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**Press statement: for immediate release**

## **Thamesmead exhibition maps the histories of London's oldest cultural minority**

A new exhibition which showcases the lives and experiences of London's oldest cultural minority, Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers, will open on the 19 November at the Information Hub in Thamesmead.

London Gypsies and Travellers is working in partnership with Peabody, London's oldest housing association, to bring the exhibition to Thamesmead. The exhibition was first show at London City Hall in June, marking the celebration of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month.

The exhibition includes stories, archives, news articles and recordings– all linked to new interactive maps charting the histories and experiences of Gypsies and Travellers in London.

Dr Anna Hoare, Community Research Officer at London Gypsies and Traveller, said: "The maps give us rich insights into the changing geographies of nomadic life through the twentieth century in London and the South East.

"Long before Thamesmead was built at Erith, south of the Thames, the Belvedere Marshes were home to one of the largest settlements of Gypsies, Showpeople and Travellers in the country. Many London-based Romany families trace their histories to Belvedere from the early 20th century. Today Thamesmead is home to a large Romany and Irish Traveller community. Thistlebrook is the largest local authority Traveller site in London.

"These local families include the children and grandchildren of earlier generations of Belvedere's Gypsy and Traveller residents. The exhibition includes fascinating recordings, such as that of Romany Gypsy, Joseph Jones, who describes how his grandfather kept cattle on the marsh and took them across the Thames on the Woolwich Ferry to the slaughterhouse they owned in the East End before selling the meat to restaurants across London."

The exhibition is a result of London Gypsies and Travellers' London Mapping project, funded by the Heritage Lottery and developed in partnership with social enterprise organisation Mapping for Change. It is creating a growing archive of travelling routes, camps and green corridors, the first official sites, Travellers' experiences of property, housing, and education and the skills and businesses that underpinned their lives in and around the capital.

“Twentieth century Gypsy and Traveller history is an exceptionally rich and neglected part of our history, much as Black history was until the 1980s,” says Anna Hoare.

The exhibition runs from 19 November to 18 December at Thamesmead Information Hub, 216 Yarnton Way, DA18 4BW. Opening times: Tuesdays and Wednesdays 11am - 4pm, Saturday 7 and 14 December, 11am - 4pm.

### **Further information**

Background information on the heritage project can be viewed at:

<http://www.londongypsiesandtravellers.org.uk/history-and-heritage-map/>

The online heritage maps can be viewed at: [lgtheheritage.communitymaps.org.uk](http://lgtheheritage.communitymaps.org.uk)

Media enquiries: contact Dr Anna Hoare, Community Research Officer, tel. 07494 969356, email [policy@londongandt.org.uk](mailto:policy@londongandt.org.uk)