

1. SUMMARY

This report on housing and accommodation needs of Travellers in Moray was commissioned by Moray Council and prepared by Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) in June 2023 to inform the Council's updated Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA).

The accommodation needs of Travelling communities in the region were previously researched in 2017¹ in a Grampian-wide study conducted by GREC and Aberdeen University in partnership with Moray Council alongside Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils. This report therefore looks to update the 2017 research and highlight the picture in Moray specifically, via a literature review and an analysis of encampment data over this period.

There are no public Traveller sites operated by the local authority in Moray, meaning the only accommodation options available for Gypsy/Travellers in the region are located on private land or settled accommodation, and unauthorised encampments are common.

1. METHODOLOGY

The project to update evidence on the Accommodation Needs of Gypsy/Travellers in Moray was a very short-term piece of work, significantly smaller in scale and capacity compared to pre-existing research in this area. The methodology contained three main elements:

- An analysis of the number of unauthorised encampments in the Moray area since 2012
- A literature review with a focus on the national context and any shifts since 2017
- Engagement with Gypsy/Traveller communities residing in Moray during June 2023

2. TERMINOLOGY

For the purposes of this report the terms "Traveller" and "Travelling Communities" are used to refer to people from several different ethnic backgrounds that fall under the Traveller umbrella, including Scottish and Irish Travellers and Romani people. The term "Gypsy/Traveller", common in policy and used in the Scottish Census as a self-identified ethnic category, is also used occasionally in the same context.

The term "unauthorised encampment" refers to camps set up by Travellers without first seeking permission from the relevant landowner. "Encampment" is also used occasionally as shorthand in the same context.

The term "settled housing/accommodation" is used throughout to refer to conventional brick-and-mortar accommodation including owned and rented properties. The term "settled community" is used to refer to non-Travellers.

¹ *Grampian Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, 2017*

4. NATIONAL CONTEXT

Travellers are of course not a homogenous group, and as such their needs and difficulties will vary on a case-by-case basis. It is however well known and evidenced that Travellers experience consistently high² levels of inequality in Scotland across all levels: both in the form of overt discrimination from non-Travellers; and in inequality of access to housing, education, healthcare, and other services. The Scottish Government have therefore stated a long-term aim to make Scotland fairer for Travellers by working to dismantle the “significant, entrenched and long-standing inequalities they face.”³

Indeed, the discrimination faced by Travellers is so commonplace it has been dubbed “the last acceptable form of racism”⁴ by some commentators. Discrimination against Travellers is well-evidenced in the North East of Scotland: in 2020, Travellers accounted for the victims in 2% of hate crimes reported across Grampian despite making up only 0.1% of the area’s population.⁵

Health inequality is likewise a well documented issue for Travellers: per the 2011 Census, Travellers were more likely to report a long-term health problem or disability and were more likely to report bad or very bad general health than the general population. In some cases this health inequality is related to Traveller’s accommodation, as sites are often far from public services and a lack of fixed address can cause issues when attempting to register with primary care providers.

The lack of suitable accommodation options for Travellers leading a nomadic lifestyle is an equally well-evidenced problem: public and permanent Traveller sites are few, and those that are available are often of poor quality, lacking adequate facilities, or otherwise fail to meet the needs of the people that live there.⁶

A lack of quality public sites is certainly not an issue unique to Moray or Grampian. It is worth noting however that Clinterty, the only public Traveller site in Aberdeen City, recently closed for refurbishment and will not be reopening until at least summer 2024. While the upgrading of the Clinterty site is a welcome development, with no local authority operated sites in Moray, this means Aberdeenshire is currently the only area in the Grampian region with any public site provision for Travellers.

There is a high level of unauthorised encampments across the North East compared to much of the rest of the country: for the period 2017-19, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray (as well as Ayrshire and Fife) reported averages of over 30 encampments per year compared to averages between 15-20 across other regions in Scotland⁷. This fact is surely related to the lack of public sites available for Travellers stopping in the area.

