Our Human Rights Matter

Second human rights monitoring report
by residents of
Double Dykes Traveller Site,
Perth

December 2024

Foreword by
Anastasia Crickley

“It’s an honour to be asked to write a few words about this report but a big disappointment that so much of what was in the previous report had to be repeated here. More to the point it’s very concerning that the Double Dyke residents face another winter in conditions which should have been dealt with a number of years ago.

I take this opportunity to salute the great women and also the men who have gone the road less travelled and are prepared to stay the journey until their rights are vindicated. This is not about window dressing but about creating conditions which mean they and their families can live in the circumstances to which they are entitled.

Their story echoes those of other Travellers elsewhere and those of many who struggle to realise their rights across today’s world. I wish them well, am proud to stand in solidarity with them and hope that by next International Human Rights Day my Double Dyke friends will have a different story to tell about their homes.”

Chairperson
Minority Rights Group International, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, and previously Chair of UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

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Introduction

This report is a comparison of the results from human rights surveys and interviews carried out by residents at Double Dykes Travellers'[1] site in Perth in September 2022 and summer 2024, providing insight into the progressive realisation of human rights and living conditions in the community over time.

This is the second human rights monitoring report by residents.

The report highlights the major housing conditions, community concerns, and human rights issues based on residents' feedback, including direct quotations to illustrate the personal impact of these issues.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the residents who took part in the research for this report.

This was supported by Making Rights Real, a grassroots human rights charity in Scotland that supports communities to name and claim their rights.

What we did

This project uses a human rights based approach[2] in practice.

A group of residents worked with Making Rights Real from September 2023 to March 2024 to develop a survey based on the main issues that residents had identified in 2022. Additional questions were added to discover residents' experiences of racism and discrimination as this was considered a defining part of residents' lives.

Seven[3] of the 20 households participated by completing surveys / taking part in interviews over spring / summer 2024.

In July 2024, Making Rights Real reported residents' concerns to CERD[4] (the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) and the UN made concluding observations the State (governments and public authorities) must act upon[5].

Additional comments about experiences living on site were provided by residents in August 2024 around objections to a planning application close to the site.

[1] We have mainly used the term Travellers in this report as this is how most residents in Double Dykes want to be referred.
[2] For information about a human rights based approach and the FAIR process see https://makingrightsreal.org.uk/using-your-rights/
[3] Eight households took part in 2022.
[4] https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCERD%2FNGO%2FGBR%2F58907&Lang=en
[5] See the CERD concluding observations, which point to improvements required in the health, housing, education, access to justice and addressing the forced assimilation of Gypsy Travellers in Scotland, here: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2FC%2FGBR%2FCO%2F24-26&Lang=en

In September 2024, six residents met with Anastasia Crickley (Chairperson of Minority Rights Group International, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, and previously Chair of UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) to update her on their human rights concerns.

In October 2024, 13 residents met with Council officers in relation to dissatisfaction with the information and timescales provided to residents on the planned upgrade to the site.

All of these engagements have contributed to findings in this report.

Survey Results

Community Values

Residents continue to express a deep attachment to the Traveller community, with many highlighting the cultural significance of living at Double Dykes. The surveys reveal a strong sense of community, with people valuing the presence of family and the Traveller way of life. When asked what is valued about living at Double Dykes, responses included:

"The Travelling community. Never been without it. They're there when family's not here if you need them. My children, grandchildren were brought up here and great grandchildren have come to visit. They know it as "grannies.""

"Family friends my way of life."

"My family and friends are here. Family-oriented."

"The people around me are from the Travelling community like myself!"

"I like that it's a Gypsy Traveller caravan site as there are very few of them. This area has a long history of Travellers living here."

However, people are concerned about the loss of character of the site due to development:

"It's in a rural area, but we're getting built up rapidly."

"It used to be really rural. We're not noo."

A recent planning application to build a housing estate close to the edge of the site was objected to by 13 households from Double Dykes.

There are also concerns about how the site is being managed by Perth and Kinross Council.

"The caravan site should be managed properly, not upgraded and left. All the things that made this a good site have been taken away over the years."

Monitoring human rights issues

Residents have considered the main issues identified in the survey and have set indicators to demonstrate what they want to see changed.

