SUBMISSION FROM PLANNING AID FOR SCOTLAND

Introduction
Planning Aid for Scotland (PAS) has a remit of promoting and facilitating better public engagement with the planning system in Scotland.

The evidence below is based on points arising at PAS training events and seminars involving Gypsy-Travellers, or relating to the engagement of Gypsy-Travellers with the planning system.

PAS work with Gypsy/Travellers
In 2006 PAS was commissioned by the Scottish Government to undertake a study into barriers to Gypsy/Travellers’ and BME groups’ engagement with the planning system; and to pilot means of addressing these barriers. This 18-month project involved the researcher visiting numerous Gypsy/Traveller sites and conducting interviews.

With regard to Gypsy/Traveller/BME Groups’ perception of the planning system, and planning officers’ perceptions of Gypsy/Traveller/BME groups’ interaction with the planning system, some key points relevant to this call for evidence are detailed below:

Gypsy/Travellers
- lack of understanding and awareness of the planning system
- negative views of the planning system
- cultural difficulties in accessing information/technical language and jargon
- tokenistic consultation with lack of feedback
- NIMBY attitudes
- lack of Gypsy/Traveller Group representation

Planning Officers:
- difficulty in stimulating and maintaining Gypsy interest in planning policy development
- lack of understanding as to how planning applications are assessed
- lack of resources/training to facilitate engagement

Based on the findings of the Reach Out project, PAS developed a pilot training programme involving a wide range of stakeholders, aiming to facilitate better engagement between Gypsy/Travellers and the planning system.
Throughout 2010 a Reach Out pilot training programme took place with the following aims:

- train Gypsy/Traveller and BME groups in how to engage effectively with the planning system
- promote better practice amongst planning professionals in engaging with seldom heard groups
- encourage wider and continued discussion on the above matters

PAS held the following five events:

- three community training sessions: two for Gypsy/Travellers and one for BME groups
- a training session for PAS volunteers on engaging effectively with seldom heard groups
- a seminar bringing together representatives from the Gypsy/Traveller community and the planning profession

The full report of the Reach Out seminar is attached as an appendix.

At the 2011 PAS Conference, a presentation was made by Alister Fowler of Building Bridges on the relationship between Gypsy Traveller Communities and the planning system.

**Scottish Government Policy and Guidance**

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) states that local authorities should address the needs of all sections of the community, including Gypsy/Travellers. It further states that “provision should be made for those communities which are in an area already and those who may arrive at a later date”; and that Gypsy-Travellers should be involved in decisions about sites for their use (paras. 89 & 90).

However, there is no further national guidance on how best to provide suitable sites, on what might constitute a suitable site, or on how to engage Gypsy/Travellers in the planning process in a meaningful manner. This means that local authorities have to base provision of suitable sites for Gypsy/Travellers on the two SPP paragraphs.

This contrasts with England where [ODPM Circular 1/2006](#) provides comprehensive guidance.

PAS is aware that many Scottish local authorities produce criteria-based and site specific polices, and supplementary guidance relating to provision of sites for Gypsy/Travellers. However, in order to have a more consistent approach across Scotland, it might be useful to discuss whether further guidance is required from the
The availability of accurate and up-to-date information on how the demand for Gypsy-Traveller sites is being met is paramount; this can be achieved by meaningful consultation and participation taking place.

**Education and Training**
On the basis of PAS’s research, there would appear to be a clear need for further training aimed at all relevant stakeholders (Gypsy/Travellers, planners, elected members, community councils).

PAS believes that it is particularly important that young Gypsy/Travellers, as well as adults, gain an understanding of the planning system as this is likely to lead to more meaningful engagement with the planning system as adults. Equally, it is essential that planning officers, elected members and community councils understand the needs of Gypsy/Travellers.

PAS is interested in being involved in delivering further training and education in this regard and would be happy to discuss this possibility further.

**Responses to selected set questions**
The evidence below is based on points arising at PAS training events and seminars involving Gypsy-Travellers, or relating to the engagement of Gypsy-Travellers with the planning system.

**Site provision**
*The number of local authority sites across Scotland – are there enough sites to accommodate Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland, and do sites generally provide enough pitches to accommodate large family groups?*

PAS believes that it is important that accurate and up-to-date information regarding provision of Gypsy-Traveller sites across Scotland is available, in order to inform policy at a national and local level.

*Whether there are alternatives to local authority site provision—for instance private sites—what might these be and how they are run?*

Meaningful Gypsy/Traveller participation in the development plan process, and the submission of high-quality planning applications by Gypsy/Travellers with appropriate pre-application discussion and support from local authorities, should be encouraged. Training, education and better knowledge of planning for all relevant stakeholders is essential in helping to facilitate all of this.
What provision is available for Gypsy/Travellers who want to stop somewhere temporarily?

PAS believes it is essential to consult Gypsy/Travellers in a meaningful way regarding the need for and provision of transit sites. It may be useful to do this more widely than at local level only.

Do Gypsy/Travellers contact public and third sector organisations for assistance, if so what are their concerns?

