

PE1364/A

Addition Statement by Phyllis McBain

I urge this petition committee not to miss this small window of opportunity to urge the Scottish Government to show real positive instructions on this issue. There is a small window of opportunity between now and next spring.

The items of clarity which urgently requires to be reviewed highlighted in the petition are important. And from those more clear guidance produced with far more fair interpretation.

There are a few points which I did not say in my petition and I have added them here.

- Trespass is not a victimless crime- People are directly affected by this crime.
- Trespass by Gypsies/Travelling communities is part of the way of life- This is a miss leading statement which can be found in many documents on this subject. In years gone by it most certainly was not. My Mother fondly still speaks of the Gypsies who came each year and stayed on the farm she grow up on. They asked to stay and were given the opportunity to do so.
- The start point for all guidelines all start after the set up of an unauthorised site. You should look at the start point of the guidelines should have guidance to the Gypsies/Travelling communities to be encouraged to ask to enter land before it becomes a trespass issue.

The real goal which has to be achieved from this process is the opportunity for more authorised sites for the Gypsies/Travelling community throughout Scotland. This is no easy task, trust has been lost on this issue and the main reason for this is the lack of strong management of unauthorised sites. In many areas of Scotland this summer many unofficial sites have been set up and the aftermath has done nothing to help anybody on this issue.

One idea I have had from writing the petition to improve the current situation and move forward with it is to look at giving unauthorised site next year is a temporary licence.

- Conditions set that could result in a licence being given for a set period of time.
- The rules of an authorised stop over site are then enforced.
 - Entrance agreement are signed
 - Code of conduct
 - Rent is paid
 - Agreement on entry and exit strategies
 - In case of unauthorised site on private land agreement in place that if the landowner gives permission – local authority's takes over the management and pays landowner rent for the land – Agree to return land as it was.

I know this is a basic blueprint that with real thought it could work and if it did work then the Settled Communities will see sites which are well managed and trust is rebuilt and the opportunity for more permeate site will be more easily achieved.

- Instruct accurate records are kept on this trial solution.
- If these sites are seen to be well managed real progress on this issue will have been made.
- It is far better than current policies on unauthorised sites of Prevent – Minimise the realities- Evict.

Gypsies/Traveller Liaison Officer – Whither they be Police or Local authority.

- I ask the question of the training given for these roles.
- The support structure they have within the originations they work for.
- This is a far more structured role to include all within this issue.

I have a personal point to make you may have noticed on reading this document that up to now I have not used the word encampment. I personally hate that word because it has me thinking negatively, I much prefer just saying sites and am trying very hard to use that term now. I used it in the petition because it is the terms used in guidelines I read.