’s are set to continue as no alternative has been identified.

Following a protracted process of negotiations, public meetings and an emotive local campaign against the site, planning permission was eventually awarded for the facility, which was to be just off the A95 between Perth and Crieff.

Along with the over-subscribed pitched at Double Dykes near Perth, the new site would have helped the council meet part of its target number of pitches, set by central government.

Instructions issued to councils and police forces by the Lord Advocate mean a policy of non-harassment must be pursued when dealing with travellers camped on public land if the local council has not met pitch targets.

Because Perth and Kinross falls far short of its own target, the authorities admit they are powerless to stop encampments being set up at roadside picnic areas, beauty spots and even car parks unless there is a serious risk to public health and safety.

A Perth and Kinross Council spokesman said yesterday, “Until we do meet our pitch target there will be difficulties with travellers making unauthorised encampments.”

She continued, “No alternative site is being looked at present, so the pitch target won’t be met and we will continue to stick by the non-harassment policy.”

Finding suitable places for council-run pitches is proving very difficult in Perth and Kinross, despite the success of arrangements at Double Dykes, which produce few complaints.

Years of searching produced only one Abercairny, already a residential caravan site, which itself was not enough to meet the pitch target.

The council confirmed yesterday Abercairny’s owner, whom they have consistently declined to name, has himself ended the deal, which would have seen the land leased by the council and sub-let to individual users.

It is not clear what prompted the landowner’s change of heart, although he Courier understands the sustained campaign against the travellers site by many of his neighbours may have been a factor.

That campaign’s co-ordinator, John McLaren, yesterday made no comment on that but said locals were relieved at the news.

He said, “We’re just glad that it would seem that sense has prevailed, because the site really wasn’t suitable for the job.

“I would say that the community wasn’t necessarily against the concept of sites but certainly we felt that that particular one was a bad idea.”

The campaigners cited a number of grounds against the caravan site, including its impact on the environment, considerable distance from sources of employment and proximity to an already busy single-carriageway road.
5 June 2002

Dave Roberts
Director of Housing & Property Services
Perth & Kinross Council
Pullar House
35 Kinnoull Street
PERTH
PH1 5GD

Dear Dave

Gypsy Travellers Thematic Study

Thank you very much for your letter dated 21 May in response to our draft report on the Perth & Kinross case study we carried out within the above thematic study. I have enclosed a copy of the Final Report of the Perth & Kinross case study.

I appreciate your questions and comments, and respond as follows.

1. Paragraph 17, Community Planning. Thank you for clarifying this point. I have changed the Final Report to reflect your comments.

2. I am pleased to note your comment that there are no other factual inaccuracies.

3. Although we hope you found our report useful overall, it is not our intention to attach priority to the suggestions made in the report. We feel that the case study organisations will be better placed to determine priorities, taking into account other priorities beyond services to Gypsy Travellers.

4. The case study assessment carried out through this thematic study is not part of statutory regulation, therefore, we are not looking for a detailed response at this stage. We would not, to take your example, expect you to produce a costed improvement plan for our information, although of course you may wish to do so for internal purposes. Within the context of the regulatory inspection, we request a copy of any post inspection action plan, however, this is seen primarily as an internal document produced by the organisation to consider how to take forward recommendations made in the inspection report.
5 March 2007


Subject: Planning Application by Perth & Kinross Council for Formation of Temporary Decant Site for the Travelling People of Double Dykes.

Dear Sirs,

It has been brought to our attention that Perth & Kinross Council have applied for planning permission for the formation of a temporary decant site for the travelling people of Double Dykes on land beside the North Muirton Industrial Estate.

Having already experienced a high problem of theft in this estate we have spent £22,000 to improve our security systems to protect our vehicles and equipment. This higher rate of theft corresponded to the presence of illegally parked travelling people in this estate (see headline Perthshire Advertiser November 2001). The Lord Provost at that time was so concerned with the problems being experienced by businesses in the estate that he called a meeting with residents and police to discuss this problem. The illegally parked travellers were eventually moved on and the problem stopped. It was also verbally confirmed to us by the police that they also believed the problem was related to these travellers.

