



## Encouraging a new approach to the community

# Is your mind open?

HOW do you view Gypsies and Travellers? Do you see them as people who set up illegal sites on private land and go around covering drives and stealing anything they can? Or do you understand them as being an ethnic group with a long history and strict traditions.

With some of the recent media reports, people might be mistaken for thinking it was the former.

But over recent years, the Met has recognised the specific concerns of Gypsies and Travellers as a distinct ethnic group.

According to its current policy, the Met “acknowledges the minority ethnic status of Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers and commits the Met to a policy of engagement and consultation with all concerned parties”.

This means rather than simply moving Gypsies off sites, officers are encouraged to talk to Gypsies and Travellers and include them as part of the community.

According to Acting Insp Nick Williams, the Met’s Gypsy and Traveller liaison officer, they must be treated like everyone else.

He said: “Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are minority groups in terms of the Race Relations Act. Met policy states clearly that the Service is aware of that.

“It is important to work with them as London residents and consult with them in the same way we do with other racial and minority groups and include them in the decision-making process.”

From *The Job*, April 2005. The magazine of The Metropolitan Police Authority



## **Tory traveller plans 'not racist'**

**The Conservatives' policy to crack down on illegal traveller sites is nothing to do with racism and all about common sense, Michael Howard has said.**

His plans to criminalise trespass by travellers were part of "standing up for the right values", he added.

Mr Howard also claimed the Human Rights Act was making it easier for travellers to abuse planning rules.

Lord Chancellor Lord Falconer said the plans were "madcap" and the Lib Dems accused Mr Howard of "opportunism".

From BBC NEWS online, March 2005



### **Travellers, Gypsies and the media**

Poor quality reporting which exploits or panders to stereotypes can cause much hurt to those about whom the stories are written. By repeating false and negative stereotypes the media can encourage bad practice on the part of those with whom Travellers and Gypsies deal and can validate the expression of language and attitudes which in any other circumstances would be seen as totally unacceptable.

- Steer clear of exploiting prejudice
- Check the facts
- Don't let your news agenda only be driven by the way others are handling the issue
- Look behind the storyline
- Listen to the people you are writing about
- Don't label people if it is not relevant

Adapted from 'Guidance for journalists on reporting race issues' by The Commission For Racial Equality.

Some examples of media coverage of Gypsies and Travellers

## With the gypsies in junk heaven

JEREMY CLARKSON

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,24389-2179074.html>

## Villagers reach for their cheque books to beat off 'Gucci gypsies'

BY DAVID LISTER

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/printFriendly/0,,1-2-1346442-2,00.html>

## Gypsies take over park

By JOHN COLES

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/article/0,,2-2006170309,00.html>

## Gypsies' ruin beauty spot

By JOHN TROUP

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/article/0,,2-2006180301,00.html>

## School for scandal

By Dea Birkett

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/racism/comment/0,,633772,00.html>

## Woman told to look for stolen van at gypsy sites

By Richard Savill

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/09/16/ntrav116.xml>