

# **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: GYPSY/TRAVELLER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

## **Cairngorm National Park**

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**CONYACH**  
ADVOCACY AND ENGAGEMENT

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# BACKGROUND TO WORK

Conyach Advocacy & Engagement has over a decade of experience working directly with Gypsy/Traveller communities on issues that matter to them.

In October 2023, The Cairngorm National Park commissioned Conyach Advocacy & Engagement to conduct an engagement project with Gypsy/Travellers living and working in the National Park area. The engagement was to focus on the upcoming Local Development Plan for the National Park and ensure Gypsy/Traveller voices were heard in this process.



## Specific Aims of Work:

- Develop meaningful processes to gather the views of Gypsy/Traveller communities who live and work in the Cairngorm National Park on issues relevant to the Local Development Plan (LDP).
- Where possible gather quantitative data related to Gypsy/Traveller communities, particularly where there are data gaps around transitory populations and less visible Gypsy/Traveller families in the area.
- Co-produce with Gypsy/Travellers a meaningful collation of their data for the evidence report, that will build sustainable engagement within the LDP lifecycle and empower communities to play a more active role.
- Explore deep-mapping with Gypsy/Traveller communities to find the right balance between conserving and enhancing the cultural heritage of the National Park, delivering accommodation, and supporting a sustainable thriving economy.

# METHADODOLOGY

Conyach focused its engagement through a semi-structured deep listening exercise with Gypsy/Traveller communities who live and work in the Cairngorm National Park. We utilised four key methods during this exercise:

- Circle-way approach
- Community-based storytelling
- Digital surveying
- Telephone trees

This deep listening exercise enabled us to explore the needs and aspirations of communities in a meaningful and non-intrusive manner (via the Circle Way approach and Community storytelling techniques). It also enabled us to lean into the wisdom and experience already within the Gypsy/Traveller community, co-designing our approach, building trust and shared ownership of what was generated within the project.

Alongside the community-based workshops, Conyach also facilitated a number of Face-to-Face meetings and telephone interviews with individuals living in housing. Additionally, to further bridge the gap of accessibility to our engagement process we conducted an online survey.

Following this, Conyach established shared offline working rhythms with communities, to support collaborative reflection on the data and how it should be presented.



# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Whilst our engagement was generative in nature, facilitated in a manner to lean in to wants, needs and ambitions of communities themselves; we had a number of questions agreed with communities to begin dialogue.

These are the main questions utilised, to varying degrees, through all four methods of deep-listening.

- How long have you lived here / travelled in the Cairngorm National Park area?
- Do you like living here? If not, why not?
- Does the area meet your needs for leisure activities/exercise/hobbies etc. If not, what would make it better?
- How does living here impact your happiness / your sense of connection to the local area?
- If you live on a site, is it the right size/too big/too small?
- If you live on a site, is it in the right place?
- Are there enough safe places to camp when travelling in the area?
- Do you have good access to the things you need around the area? Especially when travelling?
- Are education and health services easy to access?
- Are shops and entertainment easy to access?
- How do you tend to travel to access local services. By foot/bike?/car?
- Do you feel safe living here? If not, why not?
- Do you feel safe using the surrounding roads/streets/paths? If not, why not?
- Are there enough opportunities for work in the local area, and if not, what sorts of things would you like?
- What barriers are there for getting/keeping a job in the Cairngorm national park area?
- How is it for children and young people living here? What is good/bad/could be better?
- How is it for older people living here? What is good/bad/could be better?
- What does the role of heritage/history play in your experience of the Cairngorm area?
- If you could improve one thing in this area, what would it be?
- What could/should be done to keep Gypsy/Travellers informed of changes or proposals for development in the Cairngorm area?



# **LIMITATIONS TO ENGAGEMENT**

## **Demographic Reach**

Gypsy/Travellers make up around 0.06% of the Scottish population (census 2022), furthermore it has been recognised in the Cairngorm National Park Equality and Fairer Scotland Impact Assessment (EFSIA) that there were 113 Gypsy/Travellers living in the Cairngorms National Park in 2011. Of these just over 75% were in Badenoch and Strathspey. Therefore, population density and size were a significant barrier to our engagement.

It was further recognised in the EFSIA that the historical twice-yearly count of Gypsy/Travellers indicates that the population on Council run sites and encampments has typically been 30-40% lower in the winter, as the travelling season begins in April. Therefore our engagement faced barriers reaching many of the transient population due to work taking place between October 2023 and March 2024.

## **Rural Geography**

The Cairngorm National Park is a large area spanning 1,748 sq miles, with sparse villages and towns. Furthermore, much of the area is difficult to access during winter months due to weather conditions. Travel proved a significant limitation to our engagement work, particularly related to Face-to-Face interviews and Community workshops.

## **Digital inclusion**

There are significant barriers to digital accessibility for Gypsy/Traveller communities (Tammi, 2020.), this is further heightened by the rural nature of the Cairngorm National Park and connection issues that exist as a result. This limited our engagement as it meant an over-reliance on Face-to-Face engagement methods.

## **Mistrust of data gathering**

It is widely recognised that Gypsy/Traveller communities have a mistrust of authorities and may be reluctant to self-identify as Gypsy/Travellers due to fears around issues of discrimination and harassment. This may limit engagement efforts when trying to reach Gypsy/Travellers permanently settled in the National Park area.



## **Spatial vs Social**

Our engagement, whilst heavily influenced by spatial planning, recognised early on that Gypsy/Traveller communities felt there were both spatial (physical/land based) issues and community (social) issues that needed to be addressed within the LDP.

Our co-designed approach to engagement combined both spatial and community issues, utilising the themes of the National Planning Framework (NPF4) to support a more meaningful and comprehensive conversation with communities.

We used the approach outlined in the Place Standard at community workshops to assist a deeper conversation around what place means to Gypsy/Travellers. This helped us to generate a rich conversation on what mattered to the community and scope recommendations for the LDP.

## **Deep mapping**

Key proposals and ideas were then gathered through written notes and graphic harvesting with a community artist. Our initial attempts at mapping traditional stopping places and places of heritage was met by opposition from Gypsy/Traveller communities. Communities felt this may be used to further restrict their usage of these spaces. Furthermore, there was significant anxiety around mapping of movements linked with social work and police databases in the past. It was also explained by communities that there are so many traditional stopping places in the area, each used by different families, that it would not be feasible to create a meaningful map of these sites.

Therefore, whilst the deep-mapping exercise planned with the community was unable to happen; our report allowed Gypsy/Travellers to identify their own priorities and discuss the issues which are important to them. It also allowed considerations to be raised to better enable more localised conversations around stopping places in line with local development plans.

## **Asset based engagement**

Our engagement embedded empowerment of Gypsy/Traveller communities to take ownership of both the process and the material outcomes. The limitations to engagement meant a clear focus on leaning into strengths within the community to mitigate barriers. As such, a relational approach was quickly taken, the building of a network of Community Connectors within the community who could build a social network model of engagement in the area. This expanded to allow for community telephone trees; community-based workshops; and Face-to-Face engagement with those in housing.