Although this application is for a temporary site we feel that once used as a travelling people site it will become a permanent site to other travellers.

As it will be necessary for vehicles to drive right through the industrial estate to access this site it will mean more congestion in Arran Road which at present is difficult enough to drive along with all the vehicles parked on the road. It now takes up to 30 minutes to exit the estate at peak periods.

Who will ensure that the dumping and burning of rubbish and the roaming dogs are kept under control – which if you visit Double Dykes it is an obvious problem. We would also like to know if you intend to put in place any security patrols or other measures.

This site will be right next to the main A9 and will be an eyesore for people entering and leaving Perth – hardly a good advert for the town.

We therefore strongly object to the formation of this temporary site on this industrial estate.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]
Stuart Smith.

On behalf of EPSCO Ltd.
The Head of Development Standards  
The Environment Service  
Perth & Kinross Council  
Pullar House  
35 Kinnoull Street  
PERTH  
PH1 5GD

Dear Sirs,

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE) ORDER 1992
PERTH & KINROSS HOUSE, HOUSING & COMMUNITY CARE
THE FORMATION OF A TEMPORARY DECANT SITE FOR THE
TRAVELLING PEOPLE OF DOUBLE DYKES
AT ARRAN ROAD, PERTH

We are the owners of the Arran Place Industrial Estate, the Dingbro property and Industrial land for further development opposite the proposed decant site in Arran Road, Perth and have received Neighbour Notification in respect of the above Planning Application.

We are opposed to this proposal because of concerns that the impact of bringing travelling people to the estate will be detrimental to the businesses in the area.

Arran Place has been targeted by Travelling People a number of times in the past and we have subsequently taken measures to prevent their influx by creating an earth barrier around our property and Perth and District Council erected a road barrier. These measures have been successful in recent years. It is therefore hard to understand why the Council should now choose to invite the travelling people to move into this area having worked with us in the past to prevent them moving in and disrupting the local community.

It has been our experience on several estates which we own across the country that travelling people have little regard for local residents and the local environment. They generate substantial volumes of rubbish which is simply left for the land owner to clean up and local residents feel too intimidated to complain.

Our tenants have made it clear that they believe this proposal will be detrimental to their businesses. We have been endeavouring to expand our estate in Arran Place and it is clear that the presence of the travelling people’s site will discourage any potential tenant from setting up business in the area.
We would finally note that description of the application for permission to form a "temporary" decant site does little to ease our concerns as it would be a relatively simple matter for the site to be declared permanent at a later date if the Council express a need to expand local accommodation for travelling people.

Our concern is the close proximity of the site to the Arran Road and Arran Place business communities. If a site is needed for the travelling people it should be located well clear of established communities and in an area where they can freely enjoy their own way of life without conflict.

Yours faithfully
for C & W Assets Ltd.

BRYAN J W POWELL

cc – Mr Archie MacLellan
Travellers’ move plan angers estate residents

By Dave Lord

CONTROVERSIAL LOCAL authority plans to “decant” dozens of travelling people to waste ground on a popular Perth housing estate are set to be discussed by councillors this week.

Despite numerous objections, elected members on Perth and Kinross Council’s development control committee are being urged to approve the plan.

If given the green light travelling people will descend on a site at Arran Road, North Muirton, while their permanent site at Double Dykes on the outskirts of town is refurbished.

But residents and business owners are among those slamming the proposal, alleging it will lead to more theft, vandalism and litter.

Fears over the burning of rubbish have also been raised.

Businesses insist they will suffer a negative impact, while a potentially dangerous increase in traffic on roads has also been flagged up.

If the proposal is approved toilets and showers would be created, giving rise to concerns over the potential for the site to attract further caravans.

