

Wiltshire Council

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater Strategy Public Consultation

The current Wiltshire Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater (GRT&B) strategy is due to finish in 2020. A new strategy has been developed for 2020-2025, based on evidence from the Health Needs Assessment for Gypsy, Traveller and Boater Populations Living in Wiltshire (published July 2019). Wiltshire Council is seeking feedback and input from a wide range of organisations, and members of the public, to ensure this new strategy reflects the experience and needs of Wiltshire residents.

Please find below a short survey which provides an opportunity to provide feedback on all sections of the strategy. This will close on Thursday 12th March at 5pm, and all comments will be reviewed and considered as part of the strategy development.

For any queries or questions with regards to the new GRT&B strategy, please contact Dr Michael Allum, Public Health Specialty Registrar, via michael.allum@wiltshire.gov.uk.

Q1 Please confirm whether you are completing this form as:

- A representative of an organisation
 An individual member of the public

Please state the name of the organisation you represent:

This consultation response is from the National Bargee Travellers Association (NBTA). The NBTA is a volunteer organisation for

Q2 Do you have any comments on the following strategic priorities?:

Strategic Priority 1: Educational attainment and attendance

Some Bargee Travellers home educate their children through genuine choice. However others are forced into a position where they decide to educate their children at home because of the completely unlawful enforcement actions of Canal & River Trust that force Bargee Travellers to travel distances that put them out of reach of regular attendance at a particular school. Despite negotiation and discussion on an individual and community level between Bargee Travellers and Canal & River Trust in 2016-2019, the charity has refused to agree 'term time' cruising patterns with individual Bargee Traveller families with school age children.

Wiltshire Council should compel Canal & River Trust to suspend any enforcement action that prevents the children of Bargee Traveller families from attending the same school as regularly as a child from the housed community. The Council should compel Canal & River Trust to agree a reduced travel range in term time that suits the family, and to agree special arrangements such as no movement at all during critical periods of a child's education such as GCSE and A level examinations.

Strategic Priority 2: Preventative Services

Inequalities include Bargee Travellers being a long distance away from their GP or clinic and so unable to take up screening appointments; boaters being wrongly refused registration with a GP due to not having an address within the catchment area where they are present, or not having ID with such an address, or not having an address/ ID at all, or not being able to give a postcode.

Effective interventions could include 'Pop up' clinics at boating community events such as floating markets or the monthly Julian House Boaters' Cafe Club; drop in sessions at venues used by itinerant liveaboard boaters along the Kennet and Avon Canal.

Strategic Priority 3: Safeguarding and Violence Prevention

Strategic Priority 4: Mental Health

For those with a mental health issue, "signposting" them to a specific service will not necessarily achieve their attendance if they perceive the service to be outside of their community environment. If Bargee Travellers need specific mental health services, the referral should be handled by reaching out to that person and offering the service, rather than waiting for the individual to approach the service themselves, which they may not feel able to do due to a lack of confidence that the service will be appropriate and welcoming for them.

Strategic Priority 5: Maternal Health and Early Years

Actions need to include ensuring that Bargee Travellers are confident that they will receive the same respect from maternity etc services as the housed community, and that their choice to live on a boat is respected and not seen as a problem or as a danger to the mother or the child. Ensure that there are no restrictions on midwives, GPs and health visitors visiting boats for example ensuring that all staff are insured for visiting boats, walking along towpaths, crossing gangplanks etc.

Strategic Priority 6: Carer Support

Social care: Older Bargee Travellers and boat dwellers, whether on permanent moorings or itinerant, are denied domiciliary care when they need it unless they move out of their boats and into bricks and mortar. This issue has not been highlighted enough and is an injustice to older Bargee Travellers. Nobody should be forced out of their home in order to receive domiciliary care. The practical assistance that boaters will need from a domiciliary carer is likely to differ from that needed by a house dweller due to the different heating, water supply, sanitary and refuse disposal arrangements of living on boats.

Strategic Priority 7: Place and Community

Wiltshire Council should provide or compel Canal & River Trust to provide an adequate number of water taps, sewage disposal sites and refuse disposal/recycling sites by using its public health and/or environmental health powers.

Wiltshire Council should work with Canal & River Trust to provide genuinely affordable permanent moorings, outside of the Trust's auction system for letting moorings, especially for those boaters whose licences are refused renewal without a permanent mooring on the grounds that they have not travelled "far enough".

The Council should take into account the needs of the boater community and consult with boaters when considering vehicle parking restrictions near the Kennet and Avon canal. Bargee Travellers in Wiltshire have difficulty accessing public transport from many of the locations along the canal and thus have to rely on vehicles if they are to have access to employment, education for their children, healthcare and family responsibilities/ contact with family members away from the canal. Therefore they need vehicle parking to be available to them along the canal.

Q3 Are there any priorities which you feel are missing from the strategy?

Yes. Mooring provision (and site provision for those on land).

Q4 Does the strategy reflect the needs of the GRT&B communities in Wiltshire?

Partially.

Q5 Do you have any other comments on the strategy?

The main issue facing Bargee Travellers (specifically, boats licensed without a permanent mooring under Section 17 3 c ii of the British Waterways Act 1995) in Wiltshire is the unlawful imposition of a requirement by Canal & River Trust to travel a range of over 20 miles in the licence period. This goes beyond the lawful requirement set out in Section 17 3 c ii of the 1995 Act to use the boat bona fide for navigation without remaining continuously in any one place for more than 14 days or longer if reasonable in the circumstances. If Bargee Travellers do not comply with the unlawful 20 mile requirement and/or the lawful 14 continuous day limit in any one place, they risk having their boats removed and seized by Canal & River Trust, rendering them homeless. If they do comply with the 20 mile requirement, they are likely to have extreme difficulty staying in employment and/or getting their children to school every day in term time.

Therefore they face exclusion from employment, education, health services and to an extent, social involvement. In addition, a significant proportion of the Bargee Traveller community are over pension age and are therefore vulnerable to losing their homes if they do not know their rights as older/disabled people under the Equality Act not to have Canal & River Trust's enforcement policy applied to them in the same way that it is to young, able-bodied Bargee Travellers. A significant proportion of Bargee Travellers are on extremely low incomes due to benefit delays/sanctions and other reasons, in some cases vulnerable to having their homes seized because they cannot afford to pay for a boat licence. These Bargee Travellers suffer food and fuel poverty, and some will be living in damp, badly insulated, poorly heated boats which may or may not have an engine, making it difficult for them to meet the 20-mile requirement or comply with the 14-day limit.

Q6

We may want to follow-up on submitted comments for clarification - if you are happy to be contacted, please provide your name and email address below.

Pamela Smith, Chair National Bargee Travellers Association, secretariat@bargee-traveller.org.uk

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.



Submit ✓