² *Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland: A Comprehensive Analysis of the 2011 Census*, Scottish Government, 2015

³ *Improving the Lives of Scotland’s Gypsy/Travellers*, Scottish Government, 2019

⁴ *The Last Acceptable Form of Racism*, The Traveller Movement, 2017

⁵ *How Fair Is North East Scotland?*, Grampian Regional Equality Council, 2021

⁶ *Evidence Review: Accommodation Needs of Gypsy Travellers in Scotland*, 2020

⁷ *Gypsy Traveller Sites in Scotland*, Engage Scotland and Craigforth, 2019

The arrival of unauthorised encampments has been known to lead to tension between Travellers and local settled communities and contribute to hostility directed from the latter to the former.⁸ A public site in Moray where Travellers could stop without worrying about such hostility could help to alleviate this concern.

With that being said, the Scottish Government recognises the right of Gypsy/Travellers to practice a nomadic lifestyle, including travelling and camping across Scotland, and has acknowledged that the large majority of unauthorised sites do not cause any issues.⁹ Local councils should not work to eliminate these encampments entirely, but rather work with the Travellers using such sites to ensure a positive experience for all stakeholders.

In their draft protocol for dealing with unauthorised encampments, Moray Council has stated that it “will not evict Gypsy/Travellers without due process from the land that it owns or manages”¹⁰ and has taken the policy of managing, rather than evicting, unauthorised camps so long as these camps are in appropriate locations and a Code of Conduct is followed by the camp’s inhabitants. This policy of working with, rather than against, Travellers using unauthorised encampments is in line with Scottish Government guidance and should be continued in future.

5. TRAVELLER POPULATION IN MORAY

79 Gypsy/Travellers were recorded in Moray in the 2011 Census. Data from the 2022 Census has not yet been released and specific ethnicity data is not available by local authority in mid-year population estimates. The 2022 Census data is expected later this year and will provide a more accurate representation of the current population size in Moray.

It should be noted that it is generally considered challenging to collect accurate data on Traveller populations due in part to under-reporting among these communities. Many organisations, including Amnesty International¹¹, the EHRC¹² and the Scottish Government¹³ as well as Traveller-led organisations, therefore acknowledge that actual population sizes are likely to be larger than Census data indicates.

As there are no public Traveller sites in Moray, the local authority instead focuses on managing unauthorised encampments. A detailed overview of encampments in the area since 2012 can be found in Section 6 below. In addition to these encampments there is at least one private site used by Travellers in Moray comprising 6 pitches on private land located just outside Elgin.

⁸ *Managing Unauthorised Camping By Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland*, Scottish Government, 2017

⁹ *Managing Unauthorised Camping By Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland*, Scottish Government, 2017

¹⁰ *Protocol for Dealing With Unauthorised Encampments by Gypsy/Travellers in Moray*, Moray Council

¹¹ *On The Margins: Local Authority Service Provision for Scottish Gypsy Travellers*, Amnesty International, 2013

¹² *Gypsy Travellers in Scotland: A Resource for the Media*, Equality & Human Rights Commission, 2013

¹³ *Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland: A Comprehensive Analysis of the 2011 Census*, Scottish Government, 2015

5.1 Settled Accommodation

There are also a number of Travellers living in settled accommodation throughout Moray with three households currently living in Moray Council Housing. The 2011 Census suggests that as much as 85% of Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller population live in "traditional" brick and mortar accommodation as opposed to living nomadically, and the majority of these are renters (40% social renters, 28% private renters). Evidence suggests that while this is a personal choice for many, some members of the community living in settled accommodation are doing so due to a lack of suitable public and private sites.¹³

5.2 Participant Feedback

During the research project 4 Travellers (one family of 3 and one solo Traveller) were interviewed, all of whom were based on private sites in Moray during June 2023. The interview process was intended to be informal and relaxed in order to avoid consultation fatigue, as Travelling communities have been surveyed numerous times on this topic without seeing any significant progress made. Interviews were held face-to-face and conducted orally by local authority staff; the interview questions are listed below.

1. How well does your current, and recent, accommodation in Moray meet your needs?
2. Should Moray create a public site for travellers? If yes: where should it be located, how many pitches should be included, and what type of pitches should these be?
3. What one action do you think Moray Council should take to improve accommodation for Travellers in the area?
4. Has anything changed in the past 4 years that has made you feel differently about your current accommodation and future plans?