Despite all the objections, the council's head of development standards Ian Sleith will this week urge councillors to rubber-stamp the application.

He claims most objections are based on "perceptions of how the gypsies may conduct themselves" and insists that cannot be a "material consideration" for councillors.

"The application concerns the formation of decant site for the gypsies of Double Dykes for a temporary period of six months to the west of Arran Road," Mr Sleith said.

"It is proposed to form an area of hardstanding containing stances for 26 touring caravans and one static caravan together with washing, drying, parking, toilet and shower facilities.

"The hardstanding area ... will be enclosed by fencing.

"The site is required for a period of six months as a decant facility to enable the current gypsy/traveller site at Double Dykes to be comprehensively refurbished."

Mr Sleith will tell councillors that over a dozen letters of objection have been received from business owners and householders.

Nevertheless, he insists that the plan should be approved.

“Most of the grounds of objection are based on perceptions of how the gypsies may conduct themselves while the temporary decant site is in operation and are not matters which can be treated as material considerations in the determination of the planning application,” Mr Sleith said.

“However, the council does have agreed procedures for dealing with the unauthorised sitting of caravans outwith the site should that problem arise.

“There are also legislative controls to cover matters raised such as litter, roaming dogs and the burning of waste.”

Councillors will discuss the contentious proposal at a meeting tomorrow.
Dear Editor, – The situation for the traveller families on the Double Dykes site is causing them a great deal of stress. They have campaigned long and hard to have their accommodation upgraded, nothing too elaborate, just to have self-contained living quarters, each with private cooking and washing facilities. Surely this is not a lot to ask for in the 21st century? Members of their own community have put in a huge amount of effort to achieve this.

The Scottish Executive has agreed to come up with their share of the money, but meanwhile the families have nowhere to go till the work is done.

Perth and Kinross Council have failed to organise a site for them to decamp to, though they had many months to do so. Families, some with school age children, are facing major disruption, all of which was avoidable had the council fulfilled its part of the proceedings.

For the last 18 months or so I have been working as a volunteer one afternoon a week on a programme at Double Dykes. I have been so impressed with the way the families have a pride in the traditional way of life, in spite of all the difficulties; all they ask is to be able to co-exist in conditions acceptable for nowadays. What they face, day in and day out, is indifference at best, and at worst, the most stereotypical hostility, where individuals have to bear the brunt of the wider community’s prejudices.

I can't help feeling that if this story were to be reported as happening in another country, we would all feel shocked, but it is always hard to see when injustice is taking place in our own neighbourhood.

Zeb Korceinska, Pitcullen Terrace, Perth, PH2 7EQ.
Travellers’ decant site gets red light

Alison Anderson

PLANS by Perth and Kinross Council to refurbish the site for gypsies/travellers at Double Dykes on the outskirts of the city have been stalled after members of the development control committee unanimously refused permission for a decant site.

The council had identified an area of local authority-owned land at the end of Arran Road at North Muirton to create the decant site for six months, creating the temporary site of 26 stances for touring caravans and one static caravan plus laundry, toilet and shower facilities.

But councillors heeded the concerns of business on the neighbouring Arran Road Industrial Estate, who asserted the site was unsuitable.

Their grounds of objection included increase in traffic along Arran Road; potential for increased theft, vandalism and litter; problems with roaming dogs; concerns that the temporary site could result in unauthorised occupation; and a possible negative impact on local businesses.

Objectors and ward councillor Archie MacLellan were also furious at the lack of consultation by councillor officers with the local community - residents, businesses and himself - when the plans were being drawn up.

Head of development standards Ian Sleith had recommended approval of the temporary site, pointing out to councillors that the council had agreed procedures for dealing with the unauthorised sitting of caravans outwith the site and controls over matters such as litter, dogs and burning of waste.