We also worked with a community artist to ensure meaning was not siloed to the written word, but expressed in an accessible manner through art. This supported the inclusion of those with literacy barriers and younger people.

# OUR PROJECT IN NUMBERS:

76

Gypsy/Travellers engaged

12

Phonecall Interviews

4

Community Workshops

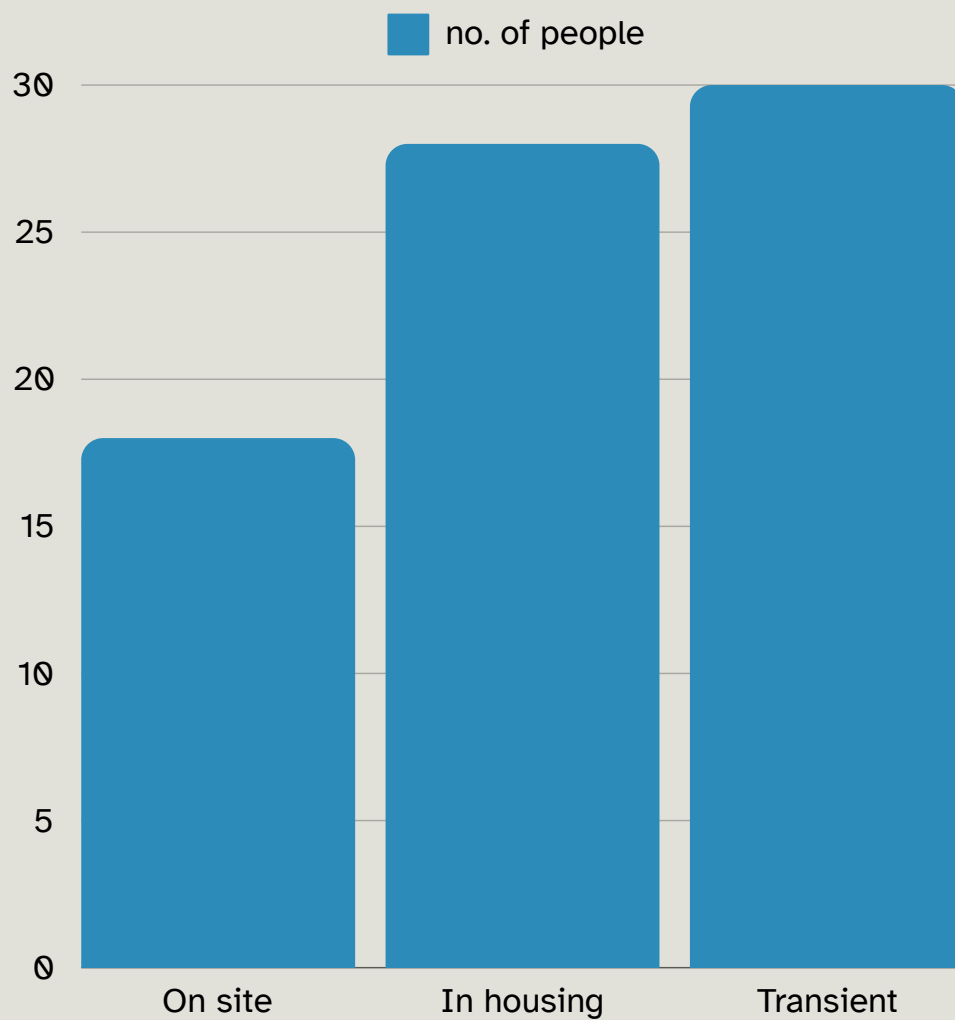
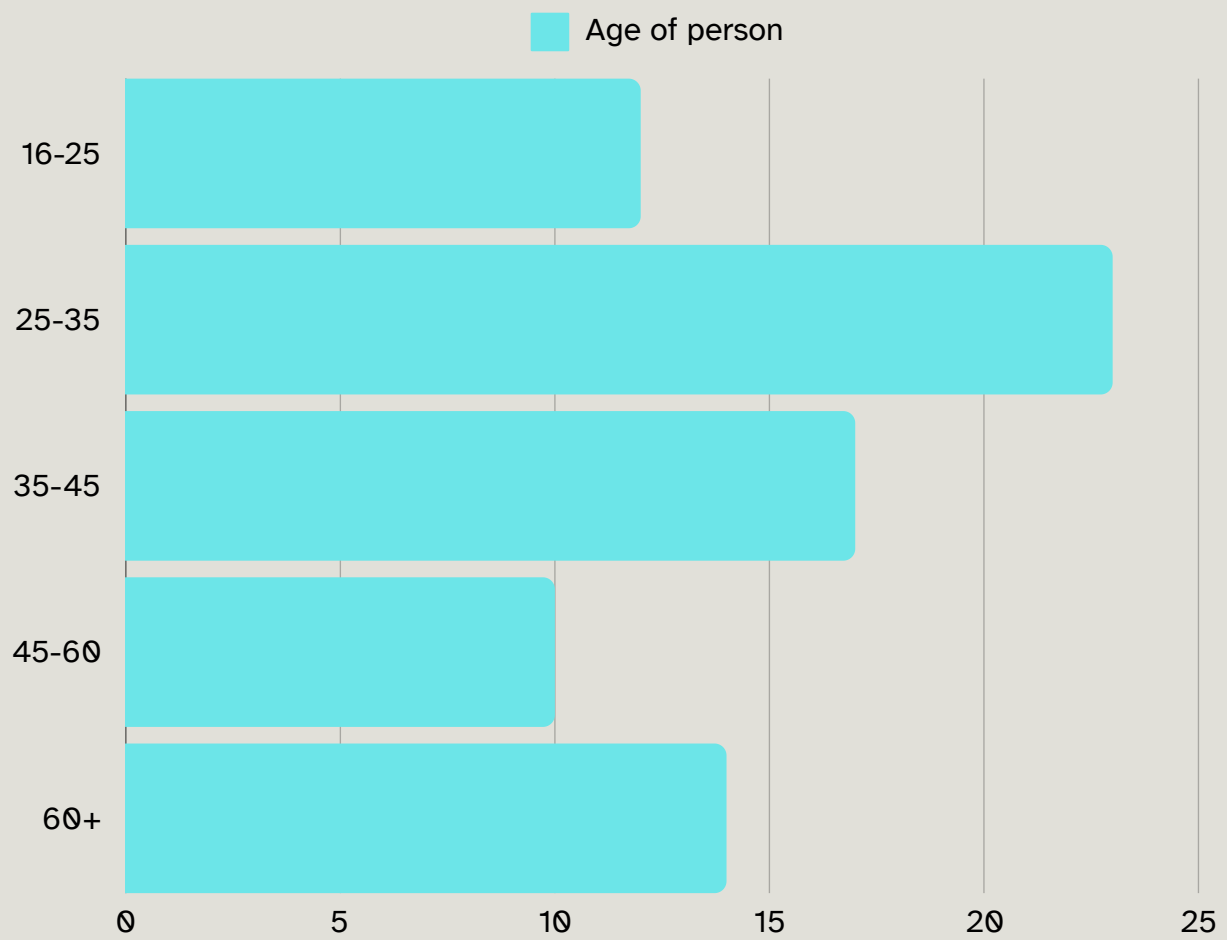
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Graphic Harvested Images

