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Your ref: Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland: "Tinker Experiment"

11 March 2025

Dear Karen,

Thank you for your letter dated 24 February 2025 asking for an update on our independent archival research into historical treatment of Gypsy/Traveller communities, known as the 'Tinker Experiment'.

In line with normal practice, a Research Advisory Group was set up to review and provide feedback on drafts of the report. This group includes academic and archivist representation and Scottish Government analysts. The report is going through an iterative process with feedback provided on drafts by the advisory group with the most recent draft being received on 29 January 2025.

It is usual practice for reports to go through several iterations and Ministers are not involved in this process. In line with the Scottish Government Social Research Publication Protocol, before publication we need to ensure reports meet our high standards of quality and that any conclusions are supported by a robust evidence base.

Officials are working at pace to finalise the report with the contractor and we are expecting to publish it online by the end of May 2025. This deals with complex and sensitive issues and we want to get it right so that we can give important answers to everyone who was impacted. It is also important to recognise that archival research is only part of this picture and, before we discuss next steps, we need to hear from Gypsy/Traveller communities directly. We fully intend to engage with campaigners and communities on this subject and have started to plan for this now that the research is concluding.

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Scottish Government is committed to learning important lessons from the “Tinker Experiment” to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. We must not shy away from the very real impacts unjust attitudes and practices had on Gypsy/Traveller communities; only through facing the difficult truths of the past can we learn and build a fairer Scotland that celebrates and values Gypsy/Travellers’ culture.

Through the Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan we are already driving positive change and tackling inequality for communities across Scotland. I also remain in regular and ongoing contact with community members and stakeholders to hear their concerns with meetings planned over the next few months, including in Fife and Argyll & Bute.

I hope that my response offers reassurance to you that this work remains important to me and that progress is being made.

Yours sincerely,

Kaukab Stewart MSP
Minister for Equalities

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