While no conclusions can be drawn from such a small sample size, their input was valuable to provide insight into the views and experiences of community members. For example, interviewees agreed that a public site operated by Moray Council would be beneficial to the region. One participant felt there should be a public site with mixture of permanent and temporary pitches, which supports data that suggests a demand for mixed provision of pitches. One participant expressed a preference for coastal sites, while another felt unused municipal sites in Moray would be suitable for use as Traveller sites.

It was also noted that facilities at private sites are basic, and therefore not always suitable for longer stays. In addition, one participant who has a wheelchair user in their family remarked that Traveller sites are rarely accessible for those with mobility issues.

Previous HNDA research in 2009 recommended Moray introduce public sites comprising 23-25 pitches of mixed provision. This recommendation was reaffirmed in the most recent 2017 HNDA, but as 14 years have passed since the recommendation was originally made, this is likely to be out of date. As shown in Section 6 below there has been a reduction in encampment numbers in the area in the last decade, so it is likely a smaller number of pitches would be required.

6. UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS IN MORAY

The chart below shows the total number of recorded encampments in Moray from 2012 to 2022.

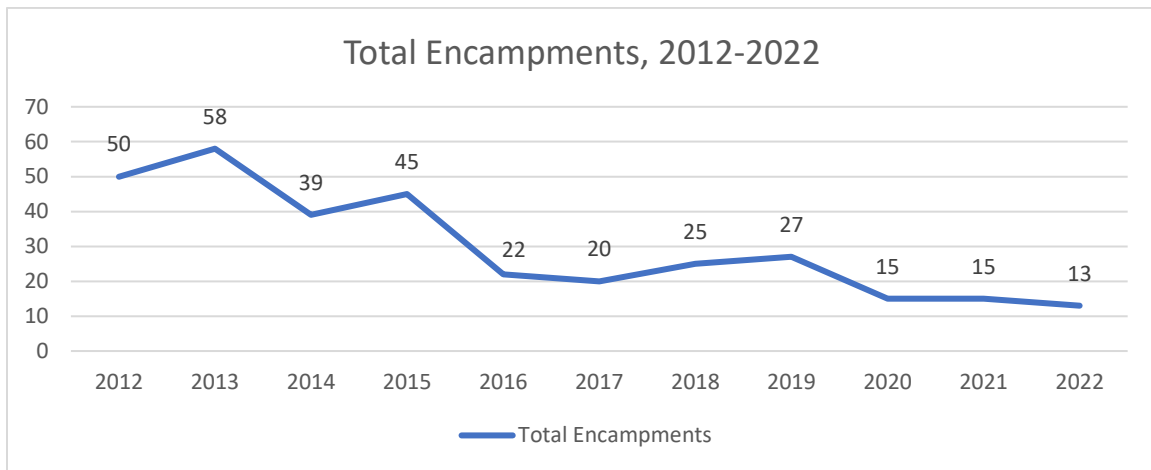


Figure 1: Total Unauthorised Encampments in Moray, 2012-2022

Overall, there has been a declining number of encampments over the past decade, with a peak in 2013 of 58, down to only 13 in 2022. There were particularly steep drops in encampment numbers in 2016 and 2020, with the latter likely being caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For 2020-2022 more detailed data is available, as shown in Figures 2-8 on the following two pages. In 2020 and 2021, there were 15 encampments totalling 580 and 463 days, respectively, and in 2022 there were 13, totalling 478 days.

With only three years to compare, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions, but there were a few patterns. Across the three year period, around a third of groups stayed at their encampments for longer than a month, with shorter stays varying in popularity in the other two-thirds of the time. The number of groups without children has been increasing, and the number of vehicles per group has been declining. There is activity across most of the year (except January and February), with more encampments in the spring and summer.

Encampments 2020-2022		2020	2021	2022
Total Encampments		15	15	13
Total Days		580	463	478
Length of Stay	7 days or less	2	7	4
	8-14 days	3	1	3
	15-30 days	5	2	2
	31+ days	5	5	4
People*	Adults	37	57	49
	Children	39	47	35
	Total	76	104	84
Vehicles	Unknown	3	1	-
	1-2	7	7	4
	3-4	2	2	5
	5-8	1	3	2
	9+	2	1	2

* some data missing, actual figure will be higher

Group Size	2020	2021	2022
Unknown	4	1	1
1-2	1	4	4
3-4	3	2	2
5-8	4	4	2
9-12	1	1	1
13+	2	3	3