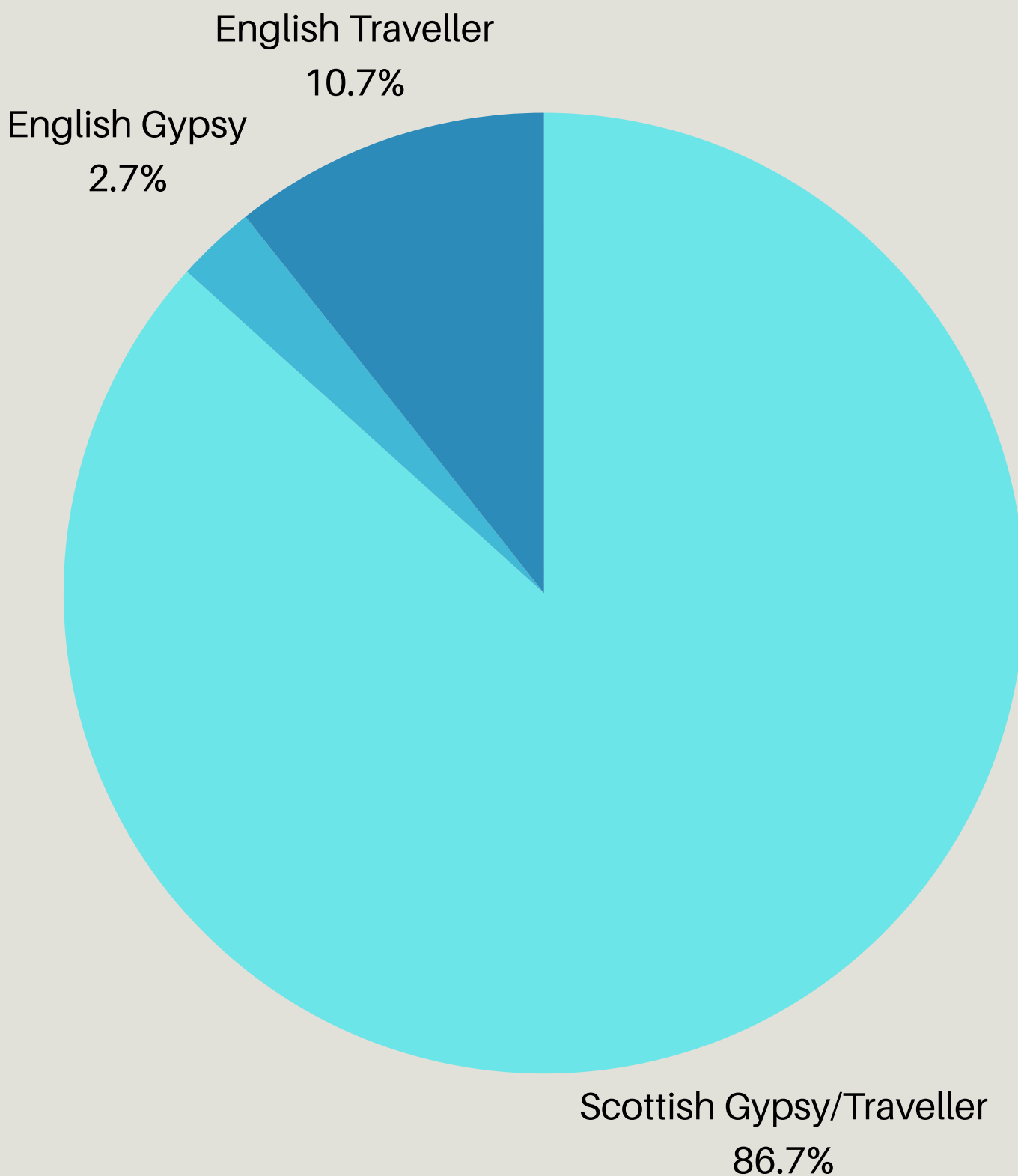
1

Online Survey

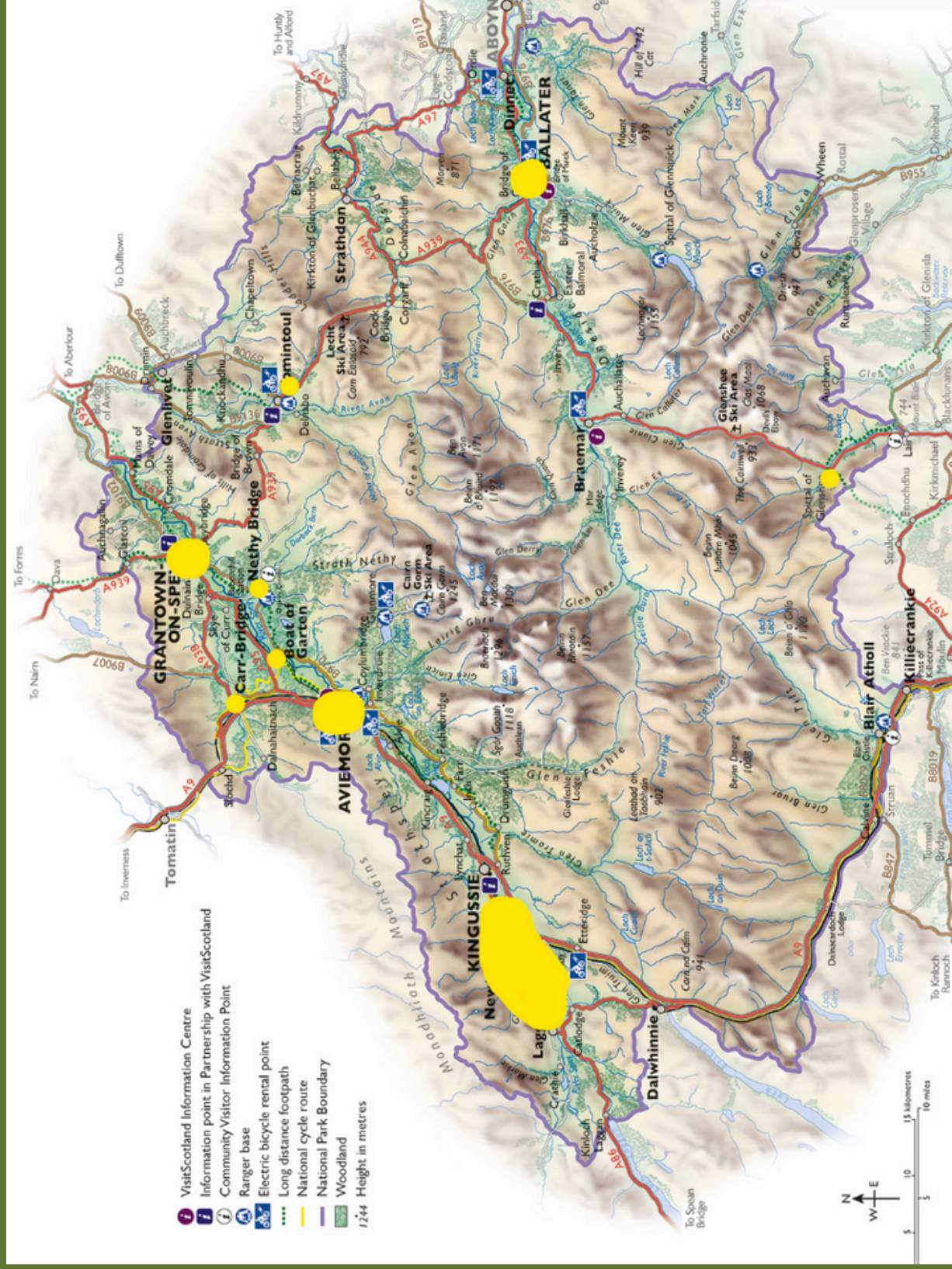




Our engagement focus was on Gypsy/Travellers, inclusive of Scottish Gypsy/Travellers; Irish Travellers; and Romany Gypsies. However we embedded self-determination throughout the process and those engaged defined mostly as Scottish Gypsy/Travellers (86.7%), with a small percentage defining as English Traveller (10.7%) and English Gypsy (2.7%). No individuals defined as Irish Traveller or Romany Gypsy.



