

**NATIONAL  
TRAVELLER HORSE OWNERSHIP  
SEMINAR**

*MILLENIUM HALL,  
CORK,  
21<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2013*



**REPORT**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The working group would like to thank the following for their support in organising the seminar:

- Traveller Health Unit, HSE South (*for providing funding, and for supporting the link between horse ownership & mental health*)
- Cork City Council & the Staff in Millenium Hall
- All the speakers & people opening seminar
- All the participants at the seminar
- All the workshop facilitators
- Niall Crowley (*for both his chairing & subsequent report on the day*)
- Ruth McGuane & Pat O`Sullivan (*TVG students for their help in the preparation of the event*)

The seminar was attended by 105 people, with 83 staying to participate in the workshops, following the presentations.

Participants came from among local authorities (both officials & elected members), gardai, HSE, VEC, the media, community & voluntary groups, Traveller organisations and horse owners from across the country, though predominantly Munster.

## **BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION**

In common with Travellers across the island of Ireland, many of the Traveller families in Cork City have owned horses and continue this cultural tradition to the present day. This has led to conflicts with members of the majority population in an increasingly urbanised environment, with decreasing access to grazing lands. The value of horses has also dramatically reduced, with the demise of the so-called `Celtic Tiger`, creating an oversupply of horses.

In response to the death of a number of horses during the winter of 2010/11, Cork City`s Joint Policing Committee established a Horse Control Forum in September 2011 (re-named the Horse Forum shortly thereafter). In addition to the welfare and the number of horses in the terms of reference, the Forum also sought to facilitate responsible horse ownership. Traveller organisations (as well as Traveller horse owners) engaged with the Forum from the beginning, but found it difficult to make any progress on the issue of facilitating the ownership of horses as an expression of Traveller culture.

As a result, in the autumn of 2012, Traveller organisations considered organising their own seminar to promote Traveller horse ownership. Initially planned as a local seminar, it quickly evolved into a national seminar, which could be of benefit to Traveller groups and horse owners across the country, sharing similar difficulties and learning from the experience in other areas. Other members of the Horse Forum were invited to join the working group, set up to plan the seminar. By early 2013 it was agreed to make the seminar part of Cork`s Lifelong Learning Week of Events. It was further agreed to hold it on the 21<sup>st</sup> March to mark the United Nations` Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The seminar did not take place in isolation, as the months leading up to it marked a number of significant events impacting on horse owners. Cork City Council published its first draft by-laws under the Control of Horses Act, 1996, seeking to introduce new restrictions and obligations on horse owners. Of even greater impact was the Europe-wide discovery of horse meat being mis-labelled as beef and entering the food chain, which led to a quick tightening of regulations of horse

registration measures, with a particular media spotlight on the constituency of the Irish Minister for Agriculture, Simon Coveney in Cork. This led to an article in one of the local papers, accidentally misrepresenting the purpose and the group organising the seminar about a month before the event. Furthermore 25 horses were taken out of fields and impounded the day before the seminar under `Equine Identity Regulations`.

Relevant developments continued after the seminar. In April 2013, the national media highlighted the concerns of a High Court judge about the operation of a horse pound acting on behalf of a local authority. As a result of this court case, horse pounds/local authorities can no longer demand full payment of exorbitant amounts of money within a very short 5-day period for the release of impounded horses.

## **AIM & PURPOSE**

To highlight positive examples of horse ownership across the country in order to support initiatives which can influence the living environments of horses in urban settings, whilst acknowledging the cultural context of Travellers

## **REPORT of the Proceedings of the Seminar,**

By Niall Crowley, Seminar Facilitator

### **WELCOME**

***Deputy Lord Mayor, Cllr. Jim Corr, Cork City Council*** opened the seminar.

He highlighted tensions around Traveller horse ownership and the challenge to explore ways of living in harmony while appreciating difference. He welcomed proposals to enable Travellers continue their traditions in an inclusive society.

### **IDEAS PRESENTED**

***Professor Fred Powell, Dean of Social Science and Head of School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork*** presented a three-part framework of:

- *Horses*: We live in a society where the relationship with horses goes back thousands of years and where the entry of horsemeat into the food chain infringes an age-old cultural taboo. Horses are more than a commodity to be sold and animal welfare must be a concern.
- *Multicultural Society*: We live in a changing society that is challenged to respect culture, cultural difference and ethnic identity. Our response to multi-culturalism can be mono-cultural. This denies differences. Traits we share are emphasised and those that fall outside these are defined as 'other'. This can lead to cultural disrespect and intolerance. A liberal multi-cultural response would respect difference and promote dialogue to explore difference.
- *Travellers and Horses*: Travellers are part of this multi-cultural Ireland and have sought to forge their identity in this context. A liberal multicultural response to Traveller identity requires respectful dialogue to discuss and resolve the issues that have arisen.

