



# Amnesty International

# TRAVELLERS' RIGHTS

## HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CURRICULUM

A human rights resource for teachers of KS4 Citizenship, Personal and Social Education and related subjects

### BACKGROUND

'Travellers' in the UK are most predominantly from Gypsy and Irish Traveller communities. There are estimated to be 200,000-300,000 Gypsy and Irish Travellers currently in the UK. Both of these Traveller communities are recognised ethnic groups, each identified as having a shared culture, language and beliefs.

Traveller and Gypsy communities are traditionally nomadic and in the UK local authorities used to have a legal duty to provide sites for these groups. However, as part of the 1994 UK Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, this obligation was removed. As a result there are now too few authorised sites for the Traveller communities. This has forced Travellers to camp where they can, often resulting in a hostile response from those living in areas where they settle.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Commission for Racial Equality,  
[http://www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/g\\_and\\_t\\_facts.html](http://www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/g_and_t_facts.html)



## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

The main activity in this resource pack explores the conflicting views on the land rights of Traveller groups and asks students to explore and try to resolve the issues through role-play and discussion.

The resource includes Teacher's Notes to guide you through the activities and photocopiable worksheets for students.

One or two lessons will be needed to complete the activities.

Full curriculum links are provided at the end of the resource.

### Learning objectives

- To understand the reasons why Travellers migrate and the challenges they face
- To challenge stereotypes of travelling people
- To try to balance the rights of travelling people with those of local residents
- To explore conflict in land use using role play
- To present and interpret data from a variety of sources

### ICT opportunities

The starter and extension activities in this resource pack encourage the development of ICT internet research skills.

### Human rights

The following articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) are relevant to this activity:

#### Article 2

Everyone is entitled to the rights outlined in the UDHR, regardless of distinction (eg on grounds of ethnicity)

#### Article 13

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement

#### Article 25

Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for... health and well-being.

#### Article 29

Everyone has duties to the community.

### Resources

- 'Who are Travellers?' – Activity 1 worksheet (requires internet access)
- 'Group roles' sheet for each group – Activity 2
- Flip chart/sugar paper for each group
- Pens



## ACTIVITY 1

### INTRODUCING TRAVELLERS

The 'Who are Travellers?' IT research activity below could be done as a starter at the beginning of the lesson or as a homework activity before the lesson.

If neither option is possible, start by asking the students if they have ever heard of 'Travellers' and what they know about them.

At the end of the discussion, clarify any misconceptions using the information in the Teacher's Notes and additional facts from the Commission for Racial Equality's website: [www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/g\\_and\\_t\\_facts.html](http://www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/g_and_t_facts.html)

If stereotypes or prejudiced comments do arise in the discussion, highlight to students that discrimination against Traveller and Gypsy communities (since they are both recognised as ethnic groups) is unlawful according to the UK Race Relations Act (1976).

## ACTIVITY 1

### WHO ARE 'TRAVELLERS?'

[http://www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/g\\_and\\_t\\_facts.html](http://www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/g_and_t_facts.html)

<http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/sitesandhousing/sitesandhousingindex.htm>

[http://www.travellersinleeds.co.uk/\\_travellers/Communities.html](http://www.travellersinleeds.co.uk/_travellers/Communities.html)

- a. Using the websites above define the two main groups of 'Travellers' in the UK.
- b. Travellers in the UK traditionally move around the country rather than living in one place. Why do they move? Think of at least one 'push' factor and one 'pull' factor.



## ACTIVITY 2

### TRAVELLERS' SITE ROLE PLAY

#### Setting the scene

Explain that a group of Travellers would like to set up an official site for 20 caravans on the outskirts of a small village in Essex. They currently live in caravans on an illegal site, which they set up on a nearby farmer's land. The Travellers have bought a piece of land for their caravans, and applied to the council for planning permission. Their application was refused because the council faced an enormous amount of opposition from other local residents.

The Travellers are appealing against this decision. To resolve the debate the council have set up an informal inquiry (which is common practice in these cases) where all sides will have a chance to present their case. The decision whether or not permission will be granted will then be in the hands of the planning inspectorate (a government body charged with making decisions on planning appeals).

#### Group work

Divide the class into:

1. Travellers
2. Village Chamber of Commerce
3. Local wildlife group
4. Local residents' association

Give the groups the relevant section of the role-play sheet explaining their views on the planning proposal, and the evidence sheet, which backs up their views. Give the groups 15-20 minutes to prepare their case. (They should consider how they can present the evidence as effectively as possible to get their point across, through the use of visual aids, graphs etc.) When they have finished preparing, give each group five minutes to present their case. During the debate, the teacher should act as the chair of the council and should ensure that any statements made are backed-up by evidence.