# Where communities were based





## **OUR FINDINGS**



# OUR COMMUNITY PLACE STANDARD

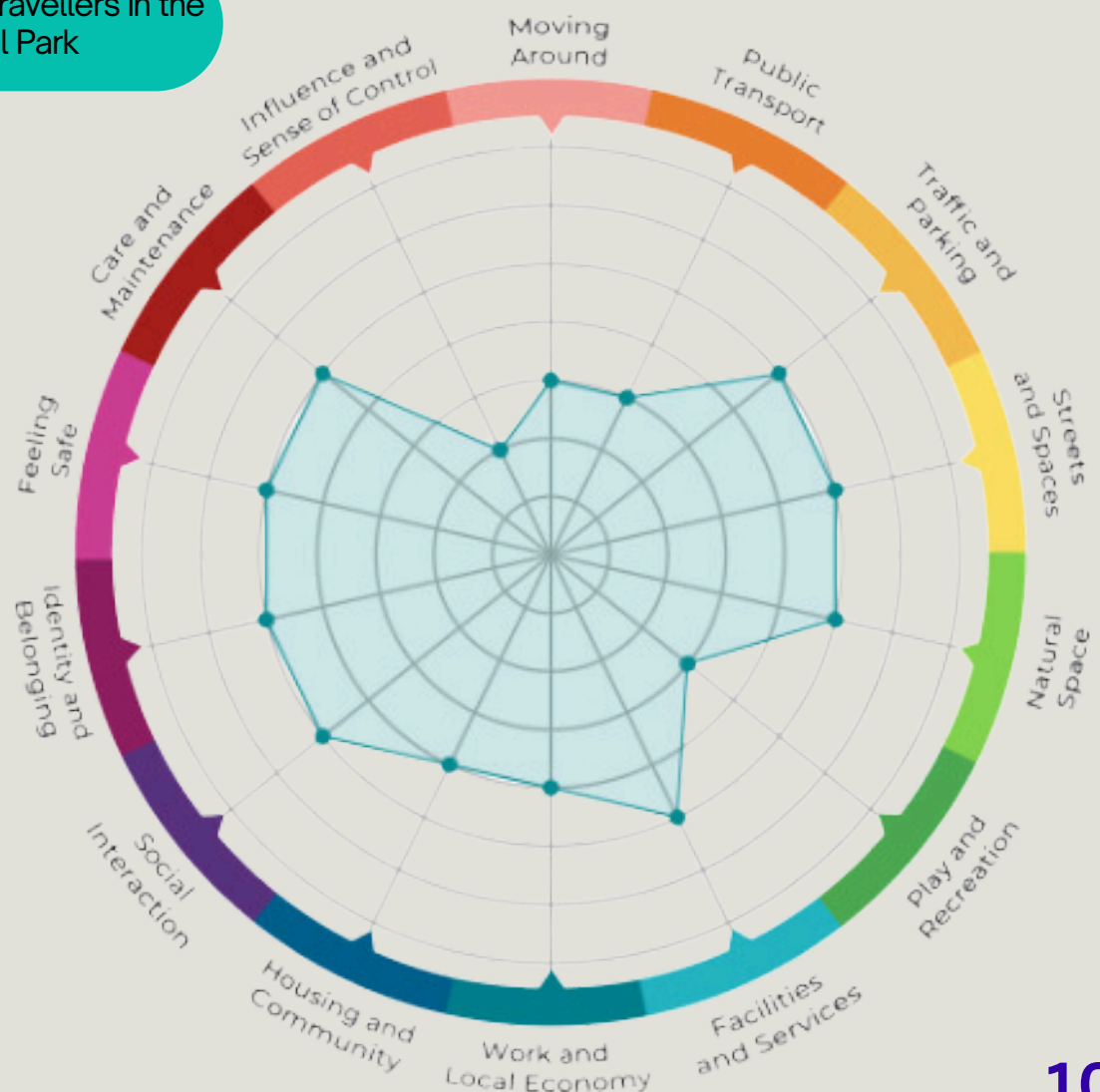
The Place Standard tool highlighted that generally Gypsy/Travellers felt safe and a strong sense of identity and belonging within the Cairngorm National Park. It also highlighted that there were spatial strengths in access to natural space and facilities and services.

However it highlighted that key areas for development were:

- Moving around
- Public transport
- Sense of influence and control over decision-making locally
- Accommodation
- Play and recreation

