

# SAVE DALE FARM!

Stop the Eviction of Dale Farm Community, UK



## What Is Dale Farm?

Dale Farm is the largest Gypsy and Traveller community in the UK, comprising of about 1,000 residents settled in Crays Hill, Essex. The community extends onto land owned by the portion of the settlement. A number of enforcement notices ordering the removal of homes and caravans from the land they occupy was served by the Basildon District Council (BDC). The eviction concerns some 90 families, comprising of about 300 people, including many children, elderly and infirm.

## Who Are The Families Living At Dale Farm?

Most are Travellers of Irish heritage, with their own language, culture and musical traditions, who have a history of nomadism even older than the Roma with whom they share part of what is virtually a village, the largest of its kind in the UK. It is estimated that there are some 350,000 Travellers, Gypsies and newly arrived Roma in Britain today, the Roma having first arrived in the early 16th century. Under the Race Relations Act both Gypsies and Travellers are recognized as ethnic groups. For the Gypsy and Traveller community travelling has social and economic functions as it permits social organisation and flexibility, and makes trading possible. But the community has been up against discrimination for generations. Under planning law the question of who is a Gypsy revolves around land disputes and has threatened their right to maintain a separate identity as an ethnic group. Many have had to give up their nomadic lifestyle because commons and other stopping places have been closed, and police harassment has increased, especially



Picture taken from [news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk)

## Editorial

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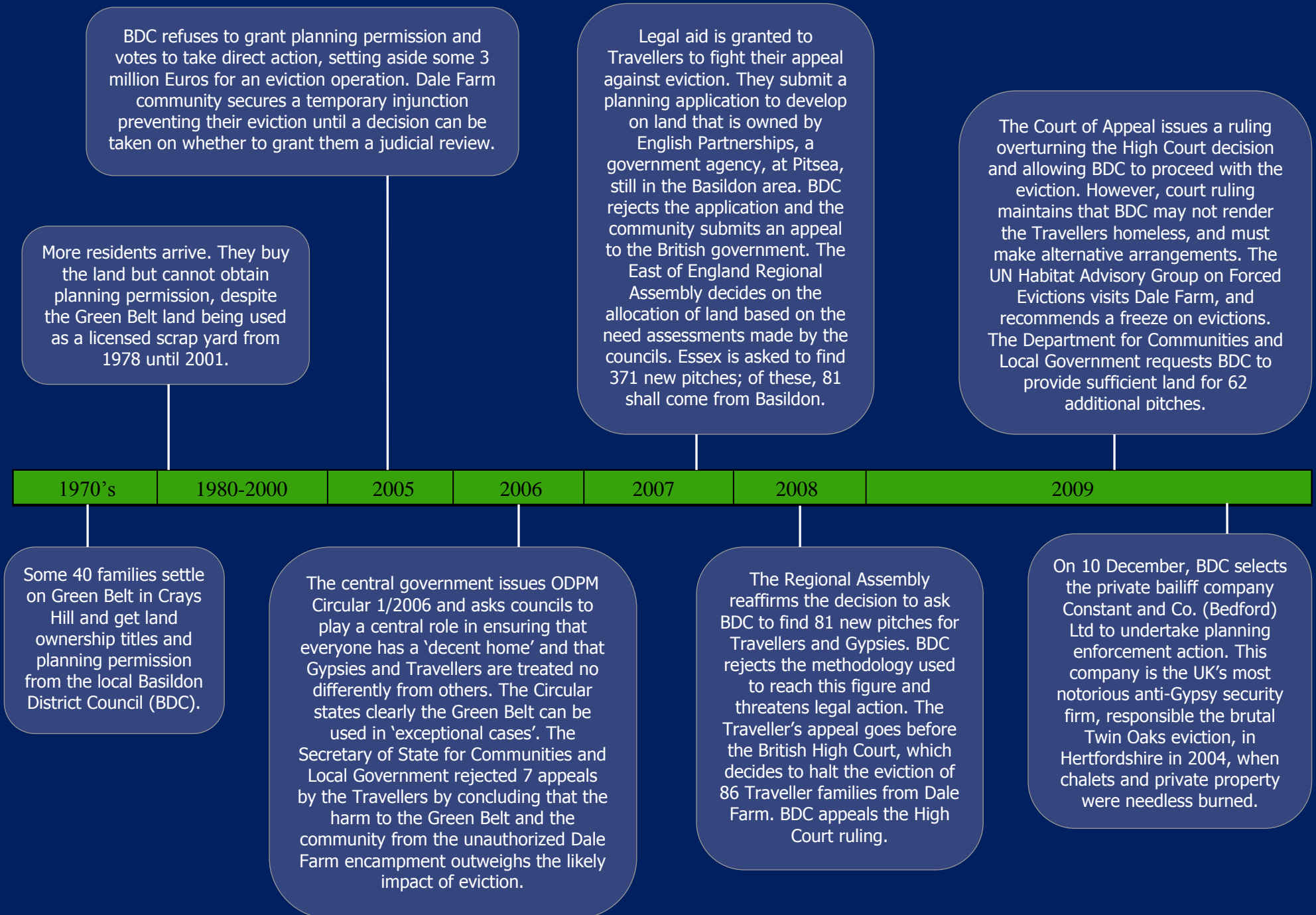
This is the first electronic Dale Farm Bulletin.