**Chrissie O'Sullivan, Coordinator of the Traveller Visibility Group, Cork** provided a local perspective.

The ownership of horses is the last most tangible link back to the Traveller nomadic way of life. Travellers needed horses for economic purposes and for their way of life. The issue of horse ownership should never have become a negative issue and media portrayal has not been helpful.

There have been dramatic shifts within the Traveller community in recent times. A sense of siege has developed. The current response to horse ownership is part of this. There are difficulties in access to land. As soon as Travellers get mentioned access to land becomes difficult. Local Authorities can make a big contribution and have secured access to land and stabling in some areas.

**Martin Collins, Assistant Director of Pavee Point** provided a national perspective.

Traveller men are going through a difficult time with barriers to their ability to earn a living. Creative strategies are needed to reach out to Traveller men and support them in finding new roles. A positive response to horse ownership could be part of this. Steps could be taken to facilitate sulky racing in a safe context.

The Control of Horses Act has not facilitated horse ownership. Travellers need support to comply with it and to ensure high welfare standards for the horses. Where local authorities have facilitated Travellers to keep their horses, this has contributed to better relationships between Travellers and the local authorities. Any costs need to be viewed in a context where 61 million euro was made available by the government to subsidise the horse and greyhound industries (2008, most recent available figure).

It must also be recognized that a lot of horse fairs in Ireland and England would not be viable and would cease to exist, if not for the participation of Travellers and Gypsies at these events. This would be a huge loss to local economies.

**Joseph Patrick Jones, Co-Chair of the Gypsy Council in the UK** presented responses in Britain.

National fair networks owe much to the Travellers and Gypsies that used the fairs in their trading. Not so long ago the horse and trailer were a key form of transport for Travellers and Gypsies. The horse is a part of the family.

The Gypsy Council Horse Welfare Society developed proposals on horse ownership, got the RSPCA, the police and local councils to look at these, and worked with these organisations to create a programme. They trained people to chip the horses, guaranteed rent as a way of getting farmers to rent land, encouraged Gypsies and Travellers to club together to buy land, and pushed local councils to support stables on this land.

**James Cronin, Kerry County Council and the Tralee Traveller Horse Project** presented the good practice developed by Kingdom Curragh Project with the support of Kerry County Council and Tralee Town Council.

An inter-agency approach, with Kerry County Council, Tralee Town Council, the Gardai, Kerry Traveller Development and the Traveller horse owners was developed. The project responds to the social, educational and employment needs of the Travellers.

The project supports Traveller horse owners to comply with the Control of Horses Act. The land around an old dump was acquired from Tralee Town Council. All horses must be micro chipped and there is a limit on the number of horses per family. The Traveller horse owners pay rent and insurance through Kerry Traveller Development. They provide their own hay. The project has contributed to a drop in the number of horses roaming and is self-financing. Kerry County Council spends less of its funding now on the horse project, than it previously did on paying for the impounding of horses.

Fees from members of the horse project provides for rent of stables and grazing, maintenance and insurance cover.

**John McCormack, Director of Services with Kilkenny County Council**

presented the good practice being developed by Kilkenny County Council.

There are challenges to improve conditions for Travellers, build Traveller capacity, mitigate the impact on surrounding people, and manage the issue of horses. There are difficulties including damage done to property and intimidation of landowners. There are specific challenges with regard to horses to reduce horse numbers, improve breeding quality, educate horse owners on animal husbandry, secure compliance with the law and support the horse economy.

An inter-agency structure was established from which a Traveller Horse Project sub-group was formed. But, it has been difficult to get Traveller men to participate. Funding was secured and substantial land identified. But, the sale of council land to fund the project has been delayed and leases on the land identified have not been finalized. The horse project is named in the County Development Plan. The Leader Partnership is funding a dedicated worker for the project. A lack of in-house coordination on the issue of horse ownership within the local authority has been identified. There is however a willingness to drive on with the project.