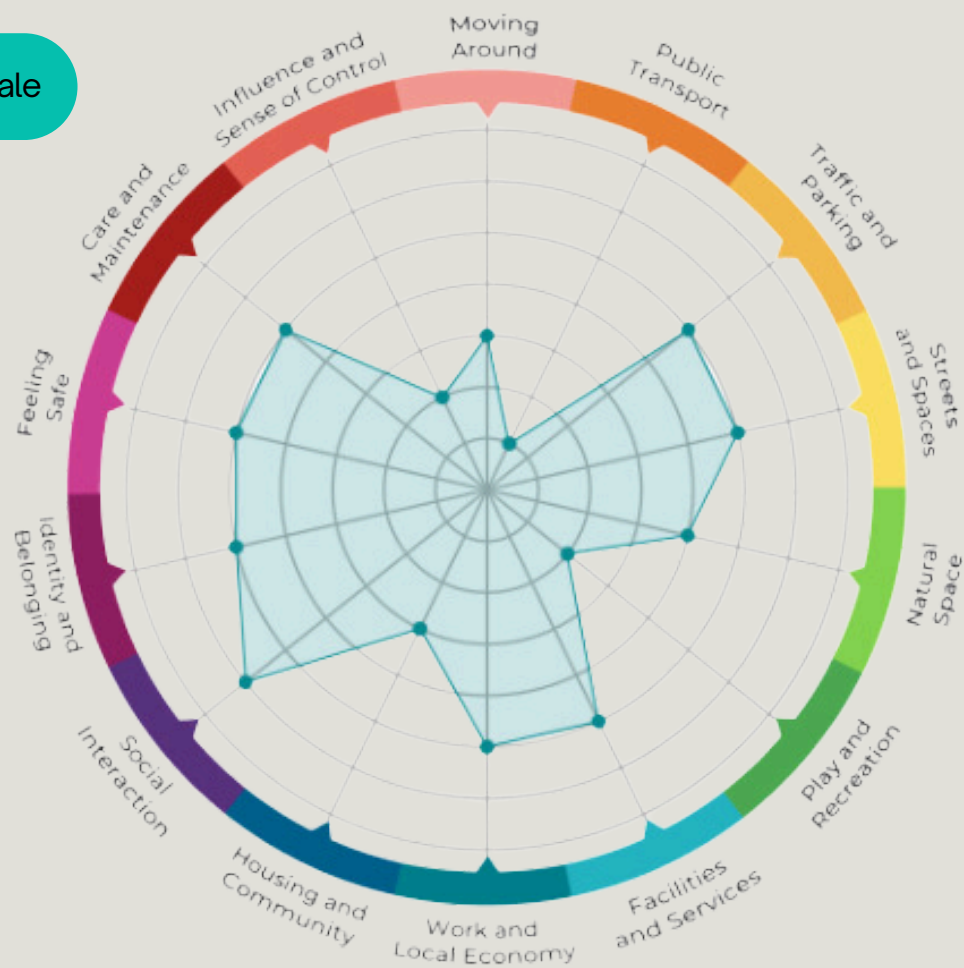
Below we have collated the overall picture for Gypsy/Travellers. In an attempt to build equitable consideration of intersectionality we have also included graphs for the views of those self-identifying as; female; 16-25; and 60+.

