

PRESS RELEASE



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50 site visits promote the welfare of Migrant Workers in West Cornwall

Kerrier Council has been recognised as an example of good practice in a recent publication by the Audit Commission, "Crossing Borders", which considers the way in which Councils are responding to the influx of Migrant Workers in recent years. The Council set up a multi agency group 2 years ago to respond to concerns about the living conditions of Migrant Workers and has been successful in promoting better conditions across the District, in partnership with other agencies such as the police, probation, fire service, customs and excise etc.

Coinciding with the release of Audit Commission's Report, the West Cornwall Migrant Worker Action Group undertook an innovative, intelligence-led multi agency approach throughout West Cornwall last week, visiting sites known or suspected to be employing Migrant Workers.

During the Action Week, the partnership looked at the many different issues in relation to Migrant Workers, looking in particular into the welfare of those living and working within the agricultural industry.

Councillor Miss Pat Aston, Portfolio Holder for Social Inclusion said: *'Migrant Workers play an important part in the economy of Cornwall. They deserve good pay and working conditions, which will not undercut the pay and conditions of local workers.'*

All agencies need to ensure that Cornwall's reputation for growing quality produce, especially for export, is not undermined by visiting workers experiencing poor living and working conditions. The District Council will protect all the people who live and work in Kerrier.'

A number of different organisations were involved in the Migrant Worker Action Week, which is a successful partnership of organisations with the same objectives but who have different powers available to them in which act in the best interests of the workers. **The Partnership comprises of:-**

Environmental Health Officers from Kerrier and Penwith District Councils whose role is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the Migrant Workers within the accommodation that they are occupying; mostly caravans.

Continued overleaf

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regarding the health and safety of workers within their working environment.

The Gangmaster Licensing Authority (GLA) concerning the Migrant Worker's employment rights; where there is gangmaster involvement.

Cornwall County Fire Brigade to ensure fire safety issues in the Migrant Worker's working environment and their housing.

Devon and Cornwall Police to look at any issues in relation to the exploitation of workers, as well as playing a key role in the operational aspects of the Migrant Worker Action Week.

Other organisations such as **the Probation Service**, played a key role in providing intelligence although they didn't take an active part in the event.

Intelligence received through the partnership identified 71 sites that were known or suspected to be employing and/or accommodating workers in the agricultural industry across West Cornwall. The intelligence was prioritised and this led to a total of 50 multi-agency site visits being made across West Cornwall during the week beginning 5 February 2007.

The teams, with the help of an interpreter, interacted with a total of 419 Migrant Workers and identified that there were areas that were outstanding about the way in which some employers dealt with Migrant Workers employment and the accommodation provided. In a few instances, there were areas for slight concern, however, these were just a case of raising awareness to the issues needing to be addressed, for example; the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) for workers should be provided free of charge.

Hope Bradbury, Kerrier's Environmental Health Officer with responsibility for Private Sector Housing said: 'Migrant workers play an important part in the West Cornwall economy and it's important that they receive fair pay and decent working and living conditions. This latest initiative from the Migrant Worker Action Group demonstrates how the concerns surrounding Migrant Workers can be improved and maintained through effective partnership working. All the organisations involved agree that the carrying out of these planned operations reduces the overall demand on resources to each of the agencies involved, but at the same time meets the aims and objectives of everyone involved.'

Several sites across West Cornwall where standards fell below those expected, will be subject to enforcement action from the different organisations involved.

- Ends -

Notes for Editors

The Audit Commission publication can be accessed via this link: http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/05CA5CAD-C551-4b66-825E-ABFA8C8E4717/CrossingBorders_printfriendly.pdf

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