Number of Children per Group	2020	2021	2022
Unknown	4	1	1
None	0	5	6
1-2	4	1	0
3-4	4	3	3
5-8	2	4	2
9+	1	1	1

Number of Vehicles per Group	2020	2021	2022
Unknown	3	1	0
1-2	7	7	4
3-4	2	2	5
5-8	1	3	2

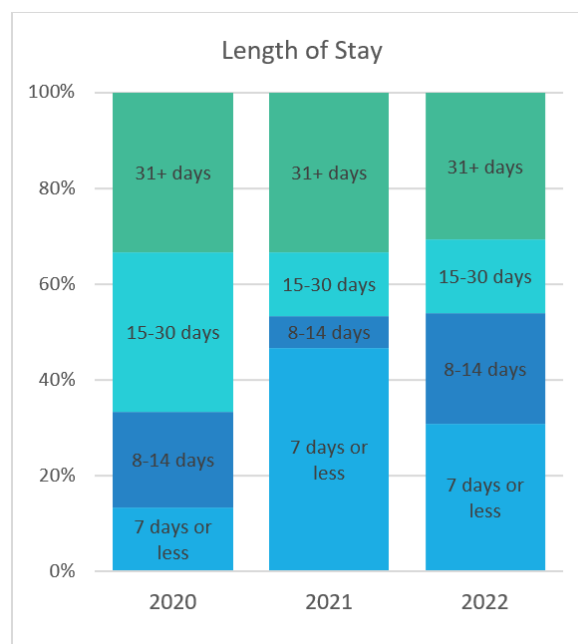


Figure 3: Unauthorised Encampments - Length of Stay

While around a third of encampments lasted longer than a month, a few lasted longer than three months: two in 2020, two in 2021, and one in 2022. The time of year for all recorded encampments will be shown in Figure 7 below.

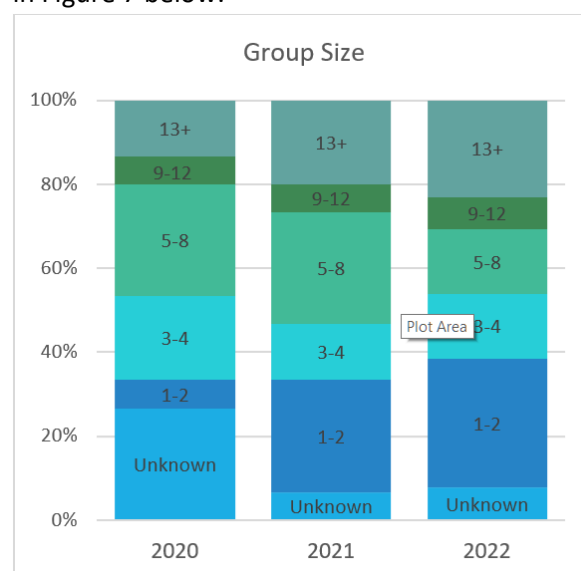


Figure 4: Unauthorised Encampments by Group Size

The size of groups fluctuated somewhat over the three year period. The number of both smaller and

Figure 2: Total Unauthorised Encampments in Moray, 2020-2022

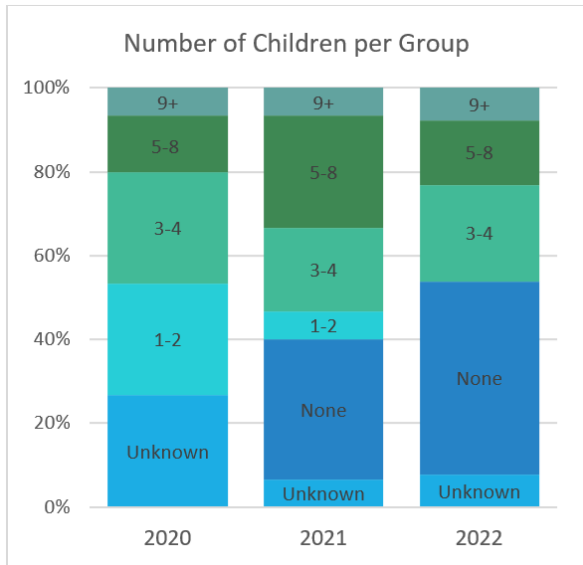


Figure 5: Unauthorised Encampments by No. of Children

Between 2020-22, there was not any particular pattern or trend in the number of children in each group (where known). However, the number of groups without any children increased from zero in 2020 to six in 2022.