Overall picture for Gypsy/Travellers in the Cairngorm National Park

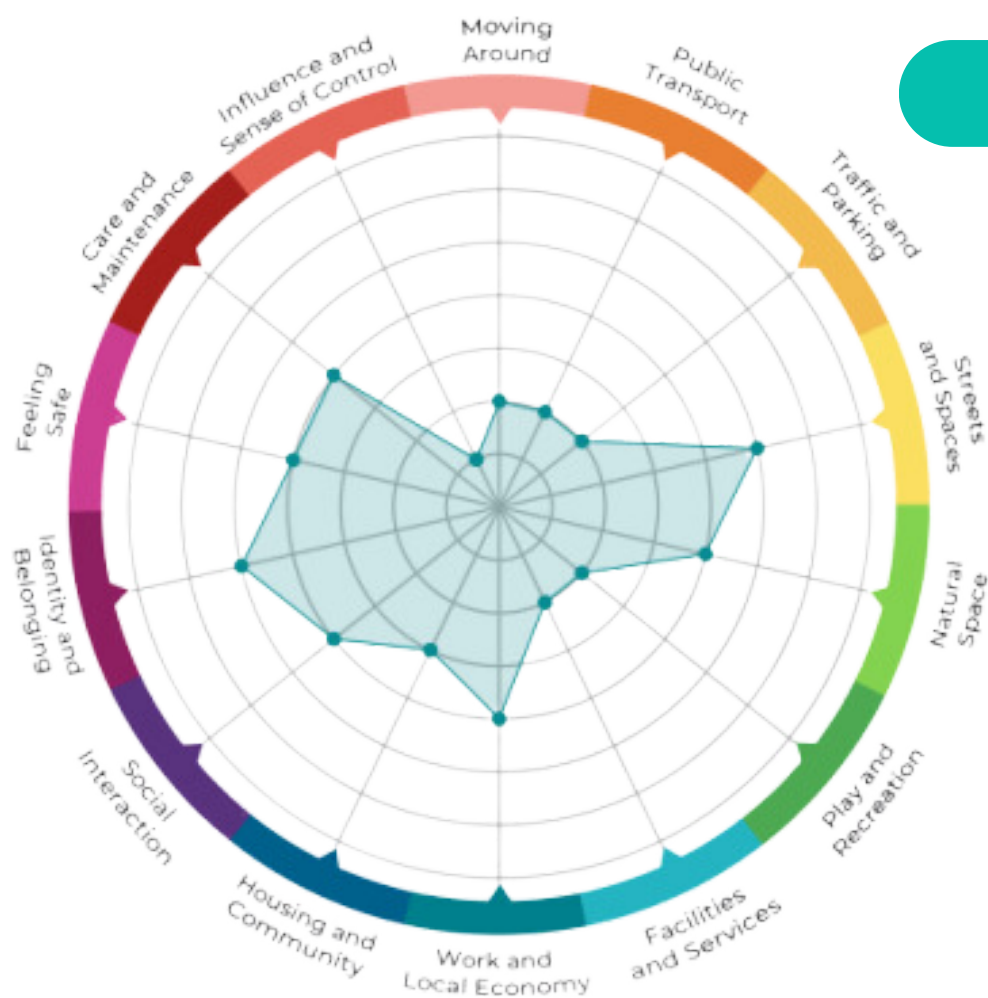




Picture for those identifying as Female

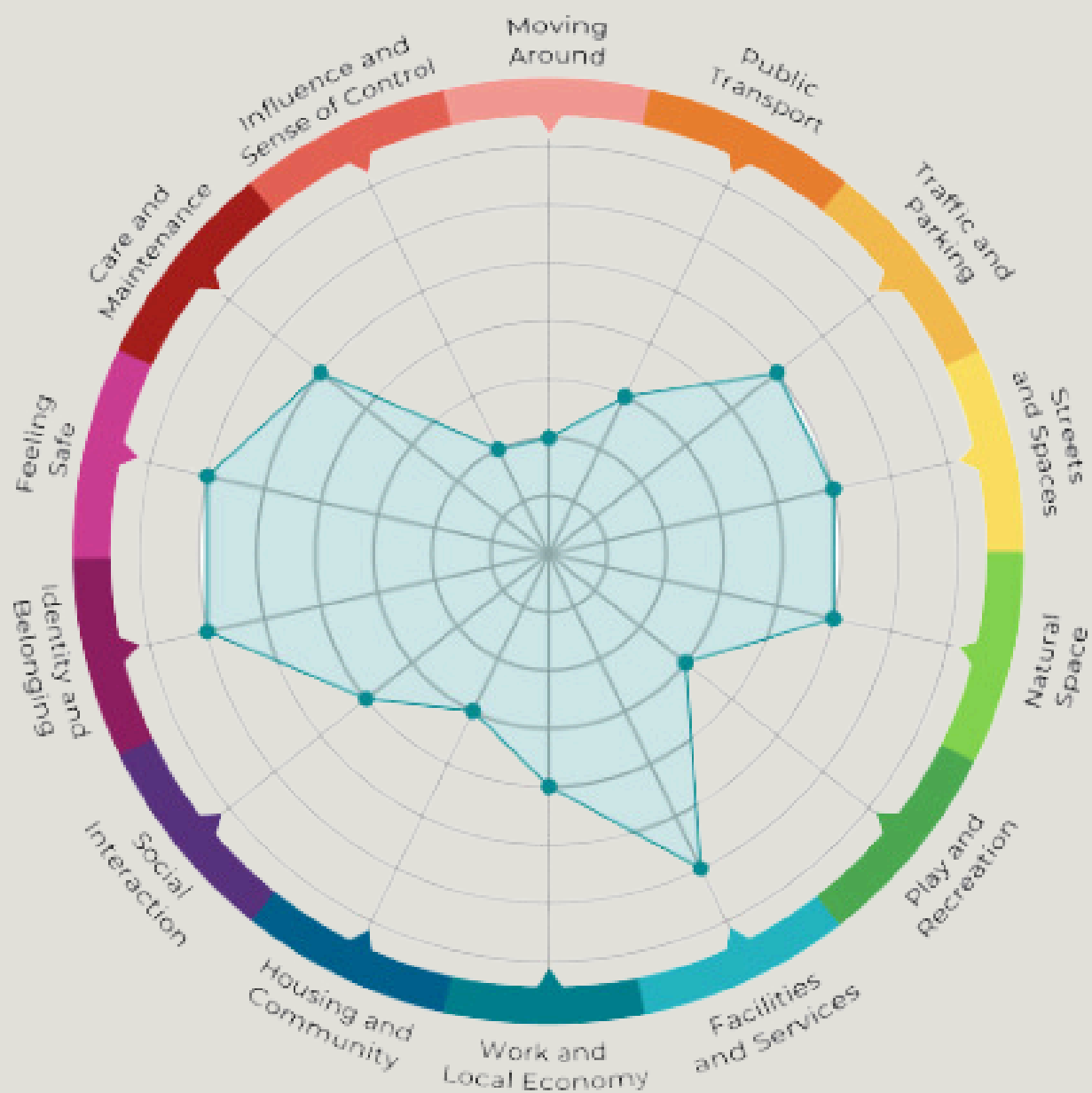


Picture for those 16-25 years





Picture for those identifying as 60+





# SUSTAINABLE PLACES

Gypsy/Traveller communities highlighted that they have had a presence in the Cairngorm National Park for centuries. Many of those engaged spoke of family connections going back generations and a strong sense of belonging in the landscape of the area.

In regard to the LDP consideration of 'Sustainable Place', communities raised three key areas of consideration:

- Sustainable connection to heritage and cultural assets.
- Responsible waste disposal and recycling
- Transport connectivity

The graphic harvested for this theme aims to highlight community heritage and belonging on their ancestral camps in the Cairngorm National Park; the Intergenerational nature of learning; and the ancestry of creativity in the area (note the wooden flowers being made).

# SUSTAINABLE PLACES:

## HERITAGE & CULTURAL ASSETS

There isn't much about our history here but I have family been coming here for a very long time

### Key thoughts:

- Gypsy/Traveller communities felt that more needs to be done to highlight their culture and heritage in the area. It was noted that whilst there is an exhibition at the Highland Folk Museum, there isn't any other permanent exhibit to their heritage in the area. This was felt to be an area of priority particularly for the sense of belonging for young Gypsy/Travellers.
- Gypsy/Travellers highlighted that many of their ancestral stopping places have been blocked off in the area. This has had a significant impact on the ability of families travelling through to explore their oral heritage in the area.
- It was felt that whilst built heritage has been conserved and supported in the area, Intangible Heritage has not received the same level of protection.
- Elders in the community highlighted that their knowledge of the landscape should be better used by conservation efforts.

Yes I think it would be good to have something to show our culture and traditions more for others to see and the young travellers to learn from

### Actions/Recommendations:

- Development of a Heritage centre for Gypsy/Traveller communities in the East of the National Park.
- Increased communication with Gypsy/Traveller communities to protect and highlight areas of oral heritage - particularly ancestral stopping places - from development
- More work to recognise where barriers to land have been placed in the landscape, working in partnership with landowners and communities to remove these wherever possible.
- Support more Gypsy/Traveller inclusion in development of conservation and climate change infrastructure/planning..


Our camps is important, used tae see heaps of Travellers, no really anymore - most of the camps is done away wie. I think more needs done to support Travellers shifting through here.

# SUSTAINABLE PLACES:

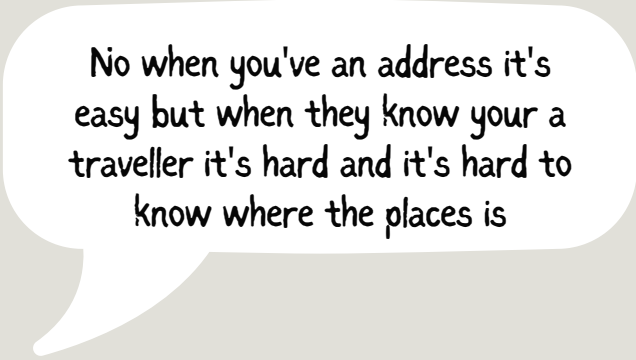
## WASTE DISPOSAL & RECYCLING

### Key thoughts:

- Families expressed frustration at the lack of waste disposal available to them as they travelled through the area. Specifically highlighting the lack of bins provided at or near their stopping places, alongside barriers to accessing waste recycling centres without a permanent address.
- Young people highlighted that their ability to recycle in the area is significantly impacted by the lack of roadside recycling bins.
- Gypsy/Travellers highlighted frustration at the closure of public toilet facilities. They explained that this has left many travelling through the area with nowhere safe and hygienic to go to the bathroom. They explained that this was also an issue for non-Gypsy/Traveller campers who were causing environmental pollution with chemical toilets.




...more camps that has  
toilets and bins



No when you've an address it's  
easy but when they know your a  
traveller it's hard and it's hard to  
know where the places is

### Actions/Recommendations:

- Development of a policy to support Gypsy/Travellers to access local recycling centres when travelling through the area.
- More roadside recycling facilities, with a larger focus on messaging and awareness to support Gypsy/Traveller families to recycle.
- Provision of more public toilets, and portaloos for families travelling to better protect beauty spots and ancestral stopping places.



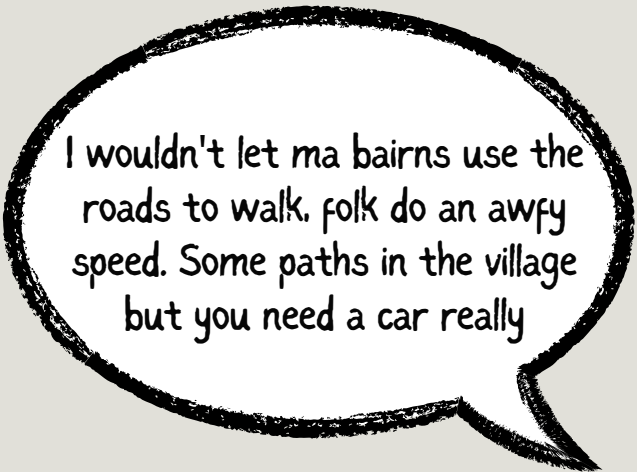
Folks always on about recycling  
but they don't realise that on the  
road it's impossible - where do  
you put the stuff?

