

News Release

Appleby Fair Multi Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group

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Appleby Fair provides unique opportunity to learn more about Gypsy and Traveller culture

A series of educational sessions have been arranged both prior to and during Appleby Fair this year so that people can learn more about the unique history and culture of Gypsies and Travellers.

The Fair is the largest annual gathering of its kind in Britain and will transform the town of Appleby when it runs from June 4-10 this year.

In the run-up to the Fair, local schools in the area will feature workshops and visits from experts in Gypsy and Traveller culture thanks to an initiative spearheaded by Cumbria County Council and the Cumbria Development Education Centre, with input from a project called Education on the Hoof, which promotes education to Gypsy and Traveller families.

The full programme of events in schools is as follows:

Appleby Secondary

15th May: Year 8 workshop on challenging myths and stereotypes about Gypsies and Travellers by exploring, and celebrating, differences and similarities.

2nd June: Gypsy Roma visual artist Ferdinand Koci from Albania will be working alongside the school's art teacher.

4th & 5th June: Jake Bowers, Romany Gypsy journalist and BBC broadcaster, will be working with a small group of young people to produce a podcast during the Fair, which will involve interviewing some representatives of the Traveller community on Fair Hill.

5th June: Gordon Boswell from the Romany Museum in Spalding will be running workshops at the school throughout the day to share his experience of Romany life and culture

Appleby Primary School

3rd June: Series of workshops with Y5 and Y6 pupils on challenging perceptions and stereotypes about Gypsies and Travellers.

Long Marton Primary School

15th May: Year 5&6 workshop on challenging myths and stereotypes about Gypsies and Travellers by exploring, and celebrating, differences and similarities.

3rd June: Richard O'Neill, Traveller storyteller, will be running workshops at the school throughout the day.

Kirkby Stephen Primary

21st May: Year 5/6 workshop on challenging myths and stereotypes about Gypsies and Travellers by exploring, and celebrating, differences and similarities.

5th June: Richard O'Neill, Traveller storyteller, will be running workshops at the school throughout the morning.

Kirkby Stephen Grammar

5th June: Richard O'Neill will be leading a whole school assembly and will also be working with a class of Year 7 in the afternoon.

Education on the Hoof will also be present during the Fair itself, with a small marquee, exhibition trailer and Travellers Truck for children situated at Salt Tip Corner, just below the market area and Flashing Lane on the north side of the A66. A number of public sector agencies will be providing information to those visiting the Fair from this spot.

There will also be a series of public talks about Gypsy and Traveller culture held at Centre 67, the local community centre based on Chapel St, next to Broad Close car park. The sessions will consist of talks by a number of speakers from the Gypsy and Traveller community and those working with them. There will also be a public display and viewings of DVDs at the centre.

The education initiative coincides with Gypsy and Roma Traveller History Month, which takes place in June 2009.

The programme of events at Centre 67 is as follows:

Thursday 4th June

11:30am - 12.30pm

1.30pm - 2.30pm

Romani storyteller Richard O'Neill will be exploring some of the issues relating to Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities today.

3pm-4pm

Gypsy historian and BBC Radio broadcaster Simon Evans presents a photographic journey through Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history

Friday 5th June

11:30am - 12.30pm

Gypsy and Roma Traveller History Month (GRTHM) Cultural Talk: Shamus McPhee - Scottish Gypsy Traveller, political campaigner, talented artist, and qualified linguist. Growing up at Bobbin Mill - a racial experiment.

1:30pm - 2.30pm

GRTHM Cultural Talk: Michael and Ellen McDonagh - Irish Traveller heritage, culture, history and language.

3:30pm - 4.30pm

GRTHM Cultural Talk: Candy Sheriden Irish Traveller, and campaigner. Recent work with the UN - unauthorized encampments and illegal evictions.

Saturday 6th June

10:30am - 12:30pm

1:30pm - 4pm

GRTHM Film Festival: An opportunity to view a selection of films relating to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller lifestyles and cultures

David Sheard, Cumbria County Council's representative on the Multi Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group, said:

"Appleby Fair has a big impact on the small town of Appleby during Fair week and this is a unique opportunity for local people and other day visitors to understand a little more about Gypsy and Traveller culture. Our main aim in co-ordinating the Fair is to make it as safe and enjoyable as possible for all parties. Over recent years Appleby Fair has grown in size and in terms of the number of visitors it attracts. We want to return the Fair to its traditional roots, and educating people about Gypsy and Traveller culture is an important part of this."

Notes for editors

Appleby Horse Fair

Appleby Fair is the largest horse fair in Britain and amongst the oldest in Europe. By far the busiest days are from the Friday to the Sunday. The event attracts around 10,000 Gypsies and Travellers and over 30,000 other visitors to Appleby. It transforms the town of Appleby for the week, as it normally has a population of around 2,500.

The Fair has its primary connection with Fair Hill, which is in the ownership of Appleby Town Council. The Town Council lease the field for a fee to the Travellers during Fair week for use as a caravan site and as a tethering ground for their horses.

Multi Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group (MASCG)

In October 2007, the Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group (MASCG) was set up to bring together and co-ordinate the work of the key public agencies that have a regulatory role at the Fair.

The MASCG consists of representatives from Eden District Council, Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, Cumbria NHS, North West Ambulance Service, RSPCA, Environment Agency, South Lakeland District Council and the Highways Agency.

The MASCG undertook a detailed evaluation of the 2008 Fair and using the 2008 event as a baseline, has developed an Improvement Plan to be implemented over a three year period. The Plan takes into account feedback obtained at Public Meetings held following the 2008 Fair and feedback from Gypsies and Travellers.

The objective of the Plan is to make the Fair a safer and more enjoyable event for residents, Gypsies and Travellers and visitors. The Improvement Plan has been adopted by all the agencies involved and will form the basis on which all MASCG partners will apply their resources. Tasks have been prioritised for implementation over the next three years.

A comprehensive new website has been launched to give information for local residents, visitors and traders about this year's Appleby Fair. www.applebyfair.org is the official website produced by the public sector and voluntary organisations involved in co-ordinating the Fair.

Education on the Hoof

This is an education project that has been running for many years at Appleby Fair. It is now nationally recognised as a major initiative in promoting education to Gypsy and Traveller families and has been running for the last 15 years. It is run and coordinated by ACERT (Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other Travellers) and assisted by Traveller Education Services countrywide. It is funded directly by the Department for Children, Families and Schools and promotes equal access for Gypsies and Travellers to safe and secure accommodation, education, health and other community services. This year the project is running jointly with the Appleby Fair Multi Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group who have helped to expand the project.

Gypsy and Roma Traveller History Month

More information about Gypsy and Roma Traveller History Month is available at www.grthm.co.uk

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Media wishing to arrange a visit to any of the events on the programme, or for any other media enquiries, contact Gareth Cosslett, News Manager on 01228 226332.