At the end of the presentations, ask everyone to come out of role and re-group into groups of five. They should now imagine they are the 'planning inspectorate' who have to decide whether or not the Travellers should be given permission to set up their caravan site. Give them 10 minutes to discuss the following:

- Is the evidence presented by the different sides valid or is it biased? How much is fact and how much is prejudice? Does it prove the case, or is further evidence required?
- If the Travellers are not given permission for the site, would any of their human rights be denied?
- Should the Travellers be given permission for the site or not?

#### The vote

Bring the whole class back together.

Take a VOTE on whether they think the proposal should be approved or not. Discuss the reasons why they have made this decision, and how they could resolve the conflict of interest. Will their decision protect the human rights of the Travellers and the human rights of the settled community?



## ACTIVITY 2 TRAVELLERS' SITE ROLE PLAY contd

### Resolving the conflict

When the vote has been taken, it is important to consider how the conflict of interest between the groups could be resolved. If the students do not come up with ideas on this themselves, here are a few suggestions:

If the vote is to allow the site to go ahead:

- Could the risk of criminal activity be reduced by increasing regulation and police monitoring of the site?
- Could the Travellers be integrated more into the local community by, for example, having a representative on the Parish Council who could act as a link between the local residents and the Travellers?
- Could more rubbish facilities be provided to make it easier for the Travellers to dispose of their waste safely?
- Could the Travellers be given a role to help manage and protect the wildlife site? For example, perhaps they could be given firewood in return for helping to coppice and protect the trees (it is likely that Shadey wood would be coppiced as the most effective way to protect the orchids).

If the vote is taken not to allow the site to go ahead:

- Could the council propose a more appropriate site – somewhere that would not cause as much disturbance to local residents?
- Could the Travellers be offered low cost housing, where they could live for most of the year, and still be able to travel to Traveller fairs etc for part of the year?

### NOTES

#### Sensitivities

All the groups in the debate, except the Travellers themselves, oppose the Travellers' site. This is usually the case in reality but the teacher, as the chair, should make sure that those playing the part of the Travellers do not feel too isolated or persecuted. This can be done by making sure that all groups are interrogated to the same degree, and by ensuring that when the students

come out of role and start to think about the issue from the perspective of the inspectorate, that they are balanced in their criticism of each group.

Be aware that some of the students in your group may be Travellers themselves. You should make sure you are aware of this before you undertake the activity, and it may be appropriate to talk it through with them before you do it, to ensure that they feel comfortable with it. If the activity goes according to plan, the Travellers should feel that their case is presented fairly and in a balanced way. It is vital to ensure that the activity serves to challenge prejudice and stereotypes rather than exaggerating them.

For guidelines and resources for teachers working with Traveller children, see [www.gypsy-traveller.org/education.index.htm](http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/education.index.htm)

## GROUP ROLES: 1. TRAVELLERS



### Your views

#### 'We have rights like everyone else!'

You represent 20 families. Some people call you 'Gypsies' but you prefer to be called 'Travellers', because rather than living in one place, you like to move around and live in caravans. Some of your families have been Travellers for over 100 years.

You are strongly in favour of the caravan site near Elburgh village – you own the land there and you want to persuade the council to give you permission to park your caravans there permanently. You want somewhere official to go, so you can run a site which is well managed and doesn't create any problems for other people living in the village.

You used to live on a site nearby at a place called Highborough, but you did not have permission from the council to live there, so you had to move and now you have nowhere to go.

You enjoy a drink and a party like anyone else, but you object to people saying you are all thieves and drunkards! The people who say this are prejudiced. Under Article 13 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it says that everyone in the world has a right to 'freedom of movement' and Article 25 says that 'everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living'. You have these rights just like anyone else, so you should be allowed to live on your caravan site.

### Your evidence

#### 1. There aren't enough legal sites

Many Travellers want to settle on council-run sites, but the problem is there aren't enough of these sites. Local authorities in the UK used to have a legal duty to provide sites for Traveller groups. However, the 1994 UK Criminal Justice and Public Order Act removed this obligation, so local authorities stopped providing as many sites for Travellers. As a result there are now too few sites for the Traveller communities. This has led to more Travellers buying private land to create their own sites, but they need planning permission for this.

This is what you want to do, rather than continue to live on an illegal site.

#### 2. Neighbours' views of official sites for travelling people

Other people who live in the area usually oppose the creation of permanent sites for travelling people – but do they exaggerate the problems? Tom Duncan at the Planning Exchange, Glasgow thinks they do. He went to talk to people who objected to Travellers' sites in Scotland to find out whether their views changed after the sites had been up and running for a year or more. He found that:

- All the sites with council permission were well run and the problems were much less than the neighbours feared.
- Many neighbours' fears had been based on previous experiences of illegal sites.
- Most householders had no complaints about the Travellers and many admitted that they had worried unnecessarily.
- Primary schools had been able to cope with the arrival of Traveller children.
- Police authorities reported no noticeable increase in crime in the vicinity of sites.

| Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation Housing Research 201. December 1996.

## GROUP ROLES: 2. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



### Your views

#### **'These Travellers will damage our business!'**

You represent the views of local businesses in Elburgh village. Collectively the businesses make £377 million every year and employ 2,200 local people. You are firmly against the proposal for the Travellers' caravan site.

In your opinion, the site would put off other businesses from coming to the area, and the value of your business would go down because no one would want to buy a business next to a Traveller site.

There is no doubt in your mind that crime around the illegal Traveller site at Highborough was much higher than elsewhere. You think it is well known that theft and damage to machinery is higher near Traveller sites and there have even been reports of Travellers stealing local cows and sheep!

Businesses near the old illegal site had to spend a lot of money to build high fences around their property to protect it from the Travellers, their insurance premiums went up and they had to pay people to clean up the mess that the Travellers made on their land. These are all extra costs that businesses cannot afford.

Staff who work at night would not feel safe with the Travellers living nearby.

### Your evidence

#### **Mr Frank Potter of Enamel Tiling presents an eye-witness report on the impact of the unauthorised Travellers' site at Highborough:**

My family have run a tiling business in this area for 40 years and we have never experienced as many problems as when the Gypsies came and set up camp near to us at Highborough. It all started one evening, when my wife caught sight of a young man running away from our warehouse with a bag of tools. We called the police but they arrived too late. We lost £500 worth of equipment that night.

The next incident was when a group of youths started throwing stones at our dog. We called them to stop but we were met with a barrage of abuse and they turned their stones on us! We decided to take the matter into our own hands and a group of us went down to the caravans, but the Gypsies refused to talk to us. They were all drunk and told us to 'get lost' in no uncertain terms.

And then there's the litter – the caravan site was always a complete tip, with old refrigerators and car wheels lying around everywhere – it really looked bad and many business who were keen to set up here, decided against it when they saw all the mess.

Since the Gypsies have been there, we have also noticed a lot more rubbish dumped in a ditch just half a mile from the caravan site.

## GROUP ROLES: 3. LOCAL RESIDENTS GROUPS



### Your views

#### **'We don't want Travellers ruining our historic village!'**

You are firmly against the proposal for a Traveller site in your village.

The village is hundreds of years old, and there are a lot of tourists who come to visit.

You are worried that the tourists would be put off by the Traveller site and they would no longer come. This would affect the local shops very badly.

You are also worried about crime and security. You have heard from people who live near the illegal Traveller site that they have suffered a great deal from Travellers getting drunk and causing a disturbance.

You have also heard that Travellers leave a lot of litter around and crime rates, particularly for theft and damage to property, are higher in places where Travellers gather.

In your opinion the village services can't cope with extra people.

The schools are full so they couldn't take in any more children, and the roads are already congested. The sewage treatment plant is also too small to cope with the extra people.

