

# Cross-Party Group on Scottish Gypsy/Travellers

20<sup>th</sup> September 2023: 1.00pm – 2.00pm, Scottish Parliament.

## Minute

## Present

## MSPs

Maggie Chapman MSP – Deputy Convenor  
John Mason MSP  
Jackie Dunbar MSP

## Non-MSP Group Members

Lynne Tammi - Aye Right [Secretariat]  
Davie Donaldson – Progress in Dialogue

## Apologies

David Torrance - MSP  
Leslie Drury - Article 12  
Bernadette Williamson – Article 12  
Maureen Finn – STEP  
Dominique Barr – COSLA  
Kelly Muir – Public Health Scotland  
Dorothy Ogle – Scottish Government  
Diane Steele – Scottish Government  
Aqeel Ahmed – Scottish Government  
Shamus McPhee – Community Member  
Roseanna McPhee – Community Member

## Agenda item 1

Maggie Chapman MSP welcomed attendees to the meeting. Given that a number of people had been unable to attend due to train cancellations, Maggie Chapman proposed that the meeting discussed potential future actions for the group for further discussion at the next group meeting. All those present were in agreement.

## Agenda item 2

The minute of the previous meeting was approved.

## Agenda item 3

Matters arising:

Maggie Chapman asked if the Article 12 Deekin to Jan project visit to parliament had taken place. As members of Article 12 were unable to attend the meeting due to train cancellations, Maggie Chapman agreed to check if any progress had been made on this.

Due to prior engagements, Emma Roddick, Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees was unable to attend the meeting.

Format of meetings. It was agreed that future meetings should be in a hybrid format.

## Agenda item 4

The following future actions were tabled, discussed and proposed for further deliberation:

Maggie Chapman agreed to contact COSLA to request an update, in advance of the next meeting, on the national Action Plan in relation to accommodation and any evaluation documentation including that of the negotiated stopping places pilot.

In order to further raise awareness, it was proposed that an application to hold an exhibition of the work of key individuals and organisations at the parliament be made.  
Action: Maggie Chapman.

John Mason pointed out that it would be better to hold the exhibition in the garden Lobby as this would ensure greater 'footfall' and attendance.

Davie Donaldson pointed out that whilst the history was important the exhibition should also reflect contemporary issues and events such as the impact that blocking off areas has on the community's nomadic rights. Additionally, any exhibition must be inclusive of community voices.

John Mason suggested the establishment of an event similar to the Showman's Guild annual dinner. This was well attended by MSPs and gave members of the Guild direct access to them. Jackie Dunbar agreed, adding that such events were a good opportunity for politicians to demonstrate that they are approachable and are listening.

Jackie Dunbar suggested a mapping exercise of fairs and their meaning to the community – from Aikey Brae in the North East to St Boswells in the Borders – this could form part of the exhibition. MSPs might be surprised to find that a Gypsy Traveller fair had existed in their constituency and in turn this might start a conversation on the opening up of traditional stopping places.

Jackie Dunbar suggested that MSPs could offer local surgeries specifically for community members – this way community voices would be heard directly, rather than through a third party.

Davie Donaldson pointed out that the centralisation of funding/resources meant, at times, local need was not being met or requests for support were not being made as community members either did not know what was available or did not think they would be funded at the local level. Disaggregation and a more strategic approach would go some way to addressing this. It was agreed that the staff at Equality Unit would be asked to provide data on how resources are distributed and on what basis – i.e., are there set priorities.

John Mason pointed out that it can be the case that a community's voice is drowned out by those who can 'shout louder'. Competing with Pride in June [Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month] means we have to work harder to have our voice heard. Having a members debate or motion could go some way to raising the profile of History Month and contemporary issues/events. Action: Maggie Chapman to contact George Adam, Minister for Parliamentary Business, to facilitate this.

In terms of connecting with Local Authorities, it was agreed to contact Morag Macpherson at COSLA regarding the processes of contacting the Leaders/Chief Executives vis awareness raising/celebrating History Month. Action Maggie Chapman/David Torrance.

Davie Donaldson noted the importance of community voices being heard in broader strategies such as the climate crisis, Land Reform, Scottish Languages Bill and so on. John Mason asked if Progress in Dialogue and other organisations had the capacity/resources to respond to consultations on these matters. Perhaps meetings with community members for each relevant consultation/strategy would be the way forward. This would ensure that community voices are heard directly, rather than being filtered through third parties.

Davie Donaldson noted that 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2024 was the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roma Holocaust. The Scottish Government has recognised the day in past years by sending a wreath to memorial day events. He suggested that the parliament may wish to table a motion marking next year's anniversary.

Lynne Tammi informed the group that she would be travelling to Ottawa, Canada early November to further research the trafficking of Gypsy Traveller children to the colonies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She would be happy to share her findings with the group. All wished her well and agreed that space should be made for her input at the next meeting.

On behalf of Roseanna McPhee, Lynne Tammi tabled concerns regarding changes to tenancy agreements at Bobbin Mill site, Pitlochry. It was agreed that COSLA should be asked to give input on acceptable standards of tenancy agreements at the next meeting. Action: Maggie Chapman.

## Agenda item 5

Maggie Chapman thanked everyone for their participation.

The date of the next meeting [and AGM] was agreed as follows:

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2003, 1.00pm – 2.30pm, the Scottish Parliament and on-line.