Councillor MacLellan, however, branded Mr Sleith’s claims about unauthorised caravans as “so offensive”. The North Muirton councillor told the meeting: “Four years ago my first actions as the newly-elected member for North Muirton concerned an unauthorised invasion by travelling people of the area close to Riverside Church ... and it took weeks to effect their removal and a great deal of council time and money to keep the area under control.

“I and the people of North Muirton have not forgotten that timelapse view of what was an unauthorised occupation over a long time.

“The site is not compatible within the community against the development and significant site history and piecemeal development at Greenacres over a long time.

Councillor Barnacle was seconded by the development control convener Bob Lumaden.

Councillor Eleanor Howie moved deferral, but failed to find a seconder. She agreed that the unauthorised was a very serious issue but felt committee had been given insufficient information.

It was agreed that the council should continue to work with the gypsy/travelling community to support the refurbishment of Double Dykes and secure a satisfactory decant site.

THE operators of gypsy/traveller pitches at Greenacres, to the south of Kinross, were refused retrospective planning permission for four additional pitches.

In a video shown to councillors it was clearly seen that the site had been landscaped and four homes located there even though no planning consent had been granted.

Head of Development Standards Ian Sleith, told the committee that the site operators, the Reid family, had failed to respond to an enforcement notice.

It was also explained that the application was the subject of appeals to the Scottish Ministers against the council’s non-determination and also against the enforcement notice.

Kinross-shire councillor Michael Barnacle moved the council oppose the development at appeal, citing the Reid family’s lack of response to the enforcement notice. Strong representation from the local community against the development and significant site history and piecemeal development at Greenacres over a long time.

Councillor Barnacle was seconded by the development control convener Bob Lumaden.

Councillor Eleanor Howie moved deferral, but failed to find a seconder. She agreed that the unauthorised was a very serious issue but felt committee had been given insufficient information.
Note of Meeting of Perth and Kinross Gypsy Travellers Liaison Group in Room 413, Fourth Floor, Council Building, 2 High Street, Perth on Thursday 13 June 2002 at 12.00 noon.

Present: John Angus, Committee & Administration, Perth & Kinross Council
Tom Brydone, Environment Services, Perth & Kinross Council
Margo Chalmers, Housing & Property Services, Perth & Kinross Council
Liz Cooper, Housing & Property Services, Perth & Kinross Council
John Irons, Tayside Police
Mark Kennedy, Scottish Gypsy Travellers Association
Jim Low, Property Management, Perth & Kinross Council
Roseanna McPhee, Individual Traveller – on behalf of other Gypsy Travellers in the Perth and Kinross area
Shamus McPhee, European Romani Rights Centre (ERRC)
Joy Somervaille, Committee & Administration, Perth & Kinross Council

John Angus, Chairperson

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Joan Grant (Disability Benefits Advice Service/Citizens Advice Bureau), Joan Wilson (Perth and Kinross Local Healthcare Co-operative), Maria Walker (Education and Children’s Services, Perth and Kinross Council).

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting of 26 November 2001 were submitted and approved as a true record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

(i) “Gypsy Travellers and Public Sector Policies” – Recommendations from the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament

It was noted that at the meeting held on 28 November 2001, progress had been limited as regrettably no representative of the Gypsy Traveller community had attended. J Angus acknowledged that there were a range of issues relevant to this Group but asked that present discussion focussed on the two substantive items deferred from the last meeting. In response to an invitation to comment on the Recommendations from the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament, M Kennedy reported that the SGTA had played an instrumental role in the development of these Recommendations. However, he asked that several issues with specific relevance to the Perth and Kinross Council area be noted in the first instance. He specifically referred to the progress of the planning application for the site at Muthill, the delay in undertaking repairs at Double Dykes, pressures on Double Dykes tenants in respect of electricity underpayments, and missing records for the last nine years of electricity used by residents at Double Dykes.
In response, M Chalmers reported that she had been in contact with residents in an effort to address these problems. She noted that the Hydro-Electric Board would not use the existing cabling to supply electricity and to replace the cables would cost the Council approximately £15,000. M Chalmers agreed that the current situation was less than ideal.

