

07 October 2016

For immediate release

CORRI WILSON MP SHOWS SUPPORT FOR OPERATION REPORT HATE

Local MP Corri Wilson met with members of the travelling community in Girvan this week in the run up to National Hate Crime Awareness Week (8-15 October).

The meeting was part of the national campaign *Operation Report Hate*, which seeks to highlight hate crimes against the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, and the need to report them. Since the EU referendum result there has been an alarming increase in the number of hate crimes and the GTR communities have been victims of such offences. However, hate crimes against GTR communities are severely underreported, which means these crimes remain the lowest of priorities.

The Traveller Movement are working with the National Police Chiefs' Council and leading charities to raise awareness of hate crimes and ensure hate crimes against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are given the same public profile and recognition as other hate crimes.

Ms Wilson, MP for Ayr, Carrick & Cumnock, has been in regular contact with the traveller community in Girvan since they contacted her for assistance after their site just outside Girvan was flooded last winter.

Speaking on the issue, she said:

"It is extremely disappointing to see the increase in hate crimes, particularly since the EU referendum. While it appears that Scotland has experienced nowhere near the spike seen in England, one hate crime is one too many and it is the duty of all of us to condemn these acts of hatred and bigotry, and do all that we can to protect and welcome all those who choose to come here.

"There is no room for complacency here regarding potential attacks on our neighbours, no matter who they are or where they came from, and anyone intent on perpetrating hate crime in Scotland should know that they will feel the full force of the law."

Traveller Elizabeth Townsley said:

"My family have lived in this area for more than 20 years now. We are all keen to hold on to our culture, our identity and our way of life, but we also consider ourselves part of the wider community here in Girvan, and seek to be treated as such."

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