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

Our permanent Travellers Site at Redburn, Irvine is a 16 pitch site which was built in 1989. It has undergone a number of major refurbishments in recent years. Each block has a kitchen and a tiled toilet and shower area. We have used strong, hard-wearing units and good quality insulation and heat retention. There is also a small storage area. Two of the units are adapted for people with physical disabilities.

Rent for the site is £79.33 a week.

The site manager is on the site 5 days a week.

North Ayrshire Council understands that the residents of the site may wish to travel for part of the year and residents make arrangements with the site manager whenever they know they are going to be absent from the site.

There is a play area on the site for younger children and a small multi-activity area with goals and a basketball hoop for older children.

There is also a purpose built community facility that is used by a secondary school teacher, an adult literacy worker and children's outreach to deliver accessible services to residents.

2. Details of any proposed sites

At the present time, the Council has no proposals to create any new site. The existing site at Redburn, Kilwinning Road, Irvine is considered sufficient for permanent travelling community.

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

N/A

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

N/A

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

The Council has considered the possibility of creating a temporary or halting site but at the present time, the funding has not been identified to resource this project. There is also concern expressed by officers that the establishment of a temporary site would not of itself deal with unauthorised encampments throughout North Ayrshire.
6. How often and by what process you review the need for more pitches/sites

We regularly review our waiting list for the Redburn site. At the moment there no travellers on the waiting list and therefore no current need for further pitches or sites.

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

Residents can complain through the councils listening and learning scheme. Complaints can also be raised directly with the site manager if the resident does not want to make a formal complaint.

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

The site sits on the main bus route, A737 and just off the A78 trunk road. These roads give easy access to local towns and facilities. There are schools and local health surgeries within walking distance of the site.

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

N/A

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

A number of sites both privately and publicly owned within North Ayrshire tend to be used periodically by the travelling community. Where the site is owned by the Council the agreed protocol is that officers of the Council accompanied by the local police liaison officer will visit the sites, issue the Council's Code of Practice for Travelling People and seek information as to the identity of the travellers, the duration of their stay and whether the Council can offer any services to assist the traveller.

Where the land is in private ownership in addition to the above assistance, the Council will also contact the land owner advising them that travellers have appeared on their land and where request is made, assist the private land owner in negotiating the legal process for the removal of travellers through the Courts.

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

The Site Manager has achieved a BTEC qualification on Traveller Site Management. This is the only recognised qualification offered specific to Gypsy Travellers. He is also an executive member of the Travellers Site Managers Association, which meets on a regular basis to discuss any current issues/developments regarding the Gypsy/Traveller community.
The Council has an Equality Policy which sets out its commitment to promote equality and to tackle discrimination and has published a Single Equality Scheme which describes its activities in this regard. The Single Equality Scheme includes reference to consultation with the gypsy traveller community which led to improvements to the Travelling People’s site at Redburn, Irvine. This initiative won a Care Accolade award in 2008.

The Council’s Equality Action Plan 2012/13 contains an action to "support partners in meeting the needs of gypsy travellers on the Redburn site and in the local community and raise awareness to help change negative attitudes towards the community". This aims to increase the "uptake of services and level of support to young Gypsy Travellers, reporting of hate crime, and to improve relationships between communities".

There is continuing support provided to the gypsy travellers through the multi-agency working group which meets at the Redburn site three times each year to review progress. This is co-ordinated by Community Learning and Development includes the Gypsy Traveller Co-ordinator together with representatives from Education's Pupil Support, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Literacy Support, Welfare Rights (Money Advice), Children's Services and Housing.

Under the new public sector equality duty, the Council is developing its equality outcomes. The needs of and issues for gypsy travellers are being considered as part of this process.

In relation to staff awareness, the Council provides equality awareness training for all staff and managers to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities to promote equality. An equality e-learning course is about to be launched for managers in September 2012 and will be rolled out to all employees in early 2013.

In addition, cultural awareness workshops are provided for employees who provide more in depth awareness training on gypsy travellers and ethnic minority communities.

12. Information about your Gypsy/Traveller liaison officers, including whether the post has a shared remit and whether site managers undertake the role

North Ayrshire Council employs a Gypsy Traveller Service Co-Ordinator who has, within his remit, the management responsibility for the Redburn Travellers Site. In addition, this post has a wider remit and includes responsibility for areas such as, developing support links for the Gypsy Traveller community; facilitating closer and more effective partnership working across service areas and partners and implementing the Council policy on unauthorised encampments.

Elma Murray
Chief Executive
North Ayrshire Council
21 June 2012