She also acknowledged problems regarding the adjustment of electricity meters and reported that residents had been consulted regarding police involvement but it had been agreed that no further action in this respect should be taken. With regard to the chalet accommodation she reported that an Environmental Services inspection had found this accommodation to be below standard and that an interim upgrading was to be undertaken. However, M Chalmers understood that further improvements, including possible enlargement or adaptation to accommodate physical disability, would occur in future years.

She added however, that as the revenue for the Double Dykes site came from general funding and not the revenue account, residents wishing disabled adaptations were required to apply for a grant before work was undertaken. M Chalmers also agreed that records pertaining to electricity meter readings were indeed missing.

M Kennedy suggested that having the electricity supply converted at Double Dykes might be considered as a special case because the Recommendations from the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament could be perceived to have placed an additional burden on the local authority. He suggested that a letter be written to the SGTA highlighting the conversion could not be carried out under existing budgets and in turn the Association could contact the Scottish Executive on behalf of Perth and Kinross Council or on behalf of any local authority making such a request. M Chalmers agreed to liaise with the Director of Housing and Property Services and forward a letter to M Kennedy in due course. (Action – M Chalmers/M Kennedy)

The Group also discussed the possibility of providing a Portacabin on the Double Dykes site and M Kennedy reported that the Scottish Executive had money set aside for such provision. He noted that many local authorities were using Portacabins to facilitate on-site meetings and that this encouraged resident participation. The facility could also be used for pre-school provision or life-long learning, with the potential for other services such as Health to become involved. M Kennedy also noted that transitional housing benefit might be available. J Angus agreed that further examination of such suggestions would be useful and that further discussion could take place at a future meeting.

J Low reported that development on the land adjacent to Double Dykes would commence within the next few weeks. It was expected that because there would be noise and dust from heavy vehicles, an
Dear Ms Townsley,

Stage 3 Response - Complaint ref: 85

Having investigated the circumstances surrounding a number of different issues regarding Perth & Kinross Council's handling of service to the Double Dykes Caravan Site and its residents, I am now in a position to respond to you.

Firstly, I would like to apologise for the length of time that it has taken to respond to these particular complaints and I thank you for your patience in this matter.

Your Complaints

I have investigated the following issues in relation to your complaints:

1. Has the Council provided you with sufficient information regarding the Double Dykes electrical supply?

2. Has the Council followed their own procedures covering the minutings of meetings?

3. Why were tenant representatives not allowed to attend project group meetings?

4. Has the Council prevented the Double Dykes tenants association members from making their views know in the publication 'On the House'?

5. Has the Council provided a response to you on the outcome of the 17 April incident?

6. Why has the Council taken so long to deal with your complaints?

7. If you raise any further complaints how will they be dealt with?

8. Have you been provided with all relevant information regarding allocation of pitches?
9 Have we provided you with sufficient information regarding the proposed refurbishment of Double Dykes?

10 Were the tenants of Double Dykes refused permission to use Aberfeldy Caravan site?

11 Does the Council have another Local Authority caravan site that could be used to decant the Double Dykes residents to?

12 Why was the unacceptable actions part of the complaints procedure enacted?

Our Findings

I will deal with the points in order as follows:

Electricity

Originally the Double Dykes site was built with a landlord’s electrical supply situated in the site manager’s office. The Council bought the supply from Hydro Electric and should have sold it on to tenants at 6.8p per unit – this was the price that the Hydro Board charged all domestic users.

Street lighting costs had been included in the electrical charge until an investigation carried out on another matter relating to the electricity supply highlighted this.

This investigation also found that the site warden at the time had set the tenant’s meters at different tariffs so that tenants were not paying the same amount for their electricity supply. Some tenants were being charged 2p a unit while some were being charged 8p a unit. As stated above the standard charge per unit should have been 6.8p a unit.

