

DIRECTOR'S REPORT AND STRATEGY WORK

This year LGTU has experienced the high and the low of being part of the voluntary sector. The level of Traveller participation in the campaigning on the London Plan and Traveller pitch targets has been unique and inspiring, but we have been faced with a 30% drop in our income with the inevitable impact on staff hours, and a new government hostile to Travellers.

These pages will demonstrate how, despite these problems, LGTU has continued to deliver exceptional results. We have been able to do this because of the indomitable spirit of the staff, the enthusiastic participation of London Travellers and the contribution of committed and highly skilled volunteers, including our trustees.

Before reporting on our activities I would like to commend the work undertaken on the nuts and bolts of the organization, so essential for their delivery. These have included revised financial processes to help planning, aiming for quality assurance kite mark; IT upgrades, fundraising and sessions on monitoring and evaluation. Similarly solid delivery of the youth programme continued despite the urgent work that arose in response to the London Plan

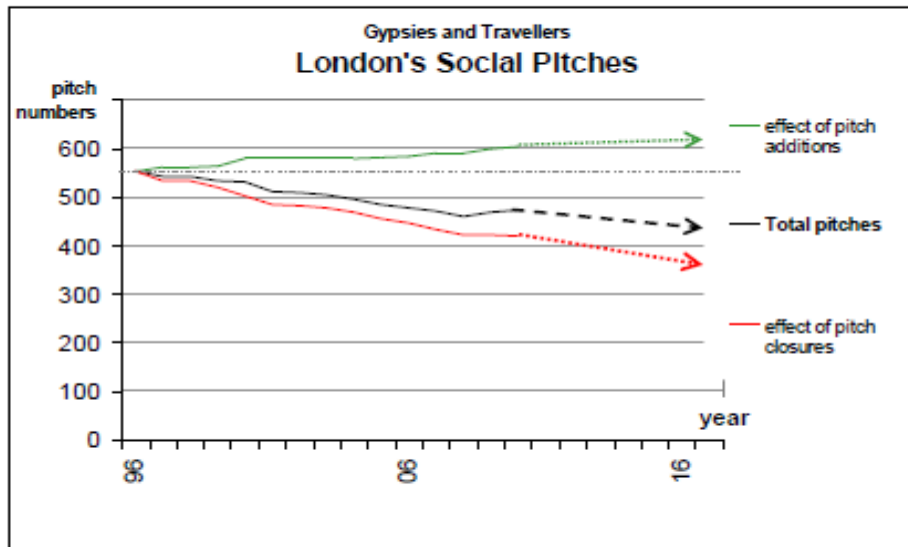
LGTU has always developed 'organically' with the separate service areas and the policy work, frequently overlapping and mutually influencing new developments. This year it is impossible to report on policy and community development work separately on the subject of **the London Plan**, and all parts of the organisation have at some point been actively engaged in making sure that Boris Johnson is made

I'm a Town Planner and I deal mostly with policies and research. I'm the kind of person who says "Mayor, Your policy 3.8, subsection i, paragraph 238 contradicts your equalities policy 3.1 and ignores the government guidance on SHMA and SHLAA and your IIA is not compliant to boot." Important, but mind numbing. What a relief then to meet people for a change, and to be a part of an organisation that is actively supporting the community in practical ways. Without this, the 'strategic' policy level so quickly loses touch with reality. Sitting in on a group of Travellers putting together ideas on how a London policy will really affect them, or being part of a silent protest at the City Hall: these are crucial reminders of just why it is important that policy 3.8i is changed.

aware of the needs of Travellers. The Plan has taken over our lives, as instead of responding to one public consultation we have been faced with three, as the Mayor has issued two 'minor amendments' reducing and then withdrawing his commitment to a Traveller policy and pitch targets. Bernard Bourdillon, policy volunteer, has continued to give all it takes and, offers the following comment on the impact of the London Plan and LGTU's response to it.

Graph on the net loss of pitches in London since the repeal of the Caravan's sites Act

Over the last 14 years London has lost over 125 pitches (25%) through closure.¹



¹ This excludes the relocation of 33 pitches from the Olympic sites

Increase in 08-10 is 12 new pitches on existing sites using 07-09 HCA grant.

This has all been happening within a changing **national context**. The General election in May heralded a new government with very different policies towards Gypsies and Travellers. The Government have abolished all Regional assemblies and therefore Regional Plans which were responsible for planning for future housing needs, and for future Traveller sites. An essential feature of their localism agenda is that no government targets will be set. In other regions where the process of setting district pitch targets has been completed, there are increasing examples of districts dropping Traveller sites from their plans.

The London Plan has not been abolished in this way as the **GLA** is a directly elected Regional body and its responsibility to produce a strategic Plan is enshrined in legislation. The Mayor's second alteration of the London Plan follows the Government position by claiming that provision of sites is not a strategic responsibility.

The London Plan also featured high on the agendas of the two other significant arenas where LGTU is active on policy; the **London Gypsy and Traveller forum (LGTF)** and the **Traveller law Reform Project (TLRP)**. Coordinated by LGTU, the LGTF was able to give a response drawing on the experiences of all the member organisations and Travellers, and also to support each organisation's individual response, as we were aware that numbers of responses were

Meeting with Boris

6 Travellers and Frieda met with Boris in October. Helena Kiely comments - *It was good to meet him face to face so we could say what we felt about taking Travellers out of the London Plan. He seemed very interested in what we had to say, so we hope he listened and does the things he promised to do like getting Boroughs to have site waiting lists and writing to Lewisham about the site they closed.*

significant. The TLRP was able to use its experience of other regional plans to give a national context to its response.

National Policy

Security of tenure on Local authority Travellers sites has been an issue for decades which we thought had been resolved. However in February it fell off the agenda again when we heard that the necessary secondary legislation would not be completed before the May election

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Traveller law Reform is supported by the TLRP policy officer through servicing their meetings and giving regular briefings. With the change of government a completely new APPG had to be recruited and re-registered, so the officer had to take a pro-active role. It is a triumph that 45 members (Of which 50% has to come from the government party) have signed up and the group is established. The APPG will be very significant in trying to hold the government to account.

New government policies on abolishing **regulatory bodies** will also impact on how organisations such as LGTU can promote equality of treatment and services for Travellers. LGTU has been a member of the equality and diversity committees of both the Audit Commission and the Tenants Services Authority making progress in ensuring that Traveller sites come under the same regulatory systems as other accommodation. Now no standards will be set for anyone!

The summary way in which **Regional Plans** were abolished, throwing planning processes in disarray, has been the subject of a scrutiny exercise by the parliamentary select committee on community and local government: and to a successful judicial review taken out by a building developer and the Community Law Partnership (who represent Travellers). LGTU, along with other Traveller organisations have made a submission on the impact on site provision to the Select committee.



Security of Tenure Petition being delivered to Downing Street