**Your evidence next page**



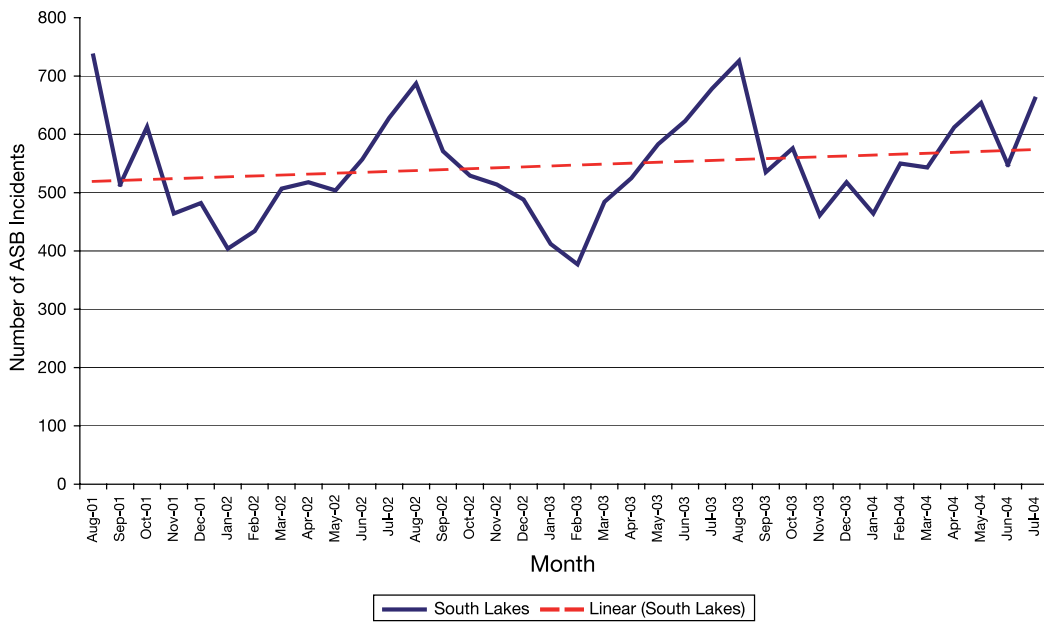
GROUP ROLES: 3. LOCAL RESIDENTS GROUPS contd



Your evidence

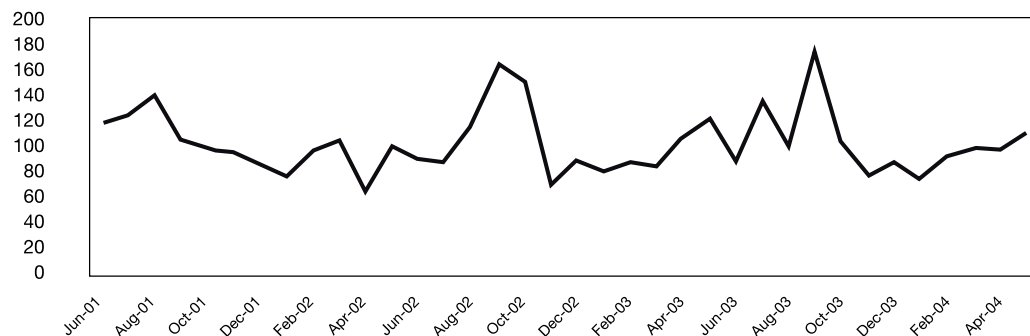
The largest gathering of Travelling people in the UK happens every year in June, in Appleby, South Lakeland. The graphs below show the rate of theft and anti-social behaviour recorded by the police in South Lakeland throughout the year. Is there an increase in this criminal activity around June?

Number of anti-social behaviour incidents in South Lakes by month  
Date Range: 01 August 2001 to 31 July 2004



Source: Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership – Crime Audit 2004  
[www.southlakeland.gov.uk/main.asp?page=1490](http://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/main.asp?page=1490)

Reported incidents of theft by month South Lakeland  
Number of Crimes



Significant Change – Number of Crimes – Cumbria – South Lakeland – Theft (Other than vehicle) and handling stolen goods – Jun 2001 – 31 May 2004

Source: Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership – Crime Audit 2004  
[www.southlakeland.gov.uk/main.asp?page=1490](http://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/main.asp?page=1490)

## GROUP ROLES: 4. LOCAL WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP



### Your views

#### 'Protect the rare plants! Say NO to the Travellers' site!'

You are against the proposal for the Traveller site because of the impact you think it will have on the local environment and wildlife.

Near the proposed site there is a nature reserve called Shadey Wood which is home to a number of rare plants, for example herb paris and early purple orchids. There are also nightingales, and bats in the wood. You are concerned that the Travellers will disturb and damage the wildlife in the wood by cutting trees for firewood, trampling the plants, and making noise.

You are also concerned about the impact of litter and bonfires, which you think will cause pollution affecting people and wildlife. You have also heard that Travellers often work on machinery, which can cause oil leaks. You are very concerned that this oil could contaminate the local reservoir. For all these reasons, you think that this is not a good place for a Travellers' site – they should go somewhere else.

### Your evidence

#### Shadey Wood Nature Reserve

#### Wildlife Survey Results 2004 – Plant Life in Shadey Wood

Local wildlife volunteers have undertaken a substantial survey of Shadey Wood Nature Reserve and have found an impressive diversity of orchids including the pyramidal orchid and such specialities as early purple, bird's-nest, greater butterfly, autumn ladies-tresses and most impressive stands of green-winged. Ten different types of orchids have been recorded, making this site one of the best places to see orchids in Britain. The rare emerald damselfly has also been spotted in the wood near the pond area, adding further to the outstanding wildlife interest.