Unfortunately there is no way of identifying when the Site Manager altered the tariffs on each meter so we do not know how much we owe the tenants who were being overcharged additionally we do not know how much the Council is owed from the tenants who were undercharged.

Residents at this time could not purchase their electricity direct from the supplier and were unable to use the cards which most people bought from stockists throughout the town whereas Double Dykes residents could only buy cards at the Muirton office during office hours.

This situation was clearly not acceptable and I can only apologise to you for this however, it was recognised even at this time that changes had to be made and improvements carried out.

Upgrading the electricity supply at Double Dykes therefore took place in spring 2005 and was prompted by these long running concerns regarding the metering and distribution of power cards. As a result the Council has installed individual electricity supplies to each chalet. Residents are now able to purchase their electricity from whatever supplier they chose.
complaints that you have submitted and the changes to the substance of the
individual complaints that have on occasion occurred. Although a great deal of staff
time has been spent on your concerns we have due to limited staff resources not
been able to spend sufficient time to enable us to answer all your questions within a
reasonable time scale and I would to take the opportunity to apologise for this.

Complaints process

I am aware that the Complaints and Governance Officer has informed you that any
new complaint that you submit will be dealt with as a normal Stage 1 complaint.

Allocation of Pitches

An e-mail dated 17 November was received from the Scottish Executive regarding
the allocation of the pitches and I have been informed that you already have a copy
of this but if you require another please inform Liz Cooper, Housing & Community
Care.

2002 proposed Refurbishment

There was only one reason ultimately why the proposed 2002 refurbishment work to
Double Dykes was cancelled, and that was because there were not adequate
resources to fund it.

If misleading information was put forward regarding tenant’s views then I apologise
for this but this was not the reason why the project was delayed.

Aberfeldy Caravan Site

The tenants of Double Dykes were not refused the use of Aberfeldy Caravan site for
decant purposes, in fact during a meeting chaired by Dave Roberts, Executive
Director of Housing and Community Care on 18 May 2007 it was explained how
tenants could use this site including the procedures for reserving and paying for
pitches.

However, additional information from yourself and others, including Richard Pitt of
the Council for Racial Equality, have highlighted that some Double Dykes residents
attempting to book into this site found that they were unable to do so due to the
inappropriate attitude of the Aberfeldy Caravan Site staff.

Dave Roberts and I would like to apologise to you and the other Double Dykes
tenants, for the actions of these Council staff and confirm that we will not tolerate this
type of behaviour. These employees have now been instructed in the proper
manner in which they should have dealt with this matter.

I would also confirm that Dave Roberts will provide you with copies of the e-mails
that you have requested, and you should receive these in week beginning 22
October 2007.

Decant site
Dear Ms Townsley,

Complaint ref: 85

Having investigated the circumstances surrounding your complaints with regard to the proposed 2002 refurbishment project at Double Dykes and the allocation of pitch no 8, I am now in a position to respond to you.

Firstly, I would like to apologise for the length of time that it has taken to respond to this particular complaint and I thank you for your patience.

2002 Proposed Refurbishment

The Council has admitted that records of the events surrounding the proposed refurbishment in 2002 do not show clarity regarding a decision whether to proceed with or delay the proposed work. However in a note of a minute of the 25 April 2002, there is a statement that “No guarantee could be given about whether or not the work would be done because it depended on the cost and the availability of money within the investment programme”.

I apologise to you for this and acknowledge that the Council could have performed better in this area. However, I believe that recent work by the Council with the Double Dykes tenants association has achieved improvements to its service in relation to the site especially in securing funding of £450,000 from the Scottish Executive.

Allocation of Pitch No 8 at Double Dykes

A decision was taken in 2004 to stop allocating pitches at Double Dykes in anticipation of redevelopment.