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## Eric Pickles: Time for a fair deal for the travelling and settled community

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Travellers who play by the rules will get the same rights as other mobile home residents and could benefit from more authorised sites under plans announced today by Communities and Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles. At the same time, top-down Whitehall planning rules on travellers which Ministers believe has undermined community cohesion and harmed the countryside will be scrapped.

### **Stronger tenancy rights on authorised council sites**

Travellers on official local authority sites will benefit from changes to legislation that will give them the same rights and responsibilities as residents on other mobile home sites. Travellers who abide by the terms of their pitch agreement will have greater protection against eviction, and have the same rights and responsibilities as other social tenants.

### **New incentives to build authorised sites**

The Government has announced that councils will be given incentives through the New Homes Bonus scheme to deliver new housing. Ministers are announcing today that this will include authorised traveller sites. This means that councils will get financial benefits for building authorised sites where they are needed. This will ensure that all types of authorised residential developments are treated equally.

### **Abolition of Whitehall guidance**

The Government has already freed councils from the top-down Regional Strategies and the associated building targets; this now allows councils to decide for themselves how many traveller pitches are necessary in their area according to local need and historic demand.

Following through on this policy, Ministers are today announcing their intention to revoke what they regard as flawed Whitehall Planning Circulars on travellers. The planning rules have been criticised by many local councils, some of whom have said this has compelled them to build on the countryside and compulsorily purchase land.

Such rules have, Ministers believe, undermined community cohesion by creating a perception amongst many people of 'different' planning rules for the travelling community and for the settled community. Planning rules should be the same for all.

### **Stronger powers for councils to tackle unauthorised development**

The Government is concerned about the growing number of unauthorised developments and encampments and the problems they cause within communities. Mr Pickles is looking at ways to strengthen the powers available to councils to more effectively tackle unauthorised development. This will include action against speculative, unscrupulous private developers.

Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, said:

"Unauthorised developments have created tensions between travellers and the settled population. We want to redress the balance and put fairness back into communities.

"Like the rest of the population, the majority of travellers are law-abiding citizens and they should have the same chance of having a safe place to live and bring up their children. These changes will put travellers who play by the rules on an equal footing.

"But at the same time, we will not sit back and allow people to bypass the planning rules that everyone else has to abide by. That's why we will strengthen the powers that councils have to enforce against breaches of planning rules and tackle the abuse of the planning system."

### **Notes to editors**

1. The Government is announcing its intention to commence Section 318 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, designed to extend tenancy rights for travellers in authorised local authority traveller sites.

2. The details of New Homes Bonus scheme will be set out in a public consultation later in the year.

3. The Government intends to revoke Planning Circular 01/06 and Circular 04/07, subject to necessary impact assessments, to be replaced with a light-touch guidance outlining councils' statutory obligations.

[www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100726/text/100726w0002.htm#10072632000565](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100726/text/100726w0002.htm#10072632000565) (external link).

4. Further announcements will be made in due course on plans to increase planning enforcement powers; measures will be included in the Localism Bill this autumn.

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