**Strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments**

Government consultation



This consultation begins on 05/11/2019

This consultation ends on 05/03/2020

About this consultation

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| **To:** | This consultation is open to the public.  We will be particularly interested to hear from local authorities, police forces, Gypsy, Roma, and Travelling communities and the general public. |
| **Duration:** | From 05/11/2019 to 05/03/2020 |
| **Enquiries to:** | Strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments consultation  Police Powers Unit  Home Office  6th Floor, Fry Building  2 Marsham Street  London  SW1P 4DF  Email: [UnauthorisedEncampmentsConsultation@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:UnauthorisedEncampmentsConsultation@homeoffice.gov.uk) |
| **How to respond:** | Please provide your response by 05/03/2020 at: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-police-powers-to-tackle-unauthorised-encampments](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-police-powers-to-tackle-unauthorised-encampments)  If you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a word document version of the form and email or post it to:  Strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments consultation  Police Powers Unit  Home Office  6th floor, Fry Building  Home Office  2 Marsham Street  London SW1P 4DF  Email: [UnauthorisedEncampmentsConsultation@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:UnauthorisedEncampmentsConsultation@homeoffice.gov.uk)  Please also contact the Police Powers Unit (as above) if you require information in any other format, such as Braille, audio or another language. We cannot analyse responses not submitted in these provided formats. |
| **Response paper:** | A response to this consultation exercise is due to be published at <https://www.gov.uk/search/policy-papers-and-consultations> |

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# 1. Foreword by the Home Secretary

We are fortunate to live in one of the most tolerant countries in the world, which has a proud tradition of promoting respect for the rule of law, for property, and for one another. This Government is committed to creating a just and fair country, where equality of opportunity flourishes and the life chances of all are enhanced. I am clear that that this must be built on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

In April 2018, the Government published a consultation on the effectiveness of enforcement against unauthorised developments and encampments. It sought views from a number of stakeholders including local authorities, police forces, Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities and the general public on the scale of the problem, whether existing powers could be used more effectively and if any additional powers were required.

In response to the consultation my predecessor, the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, announced the Government would look to amend sections 61 and 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to lower the criteria that must be met for the police to be able to direct people away from unauthorised sites.

He also confirmed Home Office officials would review how this Government could criminalise the act of trespassing when setting up an unauthorised encampment in England and Wales, learning from the trespass legislation that exists in the Republic of Ireland. This consultation document sets out the information gathered during that consultation, makes proposals for change and seeks views on those proposals.

This document consults on whether criminalising unauthorised encampments would be preferable to the amendments we originally proposed to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, and if so, how it should work. It sets out a proposed package of measures in some detail, as well as some more general questions.

The Government recognises that the proposals contained in this consultation are of interest to a significant minority of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers who continue to travel. The Government’s overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, in a way that facilitates their traditional and nomadic way of life while also respecting the interests of the wider community. In June this year the Government announced that the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government will lead development of a cross-government strategy to improve outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.



**Rt Hon Priti Patel MP**

**Home Secretary**

# 2. Executive summary

We would like to consult on measures to;

* Criminalise the act of trespassing when setting up an unauthorised encampment in England and Wales.

We would also like to consult on the following alternative approach to this issue:

* Amending section 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to permit the police to direct trespassers to suitable authorised sites located in neighbouring local authority areas.
* Amending sections 61 and 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to increase the period of time in which trespassers directed from land would be unable to return from 3 months to 12 months.
* Amending section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to lower the number of vehicles needing to be involved in an unauthorised encampment before police powers can be exercised from six to two or more vehicles.
* Amending section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to enable the police to remove trespassers from land that forms part of the highway.

This consultation is open until 05/03/2020; details of how to respond are set out towards the front of this document.

# 3. Introduction

The vast majority of travelling communities reside in caravans on authorised traveller sites. Indeed, out of the 23,726 caravans in England and Wales in July 2018, only 1049 (4.4%) were on unauthorised sites that were not owned by the occupants. However, there have been long-standing concerns about the disproportionate impact of these unauthorised encampments, where significant distress has been caused to local communities and where local authorities have consequently had to deal with a range of issues.

Recognising these concerns, the Government published a consultation in April 2018 on the effectiveness of enforcement against unauthorised developments and encampments. Through that consultation, we sought views from a number of stakeholders including local authorities, police forces, travelling communities and the general public on whether there is anything we can do to ensure that existing powers can be used more effectively and if additional powers are required. It was led by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government in partnership with the Home Office and Ministry of Justice.

The responses to the consultation were clear[[1]](#footnote-1), suggesting that significant problems are created by many unauthorised encampments. Responses highlighted the sense of unease and intimidation residents feel when an unauthorised encampment occurs, the frustration at not being able to access amenities, public land and business premises, and the waste and cost that is left once the encampment has moved on.

Parliament has already given local authorities and the police significant powers and duties designed to help them manage the impact of unauthorised encampments on local communities, including local authority and police powers in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

However, the Government heard compelling evidence, in response to the consultation, that stronger powers are needed to be able to address the issues and concerns identified.

That is why in February 2019, the previous Home Secretary announced that the Government would publish a further consultation on extending police powers by making a series of amendments to sections 61 and 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. These amendments would permit the police to direct trespassers to suitable alternative sites located in neighbouring local authority areas (as well as the authority which the encampment was currently situated within); to increase the period of time in which trespassers directed from land would be unable to return from three, to twelve months; to lower the number of vehicles needing to be involved in an unauthorised encampment before police powers can be exercised from six to two vehicles; and to enable the police to remove trespassers from land that forms part of the highway.

The Government also heard arguments that England and Wales should follow the so-called ‘Irish model’ for dealing with unauthorised encampments. This approach criminalises trespass in certain circumstances. The responses to our consultation demonstrated that the majority of respondents believe the Government should consider criminalising unauthorised encampments in England and Wales, by creating an offence of trespassing when setting up an unauthorised encampment.

That is why the previous Home Secretary announced that Home Office officials would undertake a review into how this Government can criminalise the act of trespassing when setting up an unauthorised encampment in England and Wales, learning from the trespass legislation that exists in the Republic of Ireland.

Having considered the findings from that review, we would like to test the appetite to go further and broaden the existing categories of criminal trespass to cover trespassers on land who are there with the purpose of residing in their vehicle for any period, and to give the police the relevant powers to arrest offenders in situ and to seize any vehicles or other property on existing unauthorised encampments (or those in the process of being set up) immediately.

We are therefore consulting on whether and how the setting up of or residing on an unauthorised encampment should be made an offence, as well as seeking views on the previously proposed changes to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to lower the criteria that must be met for the police to be able to direct people away from unauthorised sites, which could be introduced as an alternative to criminalisation.

# 4. The proposals

This chapter sets out options to extend police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments, including the creation of an offence of trespassing while setting up an unauthorised encampment, as well as other measures to extend police powers to direct trespassers, who have the intention to reside there, to leave land.

**4.1 Criminalising Unauthorised Encampments**

Through the Government’s consultation on the effectiveness of enforcement against unauthorised developments and encampments, the majority of respondents said they believe we should consider criminalising unauthorised encampments, as has been done in the Republic of Ireland. A similar offence also exists in Scotland.

**The Republic of Ireland: Criminal trespass and site provision**

The Irish Government has criminalised trespass in certain circumstances, in conjunction with a statutory requirement for local authorities to provide traveller sites. In response to concerns about trespassers occupying public spaces and private land, the Irish Republic introduced the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002[[2]](#footnote-2) (the Act).

The Act made it an offence for any person to enter and occupy land without the owner's

permission - or bring any "object" on to the land - if this is likely to "substantially damage"

the land or interfere with it.

The offence contained in Section 24 of the Act has the effect of criminalising trespassers

who occupy land without consent. The legislation does not amount to a ban on all

unauthorised encampments. It criminalises encampments that ‘substantially’ damage the

land or prevent use of the land by the owner or other lawful users.

The Act gives the Irish police discretion to direct trespassers to leave land if it is suspected that this offence is being committed. Failure to comply with a direction is also punishable by a fine and/or a one-month prison sentence. It is for the police to consider which approach to adopt depending on the individual circumstances of the case and the encampment.

**Scotland: Criminal trespass**

Under the Trespass (Scotland) Act 1865, it is an offence to occupy private land without the permission of the landowner[[3]](#footnote-3)

It was generally viewed by respondents to the consultation in 2018 that criminalisation of unauthorised encampments would act as a deterrent to future encampments and allow the police to enforce removal of trespassers in a timelier fashion. Advantages were seen in financial terms in both the cost of evicting trespassers and clean-up costs.

We would like to gather views on broadening the existing categories of criminal trespass.

The Government could make it an offence to enter or occupy land subject to certain conditions being met. We would welcome your views on what the conditions and threshold for this offence should be. For example, in the Republic of Ireland it is a criminal offence to enter or occupy land without the landowner’s consent or bring any "object" on to the land - if this is likely to cause "substantial damage". Imposing conditions such as a need to require proof that damage or harm has been caused will help limit prosecutions to cases where there is an element of public disorder for which there is an interest to protect against and explicitly reflect the balance between land owners’ rights to peaceful enjoyment of their property and travellers’ rights to privacy and family life.

| **Question** |
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| **Q1:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that knowingly entering land without the landowner’s permission should only be made a criminal offence if it is for the purpose of residing on it?  *Strongly agree / Agree**/ Neither agree or disagree /* ***Disagree*** */ Strongly disagree*  *Please explain your answer*  Trespassing while setting up an unauthorised encampment should **not** be made a criminal offence.  Unauthorised encampments are a matter of civil trespass between the landowner and the individual(s) illegally camped on the land. Private landowners are expected to deal with any encampments on their own land. The landowner can attempt to agree a leaving date with the representatives of the encampment, use common law powers to give a 48 hour notice of eviction, or obtain a Court Order under Part 55 of the Civil Procedure Rules 1998.  The provision of sufficient transit sites would allow police to direct unauthorised encampments on and likely reduce the possibility of encampments returning to this land. It does not seem just to criminalise trespass with intent to reside when provision of authorised sites are insufficient – GRT communities are left with no choice other than to set up an encampment on unauthorised land. If there was sufficient authorised sites and encampments continued to be set up on unauthorised land or they refused to be redirected to authorised transit sites then that would be a different matter. GRT communities are trespassing on land due to insufficient pitches and stopping places and because they have no alternative; criminalisation will do nothing to change this.  In addition, I would urge you to consider the impact of criminalisation of trespass with intent to reside on policing, criminal justice, and other public service resources. West Midlands Police has faced a funding cut of £175 million, over a quarter of the budget since 2010, leading to over 2000 fewer officers. This has placed a considerable strain on the Force as there are now fewer officers expected to do more with less. This reduction in resources is met with an increase in serious crimes such as knife crime and domestic violence. The criminalisation of trespass with intent to reside would mean that the police would be obliged to investigate a potential crime which in effect would be taking vital resource from tackling crimes that have a far greater impact on the lives of those in our communities than unauthorised encampments do - the number of times police have attended unauthorised encampments in the West Midlands has continued to reduce from 519 in 2016 to 232 in 2019.  Furthermore, in considering the potential criminal sanction - if based on the Irish model – of a one-month prison sentence, it begs the question who in the unauthorised encampment would the criminal charges be made against – everyone residing in the encampment? I strongly believe that sending people to prison is not an appropriate response to this issue, especially considering the aforementioned impact on criminal justice resources. We must also consider the impact on children, as well as the cost, in this circumstance and the possibility that they would likely enter the care system for this duration in the event that their parents were given a prison sentence.  I have concerns that criminalisation could lead to legal action regarding infringement to human rights. We must consider the best ways to reduce the harm caused by a minority of unauthorised encampments that balance the needs of both the settled and GRT travelling communities, whereby the rights of one group do not negate those of another.  The already fragile relationship between settled and travelling communities would likely be negatively impacted upon by criminalisation which could cause a deterioration of unauthorised encampments’ cooperation with police exercise of Section 61 and 62A powers and potentially increase the levels antisocial behaviour or damage to land when unauthorised encampments are asked to leave. In addition, the breakdown in this relationship may impact on the GRT community’s willingness to engage with education and healthcare services.  Whilst I disagree with the criminalisation of unauthorised encampments/trespass with intent to reside, I would support, where civil court evictions have been recently achieved, the specific action of repeat trespass on private (business) premises by unauthorised encampments becoming a criminal offence. If this action was criminalised, in addition to the proposed amendment to sections 61 and 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to increase the period of time in which trespassers directed from land would be unable to returnto 12 months, it would provide greater protection to land targeted by the same group of trespassers on a regular basis.  Currently, if a landowner recovers their land from an unauthorised occupation by any of these means, there is no sanctions offence for the return of trespassers to the land. A change to the law to restrict the return of trespassers to land would prevent the repeat victimisation of private landowners and businesses. A possession order may be used to recover land from trespassers, but a court hearing date is set with a minimum of two days’ notice for non-residential land, or five days’ notice for residential property.  This not only delays recovery of the land but also burdens landowners to prove their case for eviction instead of those on an encampment proving their case for trespass. Reducing the time taken for eviction notices, or shifting the burden of proof from the landowner to the occupying encampment, are matters that we urge the Government to consider. |

| **Question** |
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| **Q2:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the act of knowingly entering land without the landowner’s permission should only be made a criminal offence if it is for the purpose of residing on it with vehicles?  *Strongly agree / Agree**/ Neither agree or disagree /* ***Disagree*** */ Strongly disagree*  *Please explain your answer*  Please refer to my answer to Q1. |

The Government could stipulate that the landowner or representatives of the landowner must take reasonable steps to ask trespassers to leave. This would help the police to demonstrate where a trespasser is **knowingly** trespassing. However, in some instances, landowners may feel afraid to approach trespassers.

| **Question** |
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| **Q3:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the landowner or representatives of the landowner should take reasonable steps to ask persons occupying their land to remove themselves and their possessions before occupation of the land can be considered a criminal offence?  *Strongly agree /* ***Agree*** */ Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*  *Please explain your answer*  Although I disagree with the criminalisation of setting up an unauthorised encampment, I believe that attempts should be made to ask the persons occupying to leave. If there has been no attempt to take reasonable steps to ask persons occupying their land to remove themselves and their possessions, then it remains unknown to them whether or not the landowner has an issue with this occupancy of their land. In addition, those occupying the land may leave as a result of these ‘reasonable steps’ to ask them to leave. If this is the case, then considering it a criminal offence would be unnecessary anyway.  I recognise that there may be issues regarding landowners feeling uneasy about directly approaching encampments and attempting to ask unauthorised encampments to leave. Perhaps there needs to be some element of a provision of support in this action and better accessibility for the use of the services of a representative for the landowner. |

| **Question** |
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| **Q4:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that a criminal offence can only be committed when the following conditions have been met?   1. the encampment prevents people entitled to use the land from making use of it;   *Strongly agree / Agree /* ***Neither agree or disagree*** */ Disagree / Strongly disagree*   1. the encampment is causing or is likely to cause damage to the land or amenities;   *Strongly agree / Agree /* ***Neither agree or disagree*** */ Disagree / Strongly disagree*   1. those on the encampment have demanded money from the landowner to vacate the land; and/or   *Strongly agree / Agree /* ***Neither agree or disagree*** */ Disagree / Strongly disagree*   1. those on the encampment are involved or are likely to be involved in anti-social behaviour.   *Strongly agree / Agree /* ***Neither agree or disagree*** */ Disagree / Strongly disagree*  *Please explain your answer*  As previously stated, I do not support the criminalisation of unauthorised encampments – please see response to Q1 – and this includes for any of the conditions included above.  Using the condition “likely to” and causing damage or antisocial behaviour as part of the argument for criminalising unauthorised encampments is problematic in the sense that this in essence criminalises and discriminates against the entire travelling GRT community based on the preconception and stereotype that unauthorised encampments cause damage/antisocial behaviour despite this being the actions of a minority within this community, not the community as a whole.  Furthermore, powers contained within the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 should already address those issues highlighted in the conditions for criminalisation. |

| **Question** |
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| **Q5:** What other conditions not covered in the above should we consider?  **Where civil court evictions have been recently achieved, make repeat trespass on private (business) premises by unauthorised encampments a criminal offence.**  *Suggested amendment to Part 55 of the Civil Procedure Rules 1998.*  Unauthorised encampments are a matter of civil trespass between the landowner and the individual(s) illegally camped on the land. Private landowners are expected to deal with any encampments on their own land. The landowner can attempt to agree a leaving date with the representatives of the encampment, use common law powers to give a 48 hour notice of eviction, or obtain a Court Order under Part 55 of the Civil Procedure Rules 1998.  Currently however, if a landowner recovers their land from an unauthorised occupation by any of these means, there is no sanctions offence for the return of trespassers to the land. A change to the law to restrict the return of trespassers to land would prevent the repeat victimisation of private landowners and businesses.  A possession order may be used to recover land from trespassers, but a court hearing date is set with a minimum of two days’ notice for non-residential land, or five days’ notice for residential property.  This not only delays recovery of the land but also burdens landowners to prove their case for eviction instead of those on an encampment proving their case for trespass. Reducing the time taken for eviction notices, or shifting the burden of proof from the landowner to the occupying encampment, are matters that we urge the Government to consider.  Costs borne by the private sector should not be underestimated. The unauthorised encampments summit in February 2017 revealed further anecdotal evidence of the business community having profits affected by this issue, leaving the West Midlands because of it, or even being deterred from investing in parts of the region in the first place.  West Midlands Police (WMP) and the seven local authorities are already working with private land representatives to develop a toolkit of interventions that can be used to help land owners protect against unauthorised encampments. Better legal protection for private landowners and business premises would assist in this work. |

**4.2 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994**

Under Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the police have powers that allow them to direct trespassers to leave land. The requirements of these powers are currently:

1. that the trespassers have an intention to reside on the land for any period;
2. that the occupier or someone on the occupier’s behalf has taken reasonable steps to ask the trespassers to leave;
3. that: either (a)

* any of the trespassers have caused damage to land or property; or
* that any of the trespassers have used threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour towards the occupier, a member of the occupier’s family or an employee or agent of the occupier;

or (b) that the trespassers have between them six or more vehicles on the land.

Section 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 allows the police to direct trespassers to remove themselves and their vehicles and property from land on which they have the intention to reside where a suitable pitch is available within the same local authority area. The police must consult every local authority within whose area the land is situated to confirm if a suitable pitch is available on a relevant site.

Responses to the consultation from the police and some local authorities highlighted how a lack of availability of transit sites means that they are unable to exercise some of their existing powers such as section 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which provides a power to remove trespassers to alternative available sites.

We would welcome views on whether to amend section 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to permit the police to direct trespassers to suitable authorised sites located in neighbouring local authority areas.

Extending this power would make it more likely that the police could act where there is a shortage of site capacity in one particular area. However, we believe that such changes may need to be subject to conditions around:

* Agreements being in place between local authorities. Local authorities have advised us that the use of such a power without agreements in place would deter them from creating more authorised sites. This would be counterproductive.
* A maximum distance that trespassers should be directed across. In some rural areas, a site in a neighbouring local authority area could be several hours drive away. It could be considered unreasonable to relocate someone that far.

| **Question** |
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| **Q6:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that police should be given the power to direct trespassers to suitable authorised sites in a neighbouring local authority area?  ***Strongly agree*** */ Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*  *Please explain your answer*  We propose a change in legislation that allows for increased resilience across borders, by allowing s62A to direct unauthorised encampments across local authority boundaries. To maximise capacity this could be to a neighbouring local authority area, or as the collective of a Combined Authority or a police force area. Including ‘combined authorities’ and ‘police force areas’ alongside ‘local authorities’ would allow for this resilience, where an agreement was in place for a fair sharing of transit site capacity. The deployment of this power across a police force area or Combined Authority would of course have to be proportionate, and reserved for problematic groups.  We also believe such sites should only be used with the consent of the local population. They cannot simply be imposed on unwilling residents.  Careful rewording of the legislation should ensure groups are not directed disproportionate distances (ie from the east side of Coventry to the north side of Wolverhampton). Meanwhile, to direct a group to a geographically neighbouring authority (where agreements and protocols are in place) would avoid the risk of increasing the volume of unauthorised encampments in areas in the immediate vicinity of combined authorities.  **Q7:** Should this be subject to conditions around agreements being in place between local authorities?  ***Yes****/No*  Robust agreements between local authorities, specifically those within police force and/or combined authority areas would be essential. An example of this would be the ability for local authorities to be able to direct encampments to suitable neighbouring local authorities where site provision is available in the instance their local authority does not have transit site availability. The Government should take active steps to encourage such collaboration between local authorities and I believe this type of joint working ought to be embedded within Government’s strategy for improving outcomes for GRT communities.  **Q8:** Should there be a maximum distance that a trespasser can be directed across?  ***Yes*** */ No*  If yes, what distance should that be?  Within a Combined Authority or Police Force area.  **Q9:** Should there be any other conditions that should be considered when directing a trespasser across neighbouring authorities.  ***Yes*** */ No*  If yes, what should these be?  All decisions should be made on an individual and circumstantial basis.  The human rights of Gypsy, Roma, Travellers must be considered. For example, if the encampment is moving south it would be unrealistic to direct them to a transit site in the north. Additionally, the impact of directing encampments across neighbouring authorities on the employment, education, and healthcare of those residing in the encampment must be considered. |

Failure to comply with a police direction under Section 61 or 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 is a criminal offence punishable by a fine and/or a custodial sentence of up to three months’ imprisonment, as is re-entry onto the land by persons subject to the direction within three months.

Respondents to the consultation suggested that the current three-month period during which a trespasser is prohibited from returning to a location once directed from the site by the police should be increased.

We would welcome views on whether to amend sections 61 and 62A to increase the period of time in which trespassers directed from land would be unable to return from three months to twelve months. This would provide greater protection to land targeted by the same group of trespassers on a regular basis.

| **Question** |
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| **Q10:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the period of time in which trespassers directed from land would be unable to return should be increased from three months to twelve months?  *Strongly agree /* ***Agree*** */ Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*  *Please explain your answer*  I agree that the period of time in which trespassers directed from land would be unable to return should be increased from three months to twelve months to provide greater protection to land targeted by the same group of trespassers on a regular basis. If this increase is not sufficient in preventing repeat trespass, the Government should consider the following: **Where civil court evictions have been recently achieved, make repeat trespass on private (business) premises by unauthorised encampments a criminal offence.** *Suggested amendment to Part 55 of the Civil Procedure Rules 1998.* |

Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 grants police the power to direct trespassers to leave if there are six or more vehicles present on the land they are trespassing on. However, if there are fewer than six vehicles present, police do not obtain the power to direct trespassers to leave.

We would welcome views on whether to amend section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to lower the number of vehicles needing to be involved in an unauthorised encampment from six to two, before police powers can be exercised. This will increase the opportunity for police intervention where smaller encampments are present.

| **Question** |
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| **Q11**: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the number of vehicles needing to be involved in an unauthorised encampment before police powers can be exercised should be lowered from six to two vehicles?  *Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*  *Please explain your answer*  Current criteria for removal includes more than six vehicles on the land. However, if there is a transit site in place, criteria for removal is one vehicle. Police have the powers to direct persons to leave the land and to remove any of their vehicles or other property from the land. The penalty for failing to move is the police seizure of vehicles. Therefore, this action does not necessarily seem proportionate (considering there are insufficient pitches/stopping places) and the provision of sufficient transit sites needs to be increased.  Although reducing the number of vehicle may increase the opportunity for police intervention and make it more difficult for trespassers to split into smaller groups to avoid enforcement, two vehicles seems unreasonable and should be reconsidered and specify caravans rather than ‘vehicles’ as two vehicles could simply be one car and one caravan. |

We would welcome views on whether to amend section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to enable the police to remove trespassers from land that forms part of the highway. The police are currently restricted in dealing with these encampments unless there is a suitable pitch in the same local authority area. This could make it easier for the police to tackle problematic encampments.

| **Question** |
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| **Q12:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the police should be granted the power to remove trespassers from land that forms part of the highway?  *Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*  *Please explain your answer*  I would agree with this increased power only in the circumstance that an encampment is obstructing public right of way or causing damage to the highway in a way that highway authorities are, despite attempts, unable to fulfil their statutory obligation to ensure that public right of way is maintained and should be dealt with in an individual basis at the officer’s discretion. The police are currently restricted in dealing with these encampments unless there is a suitable pitch in the same local authority area which make it easier for the police to tackle problematic encampments. In short, we need for more transit sites to enable increased ability to direct encampments to authorised sites and reduce instances of encampments on unauthorised land including that which forms part of the highway. |

We believe giving the police powers to seize property, including vehicles, could enable the police to remove unauthorised encampments more quickly and act as deterrent to setting up an unauthorised encampment. We would welcome views on whether to grant police powers to seize property from trespassers and in what circumstances they should have these powers.

| **Question** |
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| **Q13:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the police should be granted the power to seize property, including vehicles, from trespassers who are on land with the purpose of residing on it?  *Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree /* ***Disagree*** */ Strongly disagree*  *Please explain your answer*  Seizure of property is already detailed in s62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which states:  *(1) If a senior police officer present at a scene reasonably believes that the conditions in sub-section (2) are satisfied in relation to a person and land, he may direct the person –*  *(a) to leave the land;*  *(b) to remove any vehicle and any other property he has with him on the land.*  *(2) The conditions are –*  *(a) that the person and one or more others (‘the trespassers’) are trespassing on land;*  *(b) that the trespassers have between them at least one vehicle on the land;*  *(c) that the trespassers are present on the land with the common purpose of residing there for any period;*  *(d) if it appears to the officer that the person has one or more caravans in his possession or under his control on the land, that there is a suitable pitch on a residential caravan site for that caravan or each of those caravans;*  *(e) that the occupier of the land or a person acting on his behalf has asked the police to remove the trespassers from the land.*  As such police can use this power as a last resort or when the circumstances require it. Any additional powers to seize vehicles may see the disproportionate seizure of vehicles, increase pressure on policing resources including police storage of seized property, leave those residing in the seizes property homeless, which not only has a detrimental impact on those made homeless but also increases pressure on local authorities to rehouse these individuals for whom travelling is an integral part of their ethnicity and culture. As such, I disagree that police should be granted the power to seize property, including vehicles, from trespassers who are on land with the purpose of residing on it.  **Q14**: Should the police be able to seize the property of:   1. Anyone whom they suspect to be trespassing on land with the purpose of residing on it; 2. Anyone they arrest for trespassing on land with the purpose of residing on it; or 3. Anyone convicted of trespassing on land with the purpose of residing on it?   *Please explain your answer*  Please see answer to Q13. |

As stated earlier, we would envisage that the above amendments to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 would be as an alternative to criminalising unauthorised encampments, rather than in addition to.

| **Question** |
| --- |
| **Q15:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed amendments to sections 61 and 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 contained in this consultation are sufficient measures to tackle the public disorder issues which are associated with unauthorised encampments without the requirement for introducing specific powers that criminalise unauthorised encampments?  *Strongly agree /* ***Agree*** */ Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*  *Please explain your answer*  I am in agreement that the proposed amendments to s61 and s62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 contained in this consultation are to a certain extent sufficient measures to tackle the public disorder issues which are associated with unauthorised encampments without the requirement for introducing specific powers that criminalise unauthorised encampments. However, the provision of sufficient authorised transit sites must accompany this if the amendments are to be effective as the revision of powers does not address the lack of sufficient and appropriate accommodation for Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities which remains the most significant driver of the establishment of unauthorised encampments.  The criminalisation of unauthorised encampments is unnecessary and incompatible with regard to the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 on the grounds that this essentially criminalises and impedes an entire culture and lifestyle considering there are insufficient alternatives such as authorised transit sites, pitches and stopping places. |

**4.3 Impacts on the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities**

While there are clear challenges presented to settled communities by unauthorised encampments, it is also highly likely that such unlawful encampments can lead to significant hardships for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities themselves.

The Government’s overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community. Therefore, we would welcome views on any adverse impacts that these proposals could have on the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

| **Question** |
| --- |
| **Q16:** Do you expect that the proposed amendments to sections 61 and 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 contained in this consultation would have a positive or negative impact on the health or educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities?  *Highly positive impact / Positive impact / Neither positive nor negative impact / Negative impact /* ***Highly negative impact***  If so, do you have any evidence to support this view, and/or suggestions for what could be done to mitigate or prevent any negative impacts?  Although there will be other actions to mitigate negative impacts, the provision of sufficient transit sites/pitches and building positive relationships between travelling and settled communities would help. |

| **Question** |
| --- |
| **Q17:** Do you expect that criminalising unauthorised encampments would have a positive or negative impact on the health or educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities?  *Highly positive impact / Positive impact / Neither positive nor negative impact / Negative impact /* ***Highly negative impact***  If so, do you have any evidence to support this view, and/or suggestions for what could be done to mitigate or prevent any negative impacts?  The provision of sufficient transit sites/pitches. |

**4.4 Other Comments**

| **Question** |
| --- |
| **Q18:** Do you have any other comments to make on the issue of unauthorised encampments not specifically addressed by any of the questions above?  I would like to add that I believe the government should do more in encouraging local authorities to provide authorised transit sites and negotiated stopping points for Gypsy, Roma, Travellers. Transit sites are essential in unlocking police powers detailed in s61 and s62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and also have the following benefits:   1. **A local authority with a transit site has significantly fewer unauthorised encampments and associated costs**. 2. **Transit sites give travelling groups an authorised option of where to go**, and without them the police can only move a group off a piece of land with no say on where they go next. 3. Transit sites allow police to **ban difficult individuals from an entire council area for 3 months** (and maybe wider if we can strengthen the law) – right now, police powers can only ban a group from a specific piece of land. 4. If a group banned using the transit site powers refuses to leave or returns to the borough too soon, **the police can make arrests, give fines of up to £2,500, and seize vehicles**. 5. **Unauthorised encampments are moved quicker and with less cost** when there is a transit site nearby. The ‘proportionality test’ for moving an unauthorised encampment is considerably easier to meet if the police can direct the group to a transit site. 6. Transit sites can **pay for themselves**, charging travelling groups a fixed rent and a deposit. 7. Transit sites **avoid needless confrontation and tension with law-abiding travelling groups**. Those that simply wish to lead a travelling lifestyle are currently forced on to unauthorised encampments due to the lack of authorised spaces. 8. If a local authority has a transit site or can demonstrate plans for one, they are **more likely to have injunctions to protect vulnerable sites from unauthorised encampments approved in court**.   Additionally, the government should provide support or resourcing for forces to manage the movement of encampments across force areas so that forces can proactively work with Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities, directing them to available authorised transit sites or stopping points so that encampments are not established on unauthorised land.  It is also important to build more positive relationships between travelling and settled communities. |

# 5. About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q19: Full name** | David Jamieson |
| **Q20: Job title** or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (for example, member of the public) | West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner |
| **Q21: Date** | March 2020 |
| **Q22: Company name/organisation** (if applicable) | Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner |
| **Q23: Address** | West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, Lloyd House, Colmore Circus Queensway, Birmingham |
|  |  |
| **Q24: Postcode** | B4 6AT |
| **Q25:** If you would like us to acknowledge receipt of your response, please tick this box |  |
| Address to which the acknowledgement should be sent, if different from above | West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, Lloyd House, Colmore Circus Queensway, Birmingham, B4 6NQ |
|  |
|  |

**Q26: If you are a representative of a group**, please tell us the name of the group and give a summary of the people or organisations that you represent.

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# 6. Contact details and how to respond

Please respond using the online system available at: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-police-powers-to-tackle-unauthorised-encampments](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-police-powers-to-tackle-unauthorised-encampments)

Please submit your response by 05/03/2020

You are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a word document version of the form and email it or post it to:

Strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments consultation

Police Powers Unit

Home Office

6th Floor NW, Fry Building

Home Office

2 Marsham Street

LONDON

SW1P 4DF

**Email**: [UnauthorisedEncampmentsConsultation@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:UnauthorisedEncampmentsConsultation@homeoffice.gov.uk)

### Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process you should contact the Home Office at the above address.

### Extra copies

Further paper copies of this consultation can be obtained from this address and it is also available online at [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-police-powers-to-tackle-unauthorised-encampments](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-police-powers-to-tackle-unauthorised-encampments)

Alternative format versions of this publication can be requested from: UnauthorisedEncampmentsConsultation@homeoffice.gov.uk

### Publication of response

A paper summarising the responses to this consultation will be published in [insert publication date, which as far as possible should be within three months of the closing date of the consultation] months’ time. The response paper will be available online at [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-police-powers-to-tackle-unauthorised-encampments](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-police-powers-to-tackle-unauthorised-encampments)

### Representative groups

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent when they respond.

### Confidentiality

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Home Office.

The Home Office will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

# 7. Impact of Proposals

**Impact Assessment**

In accordance with the Better Regulation Framework Manual issued by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)[[4]](#footnote-4), an initial assessment of the impact of these proposals has been carried out and no material financial impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies is envisaged. Impact on the public sector, such as the police and the Crown Prosecution Service, is expected to be relatively minor.

**Equalities Statement**

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places a duty on Ministers and Departments, when exercising their functions, to have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate conduct which is unlawful under the 2010 Act, advance equality of opportunity between different groups and foster good relationships between different groups.

In accordance with these duties, we have considered the impact of the proposed changes on those sharing protected characteristics in order to give due regard to the matters mentioned above.

**Eliminating unlawful discrimination**

The Traveller community includes Romany Gypsies and English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish Travellers are legally recognised as ethnic groups under the Equality Act 2010.