The indicators are in these themed areas:

Children's rights

Right to accommodation

Repairs response by Perth and Kinross Council

Right to participate

Right to live free from discrimination

Indicator 1:
Children's Rights

Main indicator:	Increased percentage of people who feel it is safe for children to play and socialise in my area (residents defined 'my area' as the Double Dykes site).

In summer 2024, 67% of respondents felt that it was safe for children and young people to play and socialise at Double Dykes—an improvement from 2022.

However, concerns about health and safety remain, particularly regarding road safety, vermin infestations, and sewage / drainage:

- **83%** of people reported problems with **rats and mice infestations**.
- Sewage / drainage problems also impacted on considerations of safety for children. **67%** of respondents said they had **sewage or drainage** issues.

There was a reported improvement in the condition of youth facilities, but 33% still rated them as "very poor".

> ***"If I go anywhere now, I lock the door. The site is unsafe. Not one of us walks up the path. Not one thing for the kids in the holidays."***
>
> ***"We asked for the library van, but they never got back to us."***

There is recognition that a new play park is included in plans for the site redevelopment, and this is welcomed.

> ***"It'll be good when play parks are here."***

Who is responsible for realising this right?

Perth and Kinross Council is responsible for children's rights at Double Dykes.

Police Scotland is responsible for monitoring traffic safety.

International human rights protections:

Children's rights are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 31 of the UNCRC[6] recognises the right of the child to ***"rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child."***

Children have a right to be safe. Places for play should also be safe, in accordance with UNCRC.

Children also have the right to an adequate standard of living, which includes the right to accommodation that is free from disease vectors.

[6] Convention on the Rights of the Child text | UN https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-textICEF

The International Convention on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) includes the right to adequate housing. General Comment 4, paragraph 8(d) ICESCR; ***"Adequate housing must provide the inhabitants with adequate space and protect them from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, structural hazards and disease vectors."***

Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child requires states to; ***"...recognise the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development, including 'appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in the case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing'."***

Indicator 1 Targets:

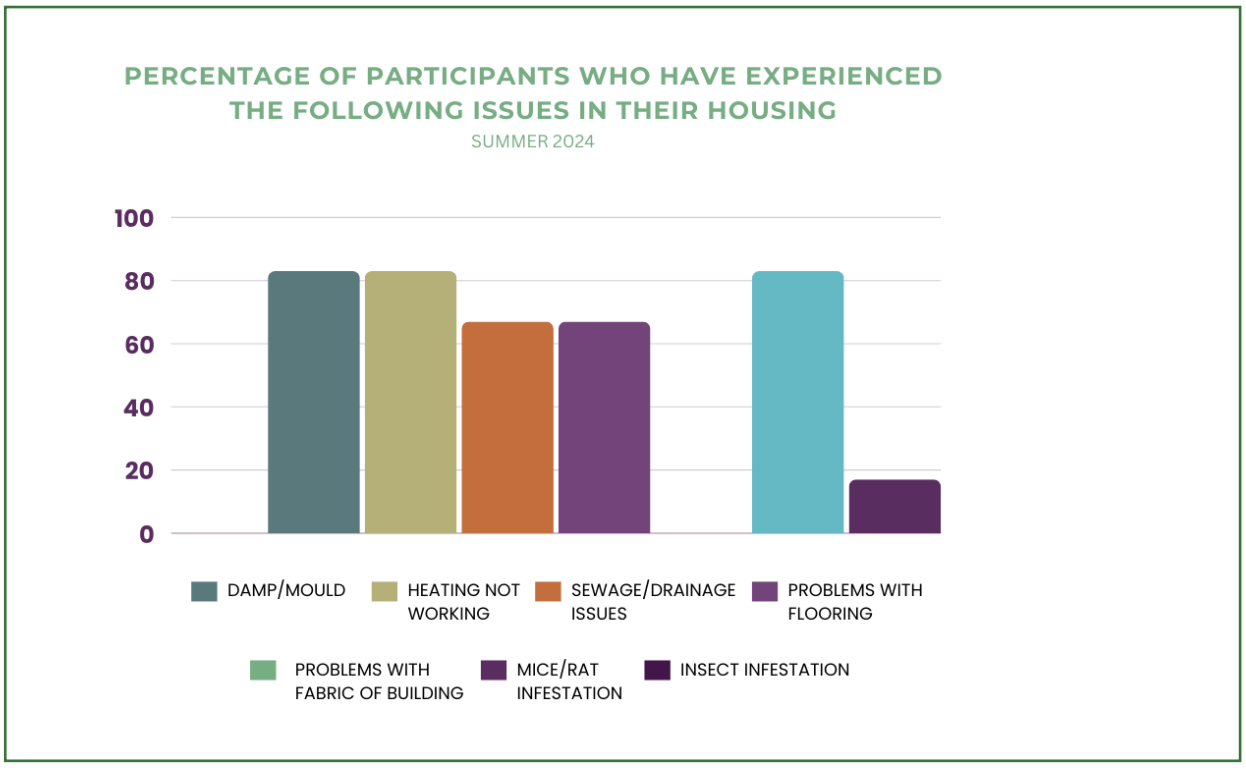
Main indicator: Increased percentage of people who feel it is safe for children to play and socialise in my area from 67% in summer 2024 to 80% in summer 2025.

