

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Sites and Rights

Gypsies and Travellers regularly hit the news: "Despair as travellers invade rural idyll." (Telegraph) "Locals outraged as illegal gypsy camp allowed." (Mail) "Sun War on Gypsy Free-for-all." (The Sun).

Now a new DVD, Sites and Rights, looks beyond the headlines and presents a powerful argument for providing more Gypsy and Traveller sites.

In Sites And Rights, made by The Rural Media Company with funding from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Luke Clements from Cardiff Law School summarises the problem: "There aren't enough sites: and there are upwards of 3,000 families with nowhere to live."

The DVD reflects the views of people with Gypsy neighbours, people like David Hilden who admits he had opposed a new site near his Warwickshire home. Now he says, he's changed his mind. "They're no trouble at all."

Worcestershire Housing association worker Hilary Brotherton goes further: "Our Gypsy neighbours are always welcoming: they can't do enough for us."

While Wychavon managing director Jack Hegarty dispels some of the common objections to new sites ("There is no evidence whatsoever of any increase in crime"), viewers are given a conducted tour of Roma Gypsy Bobbie Jones' family home: "We like to be clean and spotless."

The shortage of sites is seriously impacting on the health and education of the Gypsy community. Yet the problem is easily resolved. "Once a site has been built, people forget it's there," says Luke Clements. "If every borough council gave one or two permissions a year the problem would cease to exist."

Steve Blatch, a planner with North Norfolk District Council, says "doing nothing isn't an option. Gypsies and Travellers are finding themselves in more and more unsuitable locations where health and safety of the families is compromised."

Norfolk parish council clerk Rachel Jackson agrees: "If permanent and temporary places aren't found the problem is going to continue." The last word is left with Rachel's neighbour, Gypsy Gloria Buckley MBE, who owns and runs three sites. "If in twenty years time we still don't have anywhere for these people to live then I say: "Shame on you."

Sites and Rights was made with support from Worcestershire Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Partnership. The DVD goes on public release on April 3 2009 with a special screening before an invited audience at the Borderlines Film Festival in The Courtyard, Hereford.

## **Release ends**

### **Note to Editors**

- For press tickets, interviews and images, contact Alison Chapman or Natalie Preece at 01432 344039.
- **The Rural Media Company** is a Charity and company limited by guarantee and is supported by ScreenWM, Elmley Foundation and Herefordshire Council.
- [www.ruralmedia.co.uk](http://www.ruralmedia.co.uk)
- Gypsies and Travellers are a legally recognised ethnic minority.
- The Travelling community has the highest infant mortality rates and the lowest life expectation of any other ethnic minority.
- **Picture caption:** Young Rico at an illegal encampment on the side of the road in Warwickshire.
- **Gypsies and Travellers: Simple Solutions for Living Together (2009)**, a new report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission says local authorities must double their rate of progress if they are to meet the Government's 2011 target to provide sufficient accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers.