

Housing, Regeneration and Planning



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Residential Mobile Homes in Scotland



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RESIDENTIAL MOBILE HOMES IN SCOTLAND

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Scottish Government Social Research
2007

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS	3
LIST OF TABLES	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
<i>Introduction</i>	6
<i>Context</i>	6
<i>Aims and Objectives</i>	8
<i>Methods</i>	9
<i>Report Structure</i>	11
CHAPTER TWO: THE NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL MOBILE HOMES IN SCOTLAND	12
<i>Introduction</i>	12
<i>The number of residential mobile homes in Scotland</i>	12
<i>The characteristics of households living in residential mobile homes in Scotland</i>	16
<i>Identifying individual mobile homes</i>	24
<i>Winter lets</i>	29
<i>Conclusions</i>	31
CHAPTER THREE: LIVING IN A MOBILE HOME	32
<i>Introduction</i>	32
<i>Characteristics of the respondents</i>	32
<i>Reasons for living in mobile homes</i>	35
<i>Alternative accommodation</i>	37
<i>Condition of the dwellings</i>	39
<i>Future aspirations</i>	45
<i>Conclusions</i>	47
CHAPTER FOUR: LIVING ON LICENSED PARK HOME SITES	49
<i>Introduction</i>	49
<i>Site layout and maintenance</i>	49
<i>Relations with the park owner</i>	50
<i>Written Agreements under the 1983 Mobile Homes Act</i>	51
<i>Pitch fees</i>	51
<i>Views on the legislation</i>	52
<i>Conclusions</i>	57
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS	58
<i>Introduction</i>	58
<i>Conclusions</i>	58
REFERENCES	66
APPENDIX ONE: LOCAL AUTHORITY SURVEY OF RESIDENTIAL MOBILE HOMES	68
APPENDIX TWO: TOPIC GUIDE FOR RESIDENTS	73
APPENDIX THREE: GYPSIES / TRAVELLERS ON PRIVATELY OWNED SITES IN SCOTLAND: THE TWICE-YEARLY COUNT - NO. 8 : JULY 2005	76
APPENDIX FOUR: TENURE OF RESIDENTS LIVING IN CARAVANS MOBILE HOMES AND OTHER TEMPORARY STRUCTURES BY LOCAL AUTHORITY	78

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Localities investigated to quantify the extent of individual mobile homes	9
Table 2.1 Proportion of all households in caravans, mobile homes or other temporary structures.....	12
Table 2.2 Changes in the number of households in non-permanent accommodation 1971- 2001	13
Table 2.3: Numbers of caravans and mobile homes by local authority.....	14
Table 2.4 Number of licensed residential caravan sites.....	15
Table 2.5 Tenure of households in caravans, mobile homes and other temporary structures by country.....	17
Table 2.6 Tenure by case study area.....	17
Table 2.7 Household type by country	19
Table 2.8 Household type by case study area.....	19
Table 2.9 Age of all persons in households by Country	20
Table 2.10: Age of all persons in households by case study area.....	21
Table 2.11 People with a limiting long-term illness by country.....	21
Table 2.12 People with a long term limiting illness in Scotland by age.....	22
Table 2.13 People with a limiting long-term illness by case study area.....	22
Table 2.14 Households with central heating by country.....	23
Table 2.15 Households with central heating in Scotland, by tenure.....	23
Table 2.16 Households with central heating by case study area.....	24
Table 2.17 Applicants for Highland council housing currently living in caravans, July 2006.....	25
Table 2.18 Type of households living in mobile homes on Tiree, 2006	27
Table 2.19 Number of non-permanent household spaces comprising vacant, second and holiday homes by case study area	29
Table 3.1 Characteristics of respondents	33

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1 The Scottish Government commissioned this research to provide an up-to-date picture on the use of mobile homes as dwellings in Scotland. This research examines the nature of the mobile home sector in Scotland, and aims to inform how policy can be shaped in the future.

Context

2 There were two main groups of mobile homes in Scotland that needed to be considered by the research. The first concerned residents who lived in park homes on licensed sites, who were covered by a number of different Acts. Secondly, a characteristic of mobile home living in Scotland was the number of people who live in individual caravans and mobile homes on unlicensed sites, or sites that were exempt from licensing. There was a concern that these latter residents, especially those who rent their homes, had very limited protection under the law with regard to security of tenure and the condition of their homes. The report used the term ‘park home’ to describe mobile homes on licensed sites. Isolated units, not located on licensed sites, were described as ‘individual mobile homes’. The universal term ‘mobile homes’ was used to describe all mobile homes in Scotland.

3 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 amends a number of sections of the Mobile Homes Act 1983. The intention of the new Act is to extend the protection for people who occupy a mobile home and let a stance from a site operator. The Scottish Government (2006a) noted that the previous legislation could leave some mobile home owners in a vulnerable position, so the Act aims to rebalance the rights of mobile home and site owners on issues around tenancy conditions, security of occupation, and the selling of mobile homes.

Aims and Objectives

- 4 The aims of the research were to:
- Identify the number, location and composition (including number of units, tenure and service provision) of licensed mobile homes sites throughout Scotland;
 - Where possible, identify unlicensed sites and quantify the extent of isolated single units, which may be exempt from licensing;
 - Explore the reasons why people are living in mobile homes and their length of residence, looking at factors that have led them into the sector, their previous housing history and their aspirations for the future, particularly their ability to access affordable housing;
 - Explore the nature and extent of any issues and problems experienced by residents of mobile homes in connection with their occupation and use of the home;
 - Consider the extent to which any problems identified are addressed by the existing and recently implemented legislation.

Methods

5 Three sources of data were used to derive an estimate of the number and location of residential mobile homes in Scotland, including an analysis of 2001 Census data, a postal survey of local authorities requesting information on caravans/mobile homes in their area (see Appendix one for a copy of the survey), and finally, data on the location of sites and numbers of pitches were identified from directories and websites.

6 A case study approach was used to investigate the incidence of individual mobile homes. Localities within the three case study authorities of Argyll and Bute, Highland and Midlothian were identified, and a more detailed investigation of these areas was conducted. Three sources of data were used to quantify the number of individual mobile homes within these localities, including the 2001 Census, the Valuation Roll and information drawn from local informants within the case study areas.

7 Semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken with fifty residents of mobile homes. These interviews included forty residents living in park homes on licensed park home sites, and also ten residents of individual mobile homes, outwith licensed sites. The research aimed to draw upon the views and experiences of a wide range of residents of mobile homes. In relation to park homes on licensed sites, respondents included people who lived on sites listed in the Residential Home Parks Directory, issued by the British Holiday and Home Parks Association. Respondents were also drawn from members of the National Association of Park Home Residents. The latter respondents were perhaps more likely to have experienced some difficulty with their park home or site owner. The fifty residents included in this research cannot be taken as a representative sample of all mobile home residents in Scotland. Instead, the qualitative analysis allows the experiences and views of the respondents to illustrate a range of issues about living in mobile homes.

Findings

The number of residential mobile homes in Scotland

8 The local authority survey identified a total of 4,121 residential mobile homes. This total included sites licensed for residential use, residential units on mixed sites with holiday pitches as well, individual residential mobile homes used by staff on sites licensed for holiday use, and an estimate of individual units within authorities. However, it should be noted that few respondents to the local authority survey felt in a position to estimate the number of single units within their areas. Therefore, the total of 4,121 represents an underestimate of the total number of residential mobile homes in Scotland.

9 The tenure profile of mobile homes in Scotland was quite distinctive compared with England and Wales. A far greater proportion of residents rented caravans, mobile homes and other temporary structures from private landlords in Scotland compared with other countries within the United Kingdom. Thirty four per cent of mobile home residents in Scotland rented a caravan, mobile home or other temporary structure from a private landlord compared with 18 per cent in England and Wales. A proportion of these tenants lived on licensed sites, but many were also living in individual units, including accommodation that was tied with employment or provided for seasonal workers.

10 Future demographic trends in Scotland potentially suggest a growing demand for park home living. Given the popularity of park homes amongst older people, it would seem reasonable to infer an increased demand for this type of accommodation.

11 The 2001 Census showed that caravans, mobile homes and other temporary structures were playing a particular role in the housing system in terms of providing accommodation for older people, and also for people with a long term limiting illness. Thus, mobile homes were a more important form of accommodation for potentially vulnerable households than the general population. However, the conclusions need to be mindful of making any inferences about cause and effect with respect to illness and mobile home occupation. It was not possible to arrive at a firm conclusion in this research about the health implications of different sub-sectors of mobile home living, and further work would be necessary to update the findings of previous studies.

Individual residential mobile homes on unlicensed sites

12 The individual mobile homes not located on licensed sites were playing very diverse roles, with some respondents noting that living in a mobile home was a temporary measure, either whilst they built their bricks and mortar homes, or whilst they looked for other accommodation. For other respondents, living in a mobile home was viewed as a permanent, and more than satisfactory, solution to their housing needs. However, an underlying theme running through these interviews was the lack of an alternative affordable solution to housing needs in the remote and rural areas where these people lived. The number of households living in individual units in remote and rural areas is likely to be strongly indicative of stress in the housing market of these areas and a strong argument for not only the targeted development of permanent affordable housing, but also more flexible solutions to meeting the housing needs of these areas. In particular, there is an urgent need to focus attention on locations where enforcement notices may be served to remove mobile homes.

Residents' views on living in mobile homes

13 The majority of respondents were very satisfied with living in mobile homes, although this feeling was not universal. Positive aspects of living in mobile homes included:

- More affordable accommodation, not just in terms of buying a home, but also maintenance, running costs and less housework
- An opportunity to live in very attractive locations that would otherwise be unaffordable
- Living in a neighbourhood with like minded individuals, often with a strong sense of community
- A safe environment, mostly free from anti-social behaviour
- Accommodation that was accessible and readily adapted to suit a resident's needs.

Negative factors associated with mobile homes included:

- Vulnerability to bad weather
- Expensiveness to heat
- Living in caravans that were not intended for permanent residential occupation
- Living in park homes could be affected by poor relations with the park owner.

14 The 2001 Census revealed that people who live in caravans, mobile homes and other temporary structures were far less likely than the general population to have central heating. Further, the research showed that fuel poverty was a very significant issue for some residents. Nineteen respondents (out of a total of fifty) stated that they were paying ten per cent or more of their incomes on fuel. This problem was exacerbated by the severe adverse weather that could affect some localities in Scotland where residents were either living in park homes or in individual units.

Renting mobile homes

15 The research identified a number of issues with regard to people who rent their homes from private landlords. One factor was the availability of adequate heating: mobile homes rented from private landlords tended to have low levels of central heating compared with the general population, or compared with people who owned their mobile homes. Another factor was a low level of awareness of the legislation available with regard to security of tenure. However, other commentators have highlighted that there may be a question mark over the security of tenure available to some people living in mobile homes, depending on whether or not their home can be defined as a dwelling (Shelter, 2005). This latter issue is perhaps more likely to affect people living in caravans not intended for residential occupation, compared with park homes located on licensed sites. One further issue was related to mobile homes occupied by seasonal workers. It is difficult for local authorities to monitor standards of accommodation since these forms of mobile home are exempt from licensing under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960, but are also not included as part of landlord registration.

16 The situation with regard to people who rent their mobile homes from private landlords - especially those who live outwith licensed park home sites - requires some clarification, as there is the danger that this group may fall between two stools with regard to protection under the current legislation in Scotland. The root of this issue appears to be how this group of people are viewed in policy terms: tenants who rent mobile homes from private landlords do not appear to be covered by recent developments in the rest of the privately rented sector in Scotland. However, neither does this group of tenants benefit from the recent changes in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 with regard to mobile homes either (or from the Mobile Homes Act 1983).

Living in park homes on licensed sites

17 Although it was evident that most respondents were satisfied with their site and the way in which it was managed, there were strong concerns about the management of a small number of sites across Scotland. These difficulties included:

- Site owners and/or managers requiring homes to be sold through them, or blocking sales altogether
- Damage to personal property
- Allegations of harassment, intimidation and threatening behaviour
- Increases in pitch fees at an unacceptable level
- Inadequate supply of electricity to park homes
- Poor maintenance of sites
- Claiming over the legally permitted rate of commission on the sale of park homes.

18 Whilst it is important to have the necessary legislation in place to ensure adequate protection for park home residents on licensed sites, one of the themes running through the interviews with a number of respondents to the research was that enforcement was the key. The potentially vulnerable nature of a high proportion of people who live in the mobile home sector means that there is a greater onus on statutory agencies to ensure that the intended outcomes of legislation are both monitored and enforced. Therefore, an important area for future attention might be an evaluation of the means that are currently available to enforce the legislation pertaining to park homes, including an assessment of the need for stronger penalties to deter unscrupulous behaviour by a small number of site owners.

19 The evidence from the interviews with park home residents suggested a degree of turnover within the sector- with a number of respondents stating that they intended to move. A number of respondents who had been seeking to move identified specific difficulties that they had experienced in relation to the commission rate, such as being asked to pay more than the legally permitted 10 per cent commission rate

20 There were allegations of mis-selling on a couple of parks, where households were under the impression that they could occupy their home all year round, when in fact they were moving onto a pitch with a license for holiday use only. Households seeking to acquire a mobile home to live in for part of the year, or permanently, need to be aware of the potential pitfalls involved in the occupation of holiday pitches, to try and reduce the possibility of misunderstandings between residents, park owners and local authorities. However, households also need to be alert to the potential for actions by unscrupulous park owners.

21 Finally, there remains a suspicion that without the necessary enforcement available to back current legislation, the small number of unscrupulous park home owners identified in this research may well feel able to evade their responsibilities with relative impunity, continuing to taint a sector that is otherwise performing a valuable role in helping to meet housing needs in Scotland.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Introduction

1.1 The Scottish Government commissioned this research to provide an up-to-date picture on the use of mobile homes as dwellings in Scotland. The legislation with regard to mobile homes has recently changed with the introduction of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, and the context of mobile home living in Scotland has been the subject of considerable discussion as part of that legislative process (see the written and oral submissions to the Scottish Parliament Communities Committee with regard to then Housing (Scotland) Bill 2005 (Scottish Parliament, 2005). A key driver behind legislative change in other parts of the United Kingdom has been the input of the Park Homes Working Party, Department for Communities and Local Government. However, a central concern in Scotland is that the characteristics of the mobile home sector in this country are significantly different from other nations within the UK. This research will examine the nature of the mobile home sector in Scotland, and aims to inform how policy can be shaped in the future.

Context

1.2 There were two main groups of mobile homes in Scotland that were considered by the research. The first concerns residents who live in park homes on licensed sites, who are covered by a number of different Acts. Secondly, a characteristic of mobile home living in Scotland is the number of people who live in individual caravans and mobile homes on unlicensed sites, or which may be exempt from licensing.

1.3 Whilst a number of research studies have reflected on the issue of mobile homes in Scotland (Baxter et al, 1997; Alexander, 1992; Laing and Lindsay, 1980), the last research to explore the extent of mobile homes in Scotland was for the Scottish Office by Gentleman and Wilkinson (1977). This latter research found that about 3,800 households were living in mobile homes on licensed sites in 1975. However, other research has identified households living on unlicensed sites and in single units, which were not included in the research conducted for the Scottish Office. Alexander (1992) found that between 14 per cent and 18 per cent of all households on the Ross of Mull were living in residential caravans. In another instance, research noted concentrations in the use of individual mobile homes in a number of specific localities such as Skye (Baxter et al, 1997). Such findings lead to a concern that there may be considerable numbers of households living in mobile homes in remote and rural areas on unlicensed sites and which may not have basic standards of site facilities. The research by Alexander (1992) also noted the use of croft land for mobile homes.

Legislation

1.4 People who live in park homes on licensed sites are covered by a number of Acts as follows:

- The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960, regulates the use of land as a park home site.

- The Caravan Sites Act 1968 protects park home residents against being evicted and against harassment. This Act was extended to Scotland by the Mobile Homes Act 1975.
- The Mobile Homes Act 1983 sets out the rights of mobile home residents (see Barsby, (2001)).

1.5 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 amends a number of sections of the Mobile Homes Act 1983. The intention of the new Act is to extend the protection for people who occupy a mobile home and let a stance from a site operator. The Scottish Government (2006a) noted that the current legislation could leave some mobile home owners in a vulnerable position, so the Act aims to rebalance the rights of mobile home and site owners on issues around tenancy conditions, security of occupation, and the selling of mobile homes.

1.6 Legislation on the new schedule of rights for renters of mobile home stances came into force from 28 May 2007 specifically, the Housing (Scotland) Act:

- Requires the owner of a protected site to give a proposed occupier a written agreement before an agreement on letting a stance is made.
- Amends the Caravan Sites Act (1968) (as amended by the Housing Act 2004) to define it as an offence when a person interferes with the peace or comfort of the occupier and persons living with the occupier or persistently withdraws or withholds required services or facilities.
- Ensures that condition, but not age, will be able to be taken into account when deciding whether a mobile home is detrimental to a site.
- Gives Scottish Ministers the power to amend by order the implied terms of the Mobile Homes Act 1983.

1.7 However, there was some concern that the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 do not go far enough for those residents who live in mobile homes on unlicensed sites who have very limited protection under the law with regard to security of tenure and the condition of their homes (Shelter, 2005). Although all sites for residential occupation should be licensed (unless they fall into an exempted category, see paragraph below), it is still the case that some people in Scotland are living on unlicensed sites – for example, perhaps tenants of private landlords. Further, because they may be living in accommodation without planning permission, they may also find themselves the subject of eviction by a local authority.

1.8 There are a number of situations where mobile homes are exempt from licensing, but the exemptions often relate to their use for reasons other than residential occupation, such as recreation. For example, crofters do not require a site license for use of land as a caravan site provided such use falls within the period 1 April to 30 September in any year and in that period there are not more than 3 caravans on the land at any one time (Crofters Commission, 2007). However, mobile homes can be used as living accommodation in gardens and driveways, as long as the occupiers of the mobile home do not form an independent household from the dwelling house (for example, this could be people living in a caravan while they build or renovate their home). Further, mobile homes are also exempt from

licensing in situations where agricultural land is used as a caravan site to accommodate workers on the land (or in forestry or on a building site), for a particular season (but not throughout the year).

1.9 The situation with regard to tenants who rent their homes from private landlords is complex. The Department of Communities and Local Government (2007) refer to the situation in Scotland and suggest that if the tenant has a letting agreement after 2 January 1989, then they may be covered by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988. A tenant with a letting agreement prior to 2 January 1989 may have a Regulated Tenancy under the Rent Acts, if they fulfil the necessary criteria. However, Shelter (2005) has drawn attention to the issue that not all mobile homes may necessarily be classed as dwellings, because they may count as movable structures, thus limiting the rights that a tenant can enjoy. Ultimately, each case may be different and the question would have to be settled by the Courts. Alexander (1992) noted that there was a seasonal dimension to this issue, with the proportion of households who rent mobile homes rising in the summer, as people move out of winter lets and into mobile homes. Gentleman and Wilkinson (1977) also found that levels of dissatisfaction with mobile homes were highest amongst those households who rented their mobile homes.

Aims and Objectives

1.10 The aims of the research were to:

- Identify the number, location and composition (including number of units, tenure and service provision) of licensed mobile homes sites throughout Scotland;
- Where possible, identify unlicensed sites and quantify the extent of isolated single units, which may be exempt from licensing;
- Explore the reasons why people are living in mobile homes and their length of residence, looking at factors that have led them into the sector, their previous housing history and their aspirations for the future, particularly their ability to access affordable housing;
- Explore the nature and extent of any issues and problems experienced by residents of mobile homes in connection with their occupation and use of the home, with specific reference to the following sub-groups:
 - Residents who own their mobile homes and let the stance from the site owner;
 - Residents who are tenants of people in the above group;
 - Residents who let their property directly from the site owner.
- Consider the extent to which any problems identified are addressed by the existing and recently implemented legislation.

Methods

Which mobile homes were included in the study?

1.11 The study aimed to include residential mobile homes located:

- on sites licensed under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960;
- on unlicensed sites, and
- individual units used for residential purposes

The study did not include holiday/touring caravan sites. However, mixed sites with holiday caravans and mobile homes for residential use were included in the study. Further, it became apparent during the course of the research that there was considerable blurring in the way that holiday caravans were being used in some instances as people's primary residence. This issue is explored later in the report. Sites provided by local authorities for Gypsies/Travellers were not included in the study, as these sites are covered by different legislation, and have been the subject of other research (see Communities Scotland, 2006). However, privately owned Gypsy/Traveller sites were included in the calculation of the total number of residential mobile homes, since these are covered by the Mobile Homes Act 1983.

The number of residential mobile homes in Scotland

1.12 Three sources of data were used to derive an estimate of the number and location of residential mobile homes in Scotland. These sources included:

- Analysis of 2001 census data;
- A postal survey was sent to local authorities in March 2006 requesting information on caravans/mobile homes in their area, and 31 out of 32 local authorities responded (see Appendix One for a copy of the survey).
- Where possible, data on the location of sites and numbers of pitches were identified from directories and websites:
 - British Holiday and Home Parks Association: Residential Home Parks Directory;
 - National Park Homes Council, Directory of residential parks, www.nationalcaravan.co.uk
 - www.ukparks.com/
 - www.parkhome-living.co.uk

Individual mobile homes

1.13 One aim of the research was to quantify the extent of isolated mobile homes that were not located on licensed parks. A case study approach was used to investigate the incidence of individual mobile homes. Localities within the three case study authorities of Argyll and Bute, Highland and Midlothian were identified, and a more detailed investigation of these areas was conducted. The local authorities were chosen to reflect a range of urban and rural characteristics. Table 1.1 shows the localities that were included in the research.

Table 1.1 Localities investigated to quantify the extent of individual mobile homes

Case Study Authority	Locality
Argyll and Bute	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tiree• Ardfern• Ross of Mull
Highland	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ardnamurchan• Skye• Glenelg and Arnisdale
Midlothian	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gorebridge

1.14 Three sources of data were used to quantify the number of individual mobile homes within these localities:

- 2001 Census
- The Valuation Roll
- Information drawn from local informants within the case study areas.

1.15 Since the 2001 Census was available at very local level (output level) it was possible to identify the presence of individual units. The Council Tax valuation list, available on the Scottish Assessors Association website (www.saa.gov.uk), recorded caravans that were currently being used for residential purposes. Caravans that were either vacant, or being used for business purposes, such as holiday lets, were identified separately in the Business Rates. Information was also drawn from local people, including representatives of community councils, Community Development Trusts, Community Development workers and data from agencies such as the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust, and the Rural Housing Service.

The views and experience of residents of mobile homes

1.16 Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with 50 residents of mobile homes (see Appendix Two for the topic guide for residents). Forty interviews were conducted with park home residents who lived on licensed sites. Letters inviting participation in the research were sent to a random sample of households within the case study areas. Letters contained a reply slip and a freepost envelope. These addresses were identified using the Scottish Assessor's Association website.

1.17 A purposive sample was also used to identify respondents living in park homes on licensed sites. Letters inviting participation in the research were sent out to residents of park homes via the National Association Park Home Residents, who may have experienced some difficulty with their park home or site owner. Respondents on the licensed sites were also drawn from park homes on sites listed in the Residential Home Parks Directory, issued by the British Holiday and Home Parks Association. In addition, ten residents of individual mobile homes, outwith licensed sites, were also interviewed as part of the research.

1.18 Thus, it is important to stress that the fifty residents cannot be taken as a representative sample of all mobile home residents in Scotland. Instead, the qualitative analysis allows the experiences and views of the respondents to illustrate a range of issues about living in mobile homes. However, care must be exercised in drawing inferences about all people living in mobile homes on the basis of findings which relate to the range of

different sub-markets of mobile home residents, such as park home owners living on licensed sites, or residents living in individual, unlicensed mobile homes. Where relevant, the report makes a distinction between the different sub-markets which make up the mobile home sector in Scotland. One gap in the research was the situation regarding people who live in mobile homes that was tied with employment, including migrant workers. Further work would be necessary to explore the views and experiences of these households.

1.19 The respondents included households who owned their own home, and rented the stance from a park owner and households who rented their homes. However, no respondents were identified in this research who were tenants of residents who owned their home and rented the stance from a park owner.

Report Structure

1.20 Chapter Two provides an overview of residential mobile homes in Scotland. The chapter examines the number of residential mobile homes, and describes the characteristics of households who live in the sector. The chapter then moves on to assess the extent of individual mobile homes in the three case study areas of Highland, Argyll and Bute and Midlothian. Chapter three explores the views and experiences of households who live in mobile homes, both in park homes on licensed sites and individual units. Chapter four focuses on residents who live in park homes on licensed sites and discusses the views of respondents across a range of issues connected with living in a park home, including the efficacy of current legislation. Chapter five draws together the main conclusions of the report, and aims to inform policy developments by identifying possible areas where further action might be required.

1.21 The report used a number of different terms for mobile homes in order to draw a distinction between their location, and the legislation that covers mobile homes in different circumstances. The report used the term ‘park home’ to describe mobile homes on licensed sites, which are covered by specific legislation. Although ‘park homes’ are not a term generally used in the Scottish context, it was felt important to make a clear distinction between mobile homes on licensed sites and mobile homes generally, including mobile homes located on unlicensed sites. Further, whilst residents of mobile homes on licensed sites in this research were not asked specifically about how they liked their homes to be described, a couple of respondents did note that they preferred their dwellings to be referred to as ‘park homes’.

1.22 Isolated units, not located on licensed sites, were described as ‘individual mobile homes’ in this report, rather than single units to avoid any confusion with references to the size of mobile homes, which can be termed single units or double units. The report used the universal term ‘mobile homes’, when describing all mobile homes in Scotland, whether on licensed sites or not.

CHAPTER TWO THE NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL MOBILE HOMES IN SCOTLAND

Introduction

2.1 This chapter provides an overview of residential mobile homes in Scotland. The chapter discusses the number of residential mobile homes and examines the characteristics of households who live in this sector. The chapter then moves on to estimate the number of individual mobile homes in three case study areas of Highland, Argyll and Bute and Midlothian.

The number of residential mobile homes in Scotland

2.2 The 2001 Census counted 4,547 households living in caravans, mobile or other temporary structures (Table 2.1, overleaf). The number of households living in caravans and mobile homes recorded by the Census will be somewhat lower than this figure, since the census definition included house boats and tents within the term 'other temporary structures'. Further, the research excludes Gypsies and Travellers residing on council owned sites, who were also included in the total census figure. For example, 14 of the 64 households in Edinburgh in 2001 were recorded by the Census as living on a Gypsy/Traveller site owned by the local authority. In another instance, the survey of local authorities showed that there were 20 pitches available for Gypsy/Travellers on a council site in Fife.

2.3 The 2001 Census data showed that a very small proportion of the population in Scotland lived in caravans, mobile homes or other temporary structures (0.21 per cent). However, there were concentrations in the number of caravans and mobile homes in some local authority areas. Highland Council area had the highest number of caravans and mobile homes (501), followed by Midlothian (365), Aberdeenshire (345) and Glasgow (321). The smallest numbers of caravans and mobile homes were recorded in authorities such as Dundee (23), Clackmannanshire (15), West Dunbartonshire (38) and East Dunbartonshire (38).

2.4 The local authority with the highest proportion of households living in caravans or mobile homes was Midlothian, where 1.1 per cent of all households lived in these types of accommodation. There were other concentrations in authorities such as Moray, Highland and Argyll and Bute.

2.5 A comparison with Census data from previous decades showed that there had been an increase in the number of households living in caravans and mobile homes between 1971 and 1991 (Table 2.2, overleaf). This trend was reversed between 1991 and 2001, and the number of households in this form of accommodation fell by 1,882 households. However, it is difficult to conclude whether this trend reflected an actual fall in the number of households living in this form of accommodation, or how far other factors could account for this pattern. For example, the incidence of Foot and Mouth at the time of the 2001 Census enumeration required special arrangements to be put in place. Census forms were posted out to households where normal hand delivery by Enumerators was not possible because the area was infected or where access was limited. Further, enumerators did not deliver forms to any livestock-holding premises, or to any rural premises where the approach would involve driving off a metalled road in infected areas. Instead, enumerators covered villages

accessible by public roads. Whilst an analysis of output areas shows that the 2001 Census picked up a number of individual units, it is possible that the special provisions resulting from the Foot and Mouth crisis may have affected the ability of enumerators in the more rural and remote areas of Scotland to identify some units in isolated locations.

Table 2.1 Proportion of all households in caravans, mobile homes or other temporary structures

Council Area	All households	Households in caravan or other mobile or temporary structure	Percentage of all households living in caravan or other mobile or temporary structure
Aberdeen	97013	139	0.14
Aberdeenshire	90736	345	0.38
Angus	46945	161	0.34
Argyll & Bute	38969	293	0.75
Clackmannanshire	20558	15	0.07
Dumfries & Galloway	63807	188	0.29
Dundee	66908	23	0.03
East Ayrshire	50346	48	0.09
East Dunbartonshire	42206	38	0.09
East Lothian	38157	45	0.12
East Renfrewshire	34950	44	0.13
Edinburgh	204683	64	0.03
Eilean Siar	11275	51	0.45
Falkirk	62598	50	0.08
Fife	150274	283	0.19
Glasgow	271596	321	0.12
Highland	89533	501	0.56
Inverclyde	36691	53	0.14
Midlothian	32922	365	1.11
Moray	35803	261	0.73
North Ayrshire	58726	162	0.28
North Lanarkshire	132619	173	0.13
Orkney Islands	8342	50	0.60
Perth & Kinross	58323	241	0.41
Renfrewshire	75355	37	0.05
Scottish Borders	47371	59	0.12
Shetland Islands	9111	49	0.54
South Ayrshire	48748	97	0.20
South Lanarkshire	126496	184	0.15
Stirling	35508	120	0.34
West Dunbartonshire	40781	38	0.09
West Lothian	64896	49	0.08
SCOTLAND	2192246	4547	0.21

Notes to table Source: 2001 Census

Table 2.2 Changes in the number of households in non-permanent accommodation 1971-2001

Year	Households in non permanent accommodation
1971	5250
1981	6356
1991	6429
2001	4547

Notes to table Source: Censuses, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001.

2.6 Table 2.3 shows the number of caravans and mobile homes, comparing the results from three different sources of data: the 2001 Census, the postal survey of local authorities, and an analysis of directories and websites. The local authority survey identified a total of 4,121 residential mobile homes. This total included sites licensed for residential use, residential units on mixed sites with holiday pitches as well, individual residential mobile homes used by staff on sites licensed for holiday use, and an estimate of individual units within authorities. However, it should be noted that few respondents to the local authority survey felt in a position to estimate the number of individual mobile homes within their areas. Therefore, the total of 4,121 represents an underestimate of the total number of residential mobile homes in Scotland. The analysis of directories and websites showed the number of pitches in the larger sites in Scotland, although, again, this is an underestimate of the total, since the directories did not always record the actual number of pitches on some of the sites.

Table 2.3: Numbers of caravans and mobile homes by local authority

Council Area	Number of Caravans/mobile homes		
	2001 Census (Households in caravan or other mobile or temporary structure) ¹	Local Authority survey (pitches) ²	Directories/websites (pitches) ³
Aberdeen	139	269	267
Aberdeenshire	345	302	130
Angus	161	258	189
Argyll & Bute	293	144	105
Clackmannanshire	15	14	0
Dumfries & Galloway	188	374	331
Dundee	23	0	0
East Ayrshire	48	50	0
East Dunbartonshire	38	25	29
East Lothian	45	40	5
East Renfrewshire	44	75	63
Edinburgh	64	5	0
Eilean Siar	51	-	0
Falkirk	50	54	0
Fife	283	269	184
Glasgow	321	474	0
Highland	501	98	253
Inverclyde	53	60	43
Midlothian	365	382	378
Moray	261	381	223
North Ayrshire	162	79	139
North Lanarkshire	173	156	141
Orkney Islands	50	18	0
Perth & Kinross	241	175	188
Renfrewshire	37	0	0
Scottish Borders	59	150	76
Shetland Islands	49	11	0
South Ayrshire	97	134	74
South Lanarkshire	184	2	50
Stirling	120	83	75
West Dunbartonshire	38	0	0
West Lothian	49	39	39
SCOTLAND	4547	4121	2982

Notes to table Sources: ¹ 2001 Census; ² Local authority survey; ³ analysis of websites and directories

2.7 There were some quite large discrepancies apparent between the different sources of data in a number of authorities. For example, the Census recorded 188 caravans, mobile homes and other temporary structures in Dumfries and Galloway in 2001. However, an analysis of directories and websites showed that there were 331 pitches in 2006, with data from the local authority recording a total of 374. There were a number of cases where directories and websites had totals higher than local authorities. One possible reason for discrepancies between local authority totals and numbers recorded in directories and websites is that the latter may have recorded the maximum total number of pitches that a site is licensed to hold, whereas local authorities may have recorded the actual number of pitches occupied. A number of authorities do not have any sites licensed for residential occupation, such as Dundee and Renfrewshire.

2.8 However, the data does need to be treated with some caution. The survey of local authorities identified 222 licensed residential sites across Scotland (including mixed residential and holiday sites). However, most local authorities make returns to the Royal Environmental Health Institute in Scotland as part of its annual survey of Environmental Health which is described in its annual report. Table 2.4 shows the number of licensed residential caravan sites recorded by the Royal Environmental Health Institute between 2001 and 2005. The figures revealed quite wide fluctuations in the number of residential caravan sites, year on year, in Scotland. Nevertheless, the totals in Table 2.4 were consistently above the total figure for the survey of local authorities, suggesting an underestimate of the total number of licensed sites in Scotland in the latter survey, and by default the total number of residential caravans on licensed sites. Without undertaking further work it was not possible to identify the specific reasons for these variations. One possibility was that the number of sites does fluctuate quite markedly over time, especially the very small sites. For example, Western Isles noted that although there were 165 residential caravan sites in 2001, many of these sites had subsequently closed because of an inability to afford the work necessary to meet site license standards (Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, 2004).

Table 2.4 Number of licensed residential caravan sites

Year	Number of local authorities making returns	Number of licensed residential caravan sites
2004/5	30	235
2003/4	32	313
2002/3	31	287
2001/2	26	272

Notes to table

Source: Royal Environmental Health Institute in Scotland, Annual Surveys 2001/2 – 2004/5.

2.9 Three of the responding authorities noted that their areas contained a privately owned Gypsy/Traveller sites (see appendix three for further information available on privately owned Gypsy/Traveller sites). However, two other authorities noted sites for show people associated with travelling fairgrounds within their areas, with Glasgow, in particular, having a heavy concentration of sites for show people.

2.10 The overwhelming majority of sites were privately owned. Two sites were recorded as being in local authority ownership; one in the Shetlands and one in Orkney. One authority highlighted that a site within their area was in the process of a community buyout by its residents. The licenses for most sites were permanent, with only four sites with a temporary license (all in Stirling Council area).

2.11 Local authorities stated that park owners complied, in general, with the conditions of site licenses, and no authorities recorded that park owners did not comply. However, two authorities did note that some breaches had occurred for issues such as: faded fire point signs; omitting to display a copy of the site license; disrepair to roadways; provision of electrical certificate for the site and fire extinguishers not being inspected on an annual basis. One authority that had taken actions against a site owner expressed disappointment with the level of the penalty that was imposed.

2.12 Most authorities noted that they were not aware of any residential occupation on holiday parks that are only licensed for holiday use, although three other authorities stated that they did know of situations where this had occurred. Of these three, one authority noted that there was only anecdotal evidence of residential occupation of pitches on parks only licensed for holiday use in their area. In another instance, there has been recent press coverage of another authority, Perth and Kinross, sending letters to residents to request that they stop using their homes as a main residence on a park only licensed for holiday homes (Simpson, 2006). Another authority noted that there was a growing demand for park home living on sites licensed for holiday use, with residents occupying park homes for the period allowed, and then vacating their homes. This authority had responded by granting licences for eleven months in any one year, which minimised the amount of time that residents had to spend away from their park home.

2.13 The majority of authorities stated that they were not aware of any unlicensed sites in their areas. However, three respondents commented on unlicensed sites within their authorities. One respondent noted that there probably were unlicensed sites in their area, but that they had not actively looked. Another respondent highlighted that unlicensed sites tended to be hidden away and that authorities were often unaware of their existence unless someone brought the site to the authority's attention - for example, if a resident of a mobile home made a complaint about the site to the local authority. This respondent noted that an unlicensed site had recently been brought to this authority's attention. In another instance, an authority noted the presence of one unlicensed site with 5 mobile homes, but that the site owner was in the process of sorting this out.

The characteristics of households living in residential mobile homes in Scotland

2.14 This section of the report sets out an analysis of 2001 Census data to show how households who live in caravans, mobile homes and other temporary structures compare with all households in Scotland. The analysis also explores the characteristics of households who live in caravans and mobile homes in Scotland with their counterparts in England and Wales.

Tenure

2.15 Residents of mobile homes in Scotland were much more likely to be renting their home from a landlord than in England or Wales (Table 2.5). Three quarters of residents of mobile homes in England and Wales were owner occupiers compared with just over half of residents in Scotland. In contrast, just over a third of residents in Scotland rented their mobile home from a private landlord, compared with nearly a fifth of residents in England and Wales. Less than one in ten residents in Scotland rented their mobile home from a social landlord. It is possible that the number of residents who recorded that they were living in social rented accommodation in the Census were Gypsy/Travellers, living on local authority

owned sites. As noted in paragraph 2.10 above, only two authorities noted mobile home residents who were not Gypsy/Travellers living on local authority owned sites in their areas.

Table 2.5 Tenure of households in caravans, mobile homes and other temporary structures by country

Country	Owned (%)	Social rented (%)	Private rented or living rent free (%)	Total (%)
Scotland				
All Households	62.6	27.2	10.3	100
Caravans/mobile homes	56.0	9.5	34.5	100
England & Wales				
All households	68.9	19.1	12.0	100
Caravans/mobile homes	75.0	6.9	18.1	100

Notes to table

Source: 2001 Census

2.16 The proportions of mobile home residents who either owned or rented their homes varied considerably between the case study areas (Table 2.6). Highland council area was quite close to the average for Scotland in terms of the proportion of households in mobile homes who rented from private landlords (36.7 per cent and 34.5 per cent respectively). The proportion of households in mobile homes renting privately in Argyll and Bute was slightly higher than the average for Scotland, at 40.3 per cent. In contrast, the proportion of households in mobile homes renting from private landlords in Midlothian was much lower, at 17.5 per cent. Instead, mobile home residents in this authority were much more likely to own their homes, compared with the Highlands or Argyll and Bute. Further, mobile home residents in Midlothian were more likely to own their own homes than the general population in this authority (although these mobile home residents also rent the stance from park owners). In this respect mobile home dwellers in Midlothian were much closer to the characteristics of mobile home residents in England and Wales.

Table 2.6 Tenure by case study area

	Owned (%)	Social rented (%)	Private rented or living rent free (%)	Total (%)
Scotland				
All Households	62.6	27.2	10.3	100
Caravans/mobile homes	56.0	9.5	34.5	100
Argyll and Bute				
All Households	64.6	21.2	14.1	100
Caravan/mobile homes	50.5	9.2	40.3	100
Highland				
All Households	65.8	21.6	12.7	100
Caravans/mobile homes	61.1	2.0	36.7	100
Midlothian				
All Households	63.5	30.0	6.5	100
Caravans/mobile homes	77.8	4.7	17.5	100

Notes to table Source: 2001 Census

2.17 A proportion of residents who rent privately were living on licensed sites. For example, even though Midlothian has a relatively low proportion of mobile home residents who rent privately, it does contain one site where residents had Short Assured Tenancies. The local authority with the highest proportion of mobile home residents who rented their homes from a private landlord was Aberdeen. Seventy three per cent of all mobile home residents in this authority rented their homes from private landlords (See Appendix Four). This authority contained a number of park home sites where residents rented their homes on Short Assured Tenancies.

2.18 However, in their written submission to the Communities Committee Report on the Housing (Scotland) Bill, Shelter drew attention to the situation for residents who rent privately and who do not live on licensed sites (Scottish Parliament, 2005), with a particular concern about the conditions in which some residents may be living. This submission highlighted that while the changes brought about by the Housing Scotland Act (2006) would primarily benefit residents of mobile homes who live on licensed sites, it would not address the circumstances of people who rent their homes and who live outwith these sites.

2.19 As noted later on in this chapter, a difficulty for agencies in attempting to establish how far people who are renting their mobile homes may be living in poor conditions is that many of these dwellings are hidden from official view. Related to this issue is the number of people living in mobile homes that are tied to employment, including accommodation provided for seasonal workers. Recent research noted the use of mobile homes, as well as other forms of accommodation, to house migrant workers and highlighted a number of issues including the high cost compared with the quality of accommodation, overcrowding and the difficulty of finding appropriate accommodation (de Lima *et al*, 2005). It is important to stress that the research by de Lima *et al*, identified positive as well as negative experiences of accommodation for migrant workers, and that the quality of bricks and mortar accommodation may not necessarily be any better than that found in mobile homes. Nevertheless, the fact remains that mobile homes used by seasonal workers are exempt from licensing under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. Further, mobile homes that are privately rented are also currently excluded from landlord registration. Thus it is difficult for local authorities to monitor standards of accommodation for workers living in mobile homes provided by employers.

2.20 Baxter *et al* (1997) highlighted a number of cases of Housing Benefit being restricted for people who rent their mobile homes as a result of the poor quality of the accommodation offer, which may result in tenants being expected to make up any shortfall between Housing Benefit and the rent. However, a site owner in the Highlands interviewed for this research described the financial circumstances of many of the tenants on his park, and the lack of any viable alternative accommodation in the area for them. This owner noted the relatively low level of Housing Benefit that was set for mobile homes, and that his tenants lacked the means to make up any potential shortfall between Housing Benefit and rent charged, meaning that, in practice, the rent was effectively whatever Housing Benefit would cover.

Household type

2.21 The type of household living in a mobile home varied between Scotland and other countries within the UK (Table 2.7). For example, residents living in mobile homes in England and Wales were more likely to be older than in Scotland. Forty per cent of

households living in a mobile home in England and Wales were pensioners compared with 24 per cent of residents in Scotland. Instead, residents of mobile homes in Scotland were more likely to be single people under pensionable age, with 35 per cent of all households living in a mobile home made up of this group. The equivalent figure for England and Wales was 23 per cent.

Table 2.7 Household type by country

Country	One person (%)	All Pensioner (%)	Couples without children (%)	Couples With children (%)	Lone Parents (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
Scotland							
All Households	17.9	23.5	16.7	26.3	10.5	5.1	100
Caravans/mobile homes	35.4	24.0	16.7	11.6	7.3	5.1	100
England & Wales							
All households	15.6	23.8	17.7	27.1	9.6	6.3	100
Caravans/mobile homes	22.8	39.6	19.9	9.0	5.3	3.5	100

Notes to table

Source: 2001 Census

2.22 Table 2.8 shows that one person households were a strong feature of mobile home dwellers across the case study areas. For example, whilst 16.6 per cent of the population in the Highlands was composed of one person households, the proportion of single people living in mobile homes rose to 40.1 per cent. Instead, fewer pensioners tended to live in mobile homes in the Highlands compared with Argyll and Bute or Midlothian. Also, families with children were much less likely to live in mobile homes across the case study areas, compared with the profile of the general population in these authorities. However, discussions with one agency suggested that the proportion of children spending time in mobile homes may be higher than statistics suggest. This agency noted that in their area of the Highlands, children often spent time living in caravans occupied by one parent of a separated couple.

Table 2.8 Household type by case study area

	One person (%)	All Pensioner (%)	Couples without children (%)	Couples With children (%)	Lone Parents (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
Scotland							
All Households	17.9	23.5	16.7	26.3	10.5	5.1	100
Caravans/mobile homes	35.4	24.0	16.7	11.6	7.3	4.1	100
Argyll & Bute							
All households	16.0	26.7	18.6	25.8	8.2	4.7	100
Caravans/mobile homes	39.9	24.2	14.7	11.9	4.8	4.4	100
Highland							
All households	16.6	23.4	18.9	27.2	8.9	5.1	100
Caravans/mobile homes	40.1	16.8	20.2	12.8	3.6	6.6	100
Midlothian							
All households	12.4	22.2	18.5	31.2	11.0	4.7	100
Caravans/mobile homes	34.5	26.5	18.6	7.4	9.0	3.8	100

Notes to table Source: 2001 Census

Age of mobile home residents

2.23 Table 2.9 highlights how the age profile of residents of mobile homes varied from the general population. Residents of caravans and mobile homes in Scotland were more likely to be older than the general population. Twenty six per cent of residents in caravans and mobile homes were aged 60 and over compared with twenty one per cent of the general population. However, this trend was much more apparent in England and Wales, where forty three per cent of residents who lived in caravans and mobile homes were aged 60 and over compared with twenty one per cent of the overall population of England and Wales.

Table 2.9 Age of all persons in households by country

	0-15 (%)	16-34 (%)	35-49 (%)	50-59 (%)	60+ (%)	Total (%)
Scotland						
All Households	19.5	24.8	22.3	12.8	20.6	100
Caravans/mobile homes	14.0	20.5	21.8	16.9	26.4	100
England & Wales						
All households	20.4	24.8	21.5	12.8	20.5	100
Caravans/mobile homes	10.4	14.3	14.6	17.9	42.6	100

Notes to table

Source: 2001 Census

2.24 The age profile of people living in caravans varied between Midlothian, Argyll and Bute and Highland (Table 2.10, overleaf). There was a higher proportion of people living in caravans in Midlothian who were aged 60 and over compared with the other two case study areas. Further, older people were much more likely to live in caravans in Midlothian than the overall population of this authority. Nearly a third of people living in caravans in Midlothian were aged 60 and over compared with about one fifth of the general population in Midlothian. In contrast, younger people were far less likely to live in caravans in Midlothian than the other two case study areas. With regard to Argyll and Bute and Highland, people living in caravans tended to mirror the age profile of the general populations of these two authorities much more closely than was the case in Midlothian.

Long term limiting illness

2.25 Residents in caravans and mobile homes were more likely than the general population to have a limiting long term illness. Whilst 20 per cent of all households in Scotland had a limiting long term illness, the equivalent figure for mobile home residents was 29 per cent (Table 2.11, overleaf). To a certain extent, this trend may reflect the age profile of mobile home residents, with households living in mobile homes more likely to be made up of older people.

Table 2.10: Age of all persons in households by case study area

	0-15 (%)	16-34 (%)	35-49 (%)	50-59 (%)	60+ (%)	Total (%)
Scotland						
All Households	19.5	24.8	22.3	12.8	20.6	100
Caravans/mobile homes	14.0	20.5	21.8	16.9	26.7	100
Argyll & Bute						
All households	18.7	21.0	21.5	14.2	24.6	100
Caravans/mobile homes	13.0	22.6	24.0	12.2	28.1	100
Highland						
All households	19.6	21.4	22.6	14.2	22.3	100
Caravans/mobile homes	14.2	23.8	26.7	15.8	19.5	100
Midlothian						
All households	21.0	22.6	22.7	13.4	20.2	100
Caravans/mobile homes	10.5	15.8	20.9	21.7	31.1	100

Notes to table

Source: 2001 Census

Table 2.11 People with a limiting long-term illness by country

	People with a limiting long-term illness (%)	People without a limiting long-term illness (%)	Total (%)
Scotland			
All Households	19.7	80.3	100
Caravans/mobile homes	29.1	70.9	100
England & Wales			
All households	17.7	82.3	100
Caravans/mobile homes	30.8	69.2	100

Notes to table

Source: 2001 Census

Table 2.12 Proportion of people within age groups reporting a long term limiting illness in Scotland

	Age						
	0-15 (%)	16-34 (%)	35-49 (%)	50-59 (%)	60-64 (%)	65-84 (%)	85+ (%)
All households	4.6	7.9	14.3	26.7	39.2	50.9	73.9
Caravans/mobile homes	4.2	14.3	23.7	37.5	48.6	53.3	72.4

Notes to table

Source: 2001 Census

2.26 However, Table 2.12 (previous page) also shows that younger people living in mobile homes were more likely to have a long term limiting illness compared with the general population. For example, 14 per cent of people aged between 16 and 34 who lived in a caravan reported a long-term limiting illness, compared with about 8 per cent of the general population. This trend was apparent up to the age of between 60 and 64, where 49 per cent who lived in a caravan reported a long-term limiting illness, compared with about 39 per cent of the general population. However, there was a greater convergence amongst older people in the proportions of mobile home residents and the general population. This issue will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter, which describes residents' views and experiences of living in mobile homes.

2.27 A third of households living in mobile homes in Midlothian reported a long term limiting illness, compared with nearly a quarter of households in both Argyll and Bute and the Highlands (Table 2.13). This figure perhaps reflected the age profile of people living in mobile homes in Midlothian, with a higher proportion of this population aged 60 and over than was the case in both Argyll and Bute and Highland.

Table 2.13 People with a limiting long-term illness by case study area

	People with a limiting long-term illness (%)	People without a limiting long-term illness (%)	Total (%)
Scotland			
All Households	19.7	80.3	100
Caravans/mobile homes	29.1	70.9	100
Argyll & Bute			
All Households	19.5	80.5	100
Caravans/mobile homes	24.2	75.8	100
Highland			
All Households	17.6	82.4	100
Caravans/mobile homes	23.6	76.4	100
Midlothian			
All Households	18.4	81.6	100
Caravans/mobile homes	33.2	66.8	100

Notes to table

Source: 2001 Census

Central heating

2.28 Residents of mobile homes in Scotland were far less likely to have central heating than their counterparts in England or Wales. Table 2.14, overleaf, shows that 43 per cent of residents in mobile homes in Scotland did not have central heating, compared with 20 per cent of residents in England and Wales.

Table 2.14 Households with central heating by country

Tenure	Central heating (%)	No central heating (%)	Total (%)
Scotland:			
All Households	92.8	7.1	100
Caravan/mobile home	57.2	42.8	100
England & Wales:			
All Households	91.2	8.8	100
Caravan/mobile home	80.1	19.9	100

Notes to table

Source: 2001 Census

2.29 Tenure seemed to be an important factor in whether residents had central heating or not. Table 2.15 shows that seventy four per cent of residents who rented from a social landlord had central heating, as did 62 per cent of owner occupiers. However, this amenity was not available to the majority of residents who rented from private landlords (fifty one per cent of tenants who rented unfurnished property and sixty per cent of tenants who rented furnished mobile homes respectively).

Table 2.15 Households with central heating in Scotland, by tenure

Tenure	Central heating (%)	No central heating (%)	Total
All Households			
All households	92.8	7.1	100
Caravan/mobile home	57.2	42.8	100
Owned			
All households	94.1	5.8	100
Caravan/mobile home	61.9	38.0	100
Social rented			
All households	93.8	6.2	100
Caravan/mobile home	73.5	26.5	100
Private rented (Unfurnished)			
All households	76.2	23.8	100
Caravan/mobile home	48.9	51.0	100
Private rented (Furnished)			
All households	79.7	20.3	100
Caravan/mobile home	40.3	59.7	100
Living rent free			
All households	90.2	9.8	100
Caravan/mobile home	54.9	45.0	100

Notes to table

Source: 2001 Census

2.30 The proportions of households living in caravans who had central heating varied considerably between the case study areas (Table 2.16, overleaf). Approaching two thirds of all households living in caravans in both Argyll and Bute and the Highlands did not have central heating (66 per cent and 63 per cent respectively). The situation in Midlothian was very different, and 83 per cent of households living in caravans had central heating.

Table 2.16 Households with central heating be case study area

	Central heating (%)	No central heating (%)	Total (%)
Scotland			
All households	92.8	7.1	100
Caravan/mobile home	57.2	42.8	100
Argyll and Bute			
All households	90.6	9.4	100
Caravan/mobile home	34.5	65.5	100
Highland			
All households	92.8	7.2	100
Caravan/mobile home	36.9	63.1	100
Midlothian			
All households	97.4	2.6	100
Caravan/mobile home	82.7	17.3	100

Notes to table

Source: 2001 Census

Identifying individual mobile homes

2.31 Case study areas were identified to investigate the extent of individual units in three local authority areas. Three localities were identified in Highland Council area, including the Ardnamurchan peninsula, South Skye and thirdly Glenelg and Arnisdale. Three areas in Argyll and Bute were examined: Tiree, the Ross of Mull, and Craignish. The area around Gorebridge in Midlothian was also examined to identify individual mobile homes (see Table 1.1).

2.32 One possible source of local data on individual mobile homes is housing needs surveys, where questions on current accommodation may uncover some indication of mobile home living within the survey area. However, an agency that regularly undertook housing needs surveys noted that because caravans are often hidden away in remote locations or in people's gardens, then an approach using a postal survey, or even a door to door survey, can often miss households living in this form of accommodation. Indeed, many units tend to be tucked away within the landscape, taking advantage of shelter as much as possible to protect them from the prevailing winds. Thus, identifying the number of units is that much more difficult, due to the susceptibility of mobile homes to the weather, especially in Scotland. This respondent emphasised that it was important to supplement survey work with discussions with local people to identify households living in mobile homes. An alternative source of local information in the Glenelg and Arnisdale area was derived from the use of Personal Housing Plans by the Rural Housing Service, which also identified people living in mobile homes in this area.

2.33 The difficulty in identifying the residential occupation of individual mobile homes was also noted by a respondent from the Scottish Assessors Association. This respondent highlighted that the residential occupation of some units occasionally only came to light if the occupiers made a claim to a local authority for Housing Benefit, or Council Tax Benefit. However, the identification of mobile homes in residential use remains an important task for local authorities, given not only the reported poor conditions of some mobile homes, but also

the vulnerability of mobile homes to incidents such as fires. A fire in a mobile home is 16 times more likely to lead to death and injury than in a house (www.wiltshirefirebrigade.com/Fire_Safety/).

The Highlands

2.34 Information from Highland Council’s waiting list for council housing recorded that there were 210 applicants who were currently living in caravans in July 2006. Table 2.17 shows that there were concentrations of applicants in particular areas of the Highlands. Just over a quarter of all applicants living in a caravan were living in Lochaber. There were also large numbers of applicants living in caravans in Dingwall, Inverness and Portree.

Table 2.17 Applicants for Highland council housing currently living in caravans, July 2006

By Highland Council Area Office,	Number of applications from residents in caravans
Badenoch and Strathspey	10
Dingwall	36
Inverness	42
Lochaber	56
Nairn	4
Portree	32
Sutherland	14
Thurso	6
Wick	10
<i>Highland Council total</i>	210

Notes to table

Source: Highland Council

2.35 Further, the waiting list revealed that over one quarter of these households (28 per cent) had points for poor housing conditions, whilst nearly one third (32 per cent) had points for medical conditions. Even if the figures from the Census are an underestimate of the total number of units in the Highland area (501), the number of people living in caravans who are on the waiting list relative to this total is indicative of their dissatisfaction with this form of accommodation. A local authority respondent noted that many residents of mobile homes in the Highlands tended to be single and a low priority for council housing. This latter point highlights a potential drawback in the use of waiting list data as a measure of housing needs. Research has shown that some people are put off from applying for social rented accommodation because they know they are a low priority for rehousing. Furthermore, potential applicants in remote rural areas are also less likely to apply for social rented housing in communities where the stock of social rented accommodation is either absent, very low, or rarely comes up for relet.

2.36 An analysis of output areas from the 2001 Census showed that the census identified a number of single units not located on licensed parks. This factor was highlighted in the Highland area, where a low proportion of the total number of caravans and mobile homes were concentrated on licensed parks compared with the total number of caravans and mobile homes recorded in the Census. Instead, the output areas for the Highlands in the 2001 Census revealed the scattered distribution of many caravans in the authority including many who rent their homes from private landlords.

Glenelg and Arnisdale

2.37 Glenelg is the main settlement in a remote sparsely populated peninsula in South West Ross. The peninsula extends to an area of approximately 90 square miles and has a scattered population of around 280 permanent residents, many of these in the immediate area around Glenelg, but also in the communities of Arnisdale and Corran. During the summer tourist season the population is increased three-fold by visitors staying in the area. The area of Glenelg and Arnisdale has Initiative at the Edge status, which is a partnership programme involving communities in specific areas of Scotland. These community groups work, with the assistance of a designated Local Development Officer, alongside a number of different agencies and local authorities. The operating principle of Initiative at the Edge is that it gives the community groups the power to identify their needs, required actions and develop projects accordingly.

2.38 There were a number of sources of data on households living in mobile homes in this area over the course of about 15 years:

- A survey of housing needs for the Rural Forum's Rural Housing Service in 1994 in this area identified nine households living in caravans who were in serious housing need (Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust, 2005).
- The 2001 Census identified seven households in mobile homes in the three output areas¹ covering the Glenelg and Arnisdale area.
- In another housing needs survey, this time conducted in 2005 by the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust, five households were identified as living in caravans and in serious housing need (Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust, 2005).
- The valuation list in 2006 identified two residential caravans in this area. Four more caravans were listed in the Business Rates.

2.39 One agency felt that the number of households living in caravans in the Glenelg and Arnisdale area had fluctuated over the years in relation to the availability of lets within affordable housing in the locality. A housing needs survey had revealed nine households living in caravans in this area, prior to the development of accommodation by a local housing association. The agency noted that the availability of this new affordable housing meant that the number of households living in caravans fell away. However, it was felt that the number of people living in caravans had begun to grow in the area again, as the households in the affordable accommodation rented by the housing association tended to be settled and subsequent availability of new lets tended to be very few and far between. There was only one relet in the housing association accommodation between 2002 and 2005 in the Glenelg and Arnisdale area (Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust, 2005). In this respect residential occupation of caravans remains indicative of housing stress in many localities. Indeed, McCleery *et al* (1987) suggested an association between the number of households living in non-permanent accommodation and the dearth of local authority accommodation in certain areas of the Highlands.

¹ For further information see www.scrol.gov.uk

Ardnamurchan

2.40 The 2001 Census recorded 7 households living in caravans in this area. The Scottish Assessor's website in 2006 also recorded 7 individual caravans (and also one chalet) on the Council tax list. A further 34 individual caravans were listed on business rates, of which it is possible that some may be being used as winter lets by households, or perhaps as tied accommodation.

Skye

2.41 Previous research has highlighted the presence of a number of individual mobile homes in this area (Alexander, 1992). Information on mobile homes was available from a local authority survey conducted in 1982/83 of the Skye and Lochalsh area which identified 826 caravans and chalets, of which 170 were permanently occupied by 313 persons (www.bambi.demon.co.uk/skyedata/housing). An interview survey conducted in 1982/83 by the local authority also found that 63 per cent of these households originated from within the District of Skye and Lochalsh and that 42 per cent were living in this form of accommodation because they could not get a permanent dwelling. It was noted that very few of these mobile homes were located on residential caravan sites.

2.42 The 2001 census identified 65 households living in non permanent accommodation on Skye. An analysis of valuation data from the Scottish Assessors Association identified 63 caravans, although this includes 17 at a licensed site at Cuillin View. The valuation data thus identified 46 individual mobile homes on Skye. A further 26 caravans were recorded in the Business Rates.

Argyll and Bute

Tiree

2.43 The 2001 Census recorded seven households living in caravans on Tiree (and two on Coll). In 2006, a desk top study from a respondent using local knowledge identified 9 households on Tiree living in caravans. Another household was recorded as living in a temporary wooden cabin. These ten households included a total of 27 people. This study noted a range of different types of household occupying the caravans (Table 2.19).

Table 2.18 Type of households living in mobile homes on Tiree, 2006

Type of household	Number
Containing children of school age	1
Pensioner	3
Single (not including pensioners)	1
Couple (not including pensioners)	4
Total	9

Notes to table

Source: Desk top study by respondent

2.44 About half these households had moved in to a caravan as a short term move, often whilst they were in the process of building a new home. Six households had been living in their caravan for over five years.

Ross of Mull

2.45 The Ross of Mull, Argyll & Bute was the subject of a study of residential caravans by Alexander (1992). The study by Alexander identified 29 permanently occupied residential caravans in this area in 1992. Argyll and Bute Council (2005) noted that there were still issues regarding significant numbers of caravan dwellers, particularly in the Ross of Mull. This authority also noted that 40% of the Council's waiting list currently rent privately or live in tied accommodation (8% of whom live in caravans).

2.46 Data from Argyll and Bute council showed that there were no licensed sites in the Ross of Mull (which was also the case in 1992). However, analysis of the Valuation Roll via the Scottish Assessors Association website identified ten mobile homes in the Ross of Mull in 2006. A local respondent identified about 20 households living in mobile homes on the Ross of Mull.

Ardfern

2.47 The Argyll and Bute Local Housing Strategy 2004-2009 identified a specific issue with regard to the needs of a significant number of caravan dwellers in the Ardfern peninsula. This area was the subject of a detailed survey as part of the Mid Argyll Housing Market Study to assess the scope of the issue. This study found that 1 in 5 of the permanent residents in the area occupied chalet/bothies or caravans, amounting to 54 households or 89 residents. The Study estimated a need for 6-8 affordable rented properties, mainly family-sized, and 10-12 self-build houses. It also suggested a need for 2 supported units, linked to alarms and with care support (Argyll and Bute Council, 2005).

2.48 A local respondent noted 48 households in this area who lived in mobile homes. A key aspect of the households who lived in mobile homes was felt to be the positive impacts on the wider community in terms of economic and social benefits of having a local supply of accommodation that people could afford. Bevan *et al* (2001) highlighted the important role that permanent affordable housing could play in rural areas of England in terms of maintaining social networks, which had implications for enabling informal support to be given to vulnerable households. It appeared that a similar role was being played by the existence of residents in mobile homes in the area. The maintenance of social networks facilitated by mobile homes in the area enabled support to be provided to two households with mental health problems to allow them to live independently within that community. A key issue in this area was that a number of people were living in mobile homes without planning permission (but with the agreement of the landowner). One option being reviewed by the local authority was to serve enforcement notices to remove these mobile homes. However, there was strong local feeling that these homes were fulfilling a significant role in meeting local housing needs, with wider implications for the surrounding community in terms of employment and informal care.

Midlothian

2.49 The 2001 Census showed that there was a very different distribution of mobile homes in Midlothian compared with the other two case study areas. Most of the mobile homes

identified in the 2001 Census in Midlothian were on licensed parks – there were very few individual units recorded in the Census in this local authority area.

2.50 However, the 2001 Census did show a cluster of 11 individual mobile homes in the Gorebridge area of the district. An analysis of the Valuation Roll in 2006 showed that there were no caravans listed either on the Council tax list or the Business Rates, nor did local respondents identify any individual units in this area. It is possible that between the 2001 Census and 2006 that this group of mobile homes had been removed, or if the group were Gypsy/Travellers, that they may have moved on.

Winter lets

2.51 One feature of housing markets in some areas is that some households may spend part of the year in winter lets, and then move into caravans over the summer. Further, households may also spend some time in holiday caravans out of season, finding alternative accommodation during other parts of the year. This issue was explored in the case study areas.

2.52 A strong feature of the housing market in Skye that was noted by three respondents was the use of winter lets by households, including the use of holiday caravans outside of the peak tourist season. Further, a local respondent on Skye noted that some local residents occupied a caravan or mobile home, and let out their main residence for holiday use during the summer. In other areas such as Tiree, the movement of households between mobile homes and winter lets was felt to be far less marked.

2.53 The 2001 Census also identified non-permanent accommodation that was used as second or holiday homes. Table 2.18 shows that there were a large number of non-permanent dwellings that were second or holiday homes in Argyll and Bute, although that said, the number of non-permanent dwellings used as second and holiday homes in Highland that was recorded by the 2001 Census does seem suspiciously low. Although it is not possible to be precise, a proportion of these properties are likely to be used as winter lets.

Table 2.19 Number of non-permanent household spaces comprising vacant, second and holiday homes by case study area

	Occupied	Second/Holiday homes	Vacant
Argyll & Bute			
All Households	38969	5158	2447
Caravans/mobile homes	293	1514	35
Highland			
All Households	89533	6215	4000
Caravans/mobile homes	501	88	75
Midlothian			
All Households	32922	44	548
Caravans/mobile homes	365	3	23

Notes to table

Source: 2001 Census

Case study summaries

2.54 This section provides a summary of the mobile home markets in each of the case study areas.

Argyll and Bute

2.55 The local authority survey identified 144 mobile homes on licensed sites, mainly in the areas of Cowal, Kintyre and Helensburgh/Lomond. Further examination of specific areas within Argyll and Bute noted the presence of individual units, not located on licensed sites. In remote rural areas residential mobile homes were playing an important function in enabling households on lower incomes to live and work in these areas. Nevertheless, the vulnerability of people who occupy mobile homes without planning permission was highlighted in the area of Ardfern, where households were at risk of displacement through the serving of enforcement notices to remove mobile homes by statutory agencies. A high proportion of mobile home residents in Argyll and Bute were renting their homes from private landlords (40 per cent). Argyll and Bute had the largest proportion of residents of the three case study areas that lacked central heating.

The Highlands

2.56 The local authority noted that the Highlands contained 98 pitches on a number of small licensed sites – the largest having 50 residential units – including mixed sites with both holiday and residential use. There has been an issue in the past with some sites that are only licensed for holiday use that have accommodated people on a residential basis, although it is unknown how far this practice has continued.

2.57 The majority of residential mobile homes in the Highlands comprised individual units. Similar to the situation in Argyll and Bute Previous studies in the Highlands noted a link between a lack of affordable housing and the use of residential mobile homes, which was a view by local commentators that persisted in the present study. Nevertheless, there is a diverse range of reasons for the occupation of mobile homes. For example, some mobile homes are occupied on a temporary basis by people who are in the process of building bricks and mortar accommodation.

2.58 A relatively high proportion of residential mobile homes in the Highlands were rented by tenants of private landlords (37 per cent). Mobile homes in the Highlands were catering for younger households (between 16 and 49) than was the case in Midlothian. A high proportion of residents (63 per cent) did not have central heating.

Midlothian

2.59 Midlothian had a very different profile from the other two case studies. In contrast to the Highlands and Argyll and Bute, mobile homes in Midlothian were concentrated on three licensed sites. Two of these sites were relatively large, one site having 116 pitches and the other 205. There were very few individual mobile homes in Midlothian.

2.60 A high proportion of mobile homes were owned by their residents (78 per cent). Mobile home residents tended to be older than their counterparts in the other two case study areas, and a greater proportion also had long term limiting illnesses. However, the majority of residents had central heating.

Conclusions

2.61 A distinctive feature of mobile homes in Scotland was the relatively high proportion of tenants who rented their homes from private landlords compared with the situation in England and Wales. The 2001 Census showed that just over a third of all mobile home residents in Scotland were tenants of private landlords, whilst the respective figure in England and Wales was about one fifth. While recent changes to the legislation covering mobile homes in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 were aimed at people who owned their home and rented the space from site owners, there were concerns that this legislation fails to address the needs of people who rent their homes and who do not live on licensed sites (Scottish Parliament, 2005).

2.62 The Census showed that caravans, mobile homes and other temporary structures were playing a particular role in the housing system in terms of providing accommodation for older people, and also for people with a long term limiting illness. Thus, mobile homes were a more important form of accommodation for potentially vulnerable households than the general population. One conclusion to draw is that, whilst the sector is numerically small in number, the characteristics of people who live in the mobile home sector means that there is a greater onus on authorities to ensure that the intended outcomes of legislation are both monitored and enforced.

2.63 A diverse range of sources can be used to build up a picture of individual mobile homes. Both the 2001 Census and the Valuation Roll provide data on the incidence of individual units. These sources of data can be supplemented at local level through discussions with local people to derive an estimate of numbers, and also an indication of the type of households who are occupying mobile homes. A possible source of information at local level is the use of housing needs surveys. However, the experience of agencies shows that considerable effort is required to uncover the total number of residents living in mobile homes, who are often hidden away and difficult to identify. The information on individual mobile homes reiterated the conclusions of earlier research that this type of accommodation plays a small, but crucial, role in local housing markets in many remote and rural areas. In this respect, individual mobile homes are a strong characteristic feature of mobile home living in Scotland.

CHAPTER THREE LIVING IN A MOBILE HOME

Introduction

3.1 This chapter sets out the views and experiences of forty residents who live in park homes on licensed sites and also ten people who live in individual mobile homes that were either unlicensed or exempt from licensing. The first part of the chapter describes the characteristics of the respondents. The chapter then explores the reasons why respondents wanted to live in mobile homes, before discussing any alternative types of accommodation that the respondents considered at the time they moved into their mobile home. Following this, the chapter examines respondents' views on the condition of their homes, including fuel poverty and heating. Finally, the chapter discusses the future aspirations of respondents.

3.2 As noted in the methods, the research aimed to draw upon the views and experiences of a wide range of residents of mobile homes. In relation to park homes on licensed sites, respondents included people who lived on sites listed in the Residential Home Parks Directory, issued by the British Holiday and Home Parks Association. Respondents were also drawn from members of the National Association Park Home Residents. The latter respondents were perhaps more likely to have experienced some difficulty with their park home or site owner. Thus, the fifty residents included in this research cannot be taken as a representative sample of all mobile home residents in Scotland. Instead, the following analysis allows the experiences and views of the respondents to illustrate a range of issues about living in mobile homes.

Characteristics of the respondents

3.3 This section of the report describes the characteristics of the respondents (see Table 3.1 overleaf). Forty respondents were living in park homes on licensed sites. The 10 respondents living in individual mobile homes included a variety of circumstances. For example, three respondents were living in caravans on a temporary basis whilst they built their own homes; one respondent had been homeless and was now renting a caravan, whilst another respondent lived in portacabin on his own land. In another instance, a couple lived in a caravan in the summer and rented their bricks and mortar home as a holiday let. Four respondents lived in the Highland Council area, whilst the other 6 were based in Argyll and Bute, including 2 residents on Islay and one lived on Mull.

Household type

3.4 Half the respondents in the park homes were single. Seventeen households were couples and 3 households were couples with children. Of the respondents living in individual mobile homes, 4 households were single people, 3 households were couples and 3 households were couples with children.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of respondents

Household characteristic		Park home resident on licensed site	Resident in individual unit
Household Type	Single	20	4
	Couple	17	3
	Couple with children	3	3
	<i>Total</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>10</i>
Age	Under 50	3	7
	50 - 59	10	0
	60-69	16	3
	70 and over	11	0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>10</i>
Economic status	Employed	14	6
	Unemployed/long term illness	5	2
	Retired	20	2
	Student	1	0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>10</i>
Length of Residence	0-5	14	5
	6-10	14	4
	11-15	5	0
	Over 15	7	1
	<i>Total</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>10</i>

Age

3.5 Three of the respondents living in park homes were under the age of 49. Ten respondents were between the ages of 50 and 59; 16 respondents were aged between 60 and 69 and 11 were over 70. Respondents living in the individual mobile homes tended to be younger. Of the respondents living in individual mobile homes, 3 were aged between 60 and 69 and the other 7 were aged under 49.

Employment

3.6 Given the age profile of the respondents it was perhaps not surprising that half the respondents living in park homes were retired. Seven were working full-time, a further 7 were working part-time and one respondent was a student. Two respondents were unemployed and 3 respondents noted that they were not working due to ill health.

3.7 Six of the respondents living in individual mobile homes were either in full-time or part-time employment. Two of the respondents were retired and two were unemployed.

Length of residence

3.8 Fourteen of the households in park homes had lived in their current home between 6 and 10 years. Five households had been living in their park home between 11 and 15 years, and 7 households for over 15 years. Three of the respondents had been in their current home for less than a year. Of the respondents living in individual mobile homes, 5 had lived in their home between one and 5 years, and 3 households over 6 years (one of which had lived in their mobile home for over 30 years).

Tenure of previous accommodation

3.9 Twenty-seven of the respondents had previously owned their own homes, prior to moving into a park home or an individual mobile home. Twelve respondents had lived in privately rented accommodation, of which 6 respondents had lived in accommodation that was tied with employment. Five respondents had rented accommodation from a local authority or housing association. One respondent had previously lived in shared ownership accommodation. Four respondents had lived in another park home or individual mobile home. One respondent had been homeless, living in a tent.

Tenure of respondents

3.10 Most respondents owned their home. The majority of households who lived on licensed sites owned their park home and rented the stance from the park owner. Two respondents on licensed sites rented their home from the park owner.

3.11 Of the 10 respondents who lived in individual mobile homes, 6 owned their home. Two owned their caravans, and rented or leased the land on which the caravan was situated. Two respondents rented their caravans from landlords. One respondent owned his own land, but rented a portacabin, and the final respondents owned their house, an adjacent caravan and the land on which both were situated, and vacated their house each summer to let out as holiday accommodation, moving into the caravan to live during the tourist season.

Renting a home

3.12 Baxter *et al* (1997) suggested that people who occupy mobile homes tend to have a low awareness of their rights with regard to security of tenure. The respondents who rented their homes had a variety of agreements with their landlords. Two respondents, who lived on licensed sites, had Short Assured Tenancies. Three respondents who lived in individual mobile homes had more informal arrangements with their landlords. One respondent did not have a written tenancy, but instead had a verbal agreement with their landlord. In another instance, the landlord had drawn up their own tenancy agreement, citing one week's notice to quit. In all cases, the respondents noted that they were on good terms with their landlord. However, one of the respondents with a more informal arrangement commented on the security of tenure that they enjoyed,

“I’ve got a contract. It says it can give one week’s notice, so basically they can turn around and say ‘right we want to you out by next weekend’. And I

suppose I would have to go. Or I would have to be nasty and go to the CAB and demand my rights to stay here. But hopefully it'll never come to that.... It's just something the man wrote out himself. I would have preferred to have a proper Short Assured Tenancy, giving me a guaranteed six months or something" (renter).

3.13 However, renting from a private landlord, even with a Short Assured Tenancy, would evidently not suit everyone. One respondent had bought their caravan, and leased the land on which it was sited. This respondent felt the lease provided much greater security in comparison with renting from a private landlord,

"There is some private renting round here. No idea how much, but it's all six month leases, and well, we wouldn't feel secure. We lease this piece of land and we feel more secure than we've felt for years" (owner; leases the land).

Reasons for living in mobile homes

3.14 Respondents described a variety of reasons for wanting to live in mobile homes, and often there wasn't a single reason, but rather a combination of motivations for moving into mobile homes.

3.15 The most common factor across the case study areas was financial reasons. In the Midlothian case study, most respondents had moved from Edinburgh, where many noted that house prices were too high for them to afford to move into the type of accommodation they were looking for. Living in a park home offered opportunities for a style of living that these respondents could not afford in other parts of the housing market. Respondents had often lived in tenements, either owned or in some cases these were ex council properties that had been bought under the Right to Buy. Alternatively respondents had rented property such as flats from the local authority. Similarly, in accessible rural and remote rural areas in the other two case study areas house prices were viewed as way beyond what respondents could afford, or would require substantial renovation. In remote rural areas in particular, the supply of affordable alternatives to either rent or buy was viewed as problematic (and this issue is explored in more detail in the next section of the chapter – alternative accommodation).

3.16 A group of respondents noted that they had reached a stage in their lives when either they did not want to take on a mortgage, or had been turned down for a mortgage because of their advanced years. In two cases, respondents stated that it was not the cost of a mortgage itself that was prohibitive, but the associated costs of home ownership which put them off moving to another house or flat, such as the price of mortgage protection insurance for an older person, or council tax.

3.17 Further, respondents highlighted that moving into a mobile home enabled them to live mortgage free,

"I had a mortgage on the flat and now I've bought the mobile home I don't have the mortgage. OK, so I've got to pay ground rent, but it's swings and roundabouts because the ground rent is cheaper than the mortgage" (owner; rents a stance).

In other instances, financial considerations resulted from a separation or divorce and the respondent needed somewhere to live.

3.18 One important reason associated with wanting to leave previous accommodation was to escape ‘bad neighbours’ or a ‘rough area’. This group of respondents most often had either rented accommodation from a local authority or a housing association, or had lived in properties that had been bought from the local authority as part of the Right to Buy. These respondents emphasised the peace and quiet that could be enjoyed as part of park home living.

3.19 Another associated factor noted by respondents was the feeling of security to be had by living in a park home. To a certain extent, the feeling of security was derived from being in a community of people who were of similar age,

“We lived in Manchester in a bad area. It was the thought of being able to live somewhere without children and people our own age. It was about security. There’s always someone around, and we all look out for one another. It’s just a nice little community where we are here. We all know one another and it’s just secure. I feel so content and so secure” (owner; rents a stance).

3.20 For some residents, park homes offered good value for money in relation to the space they had available, which compared favourably with the size of their previous accommodation,

“I have a good sized lounge – it’s bigger than the lounge was in my flat. The bedrooms could be a bit bigger, but then the bedrooms in my flat weren’t very big. In my flat, the bathroom didn’t have a window. It had a fan, and I hated it. Well, I’ve got a window here” (owner; rents a stance).

“I might add it’s a pretty decent size. I have two double bedrooms. The kitchen’s bigger than anything I’ve ever had in a flat, and sometimes I found they were quite claustrophobic, especially living in a town, especially in one bedroom flats. I was never particularly happy. But it’s better here, there’s a lot of greenery and the neighbours do my garden” (owner; rents a stance).

3.21 Another group of respondents described moving for lifestyle reasons, and that moving to a park home provided the opportunity to live in a picturesque location in an affordable way. These respondents emphasised the attractive qualities of the environment they lived in. In most cases, they stressed that they would not have been able to afford to live in these kinds of areas if park homes were not available. Either house prices were beyond their reach, or properties that were affordable required considerable investment in terms of refurbishment.

3.22 Chapter two highlighted the relatively high proportion of households living in mobile homes who reported long term limiting illnesses. Eleven of the interviews with respondents revealed that poor health was indeed an important motivation for acquiring a mobile home. There were a variety of factors associated with health and the perceived benefits of mobile home living as a viable response.

3.23 Some respondents highlighted that poor health meant that they had sought to reduce their overheads by moving to a park home. This move was seen as a way of cutting down housing costs and achieving greater financial security in the face of the loss of income resulting from an onset of poor health. For example, a couple of respondents commented that buying a park home meant that they could live mortgage free.

3.24 Another reason for buying a park home was that they were viewed as more accessible for disabled people. Similarly, park homes could be readily adapted to meet the needs of disabled people. As one respondent commented,

“We sold the house and what we made on the house allowed us to buy this and do it up the way we wanted it. We bought it as a shell and converted inside to suit me – no problem adapting it. It’s brilliant inside. I’ve got it the way I want it. The floors are on one level. As far as I’m concerned I couldn’t get anything better anywhere else, because it’s been done as I want it. The house itself, I wouldn’t change it, it suits exactly what I need” (owner; rents a stance).

“My husband wasn’t very well and we had stairs in the last place. We had also been broken into. So we decided to move but we couldn’t find a house for the same price. This was the nearest thing that we could buy that was alike, but had no stairs. It has two bedrooms and a small garden and it’s beautiful – perfect” (owner; rents a stance).

Alternative accommodation

3.25 Respondents were asked if they had considered any other forms of accommodation at the time they had moved into their mobile home. The majority of respondents had considered other options, but noted a variety of reasons for not pursuing other types of accommodation, closely linked to the points raised in the section above. One of the main reasons was that other types of accommodation were viewed as either unaffordable, or in undesirable areas. Further, as noted above, alternative accommodation was sometimes viewed as disabling for respondents with impairments or suffering ill health – park homes were seen as more accessible and more easily adapted.

3.26 A small number of respondents commented that a mobile home was their first choice accommodation,

“We retired back to Scotland. We went to an exhibition and fell in love with them. It was everything we needed and could afford at the time. We had previously just thought about getting an ordinary caravan and spending ten months there and then two months away – going to the sun” (owner; rents a stance).

3.27 In the rural and remote areas a recurring theme was the lack of a viable alternative in terms of other types of accommodation. As one respondent in an individual mobile home noted,

“There wasn’t an option if I wanted to stay in this particular area. There’s a town maybe 25 miles away, probably with rental flats around there. But I’m based here as I wanted to stay in this area. There really isn’t anything around. This is the only option – live in a caravan” (renter).

3.28 A couple of respondents reflected on the role of individual mobile homes as a significant component of very localised housing systems in rural and remote areas,

“I think it’s an interesting point that people who come here and visit can’t believe just how many caravans there are. I think if people have got the ground, and they’ve permission they will put one on. Either for a holiday let but you’ll usually find some one living in it. But people are amazed at how many there are of all different shapes and sizes and ages” (owner; owns the land).

As one respondent in an individual mobile home rather ruefully noted,

“Most of the people staying in the caravans around here are working here. They’re the ones building the new houses for the incomers who have the money. So it’s slightly ironic” (renter).

3.29 In another instance a couple had a house on a smallholding, but due to poor health the respondents had decided to move out of the house each summer and let it out for holiday accommodation, moving into a mobile home during this period. Their house was their only significant asset and became the most important source of income for them in the summer months,

“We didn’t have much option really. We needed the money to pay the rent and bills. If I could have afforded to stay in the house, I would have stayed in the house. I just couldn’t afford to stay in it” (owner; own the land).

3.30 In two remote rural locations within one of the case study areas, there were concentrations of individual mobile homes because landowners were sympathetic to the housing needs of local people, and allowed a number of mobile homes on their land. As one respondent noted,

“I’ve known about this for a long time. The Laird has had these dwellings here for a long time and he’s housing a lot of people – and been famous for it. And I used to socialise here so I’ve always known about it” (owner; leases the land).

3.31 One respondent described the housing market on the island where they lived, noting that the very limited supply of housing meant that the only two viable alternatives available to them were to transport a kit house onto the island, which was felt to be too expensive, or to buy a caravan, and transport that to the island.

3.32 A small group of respondents who lived in individual mobile homes in remote and rural areas also noted the very limited supply of housing where they lived. An important route into acquiring a home was to get hold of a piece of land and to build their own home. Three respondents were doing precisely that. However, an agency felt that households on

lower incomes were gradually being squeezed out of even this approach. This agency noted that in recent years land prices had increased dramatically. This view was echoed by one of the respondents in an individual mobile home living in a remote rural area,

“Prices are going up to two hundred thousand. They’ve just gone silly. Even the price of land – an idea would have been to maybe rent a piece of land, and then maybe buy the land and from there to progress to building your own house. That was kind of my idea. But even the land prices have rocketed. You’re looking at maybe eighty thousand for a plot, so now you’re really getting priced out. So I’ve got stuck with renting” (renter).

Condition of the dwellings

3.33 The diversity of the characteristics of the sector are encapsulated in the impact of mobile homes on health. Chapter Two highlighted that households reporting a long term limiting illness were over represented in mobile homes. Some of the respondents, as noted earlier in this chapter, had made a positive choice to move to a park home because of their impairments or poor health. In these cases, park homes offered a solution in terms of improved accessibility around the home and neighbourhood, as well as a home that could be readily adapted to suit an individual’s needs. However, previous research has also highlighted that mobile homes themselves may contribute to poor health (Laing and Lindsay, 1980). The research by Laing and Lindsay (1980) noted evidence from the then Badenoch and Strathspey District Council that GP’s in that area highlighted that mobile homes were unsuitable for prolonged residential use particularly where young people were involved. This point was reiterated by a respondent in the current research, who noted that her mother had had to move out of her mobile home for health reasons on the advice of her GP.

Condensation

3.34 The majority of respondents in both park homes and individual mobile homes did not report any problems with condensation. However, nine respondents in park homes described the presence of condensation in their homes, although it was evident that there was considerable variation in the extent to which condensation occurred or was considered a difficulty by these latter respondents. For some of these respondents, condensation was a very minor issue,

“The walls are very thin. I wouldn’t say I have a problem with it – just occasionally in the winter” (owner; rents a stance).

3.35 Two respondents in park homes noted that condensation had been a problem when they had first moved in, but that it had subsequently been sorted out by having double glazing put in. However, for other people, condensation was an ongoing issue that affected the quality of their lives,

“I have had problems with condensation. It can be bad. The bedroom is the most problem place, and in my wardrobes, I have problems with my clothes and bags” (owner; rents a stance).

3.36 Four respondents in park homes had bought dehumidifiers to help clear the level of moisture in the air. Two park home respondents reported poor standards of work that had been undertaken during the occupation of their home by previous owners. For example, the exterior of one park home had been cladded and the person who undertook the work covered up all the vents. In another instance, a park home had been boxed in, but insufficient ventilation meant that air had not been allowed to circulate underneath the park home.

3.37 Four respondents who lived in individual mobile homes reported the presence of damp,

“We have the usual problems with condensation and damp. It’s a lot better than it could be because we’re not using the gas fire and we just open up the windows every morning. I certainly couldn’t dry any washing in the caravan. If you’re careful and have ventilation when you’re cooking then it’s not so bad. With damp, we’ve got a few spots – the bathroom’s always a problem. But I clean that up with vinegar and bicarbonate of soda, and that keeps it at bay for a couple of weeks. You wouldn’t be able to store any clothes that you’re not wearing all the time” (owner; owns the land).

“You do get problems with condensation, especially in the winter time it’s pretty bad. Just try and get the place aired. That’s why we use electric heating. Caravans often have gas heating, but people don’t use it because it causes the condensation” (owner; owns the land).

Space

3.38 Most respondents reported that the space in their homes was adequate for their needs. Only four respondents in park homes stated that space was a problem. However, six of the respondents in individual mobile homes felt that space was inadequate, as noted by two respondents,

“There’s no work surface to prepare food on. I just use the top of the fridge. There is a table, but all my belongings are piled up on it” (renter).

“We usually shift some stuff from the house into the spare room. You haven’t got much room in it. We’ve also got to do the laundry for the self catering in the caravan, so it’s not really ideal. We get used to it. You’ve just got to put up with these kinds of things” (owner; croft).

3.39 These results need to be placed in the context of the group of respondents who took part in the research, who tended to be single people or couples. The small number of families who took part in the research tended to be more circumspect about space. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that a number of other respondents stated that they had more space in their current accommodation compared with their previous ‘bricks and mortar’ homes, which had often been flats.

Fuel Poverty and Heating

3.40 The Scottish Government (2006c) highlighted the impact of fuel poverty on vulnerable groups such as older people, people with a disability or long term illness. Evidence from the 2001 Census showed that both these groups were over represented in mobile homes.

3.41 The Scottish Government defined fuel poverty as,

“a household is in fuel poverty if it would be required to spend more than 10% of its income (including Housing Benefit or Income Support for Mortgage Interest) on all household fuel use.” (Scottish Government, 2006c, p4).

3.42 A combination of factors can lead to fuel poverty of which the most significant are low incomes, fuel costs and energy efficiency. Research has highlighted that mobile homes exhibit very low standards of energy efficiency and are also responsible for significant emissions of carbon dioxide (Preston and Jones, 2004). Fuel costs can also be significant in relation to mobile homes because of the type of fuel that are available to residents of mobile homes, and also the basis on which fuel is available. Only a couple of the respondents in this research had access to mains gas. It was much more common for respondents to use Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), or solid fuel which tend to be more expensive than other types of fuel (Preston and Jones, 2004). As one respondent in a park home noted,

“I’ve got LPG – although it’s quite expensive. I don’t use it much because of the price of it. It’s £1.50 per unit. So I do use it, but not a great deal. Just when the grandchildren come down, I put it on. I have halogen heaters, but it can get cold” (owner; rents the stance).

Further, gas and electricity can be more expensive on park home sites because supplies are charged to site owners at the commercial, rather than domestic rate, the costs of which are often passed on to residents. One characteristic of park home living is that residents often do not enjoy the market choice that is available to people living in bricks and mortar with regard to energy suppliers. Instead, residents are reliant on the site owner.

3.43 A distinction could be drawn between respondents who lived in park homes and those residents who lived in mobile homes that were never designed for permanent residential occupation and who tended to live in the individual mobile homes. The following comments illustrated some of the experiences of these latter respondents,

“I had the pipes freeze up last winter. I went away for the week and the temperature went down to minus ten. Even though the water was turned off it’s difficult to drain the pipes and they are exposed underneath the caravan. I had about five leaks when I came back, but they got the plumber out the next day. The caravan is open underneath and the owner has said they will get round to doing it. The other caravan has skirting round it and they have put heating coils round the pipes to come on when it dips below freezing” (renter).

“On a fine day it’s fine. But if it’s wet and cold, it’s not very nice really. It’s really cold, you know? They’re really cold and you couldn’t stay in them the

winter really. Even just now (May) we've got an electric blanket on, you know" (owner; owns the land).

"The worst thing about it is the winter time. It's heating the place. Because it's a caravan there's no real insulation in it. Your heating bills go through the roof in winter" (renter, owns the land).

"There's a lot of draughts – there's half a dozen vents. And the windows aren't double glazed. There's a draught around the door. It's in a pretty sheltered position, so I was surprised when it froze up. I came in one day and the toilet was frozen. The cistern was frozen so I didn't have water for a few days because I was waiting for it to thaw out before I could turn the water back on" (renter).

3.44 In contrast, other respondents, mainly the park home residents, felt that their homes were perfectly adequate with regard to warmth, often having insulation and double glazing. Indeed, a number of respondents, both in park homes and individual mobile homes, commented on measures they had taken to improve the energy efficiency of their homes,

"The heating is fine. If you can afford the coal, it's certainly not cold. But when we came we put pine cladding with insulation between. And put a pitched roof on with cladding. But the floor does get cold, because you get a hearty wind blowing beneath you. It gets hot in the summer, but you just open a window" (owner; rents a stance).

"They're excellent. These days they are made like a house. These ones I'm staying in are older ones – they are just holiday homes and they hadn't got double glazing or central heating. But I've put all that in" (owner; rents a stance).

3.45 Respondents were asked to comment on the extent to which they felt that their heating bills were affordable or not, and to estimate the proportion of their income that they spent on heating their homes. Nineteen respondents, living in both park homes and individual mobile homes, estimated that their heating bills were either 10 per cent or more of their total incomes,

"The Council Tax and heating are the biggest bills. But you've got to do it because they've really got to be heated. And you don't have a choice really especially with children. But we do all sit on the sofa, get a duvet and cuddle up – which is quite nice" (owner; owns the land).

"Between the diesel generator and the coal, I would say it's about 30% of my income. The problem with the diesel is that you have to find the money to buy it in bulk. So it's not like a bag of coal where you can get a bag for seven pounds. You have to buy a £1000 worth of diesel. So I have to work most of the summer to buy the diesel to do me for the rest of the year" (leases the property; owns the land).

"It's adequate; it's just the cost of it. Put it this way, over winter we usually get a three monthly account for the gas and it's usually 800 pounds. That's

half of one of our pensions. And that's a lot of money, which is why we're going to change" (owner; owns the land).

3.46 One respondent noted that the only reason her heating bill was less than ten per cent of her income was because she did not turn on the heating,

"It is OK, but I have to go to bed with a hot water bottle, because I can't afford to put it on. That's just me. I'm an oldie, you see. The bottles cost £75 and last about three weeks in winter, so I just go to bed early – it's not much fun. It should be more than ten per cent. But I don't put it on, because I'm frightened of using the gas. I'm frightened of the heating – of the gas bill" (owner; rents a stance).

This point was also reiterated by a respondent on another site,

"A lot of people on this park don't use their gas because of the price of it. You use it when you first come in, until you get your first big bill. You just couldn't afford that. You couldn't keep that up" (owner; rents a stance).

3.47 A related issue about the weather in parts of Scotland was not just the potential cold, but also the wind, which can occasionally lead to tragic consequences such as the fatality of a mobile home resident on Skye in 2005. An agency in the Highland case study area noted that a couple of caravans had been severely damaged in a storm in January 2006 in their locality. These caravans had been located on the coast, but were usually sheltered from the prevailing winds. However, strong winds from an unusual direction had caused the problems which, although nobody was hurt, did result in the displacement of the occupiers. Similarly, another agency in Argyll and Bute noted that a resident of a mobile home had gone to stay with her sister one night during a violent storm last winter (2005/6), only to return to it the following day to see that it had been destroyed.

3.48 Four respondents living in individual mobile homes in the Highland and Argyll and Bute case study areas commented on their concerns about the weather in their area of Scotland,

"There's some horrendous winds you get here. And there have been some caravans damaged by storms and things. We've got a big metal container in front of it to protect us and have tied down everything possible. It's fine" (owner; croft).

"It's actually quite sheltered here. It's been chosen for that reason. It's not so bad. It's exposed from the North, but you don't get so many gales from the north end. It's mostly from the South West. Since the new roof has been on it feels slightly more safe" (renter).

"It's slightly exposed and I do get the wind, so in winter it's not so good, but it's well strapped down. That's the only thing, when it's windy and heavy rain it does rock about a bit, but I've got used to that now" (renter).

"When it rains it's like being in a tent – you can hear everything. But you get used to that, that's OK, but it's the high winds that are quite frightening. We

put all of the stone from the cottage that was there before round the caravan and that has made a difference. I think it's quite secure now. Before, I couldn't sleep thinking: it's going to go; it's going to go. And it's quite scary" (owner; owns the land).

3.49 Thus, the limitations of living in caravans not intended for permanent residential occupation were amply demonstrated by the views of the occupants who lived in them. These limitations were exacerbated by the weather conditions in particular areas of Scotland, especially during the winter months. The evidence from this research suggested that it is those respondents living in individual mobile homes, both owners and renters alike, who were the most susceptible to the cold and wind.

3.50 Nevertheless, it is important to note that although respondents were well aware of the drawbacks, there was clearly a sense that for the majority, living in a mobile home offered many positives. The circumstances and conditions of caravans was relative only to the other types of accommodation that were realistically available to these households, and the difficulties described by respondents need to be seen in this context. This point is not to suggest that accommodation of poor quality is in any way acceptable, but that enforcement of standards is only half the story if there isn't a viable alternative for people to remain living in the locality of their choosing. For example, one respondent noted that whilst there were such limitations with living in a caravan that it could only be viewed as a temporary measure, she also noted that their caravan was preferable to the damp and mould in their previous home which had been a privately rented house. As noted in the previous chapter, residential occupation of caravans is indicative of housing stress in many localities.

Access to services

3.51 One issue about the location of mobile homes was that there may be the potential for greater problems in terms of access to services because of where they are sited, either individual mobile homes in isolated locations, or park homes on sites on the edge of urban centres. However, a more significant factor appeared to be whether or not respondents lived in remote rural areas, rather than the actual location of a mobile home itself. In this respect, a distinction could be drawn between respondents living in remote rural areas and those households living in urban areas, or readily accessible to urban centres in relation to views on access to services. Most respondents living in remote rural areas seemed quite philosophical about access to services, accepting that living in these areas brought with it trade offs in terms of the availability of services. All these respondents had access to a car, which was viewed as essential. However, one household was concerned about changes to their pension payments and the implications of this change for access to their money,

"We're lucky because we have a doctor's surgery in the village. We have two shops: a Post Office and a general store. Every so often we go to Oban to stock up, or Tobermory. We get our pension via the post office. It's the only cash we can get. You're looking at nearly 100 pounds to go to Oban to get to the bank to get cash out" (owner; owns the land).

3.52 Many of the respondents living in urban or accessible rural areas commented positively on the choices available to them in terms of using private or public transport to get

to services. Indeed, in the Midlothian case study, the location of park home sites happened to be near the development of retail parks on the edge of Edinburgh,

“We’re in an ideal spot. And this is something we didn’t foresee when we moved out here. We are a ten minute walk from a retail park. The first shop we reach is IKEA – what can I say? Ten minutes and we have all the shops there. Transport is very good. With the buses in 20 minutes we can be in the centre of Edinburgh” (owner; rents the stance).

3.53 However, not all respondents living in urban or accessible rural areas felt that services were readily accessible, and this, not surprisingly, depended on car ownership. The significance of car ownership was reflected in the views of a couple of respondents living in park homes who commented on the importance of being able to continue driving into later life. One respondent noted that she would eventually have to give up her car, but was confident that she would be able to rely on neighbours for help. Another respondent commented,

“The bus service stops at the gates. The supermarket is four miles away. I’m hanging on to the car. It’s hopeless without a car” (owner; rents the stance).

Future aspirations

3.54 Demographic trends in Scotland potentially suggest a growing demand for park home living. The Scottish Government (2006b) highlighted that between 2004 and 2031 that the number of people at or above the state pension age is projected to rise by more than 35%, reaching 1.31 million persons in 2031. The number of people aged 75 and over is projected to rise by 75% from 0.37 million in 2004 to 0.65 million by 2031. Given the popularity of park homes amongst older people, it would seem reasonable to infer an increased demand for this type of accommodation.

3.55 Future intentions and aspirations were inevitably bound up closely with attitudes towards living in mobile homes and experiences of this form of accommodation or living on park home sites. The large majority of respondents living in park homes expressed considerable satisfaction with living in a mobile home. These residents were most likely to want to continue living in this form of accommodation. However, this view was not universal amongst all respondents in park homes,

“I would never regard a mobile home as a permanent dwelling. Basically because no matter how good they are, they’re still little huts on wheels. And take away the wheels and put this little hut on the ground, this would be regarded as not very good accommodation. They’re nice enough, don’t get me wrong, there’s nothing wrong with them. It’s just that they’re temporary” (owner; rents a stance).

3.56 Even those respondents who experienced difficulties with site owners often reported considerable satisfaction with their homes. Nevertheless, in contrast, one respondent in a park home commented that her negative experiences with a site owner meant that she wanted to move to another type of accommodation. This respondent had applied to the local authority for council accommodation. Certainly of the small number of respondents who

were actively looking to move, most had their name down either with the local authority for council accommodation or with housing associations. However, a number of other respondents felt that they were trapped where they were, either because of a view that they could not afford to buy another home or a feeling that they would not be eligible for social rented accommodation,

“I’m not keen on housing association or the council – there are long waiting lists. I own my own home and a housing association would laugh me out of the building. While you’ve got your own home, the council aren’t likely to give you one. I don’t fancy living in a rabbit hutch anyway, which is what a lot of council bungalows are” (owner; rents a stance).

3.57 A small number of residents felt that they were in a more invidious position. As one respondent noted,

“Because of my wife’s health we would need to be close to town in a single storey dwelling. But now we’re trapped because we’re in a chalet worth about 35-45,000 pounds. We’re trapped in that respect. The owner would like us to walk away. The owner is not allowing sales with people moving into existing homes. He just wants people off. A couple of people have managed to sell, where their home has been removed to somewhere else, but only at a considerable loss” (owner; rents a stance).

3.58 One issue is the extent to which such accommodation necessarily remains affordable to people on lower incomes. A couple of respondents noted the increase in the quality and standard of new park homes that were being located on their sites, but also commented on the cost of the new park homes.

3.59 One respondent in a remote rural area reflected on his chances of obtaining alternative accommodation,

Respondent: “There’s not many private landlords round here. I look at the papers every week, and every single one says ‘No DSS’. So it’s very difficult to find a landlord who’ll accept Housing Benefit. So I think I’ll be stuck here until either I get a full-time job and can afford to rent a place privately, or I get offered a place from a housing association”.

Interviewer: “what about the council”?

Respondent: “(groans) I’ll be an old man before I get something off the council. I’m a single male so the council doesn’t really care....when I first started hassling the council I was living in a tent. And they told me that I wasn’t homeless because I was living in a tent” (renter).

Perceptions of mobile homes

3.60 A number of respondents reflected on perceptions of mobile homes within broader society. Often respondents expressed frustration or exasperation at attitudes which they encountered amongst people with regard to living in mobile homes:

“We sometimes feel that people look down on us because we live in mobile homes, and believe you me there’s no need for people to do that. A lot of us like myself have decent jobs. I’m a professional person. There’s a lot of people come here because of circumstances like myself who couldn’t afford a proper house as I call it, and we all enjoy living here. But there is still a lot of prejudice against mobile homes” (Owner, rents the stance).

3.61 Occasionally respondents felt that negative perceptions of mobile homes coloured the attitudes of service providers in statutory agencies such as local authorities:

“We pay rates like anybody else and it’s no different from anything else in a way, we’re not treated any differently. But sometimes they (the council) kind of object to mobile homes. I think the fact that it kind of fits in with the rest of the scenery, it shouldn’t make any difference. It would be more affordable for people in our position, you know – pensioners” (Owner, owns the land).

3.62 One agency noted that a number of businesses had experienced difficulty in getting clear guidance from local authorities about the siting of mobile homes on their land, or the implications of having mobile homes on their land with regard to Council Tax. Two of the residents also noted problems in requesting guidance from authorities about issues such as Council Tax. One respondent noted,

“The council don’t seem to understand the concept of a residential caravan when it comes to claiming Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. Every year you get the same questions. There’s this performance every year, and there’s delays because there’s letters having to go backwards and forwards to confirm this and confirm that. That’s a pain really. It’s just a hassle every year” (renter).

Conclusions

3.63 Affordability of accommodation was a significant driver in prompting people to consider mobile homes in both urban and rural areas alike. However, in remote rural areas it tended to be the lack of any viable alternative to rent or buy a home, including a reported lack of affordable housing for respondents in these areas. Respondents who had lived within the Edinburgh housing market area commented on the prohibitive cost of buying or renting bricks and mortar. However in contrast to respondents in the remote rural locations, many of these respondents had rejected the possibility of moving into social rented accommodation, not because there was anything wrong with the accommodation *per se*, but as a result of negative perceptions of the areas and of antisocial behaviour. Indeed, mobile homes offered an affordable style of living for respondents who wanted to leave areas which they felt were blighted by crime and anti-social behaviour.

3.64 The majority of respondents were very satisfied with living in mobile homes, although this feeling was not universal. Positive aspects of living in mobile homes included:

- More affordable accommodation, not just in terms of buying a home, but also maintenance, running costs – and less housework;

- An opportunity to live in very attractive locations that would otherwise be unaffordable;
- Living in a neighbourhood with like minded individuals, often with a strong sense of community;
- A safe environment, mostly free from anti-social behaviour;
- Accommodation that was accessible and readily adapted to suit a resident's needs.

Negative factors associated with mobile homes included:

- Vulnerability to bad weather;
- Expensiveness to heat;
- Living in caravans that were not intended for permanent residential occupation;
- Living in park homes could be affected by poor relations with the park owner.

3.65 The factors identified above affected both people who owned their homes, as well as private tenants, and their experiences illustrated that there was considerable diversity with regard to the condition of their homes. The small number of respondents in this research who rented their homes all described relations with their landlords as good, although these respondents varied as to whether or not they had written tenancy agreements.

CHAPTER FOUR LIVING ON LICENSED PARK HOME SITES

Introduction

4.1 Chapter Four focuses on the views of the forty respondents who lived in park homes on licensed sites, and does not include the ten respondents who lived either in mobile homes that were either unlicensed or that were exempt from licensing. Firstly, the chapter examines respondents' opinions on the layout of the sites where they lived and the way in which they felt the sites were maintained. Secondly, the chapter describes relations between the respondents and the park owner. Thirdly the chapter considers a variety of aspects of living on licensed sites such as written agreements under the 1983 Mobile Homes Act, pitch fees and the legislation covering park homes.

Site layout and maintenance

4.2 The majority of respondents felt that the layout of the sites where their park homes were located, and the way that they were maintained were adequate,

"This one's really nice. I don't think I could fault it at all. There are noisy kennels next door, but this was pointed out when I viewed the property. The roads could do with a bit of upgrading in places, but then I've seen an awful lot worse in the town" (owner; rents a stance).

"I'm quite happy with it. It's a nice site and in a beautiful location. Some sites are very prim and proper, but it's more relaxed here. I wouldn't say it's perfectly maintained, but it's adequate" (owner; rents a stance).

4.3 However, ten respondents noted particular problems about either the layout or the maintenance of their sites or both,

"It was OK at first. It really is a mess now. It been allowed to deteriorate. You're sat here in the middle of the country, you're watching deer go past your window in the fields. There's a river out the back. You've got woods all around you. You couldn't, on a day like today with the sun shining, ask for anything better. But the mess here is unbelievable. You'd have to see it to believe it" (owner; rents a stance).

"It's a disgrace. There's a new owner took over three years ago, and he's using threatening tactics to get people off the site. He puts metal cages up around them when he demolishes them, and it's worse than a building site just now" (owner; rents a stance).

4.4 One problem identified by a couple of respondents was an inadequate power supply on their parks,

"The main problem in the chalet is fluctuations in electricity. Every so often the lights trip. I had everything electrical checked out, and it was OK. So I take it that it's to do with the Park, and I know a lot of people here get it. A lot

of people are complaining that the fuses on the park aren't strong enough" (owner; rents a stance).

However, one concern is that the costs of any improvement in power supply on the parks where an upgrade was necessary would be passed on to residents through an increase in pitch fees.

Relations with the park owner

4.5 Respondents were asked how far they got on with the park owner. About half the respondents were positive about their relationship with the park owner, and also the staff who worked on the park, such as the site manager, or maintenance staff,

"The owner is very pleasant and very approachable. (Name) who works in the office is lovely and very helpful, and so is the site manager. You can go to him with anything and he will get back to you" (owner; rents a stance).

"People in the office are very helpful. The guys that work in the park are very pleasant, and helpful too. You can ask them anything, no problems at all. We seldom see the actual owner" (owner; rents a stance).

4.6 Two respondents, both on the same site, expressed a concern that although they were positive about their current park owner, they were worried about what might happen if a new owner took over. This concern led to a certain amount of anxiety about the future for these respondents,

"The current owner is fine. He's actually coming up to retirement so he may be selling soon. The owner lease the site from (name). We are always concerned when we here about things changing. We've heard there might be a proposal to develop part of the site, which we're not happy about. There's one or two things in the air at the moment, which I'm a bit wary of. I'm a bit concerned, you know, how long term that is a concern for us at the moment, the site changing hands" (owner; rents a stance).

4.7 Other respondents reported that they were on poor terms with the park owner, or had experienced difficulties with the site owner. Two respondents on two different sites described damage that had been caused to their homes by the actions of their park owners,

"He brought a caravan onto the site using a land cruiser instead of a low loader and damaged the end of my home. It's not nice. I'm on my own. I'm struggling to survive. I would like a little bit of financial help for all the damage he does" (owner; rents a stance).

In the other instance, the respondent noted that they had been asked to move to another part of the site by the owner. However, damage had been caused to the inside of their home in the process of being moved by representatives of the site owner from one part of the site to another, which the site owner refused to rectify.

Written Agreements under the 1983 Mobile Homes Act

4.8 The Mobile Homes Act (1983) applies to owner occupiers on protected sites and sets out that they are entitled to a written agreement setting out their rights and responsibilities. The majority of respondents reported that they had written agreements. However, worryingly, seven respondents on three different sites stated that they had never received a written agreement from their park owner,

“We have no Agreement. You just have to live with it. It’s like crossing the road - you have to take a chance every so often. With this Act we should have an Agreement and we should know where we stand. Well we don’t know where we stand. It’s all very well on a sunny day and people walk past and say hello and stuff. But when something goes wrong it’s another story” (owner; rents a stance).

4.9 However, occasionally some respondents felt that even with an Agreement, there was too much ambiguity in the way that the current legislation could be interpreted,

“The people that own the site seem to think they have a God given right to do as they like on the site. The way I read the Mobile Homes Act, I’ve got as much rights as they have. Unless things are made a lot clearer in Agreements, there’s always going to be rows over it. He’s absolutely convinced his solicitor is right – of course he’s right because the solicitor is going to read it his way. I don’t know what you’ll put in your report, but you need to get across to whoever when they write these laws, they’ve got to make them more understandable to the average person. A lot of people who live in park homes can’t afford fancy lawyers to get it all explained to them. You should be able to read one of these park home agreements and say that it says A, B and C and that’s what it means” (owner; rents a stance).

Pitch fees

4.10 Most respondents living in park homes on licensed sites felt that pitch fees were at a reasonable level, and that increases in pitch fees were not unduly high. In most of these cases, increases were said to be roughly in line with the Retail Price Index. As one such respondent commented on pitch fees,

“A lot of people moan, but they went up 65p per week this year, which is neither here nor there. He (the site owner) pays the water rates, and you know how the price of water has shot up” (owner; rents a stance).

4.11 Another respondent, who had previous experience of living in a park home in England, noted that occasionally the pitch fees altered to take account of additional works carried out by the site owner,

“It’s moderate. If we were living in England, then the pitch fees would be a lot more. Fees go up mainly with inflation, occasionally more because he is installing or undertaking works. I think this is fair” (owner; rents a stance).

4.12 However, eleven respondents expressed dissatisfaction about their pitch fees. In most cases, these respondents were not happy because they felt that their pitch fees had increased to an unreasonable level,

“The ground rent has gone up. Last year it was supposed to be going up to £21 (a week), but then he asked for £24. But then it was hardly at £24 when he asked for £38 a week. We all formed a group. None paid the £38. It’s an ongoing dispute” (owner; rents a stance).

4.13 Another respondent reflected on a different problem with pitch fees,

“The five of us here are all on different pitch fees. Last year I was paying £50 per month. Now he’s looking for £74 a month – you can’t say that’s a 2.7 per cent increase. He wants £98 next year. And then in June 2007 he wants £120 to make it the same as the rest of the homes on the site. He’s also allowed a site improvement increase and there’s nothing in here (the Agreement) to say what sort of increase he is allowed. That should be set out into the Agreement. What is the actual percentage that residents have to pay” (owner; rents a stance).

Views on the legislation

4.14 A key issue raised during the submissions to the Scottish Parliament Communities Committee (2005) was that residents of park homes needed to be fully aware of their rights on protected sites. One respondent discussed the importance of learning about the extent of the rights that were available to park home residents,

“I didn’t know I had as many [rights] until I started having this bother. I joined the NAPHR last year. A representative came to see me. I didn’t think I hardly had any because it’s on private ground. The site owner’s attitude is that ‘It’s my patch, so you’ll play by my rules’. But we know now that we don’t have to” (owner; rents a stance).

4.15 Limited awareness of the legislation was not just confined to park home residents, however. One respondent commented that in the course of a conversation with their local authority, that the officer in question did not think that the Mobile Home Act, 1983 applied to Scotland.

Commission Rate

4.16 Part I of Schedule 1 of the Mobile Homes Act 1983 states that when a home is sold and the agreement transferred, the park owner is entitled to a commission at a rate specified by the Secretary of State, which is currently ten per cent. The Park Homes Industry Report found that the commission payment was by far the most controversial element in the industry’s cost structure (ODPM, 2002). In terms of a rationale for the commission rate, the ODPM (2002) found that the commission payment could be considered to be for the site owner’s interest in the land.

4.17 Respondents were asked for their views on the commission payable when a home is sold. There was considerable resentment amongst many of the residents towards this payment,

“I’m very angry about it, because they don’t do anything for it. I can’t understand how it’s got to this ludicrous state, that an owner can get ten per cent for doing nothing” (owner; rents a stance).

4.18 Whilst site owners can claim 15 per cent commission from people who own holiday units, anyone who legally lives in their mobile home as their permanent dwelling can only be charged 10 per cent commission. However, on one mixed site containing holiday units and residential park homes, a respondent stated that a 15 per cent commission was demanded from permanent residents, not the ten per cent as laid down in the Mobile Homes Act (1983),

“The terms of the park are that he requires 15%. His attitude is ‘if you don’t pay then I’ll take it anyway’. If you, the seller, do not give it to the management at the time of the sale, then he’ll make it difficult for the buyer, by say, increasing the site fee. In nine times out of ten, you’re selling your home to somebody you know, so at the end of the day you want it to go through smoothly and you don’t want bad blood between you and maybe your friend or another member of the family that you sold it to. So for sake of peace and quiet and harmony you just pay it” (owner; rents the stance).

4.19 Although the consultation issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) only covered England and Wales, one home owner’s association on a park had considered the issues covered by this consultation and expressed the view that they hoped that any future change in legislation that applied to Scotland would withdraw the present commission on the sale of all park homes and also prohibit a compensatory increase in pitch fee. A respondent on a different park also expressed the concern that if the law was changed in relation to commission on sales, then residents might end up in a worse situation if park owners tried to increase their revenue from other sources by way of compensation,

“There might be a problem with abolishing the ten per cent if owners put the ground rent up. Ground rent is a lot of money, whilst the ten per cent is only if and when you want to sell” (owner; rents the stance).

4.20 However, there was another, smaller group of residents who were more circumspect about paying the commission. For example, three respondents stated,

“It’s one of those things you accept, I think” (owner; rents the stance).

“I wouldn’t mind paying it if I knew that the person was going to treat you fairly and some of that money was going to be put into the infrastructure. Or if the site is in A1 condition, then fair enough – the landlord just gets to keep the money” (owner; rents the stance).

“I was aware of it at the time (I bought it) so that’s fair enough. I see it as payment for the security of being here” (owner; rents the stance).

4.21 One respondent suggested that greater transparency would help,

“This has been with caravanning for years and years and years. The thing with it is that nobody seems to know what it’s for. If it was for owners saying it’s going into such and such, say concrete bases or something. It’s just not transparent enough. If owners said ‘right we’re going to use this to further the site and put concrete bases down, I don’t suppose many people would mind” (owner; rents the stance).

4.22 However, in another instance, a respondent noted that the point about commission was academic, because the park owner was not allowing any sales on their park,

“He’s not allowing us to sell. He’s not allowing us to sell our homes. Which is wrong. It’s like you having your home and somebody saying ‘oh no, you cannot sell that’. He wants to develop the land. This place is for my kids – I’ve got four kids. And he’s giving people 3,000 pounds across the board. Well that’s my windows. That’s what we’re fighting him about because if we want to sell our homes we should be able to do it. There’s him saying I can’t leave this to my kids. It’s nonsense. We’re stuck here” (owner; rents a stance).

Another respondent highlighted a similar issue on a different park,

“Someone tried to sell not through the owner, but the owner said ‘No, I get first refusal’. Well to me that’s not in the legislation. That was never the law. We used to have a committee but after a couple of meetings he wouldn’t meet with us. I says to him: ‘you don’t have first refusal’ and he says ‘well it depends which way you look at it’” (owner; rents a stance).

4.23 Respondents living in park homes discussed whether or not they were considering moving home in the foreseeable future. The majority of respondents noted that they intended to stay where they were. Two respondents were unequivocal about their feelings on the matter commenting, *“I’m staying here until I die”* and *“We say there’s only one way we’ll go out of here and that’s in a box. That’s how we feel about it”*. Another respondent was more circumspect about living where she was, and noted,

“I wouldn’t move home. The only way you would get me out of here is if I’m unable to look after myself, and I’d be very reluctant to move because some of these care homes are appalling” (owner; rents a stance).

4.24 However, ten respondents stated that they had thought about moving home, with a further two respondents noting that they were considering a move in the long term. One of the respondents who stated that they would like to move felt constrained by their circumstances,

“We want to move but at our age, there aren’t any council houses – what they would offer us we wouldn’t take. And we couldn’t afford a mortgage anyway. So basically we’re stuck here” (owner; rents a stance).

Another respondent commented on the financial implications of a move,

“I would go if I was offered a council house now, which I may be because I’ve been on the list for about 12 years. If I get offered a house then I would just sell it to him (the park owner), because I couldn’t be bothered with the hassle. Because it is a lot of hassle. He puts them off and when they see the ground rent – that puts people off. So he ends up buying it anyway, but for less than you would have got for it” (owner; rents a stance).

4.25 It was not possible to make any direct comparison with the situation in England with regard to turnover in park homes. Nevertheless, this research illustrated that an element of turnover was apparent amongst the respondents and that the commission rate would consequently affect those respondents considering a move.

Enforcement

4.26 A strong element running through the submissions to the Scottish Parliament Communities Committee Report (2005) relating to mobile homes in the Housing (Scotland) Bill was enforcement to prevent unscrupulous park owners from flouting the legislation. The written and oral submissions by the British Holiday and Home Parks Association and the National Association for Park Home Residents both placed great emphasis on the need to ensure that legislation would be backed by sufficient penalties to deter unscrupulous park owners. Indeed, the kind of problem that has arisen in the past was highlighted by a question in the Scottish Parliament over a household living in a park home who had had their electricity and gas supplies cut off by the site owner for nearly a year and the difficulty that this household had experienced in securing redress for their discomfort (Scottish Parliament, 2004).

4.27 A common theme underlying the discussions with one group of respondents was the difficulties they had experienced in attempting to seek redress for the problems they had experienced with park owners. Local authorities were perceived as unsympathetic to the needs of residents in park homes, when these residents had reported the problems that they had experienced with the park owner. A further difficulty was that in situations where damage had been caused to personal property, the police felt that they were unable to act because the damage was caused on private land and was therefore a civil matter, rather than criminal. However, in contrast, it was reported by another respondent that in their locality, the police had intervened. Two respondents expressed frustration with the legal system in Scotland where cases had to be taken through the Sheriff’s Court, because of the length of time – often years - it took to bring a case to court.

4.28 One of these respondents felt let down by the way in which support was available to park home residents to ensure that the legislation was enforced,

“They are trying to bolster up the legislation, and it certainly needs changing, but it doesn’t matter how much they change it, or how much more transparent they make it, if there’s no-one going to enforce it then it’s just a waste of time” (owner; rents a stance).

Another respondent commented,

“It is a worry if somebody did take over the site. We don’t seem to have the government backing that you have with your own home. That’s the biggest bugbear of being in a mobile home – it’s the insecurity in comparison with bricks and mortar” (owner; rents a stance).

In another instance, one group of park home residents had taken matters into their own hands and were attempting to use the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to effect a community buy out of their park. This Act provides an opportunity for communities to acquire land in cases where landowners have indicated that an area of land is to be sold, and where the community have registered an interest in such land.

4.29 Attempts to develop the effectiveness of legislation has recently taken place in other parts of the UK. The Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) have recently set out the amendments to the implied terms in England under the Mobile Homes Act 1983 brought about by the Housing Act 2004 and the Mobile Homes Act 1983 (Amendment of Schedule 1) (England) Order 2006. These amendments cover a range of issues with regard to relations between site owners and park home residents in England. For example, one change to tackle the elusive nature of some site owners is to require all site owners by notice to inform residents and any qualifying residents’ association of the address at which notices (including notices of proceedings) may be served by residents or a qualifying residents’ association. Although a couple of respondents in the research in Scotland did comment on the difficulty of contacting their site owners, a more significant issue was the ability for park home residents to seek redress in the event of damage to property or, potentially, a personal accident due to the actions of a site owner or their representatives. In this respect, two respondents argued that valid public liability insurance should be a required condition of owning a licensed site.

Residential occupation of holiday homes

4.30 One emerging issue is the considerable potential for confusion by residents over whether mobile homes can legitimately be occupied permanently, and how far mobile homes have to be vacated for part of the year. This issue is important because of the potential for individual households to get caught out, either through a genuine misunderstanding on the part of residents and park owners, or more worryingly, through the potential for residents to be misled by unscrupulous park owners. There were allegations of mis-selling in a couple of instances where park owners or managers were selling park homes to people with the claim that households could legitimately live all year round on pitches that in fact were only licensed for holiday use (it must be noted that these cases do *not* relate to sites that have appeared recently in the press in relation to residential occupation of holiday pitches). Further, any households that occupy a park home in this way are in a precarious position because they sit outside the protection of legislation covering both housing and also mobile homes. The kind of difficulty that can arise was thrown into sharp relief by the situation in Perth and Kinross, where there was a dispute between the local authority and the site owner and a number of residents over whether the residents were legally entitled to live permanently in their mobile homes, or whether the site license was only for holiday units only (Simpson, 2006).

Conclusions

4.31 The majority of respondents were satisfied with both the way in which park home sites were maintained and managed, with a range of positive comments about the park owners and staff who managed and helped to maintain the sites. However, a significant minority of respondents expressed considerable dissatisfaction about the way their parks were run, and also about a number of key aspects of the legislation in relation to park homes.

4.32 There was considerable resentment amongst many of the residents with regard to the ten per cent commission on sales of their homes. The number of respondents who were considering a move suggests that any abuse of the commission on sales would affect a significant number of owners.

4.33 This chapter has identified a range of problems experienced by respondents in relation to difficulties with a number of park owners. These difficulties included:

- Site owners and/or managers requiring homes to be sold through them, or blocking sales altogether
- Damage to personal property
- Allegations of harassment, intimidation and threatening behaviour
- Increases in pitch fees at an unacceptable level
- Inadequate supply of electricity to park homes
- Poor maintenance of sites
- Claiming over legally permitted commission rate on the sale of park homes
- A small number of residents who stated that they did not have written agreements from their site owners.

4.34 There were allegations of mis-selling on a couple of parks, where households were under the impression that they could occupy their home all year round, when in fact they were moving onto a pitch with a license for holiday use only.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

5.1 This chapter draws together the main conclusions of the report. In so doing, the chapter aims to inform policy developments by identifying possible areas where action might be required. The conclusions are discussed under the headings of the aims and objectives of the research, which were set out in section 1.8.

Conclusions

Identify the number, location and composition of licensed mobile homes sites throughout Scotland, and where possible, identify unlicensed sites and quantify the extent of isolated single units.

5.2 The 2001 Census data showed that a very small proportion of the population in Scotland lived in caravans, mobile homes or other temporary structures (0.21 per cent). However, there were some concentrations in the number of caravans and mobile homes in some local authority areas. The local authority with the highest proportion of households living in caravans or mobile homes was Midlothian, where 1.1 per cent of all households lived in these types of accommodation. There were other concentrations in authorities such as Moray, Highland and Argyll and Bute.

5.3 The local authority survey identified a total of 4,121 residential mobile homes. This total included sites licensed for residential use, residential units on mixed sites with holiday pitches as well, individual residential mobile homes used by staff on sites licensed for holiday use, and an estimate of individual units within authorities. However, it should be noted that few respondents to the local authority survey felt in a position to estimate the number of single units within their areas. Therefore, the total of 4,121 represents an underestimate of the total number of residential mobile homes in Scotland.

5.4 The tenure profile of mobile homes in Scotland was quite distinctive compared with England and Wales. A far greater proportion of residents rent their mobile homes from private landlords in Scotland compared with other countries within the United Kingdom. Thirty four per cent of mobile home residents in Scotland rented a caravan, mobile home or other temporary structure from a private landlord compared with 18 per cent in England and Wales. A proportion of these tenants lived on licensed sites, but many were also living in individual units, including accommodation that was tied with employment or provided for seasonal workers.

Explore the reasons why people are living in mobile homes and their length of residence, looking at factors that have led them into the sector, their previous housing history and their aspirations for the future, particularly their ability to access affordable housing

5.5 Respondents described a variety of reasons for wanting to live in mobile homes, and often there wasn't a single reason, but rather a combination of motivations for moving into mobile homes. The most common factor across the case study areas, and also between park

home residents on licensed sites and residents in individual units, was financial considerations. In the Midlothian case study, most respondents had moved from Edinburgh, where many noted that house prices were too high for them to afford to move into the type of accommodation they were looking for. Similarly, in accessible rural and remote rural areas in the other two case study areas house prices were viewed as way beyond what respondents could afford, or would require substantial renovation. In remote rural areas in particular, the supply of affordable alternatives to either rent or buy was viewed as especially problematic.

5.6 Other reasons for moving into a mobile home, especially park homes on licensed sites, was for lifestyle reasons: moving to a park home provided the opportunity to live in a picturesque location in an affordable way. These respondents emphasised the attractive qualities of the environment they lived in. In most cases, they stressed that they would not have been able to afford to live in these kinds of areas if park homes were not available. In contrast, a number of respondents noted that they were attracted to mobile home living as an affordable way of getting away from their previous neighbourhoods, which were felt to be plagued by crime and antisocial behaviour.

5.7 The 2001 Census showed that mobile homes were playing a particular role in the housing system in terms of providing accommodation for older people, and also for people with a long term limiting illness. Thus, mobile homes were a more important form of accommodation for potentially vulnerable households than the general population. However, the conclusions need to be mindful of making any inferences about cause and effect with respect to illness and mobile home occupation. A number of respondents in park homes who were living on licensed sites noted that they had made a positive choice to move into a park home because of their ill health. These respondents felt that mobile homes offered an affordable way of living in accessible accommodation, and which could readily be adapted to suit their needs. Further, there is the age profile of mobile home residents to consider. Older people were more likely to reside in this form of accommodation, with the associated link of increasing levels of long term limiting illnesses with age. However, the situation regarding individual units, especially caravans which were not intended for permanent occupation, was more ambiguous. In a couple of instances there was a perception amongst respondents that the condition of mobile homes was adversely affecting health. On the other hand, another respondent in an individual unit noted that living in their mobile home was preferable to the damp conditions they had left behind in their previous, bricks and mortar, home. It was not possible to arrive at a firm conclusion in this research about the health implications of different sub-sectors of mobile home living, and further work would be necessary to update the findings of previous studies such as Laing and Lindsay (1980).

Individual mobile homes

5.8 The individual mobile homes were playing very diverse roles, with some respondents noting that living in a mobile home was a temporary measure, either whilst they built their bricks and mortar homes, or whilst they looked for other accommodation. For other respondents, living in a mobile home was viewed as a permanent, and more than satisfactory, solution to their housing needs.

5.9 Individual mobile homes are a strong characteristic feature of mobile home living in Scotland. Previous in depth research at local level noted concentrations of individual mobile homes in parts of rural areas of Scotland (Alexander, 1992; Baxter *et al*, 1997). Although it

was not possible to estimate the total number across Scotland, the case studies at local level both in Argyll and Bute and the Highlands also identified the presence of individual mobile homes. A diverse range of sources can be used to build up a picture of individual mobile homes at local level. Both the 2001 Census and the Valuation Roll provide data on the incidence of individual units. These sources of data can be supplemented at local level through discussions with local people to derive an estimate of numbers, and also an indication of the type of households who are occupying mobile homes.

Aspirations for the future: park home residents

5.10 The large majority of respondents living in park homes expressed considerable satisfaction with living in a mobile home. These residents were most likely to want to continue living in this form of accommodation. However, the evidence from the interviews with park home residents did suggest a degree of potential turnover, with a number of respondents stating that they intended to move. Further, a number of respondents identified specific difficulties that residents on their licensed sites experienced in relation to the commission rate, such as being charged 15 per cent commission, rather than the legally permitted rate of 10 per cent.

5.11 A number of respondents either had direct negative experiences of living in social rented accommodation, which had been a significant motivation on driving them to look for alternatives or had negative perceptions of the social rented sector. For these respondents, it was not a question of such accommodation being inaccessible to them – they made it clear that they would not want it even if it was available. A key point was that it was not so much the physical dwellings themselves that was the problem, but a perception that these respondents did not want to be exposed, or go back to, the potential for crime and anti-social behaviour. However, for other respondents, mainly in, or in close proximity to, urban areas, council or housing association accommodation was the only viable alternative. Respondents living in remote rural areas noted that the very limited supply of council or housing association accommodation realistically precluded a consideration of this form of accommodation.

Aspirations for the future: individual mobile homes

5.12 There were diverse reasons amongst the respondents for occupying individual units, which was also reflected in their views on the future. In some instances, individual units were being occupied on a temporary basis, whilst respondents built their permanent, bricks and mortar, accommodation. In some other cases, occupation of a mobile home was viewed the only viable option, given a perceived lack of other affordable alternatives. The small number of respondents in this sub-sample means that care must be taken over drawing firm conclusions. Nevertheless, this material, coupled with the data from the case study locations highlighted in chapter two, reinforces the view put forward in housing needs surveys and strategy statements about the function of mobile homes in local housing markets in remote rural areas (ODS, 2005, Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar (2004)). Whilst the use of caravans not intended for permanent occupation has been viewed as problematic, the fact remains that this accommodation plays an important role not only in local housing markets, but also in terms of helping lower income households remain in the communities of their choice. The

continued occupation of these forms of accommodation also begs the question of viable alternatives for such households within these communities.

5.13 Further, an underlying theme running through the interviews with residents on individual units was the lack of an alternative affordable solution to housing needs in the remote rural areas where these people lived. Thus, the number of households living in individual mobile homes in remote rural areas can be regarded as indicative of stress in the housing market of these areas. Where such housing stress exists, there is a need for alternative housing to be available for people. Such housing needs to be affordable for mobile home residents and to suit their individual needs, including providing permanent accommodation if this is what is required. The need for alternative housing is particularly acute where residents of mobile homes are at risk of displacement through the serving of enforcement notices to remove mobile homes by statutory agencies.

Explore the nature and extent of any issues and problems experienced by residents of mobile homes in connection with their occupation and use of the home

5.14 The majority of respondents were very satisfied with living in mobile homes, although this feeling was not universal. Positive aspects of living in mobile homes included:

- More affordable accommodation, not just in terms of buying a home, but also maintenance, running costs – and less housework;
- An opportunity to live in very attractive locations that would otherwise be unaffordable;
- Living in a neighbourhood with like minded individuals, often with a strong sense of community;
- A safe environment, mostly free from anti-social behaviour;
- Accommodation that was accessible and readily adapted to suit a resident's needs.

Negative factors associated with mobile homes included:

- Vulnerability to bad weather;
- Expensiveness to heat;
- Living in caravans that were not intended for permanent residential occupation;
- Living in park homes could be affected by poor relations with the park owner.

5.15 The research also identified a range of specific problems experienced by respondents on licensed sites in relation to difficulties with a number of park owners. These difficulties included:

- Site owners and/or managers requiring homes to be sold through them, or blocking sales altogether;
- Damage to personal property;
- Allegations of harassment, intimidation and threatening behaviour;
- Increases in pitch fees at an unacceptable level;
- Inadequate supply of electricity to park homes;
- Poor maintenance of sites;

- Claiming over the legally permitted commission rate on the sale of park homes;
- Allegations of mis-selling on a couple of parks, where households were under the impression that they could occupy their home all year round, when in fact they were moving onto a pitch with a license for holiday use only;
- A small number of residents who stated that they did not have written agreements from their site owners.

5.16 The small number of respondents in this research who rented their homes all described relations with their landlords as good, but their experiences illustrated that there was considerable diversity with regard to the condition of their homes. These respondents also varied as to whether or not they had written tenancy agreements.

Affordable warmth and fuel poverty

5.17 The 2001 Census revealed that people who live in mobile homes are far less likely than the general population to have central heating. Further, the research indicated that fuel poverty was a very significant issue for some residents. Nineteen respondents living in park homes and in individual units stated that they were paying ten per cent or more of their incomes on fuel. This problem was exacerbated by the severe adverse weather that could affect some localities in Scotland where residents were either living in park homes or in individual units. In particular, a couple of the agencies in the case study areas noted the dangers of living in individual units resulting from very strong winds, occasionally resulting in the destruction of people's homes or worse. A number of respondents in individual mobile homes noted the specific measures they had taken to minimise the risk of damage during storms.