## SUSTAINABLE PLACES:

### TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

#### Key thoughts:

- Gypsy/Travellers widely reported that they had a reliance on fossil fuels in the area, particularly for their generators and cars.
- It was highlighted that public transport is not reliable in the area and that there are not many transport links from Gypsy/Traveller sites.



I wouldn't let ma bairns use the roads to walk, folk do an awfy speed. Some paths in the village but you need a car really

#### Actions/Recommendations:

- There was a suggestion that there could be power stations available near to stopping places run by renewable energies. This would reduce the reliance of families on petrol generators when travelling through the area.
- More connected public transport services to encourage Gypsy/Travellers to utilise public transport more often.

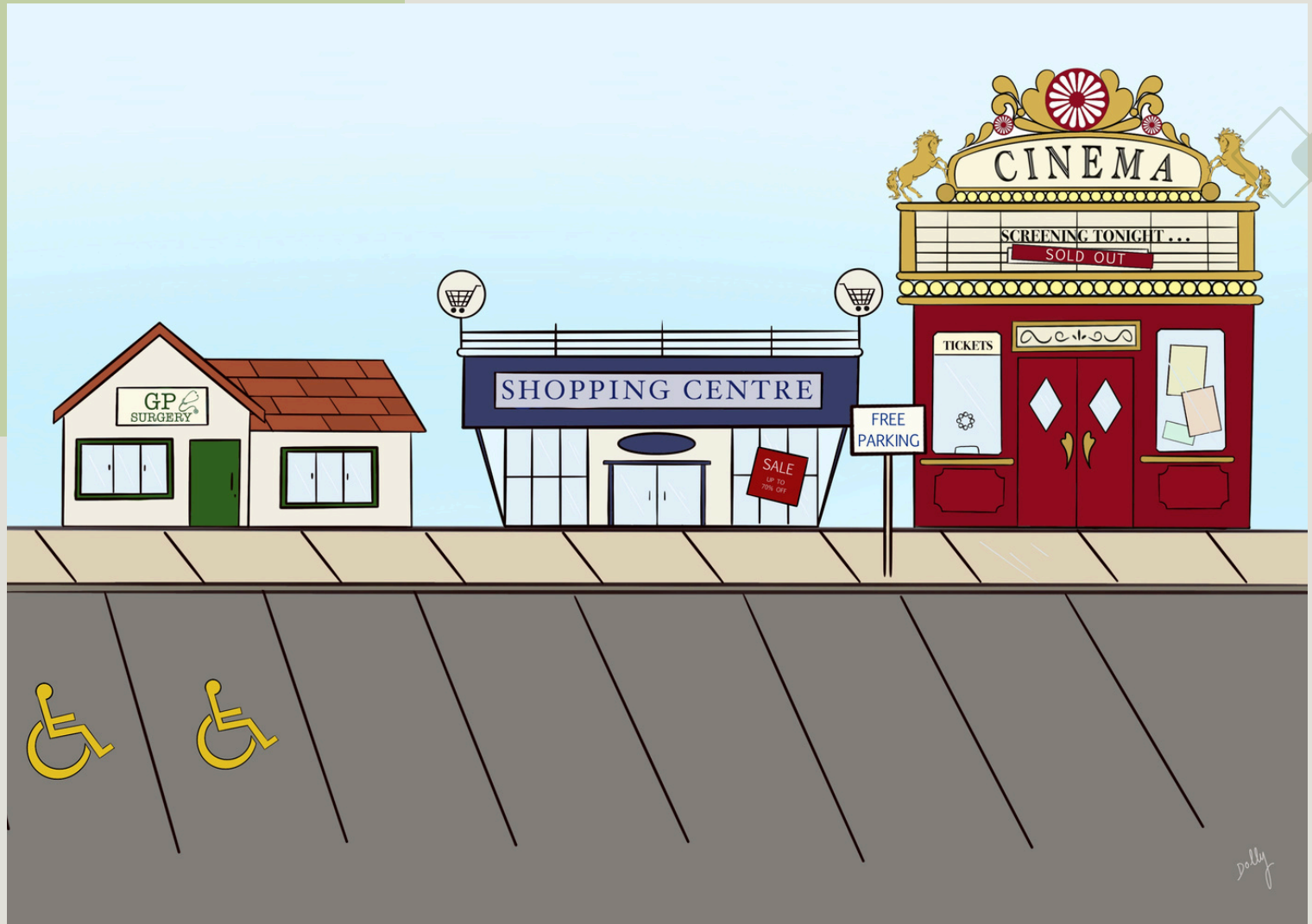


100%

We asked "How do you tend to travel to access local services. By foot/bike?/car?" 100% of those engaged travelled by car,

Highlighting that there was too far between services or they didn't feel safe walking on the roads due to a lack of pavements. They also highlighted that public transport was unreliable and sparse.





## LIVEABLE PLACES

Gypsy/Traveller communities highlighted that when staying permanently in the National Park, services such as GP's and education were easy to access. However those travelling in the area explained that these services are not easily visible or easy to access.

Communities explained that they feel safe in the area, but that discrimination and hate crime was still common.

In regard to the LDP consideration of 'Liveable Place', communities raised two key areas of consideration:

- Access to shopping and entertainment
- Access to quality culturally inclusive accommodation

The graphic harvested for this theme aims to highlight community ambitions for a more diverse National Park area that balances development and conservation. It explores community wants for more free parking; shopping facilities; entertainment; and more visible health services for transient families.




# LIVEABLE PLACES:

## ACCESS TO SHOPPING AND ENTERTAINMENT

### Key thoughts:


- Our engagement showed that young people were frustrated at the lack of entertainment in the National Park area. They explained that if you weren't interested in "outdoor hobbies then there wasn't much on offer in the area". They also explained that the lack of entertainment venues made it difficult to socialise and that this caused many to feel isolated.
- Gypsy/Travellers explained that budgeting in the area was very difficult as they often relied on "expensive corner-shops". They also highlighted that for older people or those without a driving license it was particularly difficult to get access to more affordable shopping locations.
- Families explained that the area was good for children and older people, but that teenagers and young adults were often bored - leading to many leaving the area for more urban places (e.g. Aberdeen and Perth).
- Parents expressed that it was difficult to access play areas for children and community gardens, as they are made to feel unwelcome by non-Gypsy/Traveller people.




I think a lot of them gets bored cause there's no much to do

### Actions/Recommendations:

- Development of more entertainment venues and cinemas.
- More investment into affordable shopping experiences centralising local produce and budget shops. Communities thought that 20 minute neighbourhoods were a good idea in principle.
- More inclusive funding for development of community-based facilities such as community gardens and play areas. Perhaps with conditions placed on including Gypsy/Traveller communities in their design and maintenance.



