



SAVE DALE FARM!



Stop the Eviction of Dale Farm Community, UK



FORCED EVICTION OF THE DALE FARM GYPSY AND TRAVELLER COMMUNITY APPROVED AT A COST OF £18 MILLION

On Monday 14 March Basildon Borough Council (BBC) voted 28 to 10 to forcibly evict 86 families from the largest Romani Gypsy and Irish Traveller site in the UK – Dale Farm. The 28-day eviction notices can be served at any time now.

The settlement with about 1000 residents extends onto land owned by the community but half of it does not have planning permission. Part of this land was a licensed scrap yard located within what is classified as Green Belt land. The community has been occupying the site for more than eight years, during which BBC and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government refused to grant planning permission for the unauthorised portion of the site on the basis of the harm that may be caused to the Green Belt.

The cost of the forced eviction operation is estimated at £18 million and will have a devastating effect on the provision of services to the whole population of Basildon. Such costs do not include the provision of adequate alternative accommodation for the families affected by the eviction. Around 86 families including 110 children will be thrown on to the road. £8 million will be spent in Council costs (bailiff services, ambulance, fire safety appliances, advice and liaison facility, operational contingency, temporary accommodation, etc.) and £10 million in policing costs. The request for such extra funds made by the Essex Police to the Home Office has not been decided yet.

As for the Council costs, the taxpayer is being asked to pay in order to deliberately make families and children homeless. Although BBC has not disclosed its figures, local media says that more than one hundred Basildon Council jobs are likely to be axed to help the local authority cope with budget cuts. According to the report by the leader of the Council the allocation of £3.5m to meet the initial identified cost of the eviction will reduce the balance on the contingency reserve to half - from £7m to £3.5m at 31 March 2012.

Editorial
March 2011/ Issue 3

This is the third Dale Farm Bulletin. It is promoted by the Dale Farm Housing Association (DFHA) with the assistance of the Essex Human Rights Clinic.

The Clinic works for the protection and promotion of human rights and partners with counsels, non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations working on human rights issues. The DFHA was established to promote human rights and stop the eviction of the Dale Farm Community. It is represented by Dr Keith Lomax, solicitor, who leads the legal case.

EVICTION COSTS

Direct operation cost of site clearance	£5,000,000
Potential expenditure to address extreme circumstances	£1,500,000
Post site clearance cost	£1,500,000
Policing costs	£10,000,000
TOTAL	£18,000,000
	(£209,302 per Traveller family)

BASILDON COUNCIL BUDGET CUTS

Basildon Hospital ¹	£20,000,000 Cut
The Fire Services ²	max £19,000,000 Cut
Disabled Facilities ³	£280,000 Cut

For Joseph G. Jones, Secretary of the Gypsy Council, “the Basildon community is being asked to pay millions to make vulnerable people homeless, and at the same time sacrifice their own jobs. It just doesn’t make any sense”.

PAYING FOR HOMELESSNESS

Since the Court of Appeal handed down its final decision in 2008, which considered lawful the decision of BBC to take direct action to enforce planning law and evict the community, negotiations have taken place between BBC and representatives of Dale Farm to identify alternative land. With the participation of the Local Government Association, Homes & Communities Agency and the Gypsy Council one H & C Agency owned site has been identified and two sites owned by Essex County Council have been under investigation. In 2010 BBC withdrew from the negotiations on the basis that there had been a breach of the agreement that the discussions be conducted in secret. Such reason is unreasonable and unjustified. Had these negotiations continued throughout 2010, suitable alternative land would have now been identified, temporary or even planning permission sought and given, and some if not all the residents could have by now already moved off the unauthorised land at Dale Farm and onto the identified suitable alternative land.

¹ Jason Ramsey, “Basildon Hospital to Cut Down Budget by £20,000,000”, *TOP NEWS*. 8, January, 2011. Retrieved 1, March

² “Fire chief warns of ‘catastrophe’ if budget is cut”, *Basildon Billericay Wicklord Recorder* 21, October, 2010. Retrieved by 1, March 2011 from, <http://www.basildonrecorder.co.uk/news/8463870.print/>

³ Faye Dickson, “Basildon cuts targeted disabled services”, *Basildon Billericay Wicklord Recorder*, 17 January 2011. Retrieved by 1 March 2011. http://www.basildonrecorder.co.uk/news/8792420.Basildon_Council_cuts_target_disabled_services/

Is Basildon Council acting with reckless disregard or is it working (and paying for) to render the families homeless as a sanction given for their offense of living as a community in the District?

The travellers themselves are being required to identify their own sites and apply for planning application. BBC is only keen to accept the relocation of the families to new sites on a temporary basis, as it does not want them living within the District boundaries. The Council is thus imposing discriminatory requirements for the development of the new sites such as limitations in the sizes of the pitches and the number of families”.

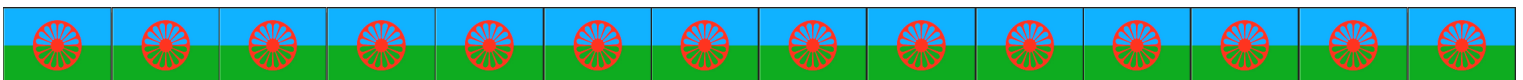
Notwithstanding the Council omission to assist the community in identifying suitable alternative land, the Dale Farm Housing Association with the support of the Gypsy Council, has applied for planning permission for the use of Pound Lane site – located in Basildon district – for accommodation. Most of the Dale Farm residents are vulnerable and poor and they may be unable to afford to meet the costs of identifying sites and applying for planning permission, as they are very expensive.

HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) considered Dale Farm under its early warning and urgent mechanism and has expressed concern about the eviction. It urged the UK government to consider suspending any planned eviction until an adequate solution is achieved and to designate alternative sites that are adequate, suitable for relocation and compatible with the culture and traditions of the people affected. The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing has also written to the government and members of an Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe visited the site one week ago.

The Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights stated that “Gypsies would appear to be the last ethnic minority in respect of which openly racist views can still be acceptably expressed”. He called for “much more serious efforts and greater tolerance than is currently in evidence”.

The UK is a State Party to the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the European Convention of Human Rights. All these instruments impose negative and positive duties upon the State regarding housing rights, security of tenure, protection of family life, participation and non-discrimination. It has also serious duties arising from the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Equalities Act 2010 to have due regard to promoting equality of opportunity for persons of different groups, fostering good relations between persons of different racial groups and eliminating discrimination.



This is a publication of the Dale Farm Housing Association (DFHA)
DFHA Board of Directors: Richard Sheridan (President) & Grattan Puxon (Secretary)
Designed and Edited by Leticia Osorio, Ryosuke Muramatsu, Sara Booth and Rachel Chhoa-Howard (Essex HR Clinic)
To receive Dale Farm Bulletins or to send comments, please write to dale.farm@btinternet.com