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

The Clinic works on issues that impede efforts to protect and promote human rights and proposes strategies that will advance solutions. As such, it partners with counsels and provides assistance to non-governmental, inter-governmental and grassroots organisations engaged in securing human rights and dealing with human rights violations. The DFHA was established to promote the human rights and stop the eviction of Dale Farm community. It is represented by Dr. Keith Lomax, solicitor, who leads the legal case with the support of the international NGO the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE).

since the Criminal Justice Act gave extra powers to local authorities to move on caravan-dwellers. A unique way of life, which has existed since time immemorial, is threatened because the differences in outlook between traditional nomads and settled house-dwellers have yet to be successfully resolved. All Gypsies and Travellers want is a legal place to station their caravans and mobile homes.

## Dale Farm Community Eviction Timeline\*



## Community Responses to Planned Eviction

The Dale Farm community is feeling a combination of extreme frustration and now desperation at news of the decision of the BDC to hire Constant & Company bailiffs to forcibly evict them from their homes.



Mark Taylor has made Dale Farm his home since 2004 and reacts to the news with concern for the communities' children and elderly. Taylor says, "The children will be most affected because they are in the local schools and the elderly will suffer because they will have to leave their personal doctors." However, Dale Farm spokesman Richard Sheridan, President of the Gypsy Council, shares Taylor's concerns and has told BDC that families have no

intention of leaving the district even if forced out of Dale Farm. "We'll not move more than a mile and hope this way to keep our children in the same schools and with the same GPs." Most have made this area their home for many years and could not tolerate being uprooted again.



*"The Dale Farm people are just like us, but marginalized out of ignorance. They are a hospitable, loving and welcoming community."*



Margaret Sheridan, a resident since 2001, states, "I want to stay with my family and they should either let us stay on our own properties or tell us where we can legally move it. We are human and we all hold British passports."

Malcolm Tully, of Life Church, expresses his frustration with the often negative perception of the Travellers. He says, "The Dale Farm people are just like us, but marginalized out of ignorance. They are a hospitable, loving and welcoming community." The planned direct action against Dale Farm, and properties at nearby Hovefields, will entail the destruction of some 100 homes. If launched, it will be the largest of its kind in the history of the UK. Some homes at Hovefields have already been bulldozed and Travellers and Roma there forced to evacuate in circumstances they have described as 'ethnic-cleansing'. Unfortunately, the BDC has adopted a confrontational approach while carrying out no more than nominal consultations with representatives of the community, who are still keen to find a peaceful alternative to violent eviction.

