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)

We have 2 sites – one at Double Dykes, Perth, which is managed and one at Bobbin Mill, Pitlochry, which is not directly managed.

Double Dykes site has 20 pitches with purpose built self contained 4 apartment (3 bedroomed) chalets with all facilities. There has been site provision here for several decades, formerly with tenants using their own caravans to reside in. Historically, this area was used frequently by Gypsy/Travellers prior to being formalised as a local authority site. They also have a separate utility building which was retained following the introduction of chalets for the benefits of tenants’ use as a storage facility. Residents can park a touring caravan on their pitch. Rent is £94.55 per week and there is a Site Manager based on site. The new chalets first went on site in October 2007. There is a portacabin on site and this facility provides a local base for health, education, tenants meetings and for general support or social activities. Residents may be absent from site for 13 weeks to allow for travelling although there is not much take up of this provision. The site is located on Council land on the edge of Perth and near to the industrial estate in a rural type setting. The original residents identified the use of this ground as most appropriate when provision was established as above. The Site Manager undertakes all management issues on the site and can assist tenants with reporting of repairs, which are undertaken in line with all mainstream tenancies, and indeed any other matter the residents wish assistance with including complaints. A Tenants Association exists on site.

Bobbin Mill has 6 self contained chalets, again all 4 apartments. The ground lies on private estate land with a long lease and the Council provided chalets here in 2009. It is predominantly a family grouping and due to the size could not substantiate site status as such and it is self managed by the residents with Housing undertaking repairs in line with all mainstream tenancies. The rent here is £61.59 per week.

Details of any proposed sites

There is no proposal for any other permanent site.

How you determine where and what size sites should be

The Council constantly monitors unauthorised encampments and is aware of some stopping places which have no official status. Such stopping places are used by Gypsy/Travellers from time to time, often with the Gypsy Travellers stopping for some periods of time. These are however tolerated and monitored closely to ensure that there are no health or waste issues or indeed any complaints of any nature. Consideration is given to where they
are situated, what condition the ground is being kept in and that there is an intent to move on in due course.

If you have no sites, what the reasons are

n/a

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

The Council is currently looking at the identification of a transit site for Gypsy/Travellers who wish to pass through the Perth & Kinross area. We sought the assistance of Gypsy/Travellers and consulted them as to their opinions in terms of geographical preferences and identifying what areas best suits their needs at the start of the process. Once the location of the site has been identified and the site set up, the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer’s role will also include the management and use of this site.

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

The need for additional pitches/sites to meet the needs of Gypsy Travellers is addressed in the Local Housing Strategy. The Local Housing Strategy is prepared every five years which necessitates an assessment of the need for additional provision for Gypsy Travellers is carried out in accordance with this. In preparing the current Local Housing Strategy a separate assessment of the needs and Aspirations of Gypsy Travellers was undertaken as one of the actions in the previous strategy.

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

The Site Manager from Double Dykes also acts as Liaison Officer for unauthorised encampments and visits along with Officers from The Environment Service. Assistance is offered in the form of bags for refuse removal, health needs, schooling/education, or any other matter. The Liaison Officer provides written reports for appropriate Officers of the Council, acts as a link for the community and public and also for Elected Members' enquiries. Regular visits are made to unauthorised encampments and the Liaison Officer provides information as to the status of the residents and their intentions.

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

Evidence suggests that Gypsy/Travellers do not rely on public transport. At the point of visit by the Liaison Officer and Environmental Health Officers, the needs of the Gypsy/Traveller are identified and thereafter by follow up visits. Education needs are dealt with when identified. Assistance with
health or welfare issues is also offered as well as dental requirements. The Liaison Officer has a link with a Health Visitor from NHS Tayside and once a need is identified, the Health Visitor is contacted and will offer advice and assistance as appropriate.

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

Commercial and private sites must conform to the Caravans, Sites & Control of Development Act 1960 provisions in terms of planning consent and establishment. All fire/safety issues are controlled by the Fire Services authority. Any unauthorised encampment which wishes to be established to site status would require to achieve planning consent. In terms of anti-socail behaviour on such sites, Noise Enforcement is unenforceable as the legislation does not cover caravan dwellings; however, if there were a dispute between residents, the Safer Communities Team would be able to support the residents as they would any other resident of a mainstream tenure type, owned properties or Council approved site.

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

Planning consent should be sought and obtained for any sites that become established and are outwith local authority provision. Such developments are closely monitored by the Council and the Liaison Officer and in fact the numbers are very low. Most Gypsy/Travellers who are passing through do not take up any lengthy residence. As above, some more frequently used areas are tolerated and not given official status. They are monitored by the local authority and the Liaison Officer assesses the needs of the users when in occupation.

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

“Perth & Kinross Council is committed to ensuring that our staff are given the best possible training and development opportunities in relation to being able to deal with cultural differences which may present themselves from our diverse population.

Housing & Community Care Service has commissioned Gypsy/Traveller Awareness raising training for staff since 2007. This training is delivered by Gypsy/Traveller community members and is independently facilitated. We have seen in excess of 250 staff attend the training and feedback has always been positive. We are also keen to make sure newly elected Councillors receive a version of this training and it has been built into their current ongoing induction programme. This training has been opened up to staff in other services in the Council and has occasionally seen representatives from other partner agencies attend.
Our Council also has a long-standing and very positive working relationship with Show Racism the Red Card – they chose Perth as the venue for their launch of the ‘Out of Site’ anti-racism materials (which focuses on anti-racism towards Gypsy/Traveller/Roma groups) in 2010. During the current school year we used these materials in local schools as part of our annual programme of Show Racism the Red Card workshops – 9 primary schools and 347 pupils received specific ‘Out of Site’ workshops (in addition to the other 27 primary schools and 754 pupils which were involved in general anti-racism workshops in partnership with Show Racism the Red Card and the St. Johnstone community coaching team). Perth & Kinross Council believes that this positive influential training in schools will start to change attitudes amongst our young people and counter the influences of negative media reports or sensationalist TV programmes.

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

Double Dykes has a Site Manager and with effect from this year, he was also appointed as the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer. The Double Dykes Site Manager currently works closely with site residents and it was seen as a natural link to merge the roles thus ensuring a greater consistency of knowledge, awareness and continuity.

David Burke  
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Perth & Kinross Council  
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