The importance of preserving the orchids in Shadey Wood is highlighted in a recent Plantlife report *Where have all the flowers gone?* by Peter Marren. This compared modern and historic county floras, giving an estimate of extinction rates. Essex was shown to have **lost 68 species** between 1862 and 1974.



### ACTIVITY 3

## REAL-LIFE TRAVELLER PLANNING APPLICATION

The Travellers' site role-play is staged in an imaginary village but conflicts such as these are very common. Most applications for planning permission for Travellers' sites meet with strong local opposition. Research in 1997 by ACERT showed that, whereas 80 per cent of all planning applications were accepted, 90 per cent of Gypsy and Traveller planning permission applications were initially rejected (although more were passed on appeal).<sup>2</sup>

The worksheet 'Real-life Traveller Planning Inquiries' at the end of this resource will enable students to reflect on a real case study and to and consider further the rights that Travellers have.

<sup>2</sup> [www.cre.gov.uk/downloads/gt\\_strategy\\_final.doc](http://www.cre.gov.uk/downloads/gt_strategy_final.doc)

### ACTIVITY 3

## REAL-LIFE TRAVELLER PLANNING APPLICATION

Consider the applications and appeals made by Travellers in the Surrey Heath area: [www.surreyheath.gov.uk/planning/PlanningPolicyandConservation/pennypot.htm](http://www.surreyheath.gov.uk/planning/PlanningPolicyandConservation/pennypot.htm)

- On what grounds are the applications made by Travellers refused?
- If you were in charge of Surrey Council, what would you do to keep local residents happy and meet the needs of the travelling community?
- Which human rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be threatened if governments made no provision for Traveller sites? Go to: [www.amnesty.org.uk/udhr/simple.shtml](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/udhr/simple.shtml)



## CURRICULUM LINKS

### England

#### KS4 Citizenship

- 1a. Students should be taught about the legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society and how they relate to citizens, including the role and operation of the criminal and civil justice systems.
- 1b. Students should be taught about the origins and implications of the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.
- 2b. Students should be taught to express, justify and defend orally and in writing a personal opinion about such issues, problems or events.
- 2c. Students should be taught to contribute to group and exploratory class discussions, and take part in formal debates.
- 3a. Students should be taught to use their imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express, explain and critically evaluate views that are not their own.

#### KS4 PSHE

- 3a. Students should be taught about the diversity of different ethnic groups and the power of prejudice.
- 4g. Students should be taught the knowledge, skills and understanding through opportunities to: consider social and moral dilemmas.

#### KS4 Humanities

Opportunities are provided for students to explore: the spatial, political, social, economic, environmental and temporal dimensions of human existence.

### Northern Ireland

Curriculum links relate to the current guidelines for the Revised Curriculum for NI

#### Learning for Life and Work: Local and Global Citizenship Strand

##### Diversity and Inclusion

Young people should have opportunities to:

- Investigate how and why conflict, including prejudice ... may arise in the community.
- Investigate ways of managing conflict and promoting community relations, reconciliation

##### Human Rights and Social Responsibility

Young people should have opportunities to:

- Investigate why it is important to uphold human rights standards in modern democratic societies, including meeting basic needs, protecting individuals and groups of people.

##### Equality and Social Justice

Young people should have opportunities to:

- Explore why some people may experience inequality or discrimination on the basis of their group identity.

### Scotland

Curriculum links relate to the current guidelines for the new Curriculum for Excellence.

**People and place:** The human environment

**People in society:** Conflict and decision making in society

The activity supports the development of students as:

Successful learners able to:

- learn independently and as part of a group
- make reasoned evaluations.

Responsible citizens able to:

- understand different beliefs and cultures
- make informed choices and decisions
- develop informed, ethical views of complex issues.

**CURRICULUM LINKS** contd

## Effective contributors

- communicate in different ways and in different settings
- work in partnership and in teams
- solve problems.

**Wales****KS4 Personal and Social Education****Knowledge:**

- Value cultural diversity and equal opportunity and respect the dignity of all.
- Be moved by injustice, exploitation and denial of human rights.

**Skills:**

- Listen attentively in different situations and respond appropriately.
- Communicate effectively their feelings and views in a wide range of situations.
- Appreciate, reflect on and critically evaluate another person's point of view.
- Resolve conflict with a win/win situation.
- Make moral judgements and resolve moral issues and dilemmas.
- Work both independently and cooperatively.