Consider the extent to which any problems identified are addressed by the existing and recently implemented legislation.

5.18 Park homes were a popular type of accommodation for the majority of respondents, and most were very satisfied with their homes. Although it was evident that most respondents were also satisfied with their site and the way in which it was managed, there were strong concerns about the management of a small number of sites across Scotland that would appear to merit policy attention.

5.19 Mobile homes are numerically a very small element of the housing system and occupy a small and intermittent element of work amongst the myriad of responsibilities facing statutory agencies. Nevertheless, the potentially vulnerable nature of a high proportion of people who live in the mobile home sector means that there is a greater onus on statutory agencies to ensure that the intended outcomes of legislation are both monitored and enforced.

5.20 Whilst it is important to have the necessary legislation in place to ensure adequate protection for park home residents on licensed sites, one of the themes running through the interviews with a number of respondents to the research was that enforcement was the key. In this respect, a number of respondents who described various difficulties about the way that sites were run were more concerned about adequate support to help residents to enforce their rights, rather than new legislation. One of the more invidious aspects of activities by unscrupulous park owners described by these respondents were threats to 'make life difficult'

for residents who did not comply with their wishes, including instances of harassment reported by a small number of respondents, or alleged cases of intimidation of other park homes residents on the sites where respondents lived. Therefore, an important area for future attention might be an evaluation of the means that are currently available to enforce the legislation pertaining to park homes, including an assessment of the need for stronger penalties to deter unscrupulous behaviour by a small number of site owners.

5.21 Enforcement measures would need to be sensitive to the context in which breaches may be taking place. For example, threatening to revoke a site owner's license would be no good in situations where the park owner was causing difficulties for park home residents because the park owner was attempting to get the site closed, perhaps with a view to selling the land for development.

5.22 There was considerable frustration expressed by a number of respondents on different sites that perceived criminal acts by site owners and their representatives were treated as a civil matter by the relevant authorities. It would be helpful to clarify the circumstances in which residents of park homes can reasonably expect redress under criminal rather than civil law.

5.23 A further point raised by respondents during the research was the potential for damage or accidents to park homes, or to residents, as a result of the actions of site owners and their representatives. One example cited in this research was damage sustained to a park home when a site owner's representatives moved a park home, with the resident's permission, to another part of a site. There is a question mark over how far park home residents are adequately covered by the current legislation in cases such as these, or the extent to which park home residents can obtain adequate redress if site owners do not have public liability insurance in place.

5.24 In their study of harassment in the park homes sector, Marsh et al (2000) suggested that local authorities could be encouraged and helped to use the powers they have, whether through the issue of guidance explaining those powers in detail, or providing training for officers on the ground. A number of authorities stated that they already inspected licensed sites on an annual basis or when complaints about a site were received. Certainly, inspections could be targeted on those sites where complaints are regular and/or numerous. Where sites were evidently well run and complaints are few and far between, then inspections could take place on a more infrequent basis. One avenue for consideration therefore is the frequency with which local authorities should inspect licensed sites.

5.25 Marsh et al (2000) also suggested identifying named officers as a contact point and publicising the role of local authorities to park owners and residents, as well as raising awareness amongst resident of their rights. As noted by Marsh et al (2000), this latter development could be undertaken by any organisation such as a body representing park owners or a residents association, as well as a public sector agency. However, a readily identifiable point of contact within local authorities would also be helpful for landowners making enquiries about the use of mobile homes on their land.

5.26 A concern arising from the research was a lack of awareness amongst some park home owners of the protection that was available to them under existing legislation. This issue of awareness of the protection available also needs to be considered in relation to people who rent their homes in individual units, outwith licensed park home sites.

5.27 Affordable warmth and fuel poverty was highlighted as a significant issue by the research. There have been a number of projects in England and Wales to improve the energy efficiency of mobile homes and to tackle fuel poverty amongst mobile home dwellers (see Marches Energy Agency: www.mea.org.uk; Preston and Jones, 2004; BRESCU, 2000). Although people living in mobile homes in Scotland are not eligible under the Central Heating Programme, the Scottish Government is reviewing its fuel poverty programmes to ensure that they are operating fairly across Scotland and that they are focussing upon the fuel poor. As part of this work the Government is considering what can be done to alleviate fuel poverty for residents of hard to heat homes such as mobile homes.

5.28 The research identified a number of issues with regard to people who rent their homes from private landlords. One factor was the availability of adequate heating: mobile homes rented from private landlords tended to have low levels of central heating compared with the general population, or compared with people who owned their mobile homes. Another factor was a low level of awareness of the legislation available with regard to security of tenure. However, other commentators have highlighted that there may be a question mark over the security of tenure available to some people living in mobile homes, depending on whether or not their home can be defined as a dwelling (Shelter, 2005). This latter issue is perhaps more likely to affect people living in caravans not intended for residential occupation, compared with park homes located on licensed sites.

5.29 The situation with regard to people who rent their mobile homes from private landlords - especially those who live outwith licensed park home sites - requires some clarification, as there is the danger that this group may fall between two stools with regard to protection under the current legislation in Scotland. The root of this issue appears to be how this group of people are viewed in policy terms: tenants who rent mobile homes from private landlords do not appear to be covered by recent developments in the rest of the privately rented sector in Scotland. However, neither does this group of tenants particularly benefit from the recent changes in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 with regard to mobile homes.

5.30 One issue that was not explored in this research was the views and experiences of people living in mobile homes provided by employers. Other research has identified the variable standards of accommodation - including mobile homes- provided for migrants employed as seasonal workers in agriculture (de Lima et al, 2005). Currently accommodation that is provided for seasonal workers is exempt from licensing, and it is difficult for local authorities to monitor standards of accommodation for people living in mobile homes that is tied with employment.

5.31 One emerging issue is the considerable potential for confusion for residents over whether mobile homes can legitimately be occupied permanently, and how far mobile homes have to be vacated for part of the year, if they are located on sites, or parts of sites which have a license for holiday use only. This issue is important because of the potential for individual households to get caught out, either through a genuine misunderstanding on the part of residents and park owners, or more worryingly, through the potential for residents to be misled by unscrupulous park owners and/or managers. Any households that occupy a park home in this way are in a precarious position because they sit outside the protection of legislation covering both housing and also mobile homes. Households seeking to acquire a mobile home to live in for part of the year, or permanently, need to be aware of the potential pitfalls involved in the occupation of holiday pitches, to try and reduce the possibility of misunderstandings between residents, park owners and local authorities. However,

households also need to be alert to the potential for actions by unscrupulous park owners. The bottom line is that prospective residents need to ensure that they can legitimately occupy the homes they are moving into, including an understanding of any restrictions on occupation. It may well be that guidance could be published to help raise awareness of this issue, either by government bodies or agencies within the sector (for example, see the advice published by the National Caravan Council:

www.nationalcaravan.co.uk/images/resources/chh_misuse_owners.pdf).

5.32 Finally, there remains a suspicion that without the necessary enforcement available to back current legislation, the small number of unscrupulous park home owners identified in this research may well feel able to evade their responsibilities with relative impunity, continuing to taint a sector that is otherwise performing a valuable role in helping to meet housing needs in Scotland.

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APPENDIX ONE: LOCAL AUTHORITY SURVEY OF RESIDENTIAL MOBILE HOMES

The Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York has been commissioned by the **Scottish Government** to undertake a study of residential mobile homes in Scotland. The last substantive research on this issue was conducted over 30 years ago. The Scottish Government Development Department require an up-to-date picture of the use of mobile homes as dwellings in Scotland and the further development of policy will be informed by the evidence that this research collects. Please note that this research is not looking for information on council owned Gypsy/Traveller sites. However, privately owned Gypsy/Traveller sites fall within the legislation under the Mobile Homes Act 1983, and we would like to include these sites in the research (see question 2).

This survey represents the first stage of the research which is to quantify the extent of mobile homes across Scotland. The specific aims of this survey are to:

- Identify the number, location and composition of licensed mobile homes sites (including local authority sites) throughout Scotland, and
- Where possible, identify unlicensed sites and quantify the extent of isolated single units, which may be exempt from licensing.

I should be very grateful if you would provide information for EACH site for which a site license has been granted within your authority.

Please could you return the form by Tuesday, 4th April 2006 – Many thanks.

1. Your details. Name of Organisation and contact?

1a.Organisation:

1b.Address:

1c.Contact Name:

1d.Position held:

1e.Telephone number:

1f. Email:

2. Does your authority contain any *privately owned* Gypsy/Traveller sites?

Yes

No

If yes, how many sites?

How many pitches in total?

3. Please could you provide the following information for EACH licensed residential site. Where possible, please could you also provide any information for each licensed caravan holiday home, chalet, touring and tenting in your area which, to your knowledge, have mobile homes in some form of residential use¹ (I have included a number of copies of this page in case you have a number of sites within your authority):

(Please include council owned parks, even if not licensed).

3a. Address of site

3b. Total number of pitches: _____

3c. - Number of residential pitches occupied by permanent residents: _____

- Number of caravan holiday home/chalet pitches: _____

- Number of touring/tent pitches: _____

- Any other type of pitch: _____

3d. Are residential mobile homes on the site:

All Owned?

All Rented?

A mix of the two?

If some are rented, can you estimate what proportion?

3e. Ownership of site:

Privately owned

Local authority

3f. Is the license:

Permanent

Temporary (due to the nature of the planning consent)

3g. If the license is temporary, when will it expire?

¹The majority of holiday caravan parks will have an element of caravans in residential use as dwellings for the owner/manager/warden/staff etc. and it would be helpful to capture this element of residential mobile home use in the project.

4a. Do you find that site operators in your authority comply with the conditions of site licenses?

Yes

4b. If no, what is the nature of the breaches?

4c. How often are licensed sites inspected?

4d. Are you aware of any caravan holiday homes on holiday parks that are only licensed for holiday use being used for residential purposes?

Yes No

4e. Does this cause any problems?

Yes No

4f. If yes, please give details:

5. How far are you aware of single units for residential use in different areas of your authority that are exempt from licensing?

Please tick more than one box as appropriate:

Please provide an estimate of the number of pitches:

5a. Urban areas

Pitches in seasonal residential use

Pitches in permanent occupation.

5b. Rural areas

Pitches in seasonal residential use

Pitches in permanent occupation.

Do rural areas include caravans/mobile homes on:

Farms/estates
Pitches in seasonal residential use

Pitches in permanent occupation.

<i>Crofts</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Pitches in seasonal residential use</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Pitches in permanent occupation.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5c. Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹For the purposes of this research, rural areas are defined as settlements with a population of 3000 or less and urban areas as any settlements above this figure.

6. Are you aware of any unlicensed sites within your authority?

Yes No

If yes, please give details:

7. Any additional comments on residential mobile homes?

I would be very grateful if you could send me a copy of any policy that you have with regard to site licensing and enforcement standards.

Thank you very much for your time in responding to our survey – this is much appreciated.

All information collected as part of this research will be treated with strict confidentiality, and anonymised in the report.

If you would like to post this form to me, then please use the following FREEPOST address:

**Mark Bevan
Centre for Housing Policy,
University of York**

FREEPOST YO202
York
YO10 5ZZ

or email to: **mab13@york.ac.uk**

If you have any queries about this survey, or about the research project in general, please do not hesitate to contact Mark Bevan on the above email or ring: **01904 321489**.

APPENDIX TWO: TOPIC GUIDE FOR RESIDENTS

RESIDENTIAL MOBILE HOMES IN SCOTLAND (Topic guide for residents)

Background to the research

The Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to undertake an investigation into residential mobile homes in Scotland. The Scottish Government Development Department require an up to date picture on the use of mobile homes as dwellings in Scotland and the further development of policy will be informed by the evidence that this research collects.

INTERVIEW CONFIDENTIALITY - no information will be passed onto anyone outside the research team, and they will not be identified in any reports that are produced.

Explain tape recording and ask permission to record.
Explain length of interview – about 45 minutes.
Explain incentive payment, £15 per household

Background details

Who lives in your home?

Could I just ask how old you are?

What is your employment status?

How long have you lived in your current home?

Do you own or rent your home:

Check:

- *Own your mobile home and let the stance from the site owner*
- *Rent your property from the site owner*
- *Rent your property from a mobile home owner*
- *Is the mobile home tied with a job*

Previous accommodation

Where were you living before you moved into your current home?

How long were you living there?

(If less than two years:

- *where did you live before then?*
- *why did you leave that place?)*

Why did you decide to leave your last place?

What would you say influenced your decision to move here?

Were there things about living in a mobile home that appealed to you?

Was there anything about living in a mobile home that made you hesitate about moving in?

Did you look at any other types of accommodation at the time you were looking for somewhere to live?

If yes: why did you not take these up?

If no: why did you not look at anything else?

Your current home

What is it like living in your home?

- *best aspects*
- *worse/bad aspects*

Could you tell me what you think about the design of your home?

- *Layout*
- *Space – including storage*
- *privacy*
- *Heating*
 - *what type of heating?*
 - *is this adequate?*
 - *does this vary with the season – i.e. overheating in summer, or too cold in the winter?)*
- *Comfort*
 - *Any problems with the following:*
 - *condensation*
 - *leaks*
 - *ventilation*
 - *security*
 - *noise*

Could you tell me what you think about the design and the layout of the site generally?

- *What do you think about the range of amenities on offer?*
- *What do you think about the management of this site?*

- How do you get on with the person who owns the site?

Was the level of any fees/rent that you have to pay something that influenced your decision to move here?

Is living here good value for money? How does it compare with any alternatives you are aware of, or which you may have considered (*referring back to decision to move*)?

Has the amount that you have to spend on your home changed over time? For example, have rents or fees risen more than was expected?

One thing that the research is concerned about is the amount of money that people have to spend on heating their homes. Is it possible to give a rough estimate of the proportion of your income that you spend on heating your home?

- prompt: would you say it is more or less than ten per cent of you total income?

The future

Have you thought about moving home at all?

- Where would you like to move to?*
- What type of accommodation would you like to live in?*
 - Would you like to live in another mobile home?*

Would you prefer to:

- buy own home?*
- Rent from a private landlord?*
- rent from a council or a housing association?*

- Is there anything that is stopping you from achieving this?

How long can you remain living here?

Just to check, do you have a written agreement from the site owner?

Is there anything else that you would like to discuss that we have not covered already?

Many thanks for all your help.

APPENDIX THREE: GYPSIES / TRAVELLERS ON PRIVATELY OWNED SITES IN SCOTLAND: THE TWICE-YEARLY COUNT - NO. 8 : JULY 2005

Information on Gypsies/Travellers on privately owned sites was also available from the Scottish Government, via their twice yearly count. The table below summarises the private sites recorded in the July 2005 count. In total, 21 sites were identified, which was more than in the summer of 2004 (17).

Availability and use of privately-owned sites in July 2005
(base = 13 Councils)

Council	No. of sites		Site	Site Type*	No. of h/holds		Use over previous six months**
	All-year	Summer only.			short stay	long stay	
Highland	0	4	a	H	?	?	A
			b	H	?	?	B
			c	H	?	?	B
			d	H	?	?	C
South Lanarkshire	2	1	a	G	0	20	A
			b	H	11	0	B
			c	G	4	8	A
Fife	1	2	a	G	0	20	A
			b	G	1	0	A
			c	?	?	?	?
East Ayrshire	1	1	a	G	0	1	B
			b	H	0	0	B
Scottish Borders	2	0	a	H	0	15	A
			b	H	0	0	B
Aberdeenshire	1	0	a	H	0	0	B
Angus	1	0	a	G	0	16	A
Dumfries & Galloway	0	1	a	H	0	16	A
East Renfrewshire	1	0	a	H	0	4	A
Falkirk	1	0	a	G	0	1	A
Perth & Kinross	1	0	a	H	0	0	B
Stirling	0	1	a	H	0	0	A
TOTALS	11	10		G = 7	16+	101+	A = 11
				H = 13			B = 8
							C = 1

* Site type G = provided specifically by/for Gypsies/Travellers; H = primarily for holiday/touring use

** Frequency of use over previous six months A = Continuous B = Occasional C = Not at all

Source: Scottish Government, 2005

The following Councils recorded no private sites of any kind: Aberdeen; Argyll & Bute; Clackmannanshire; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar; Dundee; E/Midlothian; E. Dunbartonshire; Edinburgh; Glasgow; Inverclyde; Moray; N. Ayrshire; N. Lanarkshire; Orkney Islands; Renfrewshire; Shetland Islands; S. Ayrshire; W. Dunbartonshire; W. Lothian

Information recorded by the Scottish Government at the time of the count noted that seven sites were said to be provided for/by Gypsies/Travellers, generally only available to members of those communities but probably more likely to be available for longer-term stays. All of these were occupied at the time of the count. Thirteen sites were classed as holiday/touring sites.

APPENDIX FOUR: TENURE OF RESIDENTS LIVING IN CARAVANS MOBILE HOMES AND OTHER TEMPORARY STRUCTURES BY LOCAL AUTHORITY

	Total Number	Owner occupied		Social rented		Privately rented	
		(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number
Aberdeen	139	18	25	9	13	73	101
Aberdeenshire	345	59	203	3	9	39	133
Angus	161	37	59	12	19	52	83
Argyll & Bute	293	51	148	9	27	40	118
Clackmannanshire	15	53	8	20	3	27	4
Dumfries & Galloway	188	63	118	4	7	34	63
Dundee	23	17	4	30	7	52	12
East Ayrshire	48	42	20	19	9	40	19
East Dunbartonshire	38	63	24	11	4	26	10
East Lothian	45	64	29	20	9	16	7
East Renfrewshire	44	55	24	2	1	43	19
Edinburgh	64	45	29	27	17	28	18
Eilean Siar	51	35	18	6	3	59	30
Falkirk	50	42	21	12	6	46	23
Fife	283	66	186	12	34	22	63
Glasgow	321	38	122	22	70	40	129
Highland	501	61	306	2	11	37	184
Inverclyde	53	66	35	6	3	28	15
Midlothian	365	78	284	5	17	18	64
Moray	261	56	147	4	10	40	104
North Ayrshire	162	47	76	17	27	36	59
North Lanarkshire	173	65	113	8	14	27	46
Orkney Islands	50	80	40	0	0	20	10
Perth & Kinross	241	44	106	7	16	49	119
Renfrewshire	37	41	15	32	12	27	10
Scottish Borders	59	83	49	3	2	14	8
Shetland Islands	49	37	18	53	26	10	5
South Ayrshire	97	77	75	14	14	8	8
South Lanarkshire	184	76	140	5	12	18	32
Stirling	120	60	72	3	3	38	45
West Dunbartonshire	38	34	13	19	50	6	16
West Lothian	49	41	20	12	6	47	23
SCOTLAND	4547	56	2547	10	430	34	1570

Notes to table

As well as caravans and mobile homes, the census definition included house boats and tents within the term 'other temporary structures'. The table also includes Gypsy/Travellers.

Source: 2001 Census

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