As well as the dedicated training outlined earlier in this evidence, PAS delivers a free and impartial planning advice service receiving hundreds of enquires annually. A small but regular proportion of enquiries are from Gypsy/Travellers, or relate to Gypsy/Traveller sites. Enquiries have related to a variety of matters, including how to submit a planning application, development management procedures, development plan involvement, enforcement, green-field land and interpretation of policy; as well as members of the public and community councils seeking advice on how to comment on planning applications relating to gypsy-traveller sites.

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17 July 2012
Feedback from Gypsy/Traveller Seminar – 4th November 2010

Background:

On the 4th November 2010, Planning Aid Scotland (PAS), with the support of the Scottish Traveller Education Programme (STEP), hosted a seminar, with the aim of bringing planning professionals and support agencies working with Gypsy/Travellers together, to share ideas, experience and good practice.

The seminar was the final event to take place as part of PAS’s ‘Reach Out’ pilot programme taking place throughout 2010. The Reach Out project started in 2006 as a research project into the engagement of BME groups and Gypsy/Travellers with the planning system. This research found that there were a range of barriers to engagement amongst these groups, including a lack of knowledge and understanding of the planning system. It also found that there was a lack of understanding amongst planners about the needs of these groups and the best methods of engaging with them.

As a result of the research, and with funding from Awards for All, Big Lottery Fund, a pilot project was developed with the following aims:

- to train BME groups and Gypsy/Travellers in the planning system and how to engage with the system effectively
- to promote better practice amongst planning professionals in engaging with seldom-heard groups
- to encourage wider and continued discussion on the engagement of seldom-heard groups in planning.

The pilot project included: 3 community training sessions (1 for BME groups in Glasgow and 2 for Gypsy/Travellers in Perth and Kinross); a training session for PAS volunteers on engaging with seldom-heard groups; and, the Gypsy/Traveller seminar.

In different ways, all of the above sessions sought to meet the aims of the pilot by encouraging the communities themselves, planners or other professionals, to learn, think more about, and further discuss, the relevant issues.

The Gypsy/Traveller seminar gave planners a chance to learn about the needs of Gypsy/Travellers and the best methods for engaging with them, while the support agencies learnt about the planning system and the importance of, and opportunities for, community involvement in the system.

The seminar allowed for a great deal of interesting and worthwhile discussion, from which a number of important learning points were developed.
3 specific points to come out of the discussion, which were considered in detail throughout the seminar, were as follows:

- the need for more Gypsy/Traveller representation amongst elected members
- the need for more strategic guidance on this topic at a national level
- the need for a regular forum/discussion on Gypsy/Traveller issues

These points, along with the full summary set out below, may be a starting point for extensive future discussion and debate on this topic.

PAS will endeavour to plan relevant future sessions and all participants will receive invites to these.

Education

Topic summary:

Much of the discussion centred around the need to educate and raise awareness of the lifestyles and needs/wants of Gypsy/Travellers. It was noted throughout the day that the settled population do not have an understanding of how Gypsy/Travellers live, and that this can result in poor decisions being made on their accommodation needs. It was also suggested that this can lead to discrimination and prejudice at times. In particular, it was felt that Planners and elected members, need to have a better understanding of Gypsy/Travellers so that effective decisions can be made.

In addition to educating the settled population, it was also highlighted that it is equally important to educate Gypsy/Travellers on planning issues so that they can interact with the planning system more effectively. While this seminar, and the training carried out by PAS have been a first step in this education, it is apparent that much more still needs to be done.

Other key points to come out of the discussion:

- There is a need to educate and raise awareness of Gypsy/Traveller issues and culture amongst elected members, planning staff, and the public.
- There is potential to run local events with Gypsy/Travellers, to explain more about the planning system. These sessions could also have information about Gypsy/Traveller lifestyles to help inform the settled population – although there is a challenge with getting a good attendance at these events.
- There is potential to set up a local authority working group involving various departments, including planning, housing, education etc. They should all come together to work on a combined strategy for working on this topic.
Engaging with Gypsy/Travellers

Topic summary:

Much of the discussion centred round the fact that it is essential for Gypsy/Travellers to speak for themselves and to have a say in the provision that is made for them throughout Scotland. It was accepted that in the past, decisions have often been made for them, without knowing what it is they need/want and how they like to live. The challenge of encouraging Gypsy/Travellers to engage, and the best methods for engaging with them was discussed at length, however. If planners are going to encourage Gypsy/Travellers to get involved, they must use engagement methods which are effective for that group. This can, however, result in resource concerns as the ideal type of engagement may not always be possible.

The important role of Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officers (GTLO) was highlighted and it was noted that they can be pivotal in ensuring local authorities engage with Gypsy/Travellers effectively and encourage them to have their say. It was pointed out, however, that not every local authority in Scotland has a GTLO appointed.

