



4NW Wins Prestigious Equality and Diversity Award

On Thursday 5 February 2009, the RTPI Planning Award 2008 for Equality and Diversity was awarded to 4NW, East of England Regional Assembly, South East England Regional Assembly and West Midlands Regional Assembly for a joint collaboration:

[“SOMEWHERE TO LIVE – A SHORT FILM ABOUT MEETING THE ACCOMMODATION NEEDS OF GYPSIES, TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE”](#)

The purpose of the film is to improve awareness of both the lifestyle and culture and issues connected with Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (GT&TS) communities, to demonstrate that tensions between the travelling and the settled community can be resolved.

There are around 16,000 gypsy and traveller caravans in England, and nearly 75% are on authorised sites. The rest are on unauthorised sites of one form or another. While the number of caravans on unauthorised encampments has started to decline, the number of caravans on unauthorised developments (sites owned by Gypsies and Travellers but without planning permission) has increased.

Local Councils have a new duty to deal with the severe shortage of sites through the planning system. This will not be easy and local authorities can expect to come under intense public pressure to resist meeting their legal responsibilities.

Regional Assemblies (4NW in the North West) play a key role in this process through the identification of the scale and distribution of new pitch provision in Regional Spatial Strategies. To assist in this, 4NW and the Regional Assemblies for the East of England, South East and West Midlands produced a short film to support their policy development and consultation work on Partial Reviews of Regional Spatial Strategies.

Given the controversial nature of the topic and the diverse communities involved, it was important to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the reviews, including hard to reach groups, in a different way to that traditionally used by planners.

Final versions of the film were produced on a DVD disc, enabling widespread distribution, and also made available on Assembly websites. The DVD was

distributed to local authority Chief Executives and Chief Planning Officers, with a request that the film be shown to relevant elected members and officers, and to all the relevant statutory and voluntary organisations in the regions. This has allowed extensive engagement and awareness-raising to take place within the tight timescale available for the preparation of the Partial Reviews of RSS.

In preparing the reviews, the Regional Assemblies are ensuring that spatial planning for the location of sites supports sustainability – they are near towns and services, reducing the need to travel for work, schools, health care, that they avoid despoliation of the countryside and protected sites.

Each region is at a different timescale and is tackling the issue in a slightly different way. But each of the four versions of the film shares common messages and footage making efficient use of time, resources and research. Each film includes relevant and region specific elements addressing the region's local needs such as regionally-specific interviews and case studies.

In preparing the film the regions had to address issues associated with:

- engaging and building confidence/ trust with the GT&TS communities, so that they would proactively take part in the filming through interviews and help convey balanced messages;
- finding a way of tackling and addressing negative perceptions of GT&TS to help overcome prejudice and misconceptions without losing audience interest;
- explaining complex planning issues in plain English for a varied target audience.

The RTPI Judges considered

‘..that the films have the potential to play an important part in raising awareness of the key issues concerning Gypsies and Travellers in a positive, engaging and educational way. It is an original approach to engagement in policy development at the regional level, in line with the Government's equality and diversity and e-governance agendas. Very rarely have films been used by planners to educate, inform and raise awareness about contextual issues associated with planning policy development. For relatively low cost, it is possible in approximately 10-13 minutes (depending on the version) and to provide a lot of information on the issues in a format that is easy to use and understand – which will grab and hold the attention of its intended audience of professionals, officers, elected members, interested parties, members of the public and the GT&TS communities. The experience in producing this film could be applied to other issues in RSS reviews in future and used as best practice in consultation. It demonstrates an innovative and creative approach to an important part of the planning process.’

Accepting the award on behalf of 4NW, Michael Gallagher, Director of Planning, Transport and Housing said:

‘ When an audience stops sending texts, reading reports or using Blackberries, and instead watches a film for 15 minutes, you know you have grabbed their attention on a very difficult topic that a conventional presentation does not.’

If you wish to view the film, [click here](#).

Please email enquiries@4NW.org.uk if you have any comments.



Accepting the award, left to right Michael Gallagher, 4NW, Cllr Moira Gibson, Martin Willey, and Cllr John Reynolds