The chart below shows the start and end months of encampments in Moray, 2020-2022. These do not necessarily indicate length of time for shorter encampments, for example those that take place between the end of one month and the start of the next. The chart is intended to give an overall sense of the spread of encampments throughout the year.

larger groups (1-4 and 9+ people) increased slightly, and medium-sized groups (5-8 people) decreased.

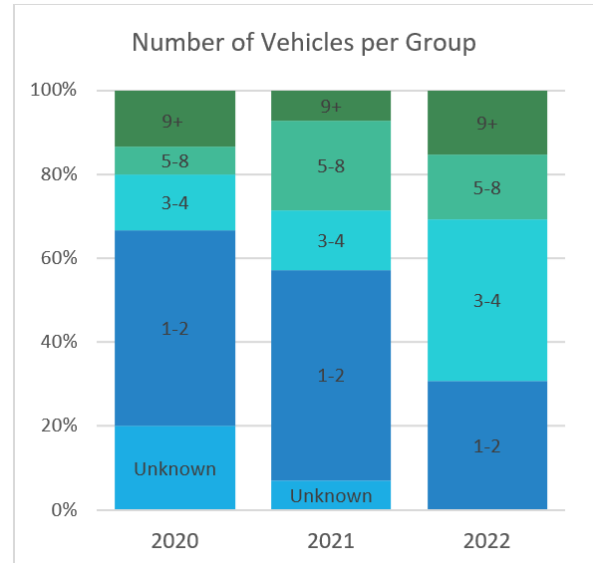


Figure 6: Unauthorised Encampments by No. Of Vehicles

The number of vehicles per group were generally related to the number of people; larger groups tended to have more vehicles, both for living space and transportation. Overall, the number per group remained similar over the three year period, with the majority of groups having between 1-4 vehicles.

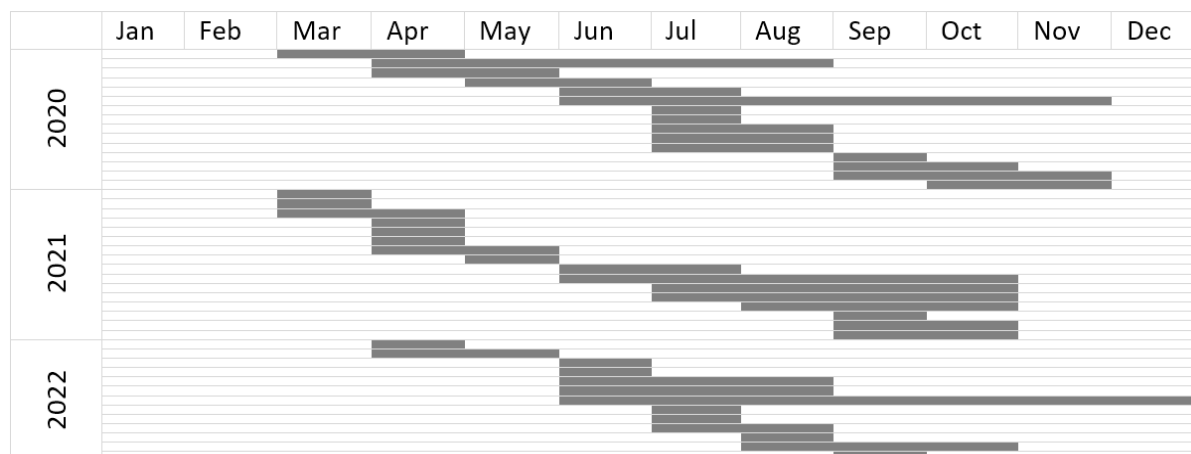


Figure 7: Unauthorised Encampments in Moray 2020-2022 by Time of Year

Broadly speaking, there was a spread between shorter and longer encampments throughout the year, with more in the late spring until early autumn. In 2021, there were more encampments later into the autumn, but all had ended by November. In 2022, one group stayed well into the winter, until spring 2023, but this was the exception, with no other encampments in January or February 2020-2022.