## STOP EVICTION! ACTION PLAN

Dale Farm Housing Association with the assistance of COHRE and the Essex Human Rights Clinic is pursuing legal advocacy strategies to ensure all rights are realized:

▶ Legal memorandum to BDC addressing the circumstances under which the eviction of Dale Farm will be carried out, with the aim of proactively advising BDC to assure that the residents' human rights are respected and protected. The memorandum encouraged dialogue between BDC and the Dale Farm community with a view to developing negotiated alternatives to the eviction and encouraging the application of national and international human rights law to resolve the conflict. Submitted in August 2009.

▶ Petition to the Early Warning and Urgent Action mechanism of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination demonstrating the presence of a significant and persistent pattern of racial discrimination against the Gypsy and Traveller community of Dale Farm, de facto exclusion of the residents from political, economic, social and cultural life; and the lack of an adequate legislative framework and protection mechanisms regarding access to housing and protection against forced evictions. The community seeks to prevent the eviction and further violations of other fundamental human rights, such as access to education and health care. Submitted in February 2010.

▶ Information to the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing requiring the issuance of a letter of concern to the Government of the UK to halt the eviction of Dale Farm considering the eminent human rights violations that would result from the implementation of such eviction, which involve damage of a very grave nature to the residents. Submitted in April 2010.

▶ Meeting with Essex Police Authority to discuss the risk assessment of the eviction process and to ensure that BDC and Constant Co. obey the law regarding health and safety and the international human rights law regarding forced evictions. Scheduled for April 2010.

## Monitoring and Taking Action

Dale Farm is being supported by many organisations, most ready to have members present in case of eviction, including the National Federation of Romany and Traveller Liaison Groups, Gypsy Council, National Gypsy & Traveller Affairs, Southern England Gypsy Federation, National Travellers Action Group Thames Valley Gypsy Association, Minceir Whidden, Pavee Point, Irish Traveller Movement, Kent ITM, Roma Opre, Southwark Travellers Action Group, Sussex Gypsy and Traveller Advice Group, Friends, Families & Travellers, Leicester Gypsy Liaison Group, Roma Support Group, Traveller Law Reform Group, Indian Institute of Roma Studies, UK Gypsy Women's Association, East Anglia Gypsy Council, Justive for Travellers, Essex Human Rights Clinic, Essex Racial Equality Council, East Anglia Social Forum, the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, Liberty, Jewish Socialist Group, Anti-Fascist League, Amnesty International, Gesellschaft fur Bedrohte Völker, Survival International, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Race Relations Institute, A World To Win, Advocacy Project, Global Women's Strike, No Borders, The Land is Ours, International Alliance of Inhabitants, Everyone Group, and the Peace & Progress Party. If your organisation would like to help monitor or to make a monetary contribution, contact [dale.farm@btinternet.com](mailto:dale.farm@btinternet.com).

## STOP EVICTION! ACTION PLAN

...continued:

▶ Additionally, the BDC case is scheduled for the High Court (in the Strand in London) on 28th July 2010 and Dale Farm community would appreciate if you or members of your organisation would on that date support a peaceful demonstration outside the Court as an expression of solidarity.

## Human Rights

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by the UK on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1976, provides in Art. 11 for the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living including adequate housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. One of the principal aspects of the obligation to respect the right to housing is the duty of the State not to allow forced evictions to occur. According to international human rights law, 'forced eviction' consists of the permanent or temporary removal against the will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection. According to the United Nations, "instances of forced evictions are prima facie incompatible with the requirements of the ICESCR and can only be justified in the most exceptional circumstances and in accordance with the relevant principles of international law" (General Comment n. 4 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, para. 18 and Resolution n. 1993/77 of the UN Commission on Human Rights).



This is a publication of the Dale Farm Housing Association (DFHA), created with the assistance of the Essex Human Rights Clinic.

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