Indicator 2:
Right to Accomodation

Main indicator:	Reduction in the number of people who experienced five or more issues with their accommodation in the last year.

Although there were some slight improvements[7] in accommodation conditions, significant problems persisted:

- **Dampness and mould:** 83% reported issues, down slightly from 87.5% in 2022.
- **Heating problems:** Increased to 83% from 50% in 2022.
- **Sewage/drainage issues:** Reported by 67%, down from 75% in 2022.
- **Mice infestations:** 83%, down from 87.5%.
- **Insect infestations:** Decreased to 17% from 50%



Despite some slight improvements, many still reported severe issues:

> ***"Heating not switching off, kitchen floor is rotten, sewage still running from the bathroom."***

> ***"Sewage meant to be cleaned, but they wouldn't do it because of rat boxes. Environmental Health wouldn't come out because***

[6] Residents consider the slight improvements of dampness / mould due to the timing of the survey being carried out in summer 2024. The previous survey was carried out in Winter 2022.

he needed a special suit for rat urine. They wouldn't go under chalet because he needed a special suit for rat urine. That's why we're no well -- rats dug a hole in the outside shed. They'll eat anything in there, all my personal things are stored in there. I'm using bleach and mould (remover) and got scarring on my lungs. Is that from the mould?"

The persistence of these issues, particularly regarding heating, mould, damp and mice infestations highlights ongoing violations of the **right to adequate housing.**

One household made positive comments about the chalets.

"Never had any problems with damp, heating not working, sewage or drainage, problems with flooring, fabric of building, mice or rat infestation or insect infestation. I've rarely had a repair done. Rarely needed to do a repair. It would help if I had more insulation. Constant arguing with the Council affects my physical health and mental."

Who is responsible for realising this right?

Perth and Kinross Council and Scottish Ministers are responsible for realising the right to accommodation for residents at Double Dykes. The Scottish Housing Regulator is responsible for monitoring housing conditions in Scotland.

International human rights protections:

The International Convention on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) includes the right to adequate housing. This has been a central theme arising from international human rights treaties and bodies since 1948, when the right was enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The right to adequate housing has since been included in the other human rights treaties, including the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights.

By ensuring the right to adequate housing, states are bound to meet one of the fundamental and basic needs of human beings i.e. shelter. However, the legal obligations placed on states incorporate the principle of 'progressive realisation,' meaning that rights are neither static nor are they a minimum standard. The obligation on the state is to constantly increase the standard of housing. 'Progressive realisation' means that things must always be getting better and the right to adequate housing means more than having a roof over your head.

Indeed, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in its publication, *'The Right to Adequate Housing'* states that; 'adequate housing must provide more than four walls and a roof. The right to adequate housing, as enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and

Cultural Rights (ICESCR), places additional seven responsibilities on the state to ensure that people are living in affordable, habitable and accessible homes which have adequate services, facilities and infrastructure. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights states that for 'adequate' housing must meet the following criteria:

Security of tenure: housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have a degree of tenure security which guarantees legal protection against forced evictions, harassment and other threats.

Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure: housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitisation, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, food storage or refuse disposal.

Affordability: housing is not adequate if its cost threatens or compromises the occupants' enjoyment of other human rights.

Habitability: housing is not adequate if it does not guarantee physical safety or provide adequate space, as well as protection against the cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, other threats to health and structural hazards.

Accessibility: housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalised groups are not taken into account.

Location: housing is not adequate if it is cut off from employment opportunities, health-care services, schools, childcare centres and other facilities, or if located in polluted or dangerous areas.

Cultural adequacy: housing is not adequate if it does not respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity.

Recognising that sub-standard housing contributes to poorer mental and physical health outcomes for its inhabitants, the right to adequate housing means that housing must be suitably protected against cold, damp, heat, rain, wind and other threats to health.

Indicator 2 Targets: Right to Accommodation

Main indicator: Reduction in the number of people who experienced five or more issues with their accommodation in the last year from 67% in summer 2024 to 50% in summer 2025.

Indicator 3:
Maintenance response by Perth & Kinross Council

Main indicator	Increased percentage of people who reported that repairs issues were fixed by the Council.

Residents were concerned about the maintenance response from the Council following repairs being reported. Of the six respondents who had problems with their accommodation, four reported their concerns to the Council or landlord.

It should be noted that although someone was sent out to fix the problem 80% of the time, **it only resulted in a positive outcome for residents 20% of the time**.

While 60% of respondents said the Council did fix reported issues, **only 20% were happy with the resolution**. Residents expressed frustration with **delayed responses** and incomplete repairs:

> ***"I tested how long it would take to come out. I had to wait three weeks. If it was winter, I'd have died of hypothermia."***

> ***"I'm wasting money on heating. Need to get council to fix it. It was a fight to get a new boiler. You've no idea the torture I went through. It was freezing. I never had the power in me to phone, so I sat in the freezing cold. Had them out 19 times until they gave me a new boiler!"***

> ***"The council is getting new chalets, so they didn't want to spend the money."***

These delays and unsatisfactory outcomes represent ongoing challenges in residents' ability to access their **right to remedy.**

Who is responsible for realising this right?

Perth and Kinross Council is responsible for the right to accommodation.

International human rights protections:

In addition to the International Convention on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) outlined above, which includes the right to adequate housing, Article 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights provides the right to an effective remedy.

> ***"You have the right to get a remedy if your rights have been breached, which can be granted by the state or, if necessary, by the courts and to expect the government to make it possible for you to get a remedy through the courts if your rights are violated."***

Indicator 3 Targets: Maintenance response by Perth and Kinross Council.

Main indicator: Increased percentage of people who reported that repairs issues were fixed by the Council from 20% in summer 2024 to 80% in summer 2025.

Indicator 4:
Right to Participation

Main indicator	Increased percentage of people who feel fully involved in decisions made about planning and estate management.

As in 2022, 50% of residents reported feeling **excluded from decisions** made by Perth and Kinross Council, particularly around **planning, estate management,** and **budget allocations.**

In summer 2024, **50%** of residents still felt they were not at all involved about decisions made around **planning and estate management**, representing no change from 2022.

> ***"They're beginning to respond now, but they're backed into a corner.. If you've got a question, they'll answer. Because now as Travellers we're pushing as we know our rights and ethnic minority status."***
>
> ***"They're making decisions before they ask us. It's already signed, sealed, and delivered."***
>
> ***"We should have accurate planned measurements for the site... The pitches, the chalet, everything. Currently we don't have anything."***
>
> ***"I don't like people discussing things about me when I'm not included. Nobody discussing Travellers' way of life who doesn't know about Travellers. As an ethnic minority we don't have a say. We don't have a representative representing us. Should be representation from Travellers, no one is doing this. There's not a collective org for all Travellers. We need an army. One person with a hammer won't break down a wall. But all of us together we'll be stronger."***

In summer 2024, **100% of respondents** felt completely uninvolved in decisions about education and budget decisions by the Council.

Responses demonstrate residents' desire for greater **inclusion** in decisions that affect their homes and livelihoods.