I see land owned community gardens but when I turn up I am asked to leave




For young ones it's not the best for them unless their into outdoorsy sports

# LIVEABLE PLACES:

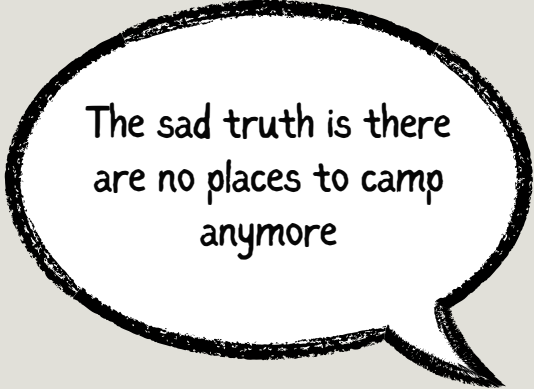
## QUALITY ACCOMODATION

### Key thoughts:

- Our engagement highlighted that Gypsy/Travellers are increasingly finding it harder to access safe camping places in the area. They also highlighted that towns/villages are expanding with new houses, increasingly pushing them to the margins of the area.
- Gypsy/Travellers explained that they often feel overlooked when it comes to local housing assessments, they believed this was one of the major reasons there was still so little Gypsy/Traveller sites in the area.
- Families on permanent sites in the area explained that they were happy with the place they lived, but all felt the Local Authority sites were situated too close to busy roads or in isolated areas.
- Gypsy/Travellers engaged did not express a specific want for new permanent accomodation, instead they wished to be included in planning processes more explicitly and for there to be more consideration of travelling routes through the area.




Aye more camps, no sites but ken actual camps



The sad truth is there are no places to camp anymore

### Actions/Recommendations:

- Inclusion of a Gypsy/Traveller stopping place within each new housing development consideration. Both the protection of any pre-existing spaces utilised by travelling families, alongside the provision of new stopping places in engagement with Gypsy/Traveller communities.
- Develop stronger relationships between planning bodies and Gypsy/Traveller communities to build new culturally inclusive accomodation - particularly in the east of the CNPA.
- Ensure that any future accomodation is not too close to the road both for safety and environmental health; also that consideration is made to communities accessing services in towns.



The site is to far out from anywhere



## PRODUCTIVE PLACES

Gypsy/Traveller communities highlighted that accessing employment can be difficult in the Cairngorm National Park area, due to spatial and infrastructural barriers. However, they also highlighted that there was more work in the area in recent years and that with the right investment more economies could be nurtured.

In regard to the LDP consideration of 'Productive Place', communities raised one key area for consideration:

- Access to employment

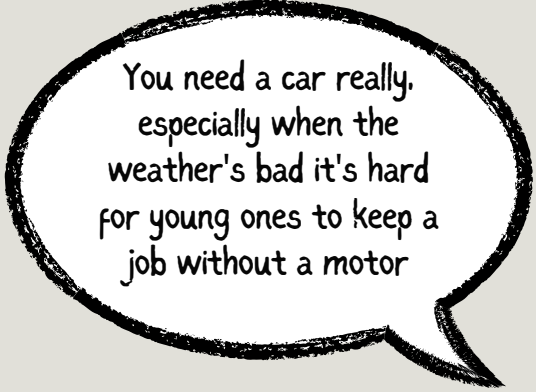
The graphic harvested for this theme aimed to highlight the creativity that exists within Gypsy/Traveller communities; their determination in self-employment; alongside their close connection with the landscape and land-based economies.

# PRODUCTIVE PLACES:

## ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

### Key thoughts:

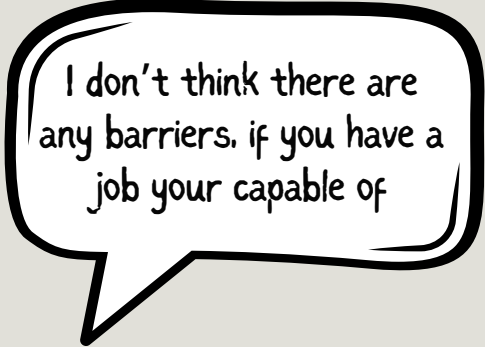
- Gypsy/Travellers highlighted that accessing employment in the CNPA can be difficult due to the distance between Gypsy/Traveller sites and towns/villages. They explained that if you don't have a car or when there is bad weather, it is hard to access workplaces.
- Gypsy/Traveller men expressed that more should be done to develop access to land based economies and opportunities in conservation work locally. They highlighted that local Gypsy/Traveller firms were often overlooked by CNP development and conservation employment.
- 97% of Gypsy/Traveller adults engaged relied upon a self-employed member of their household to pay monthly bills. This highlighted the impact that digital connectivity has on Gypsy/Travellers living in the CNPA. They explained that more investment into local digital connectivity would support their businesses to grow.
- Gypsy/Traveller elders explained that they felt opportunities to teach traditional craftsmanship to young Gypsy/Travellers hadn't been nurtured by previous LDP's. They explained that investment in a local crafts centre near Granton-on-Spey would support older Gypsy/Travellers to enter an economy of heritage crafts.



You need a car really, especially when the weather's bad it's hard for young ones to keep a job without a motor

### Actions/Recommendations:

- More infrastructure links between Gypsy/Traveller permanent sites and local villages/towns, particularly those that focus on walking routes and cycling routes for younger people or those without access to a car.
- Explore investment into community wealth-building development that supports opportunities for Gypsy/Travellers to access the land-based and conservation sectors.
- Prioritise investment into digital inclusion and digital infrastructure that connects communities, opening up more employment opportunities online.
- Explore ambitions for investment in heritage crafts locally, particularly through a creative hub or centre for artisan learning.



I don't think there are any barriers, if you have a job your capable of

# THE PERFECT CAMP

Due to the barriers faced with mapping traditional stopping places in the Cairngorm National Park, we designed a workshop focused on designing 'the perfect camp'.

The idea of this community-led workshop, was to open up a conversation about lived experience of travelling in the CNPA. The intention was to create a safe space for Gypsy/Traveller communities, to give insight into how the LDP could better serve these communities in planning and development.

The stimulus for this conversation was a suggestion from the communities that for each new housing development agreed in the area, a stopping place should also be considered for the Gypsy/Traveller community.

## COMMUNITY VIEWS

Somewhere our  
weans can play  
safely

There's enough  
room for me and  
all my folk, maybe  
5 trailers

Not too close to  
the houses, we  
like our own  
space too

Just speak to us,  
we are normal  
people - we have  
needs like  
everyone else

Somewhere  
where theres  
room for our wee  
dog

I can walk to the  
shop, when he has  
the motor at  
work

I like camping  
where my folk  
has connections,  
there's loads of  
camps we've  
stayed for years

Access to a bag  
wash is useful,  
with so many folk  
you go through a  
lot of clothes

We don't need to  
worry about the  
exhaust fumes  
from the road for  
my bairns

Toilets. I know it  
sounds basic but  
a toilet and bin  
makes things so  
much easier

Somewhere we  
can get access to  
clean water - a  
shower would be  
brilliant

# THE PERFECT CAMP

As with all our themes, we also worked with a community artist to create a graphic harvested image from the views expressed by communities about travelling, stopping places and the landscape,

This image speaks to the feeling of happiness that Gypsy/Travellers experience when on the road. It also shows the importance of travelling for many young Gypsy/Travellers in learning their culture, traditions and history - the oral landscape acting as a 'Travellers Guide'.





