

**Gypsies and Travellers**  
**Briefing for County Council**  
**23 June 2015**

**Background**

Gypsies and Travellers have a right to lead a nomadic life style, which is a recognised part of their culture. Nomadic groups have always been part of this community as Flintshire is on a natural corridor through the A55 to Holyhead. It has therefore been a long standing, traditional stopping off route for groups travelling through North Wales. Many of the unauthorised encampments are in the Greenfield area; this may be due to its location near to the Well in Holywell.

Any eviction action taken by the local authority against Gypsies and Travellers needs to comply with both the Equality Act (2010) and the Human Rights Act 1998. Decision making may be subject to legal challenge so must be justified and proportionate and therefore the Council must be able to demonstrate that any welfare needs have been assessed thoroughly before a decision to evict is made.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 provides the first legal duty to carry out a Gypsy Traveller accommodation assessment by February 2016 and we will be legally mandated to implement the findings of that assessment. Suitable locations for Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites should be identified in the Local Development Plan (LDP).

The Council makes its own provision through the Riverside Travellers site, comprising 20 pitches. The site is currently fully occupied and there is an identified need through the previous assessment for more provision.

**Welsh Government Guidance**

The new Welsh Government guidance for Managing Unauthorised Encampments published in 2013 states it might be more cost effective to provide a site, even if it is a temporary tolerated site, than to enforce against unauthorised encampments. The Welsh Government proposes different types of provision: permanent, transition provision, temporary tolerated sites and temporary stopping places.

**Travellers at Greenfield Dock**

**Toilet facilities-** porta loos were offered to the Travellers, to which they made a financial contribution. Unfortunately on this occasion, there was an unacceptable delay in the porta loos being delivered. Arrangements have now been made with another company who will deliver porta loos within 24 hours of the request being made.

## **Financial costs**

### **Site clean-up**

Costs against particular clean-ups are not collated, therefore figures for individual sites and on an area or countywide basis are not available.

### **Impact**

The precise financial and other costs caused by unauthorised encampments are difficult to identify. However, the Environmental Protection Team are notified of any unauthorised encampments; this means that any incidents of fly tipping can be monitored and action taken against perpetrators if there is adequate evidence.

The negative impact of unauthorised encampments on the local community, businesses is also recognised. There has been an unprecedented number of unauthorised encampments during the past six months.

There is a multi - disciplinary group of officers who meet regularly to co-ordinate necessary actions. The group has been meeting more frequently over the last two months given the numbers and challenges of recent encampments. The Council's Protocol for Managing Unauthorised Encampments is being updated and will include a process for responding to repeat encampments on land where a possession order is already in place.

Frequent meetings are held with North Wales Police to review the position of unauthorised encampments. North Wales Police are also providing evidence in support of evictions once assessments have been completed.

Following concerns about the number of encampments and repeat encampments, a meeting to review the response to unauthorised encampments was facilitated by the Chief Executive on 21 May 2015. Actions from this meeting include:

- Increasing protections and defences at those areas of greatest pressure, e.g. Deeside Leisure Centre, Greenfield Business Park, Greenfield Dock
- Legal are reviewing the enforcement provision but additional sites (temporary/permanent) will support any future action and the speed of it.
- Reviewing good practice from other authorities
- Reviewing timeframes with partner agencies to ensure assessments are completed without delay.