It is not clear yet how children and young people on the site have been able to participate in the decision making regarding site improvements.

There has been uncertainty about the timescales for the site improvement work. Since the survey was carried out in summer 2024, Hadden Group who had been contracted to carry out refurbishment on the site has gone into administration. Residents wrote to the Council twice asking for more information, which has been provided. Residents remain concerned about the lack of information, uncertainty and slippage of timescales for the project.

Who is responsible for realising this right?

Perth and Kinross Council is responsible for the right to participation regarding planning and estate management.

International human rights protections:

The right to participation is central to advancing human rights.

"The right to participate in political and public affairs, as enshrined in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 25 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and further elaborated upon in other international instruments, plays a crucial role in the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, social inclusion, sustainable development, as well as in the advancement of all human rights.[8]"

Children should also be able to participate in issues affecting their human rights as outlined in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) specifically in relation to:

- that all the rights guaranteed by the UNCRC must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind (Article 2);
- that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Article 3);
- that the child's view must be considered and taken into account in all matters affecting him or her (Article 12).

Indicator 4 Targets: Right to Participation

Main indicator: Increased percentage of people who feel fully involved in decisions made about planning and estate management from 50% in summer 2024 to 75% in summer 2025.

[8] CN-Intersessional-workshop-on-the-implementation-of-the-right-to-participate-20230531.pdf (ohchr.org)

Indicator 5:
Right to live free from discrimination

Main indicator	reduction in the percentage of people who have experienced or seen other experience racism, hate speech, or any other form of discrimination because of disability, sexual orientation, transgender, religious beliefs, or other characteristics.

In our first survey, residents highlighted that discrimination is a continuous feature of their lives at Double Dykes. Residents added several more in-depth questions about discrimination in this round of surveys.

The summer 2024 survey revealed a worsening trend in **discrimination** faced by Travellers at Double Dykes. **100% of residents** reported experiencing or witnessing racism, an increase from **87.5%** in 2022.

100% of residents have experienced or seen others experience racism, hate speech, or any other form of discrimination because of disability, sexual orientation, transgender, religious beliefs, or other characteristics. This is an increase from 87.5% of residents expressing the same view in September 2022.

100% of residents have directly experienced verbal abuse – compared again to 87.5% responding in the affirmative to this question in 2022.

Continuous bullying and intimidation is increasingly a feature of the lives of residents at Double Dykes. While 37.5% reported this as an issue in 2022 – this increased to **57%** in 2024.

Similarly, **57%** of respondents reported experiencing vandalism of the site or community in 2024 – an increase of 32 percentage points.

67% of respondents have taken steps to try to avoid experiences of racism – all of those who have taken steps reported either changing the way they speak, changing their name, or changing their address to appear unaffiliated with the Traveller community and site.

One respondent noted, ***"there are no places for school with our Traveller name."***

> ***"Some people hide that they are a Traveller at work."***

Verbal abuse, bullying, and intimidation have also increased:

> ***"I was banned from Matalan for something I didn't do. They got away with humiliating me—offered a £20 voucher to not take it further."***

"Once they find out you're a Traveller, attitudes change."

Many residents noted efforts to **conceal their Traveller identity** in order to avoid discrimination:

"I change the way I talk."

A workshop held by Making Rights Real which eight residents attended around racism and discrimination found that residents' experienced racism and discrimination in all areas of life, and breaches to the Equality Act (2010) were identified in accessing education, housing and goods and services. This included in restaurants and pubs, in workplaces and in accessing legal services.

This persistent **discrimination** reflects a clear violation of residents' **right to live free from racial discrimination.**

Residents expressed increased dissatisfaction with how supported they were by the following groups. Residents felt 'not supported at all' by the following:

Community workers **(43%)** (2022 - 12.5%)

Housing staff **(43%)** (2022 - 12.5%)

Youth workers **(43%)** (2022 - 37.5%)

Social workers **(43%)** (2022 - 25%)

Police **(71%)** (2022 - 25%)

Teachers **(29%)** (2022 - 12.5%)

GPs **(43%)** (2022 - 12.5%)

Addiction workers **(14%)** (2022 - 25%)

Benefits advisors **(29%)** (2022 - 12.5%)

Local elected members **(86%)** (2022 - 37.5%)

Respondents felt unsupported mostly by local elected representatives and by the police.