We recognise that the proposals outlined in this document could have an adverse impact on some members of this minority group. Indeed, in response to the original consultation, some traveller groups, human rights groups and legal organisations told us that criminalising trespass would be a disproportionate response that would impact on their way of life. However, we also recognise the distress that local communities and businesses face as a result of unauthorised encampments. While we recognise that not all unauthorised encampments cause disruption and impact communities, there is evidence that shows where this is the case, the financial costs falling to landowners to evict and to clear sites along with the impact to the community can be significant.

The Home Office will seek views on all proposals and any mitigating actions to limit any disproportionate impact on the Travelling community, as well as any indirect impacts on other protected characteristics, such as disability. The Public Sector Equality Duty is an ongoing duty that will be kept under review as we develop the policy.

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**Advancing equality of opportunity between different groups**

We recognise the rights of Romany Gypsies and English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish Travellers to follow a nomadic way of life in line with their cultural heritage.

The vast majority of the Traveller community, estimated to be over 80%, live in caravans staying on permanent public and private sites which have planning permission, or in residences of bricks and mortar. A small minority of Gypsies and Traveller caravans that are classed as unauthorised are those staying in one area and are likely to be on local authority housing waiting lists, those who travel seasonally for work and a very small number who travel across the country.

The Government’s overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, in a way that facilitates their traditional and nomadic way of life while also respecting the interests of the wider community. In June this year the Government announced that the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government will lead development of a cross-government strategy to improve outcomes in areas including health, education and employment for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

The Home Office will seek views on all proposals and any mitigating actions to limit any disproportionate impact of the Travelling community.

**Fostering good relationships between different groups**

It is possible that these new measures could lead to a reduction in unauthorised encampments, which in turn could improve relations. On the other hand, it is also possible that coverage of these measures could reinforce prejudices against Travellers, even those who are compliant with the law.

The Home Office will seek views on all proposals and any mitigating actions to limit any disproportionate impact of the Travelling community.

# 8.Consultation Questions

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that knowingly entering without the landowner’s permission should only be made a criminal offence if it is for the purpose of residing on it?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the act of knowingly entering land without the landowner’s permission should only be made a criminal offence if it is for the purpose of residing on it with vehicles?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the landowner or representatives of the landowner should take reasonable steps to ask persons occupying their land to remove themselves and their possessions before occupation of the land can be considered a criminal offence?

*Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a criminal offence can only be committed when the following conditions have been met?

1. the encampment prevents people entitled to use the land from making use of it;

*Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*

1. the encampment is causing or is likely to cause damage to the land or amenities;

*Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*

1. those on the encampment have demanded money from the landowner to vacate the land; and/or

*Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*

1. those on the encampment are involved or are likely to be involved in anti-social behaviour.

*Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*

Q5. What other conditions not covered in the above should we consider?

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that police should be given the power to direct trespassers to suitable authorised sites in a neighbouring local authority area?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Q7: Should this be subject to conditions around agreements being in place between local authorities?

Q8: Should there be a maximum distance that a trespasser can be directed across?

Yes / No

If yes, what distance should that be?

Q9: Should there be any other conditions that should be considered when directing a trespasser across neighbouring authorities. If so, what should these be?

Yes / No

If yes, what should these be?

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the period of time in which trespassers directed from land would be unable to return should be increased from 3 months to 12 months?

*Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the number of vehicles needing to be involved in an unauthorised encampment before police powers can be exercised should be lowered from six to two vehicles?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Q12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the police should be granted the power to remove trespassers from land that forms part of the highway?

*Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*

Q13:To what extent do you agree or disagree that the police should be granted the power to seize property, including vehicles, from trespassers who are on land with the purpose of residing on it?

*Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*

Q14: Should the police be able to seize the property of:

1. Anyone whom they suspect to be trespassing on land with the purpose of residing on it;
2. Anyone they arrest for trespassing on land with the purpose of residing on it; or
3. Anyone convicted of trespassing on land with the purpose of residing on it?

Q15. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed amendments to sections 61 and 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 contained in this consultation are sufficient measures to tackle the public disorder issues which are associated with unauthorised encampments without the requirement for introducing specific powers that criminalise unauthorised encampments?

*Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree or disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree*

Q16. Do you expect that the proposed amendments to sections 61 and 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 contained in this consultation would have a positive or negative impact on the health or educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities? If so, do you have any evidence to support this view, and/or suggestions for what could be done to mitigate or prevent any negative impacts?

*Highly positive impact / Positive impact / Neither positive nor negative impact / Negative impact / Highly negative impact*

Q17. Do you expect that criminalising unauthorised encampments would have a positive or negative impact on the health or educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities? If so, do you have any evidence to support this view, and/or suggestions for what could be done to mitigate or prevent any negative impacts?

*Highly positive impact / Positive impact / Neither positive nor negative impact / Negative impact / Highly negative impact*

Q18. Do you have any other comments to make on the issue of unauthorised encampments not specifically addressed by any of the questions above?

# 9. Consultation principles

The principles that government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [public.enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:public.enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk).

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/powers-for-dealing-with-unauthorised-development-and-encampments> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2002/act/9/section/24/enacted/en/html#sec24b> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/28-29/56> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/better-regulation-framework-manual> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)