Figure 8 on the following page provides a breakdown of the locations of encampments in Moray between 2020-2022, divided by Housing Market Area (HMA). Encampments in Buckie have tended to last the longest number of days, though last year this was overtaken by Elgin, with 264 total days of encampments compared to Buckie's 228. Elgin also has the highest number of sites known to be used by Travellers at 10 discrete locations, though these have not all been used in recent years. There have been no encampments in either Keith or Speyside since 2020.

Forres		2020	2021	2022
Forres Total	Sites in use	2	-	1
	Encampments	3	-	2
	Total Days	101	-	18
	Total People	29	-	10
				
				
				
				
				
				
				
				
				

Keith		2020	2021	2022
	Sites in use	3	-	-
Keith Total	Encampments	3	-	-
	Total Days	155	-	-
	Total People	12	-	-
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	█	█	█
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	██	█	█
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	█	█	█
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	█	█	█
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	██	█	█
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	█	█	█
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	█	█	█
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	██	█	█
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	█	█	█

Speyside		2020	2021	2022
Speyside Total	Sites in use	1	-	-
	Encampments	1	-	-
	Total Days	17	-	-
	Total People	5	-	-

Page | 9

Total People	-	7	-
--------------	---	---	---

7. TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE IN MORAY

Travelling Showpeople are separate from Gypsy/Travellers as they are identified by their trade, i.e. the business of operating travelling circuses or funfairs, rather than their ethnicity. The two groups do share a key feature in that both practice a nomadic lifestyle and thus have specific accommodation needs distinct from those of the settled population.

There are 8 locations across Moray currently utilised as sites by Travelling Showpeople:

- Grant Park, Forres
- Seafeld, Keith
- Strathlene, Buckie
- Linzee Gordon Park, Buckie
- Gordon Castle, Fochabers
- Showground, Keith
- Reidhaven Square, Keith
- Elgin Auction Centre, Linkwood Road

One site (Elgin Auction Centre) is a private site, while the rest are operated by Moray Council. Elgin Auction Centre has replaced Borough Briggs, a site which was previously used by Showpeople but which has become unviable for this purpose as it is in use by Moray Council Sport and Leisure.

Neither the Seafeld site in Keith nor the Strathlene site in Buckie are popular among Travelling Showpeople: the former due to waterlogged ground and low attendance; and the latter as it is too small for many groups (and set to become even smaller, pending the sale of part of the site).

According to previous engagement with the Scottish Showmen's Guild, many sites across Scotland suffer from a lack of adequate facilities, particularly water and power sources. Showpeople pay considerable fees to the Council for the use of their sites, so it is disappointing that facilities at these sites are often inadequate.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In their roadmap to Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy Travellers for 2019/21, the Scottish Government identified five areas of focus which provide a good framework for Moray Council to follow. These were:

- Provide more and better accommodation.
- Improve access to public services.
- Better incomes in and out of work.
- Tackle racism and discrimination.

- Improve Gypsy/Traveller representation.

As noted above, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from the data gathered during this project. However, based on the above recommendations, the feedback from research participants, and the wealth of existing data on the subject of Gypsy/Travellers and their accommodation needs, it is a safe assumption that the creation of a public site would be welcomed by Travellers in Moray. We therefore make the following recommendations:

1. Moray Council should prioritise developing one or two public sites for Travellers with a mixture of permanent and temporary pitches. Based on the 2009 and 2017 recommendations and the downward trend in encampments since these were made, a combined occupancy of 15-20 pitches should be sufficient. These should be in semi-rural sites with easy access to public services. Buckie and Elgin consistently have high levels of unauthorised encampments, so should be prioritised as areas for site development.
2. Moray Council should consult with local Travellers while planning and developing any public sites in order to ensure their needs are adequately met by these sites.
3. Moray Council should continue to avoid evictions of unauthorised encampments wherever possible, work with Travellers in these encampments to ensure their needs are met, and work towards a positive experience for all stakeholders.
4. Moray Council should work to promote good community relations and combat anti-Traveller racism where it is present among settled communities.
5. Moray Council should review the sites used by Travelling Showpeople to ensure facilities at these sites are adequate to meet the needs of Showpeople.