Other key points to come out of the discussion:

- It is important to help enable Gypsy/Travellers to have their say in site/accommodation provision and to encourage them to be proactive rather than solely reactive.
- It is important for GTLOs to have an awareness of planning so that they can encourage Gypsy/Traveller engagement.
- Use appropriate sources to communicate with Gypsy/Travellers – there is potential to use publications such as the Travellers Times or the Building Bridges magazine, but it must be noted that one medium will not reach all Gypsy/Travellers.
- Community Planning Partnerships are a potential bridge but this is not consistent between local authorities and there is a need for closer links between Planning and Community Planning Partnerships.
- There will generally be a need for multiple events as some Gypsy/Traveller groups or families will not mix together.
- There is often a mis-trust of authority amongst Gypsy/Travellers. It is, therefore, valuable to use third parties and a facilitatory approach to build up this trust and allow for more effective engagement.
- Appropriate engagement techniques must be considered – new/revolutionary methods with a focus on visual techniques may be required to engage effectively.
- It was noted that it can be particularly difficult to encourage transient Gypsy/Travellers to engage with planning.

Information-sharing

Topic summary:

It was highlighted that there is a need for a forum/working group on this topic which can come together regularly to share information and experience and try to find solutions to a variety of
issues. It would also be helpful to have a list of contacts for all those involved throughout Scotland, to ease communication.

It was also noted that there is insufficient accurate information available on the numbers of Gypsy/Travellers and their movement throughout Scotland and that this should be addressed. There was discussion over who would be the appropriate group to do this, and no conclusion was reached on this. Those suggested included Site Managers, the Police or Gypsy/Travellers themselves. It was recognised that this will be a large, time-consuming task and it may not be appropriate to do this on a voluntary basis.

Other key points to come out of the discussion:

- There is a need to map/record the numbers and movement of Gypsy/Travellers throughout Scotland - both permanent and transient.
- It would be helpful to produce a list of relevant contacts, including GTLOs.
- It is important to share experience and both good and bad practice to learn from this.
- It would be useful to disseminate information on the different planning requirements for different types of Gypsy/Travellers.
- There is a need for a forum at least twice a year.

National Level

Topic summary:

Most participants felt that there is a need for more to be done at a national level to deal with this issue. In particular, it was felt that provision of accommodation/sites for transient Gypsy/Travellers should be dealt with at a national level.

There was also a suggestion that a practical pilot project could be set up by the Scottish Government to co-design a site or plots with a group of Gypsy/Travellers. This would require the Scottish Government, local authorities and Gypsy/Travellers to work together to prepare the pilot and would potentially have the effect of breaking down barriers, and encouraging greater trust between these groups, and also increasing shared-understanding between them.

Other key points to come out of the discussion:

- There should be better use of Equality Impact Assessments – there is potential to improve them by making them more useful, accessible and more widely read.
- There is potential to put together a coalition of national organisations such as PAS, STEP and Building Bridges to work together to raise these issues nationally.
- The Equal Opportunities Committee at the Scottish Government may be able to assist with taking the issues forward at a national level.
- There is potential to put together a cross-party group on the issue.
Local Authority Level

Topic Summary:

At a local level, it was suggested that planning authorities need to have more information about Gypsy/Travellers in their area so that they know what to provide. As Gypsy/Travellers are not a homogenous group, there is no one-size-fits-all approach available, so it is necessary to ask Gypsy/Travellers in the local area what their needs are. There needs to be a greater dialogue between local authorities and Gypsy/Travellers. It was suggested that it is the responsibility of the housing need and demand assessment to decide what Gypsy/Travellers need and this should then be fed into local plans.

Other key points to come out of the discussion:

- There could be a network established across different local authority areas to discuss Gypsy/Traveller issues.
- It was suggested that there is no point in planning ahead for transit sites at a local level because it’s impossible to know who will be travelling through.
- Trends in how Gypsy/Travellers live should be recorded so that local authorities know what it would be worthwhile to provide.

Inclusivity of the Planning System

Topic summary:

It was discussed that whilst one of the aims of the reformed Scottish Planning System is greater inclusivity, there was a general feeling amongst participants that there is a significant issue with social exclusion amongst Gypsy/Travellers and that they can feel excluded from, and under-represented in, planning decisions. In terms of the preparation of development plans, it was noted that planning departments now have a responsibility to equality-impact assess their plans, but many plans were prepared before this legislation came into place.

Other key points to come out of the discussion:

- Some suggested that the planning system is not very inclusive and is developer-led.
- Gypsy/Travellers are very under-represented by elected representatives.

Gypsy/Traveller needs

Topic Summary:

The key learning point in this section was that Gypsy/Travellers are not a homogenous group and do not all have the same needs/wants. There must be different provision for different groups of Gypsy/Travellers in the same way as there is different provision for different groups of the settled population.

Other key points to come out of the discussion:
• Gypsy/Travellers often live in extended family groups and housing provision must reflect this.
• The lack of facilities on sites is often what causes problems – the media then focus on these problems.
• There is often a presumption amongst the settled population that Gypsy/Travellers will not live on the same sites as other families but this is not always the case.
• Many Gypsy/Travellers want to be located relatively close to existing services and communities. It’s often the case that they don’t want to be located in the middle of a community, however, because they don’t want their children exposed to issues such as drugs.
• The provision of sites is not always the solution to the problem – they need to be part of the overall provision for Gypsy/Travellers.