Who is responsible for the right to live free from discrimination?

This is a complex issue, and all public authorities have a responsibility to ensure that minority groups do not experience discrimination and are fully supported to realise their rights.

International human rights protections:

The basis of non-discrimination is central to international human rights protections.

Article 1 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Freedom from discrimination, set out in Article 2, is what ensures this equality.

Non-discrimination cuts across all international human rights law. This principle is present in all major human rights treaties. It also provides the central theme of two core instruments: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.[9]

Indicator 5 Targets: Right to live free from discrimination

Main indicator: Reduction in the percentage of people who have experienced or seen others experience racism, hate speech, or any other form of discrimination because of disability, sexual orientation, transgender, religious beliefs, or other characteristics from 100% in summer 2024 to 50% in summer 2025.

Residents felt strongly that this indicator should be 0% and that public authorities must do more to support Travellers who experience racism.

[9] https://www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights

Recommendations

Residents involved in this project made the following recommendations in which they consider positive steps have been taken to address their concerns in the 18 months since the first report in 2022.

Right to health:
- Provide information and support to women experiencing menopause on site

Right to participation:
- Ensure individuals can participate in design of site and that individual circumstances are taken into account (although collective decision making has not progressed)
- Provide free and safe access to the portacabin on site so residents can enjoy a communal space
- Provide free Wi-Fi in portacabin
- Provide information on what it is going on locally for residents on site

Right to live free from discrimination:
- Some training has been provided for duty bearers, Perth and Kinross Council, Police, NHS and other statutory services in tackling discrimination against Travellers.

The following recommendations for duty bearers remain outstanding:

Right to accommodation:
- Fix all outstanding repairs
- Deal with repair issues quickly and get repairs right first time
- Fully involve residents in culturally appropriate decision making about site improvements
- Provide more sites for Travellers in Perth and Kinross. Consider providing smaller sites for Travellers.
- Explore heritage status for the site and discuss this with residents.

Right to cultural life:
- Support access to funding for fun days, activities and a learning programme for adults, young people and children to support the community to come together on site and celebrate Traveller culture

Right to health:

- Provide access and support for residents experiencing mental ill health on site

Children's rights:

- Work with residents on site (including children and young people) to develop:
- Culturally appropriate play programme provided for children
- Culturally appropriate learning opportunities for children and young people
- Independent health and safety plan assessment of the site, addressing rights and safety issues for children and young people on site and remedies agreed to progress this (e.g. gate to prevent access to main road).
- Culturally appropriate participation programme so that children and young people can have a say on site improvements.

Right to live free from discrimination:

- Continue to provide training for duty bearers, Perth and Kinross Council, Police, NHS and other statutory services in tackling discrimination against Travellers.
- Provide Travellers with regular updates from duty bearers on how discrimination is being addressed.
- Provide a dedicated helpline for Travellers to access information and support.

Right to participation:

- Ensure that participation processes are culturally appropriate and meet residents' expectations.
- Support Travellers' group to gain access to funding for their own initiatives.
- Provide information to Travellers on their rights, and signposting to free information, advice and support.

Conclusion

The comparative survey results from 2022 and 2024 at Double Dykes show incremental improvements in some areas, particularly in the fabric of buildings and slight decreases in infestations.

However, critical issues such as heating problems, sewage/drainage issues, and discrimination have either persisted or worsened.

The failure of authorities to adequately respond to maintenance concerns, coupled with the dissatisfaction of residents in decision-making processes, reflects a broader systemic failure to uphold the rights to adequate housing, health, children's rights, and freedom from discrimination.

Residents' voices, captured through personal accounts, emphasise the human impact of these ongoing challenges, highlighting the urgent need for more comprehensive action to address the conditions at Double Dykes.

Residents aim to continue to monitoring the progressive realisation of their rights and hold public authorities accountable for them.

This work was initiated by Mangin Manishes, a voluntary organisation run by and for Travellers.

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www.makingrightsreal.org.uk
@Rights_Real

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