**Sharon Newscome, Irish Horse Welfare Trust** presented the work of the Trust.

There are issues in relation to employment opportunities in the horse industry, especially for young people with a passion for horses, due to very few training opportunities. There is a horse welfare crisis in Ireland. However, when you get responsible horse owners together and when they unite, those who are not responsible will disappear.

Managed horse projects enable compliance with the law and better relationships between horse owners and the authorities. They support responsible ownership, reduce indiscriminate breeding, and improve horse welfare. They reduce the costs associated with impounding horses, with Fingal County Council's bill for impounding horses down by 70%. They support personal and leadership skills among horse owners. They offer proven mental health benefits, provide a diversion from day-to-day difficulties, and reduce anti-social behaviour.

Horse projects have an important role to play in achieving the goals of the government's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

*"The horse care programmes have been the most effective way to engage marginalised young people"*

***Testimonial of a Youth Worker involved in one of the IHWT Projects.***

***John O'Sullivan, Traveller Men's Development Worker with the Traveller Visibility Group, Cork*** recounted the personal perspective of an older Traveller man he interviewed about horses.

The man was born into a horse mad family, with his day-to-day life centred on horses. Horses were part of his culture and identity, they showed he and his family were Travellers and proud to be Travellers.

It is different now and it is hard to keep horses. The value of horses has dropped, grazing is difficult to get and there is the risk of impounding. He doesn't keep horses anymore but he was never happier than when he did. If there were proper places to keep horses, Travellers would be a happier people.

## **IDEAS DEBATED**

Seven workshops discussed what needs to be done to respond to the issue of Traveller horse ownership.



A range of proposals were put forward, including:

### **Strategy:**

- Horse ownership has a cultural, social and economic importance for Travellers. It cannot be separated from the issue of accommodation. This is different to the situation in the settled community.
- A national strategy on horse ownership within the Traveller community should be developed. It should ensure a consistent approach across the country. Its preparation should involve Travellers and Traveller organisations.
- Funding should be diverted from the current subsidy to the horse and greyhound industries to support this Traveller horse ownership strategy.
- Bye-laws developed on foot of the Control of Horses Act should reference Traveller horse ownership and recognise the cultural importance of this.

- There needs to be greater accountability in relation to impounding. Warnings could be given before steps are taken to impound horses. Prices differ around the country and there should be one universal and affordable approach.

### **Inter-Agency Process:**

- An inter-agency process is needed, involving local authorities, the VEC, FAS/Solas, partnership companies, the Department of Social Protection, the Gardai, animal welfare groups, Traveller organisations and Traveller horse owners to respond to the Traveller horse ownership issues.
- This inter-agency response should include consideration of issues of Traveller horse projects, the provision of land, funding and training.
- In view of the proven mental health benefits associated with horse care, linkages with the appropriate health authorities and health service providers should also be pursued.
- The partners should meet in a solution focused way with openness, respect, and willingness to compromise. Traveller cultural awareness training should be provided for partner organisations.

### **Traveller Horse Projects:**

- The Traveller horse project in Tralee should be copied across the country. In particular it could be piloted in other areas like Killarney and Cork.
- The key elements to a horse project are the interagency approach, building trust especially around enforcement issues, bringing Traveller men into the education system, and ensuring the welfare of the animals.
- Educational and employment elements need to be included in Traveller horse projects.
- Traveller men should be involved and could be supported to give leadership in Traveller horse projects. (This could also provide a model for a Traveller-specific Men`s Shed Project).
- Travellers could form cooperatives and should be assisted to access land and grazing when they do.

- Resources are better used on horse projects than covering the costs of impounding.

### **Supports:**

- The cost of micro chipping chipping and passporting should be subsidised. Travellers could be trained to do the micro chipping.
- Local authorities could identify a liaison person to deal with Travellers on all issues relating to horses.
- Breeding could be controlled and monitored. The cost of castration could be subsidised. The number of horses should be based on what the owners can afford and could be reduced. Fewer horses would allow better maintenance and improvement in quality.
- Sulky racing needs to be supported so that it can be taken off the roads and happen in a safe environment.

### **NEXT STEPS**

1. Publish and disseminate the report of the seminar to secure a focus on the issue of Traveller horse ownership among all stakeholders.
2. Form a national Traveller horse ownership group to make the case for and to advance the proposals made at the seminar.
3. Open channels of communication with the local authorities to disseminate good practice developed and to explore the possibility of preparing guidance on local authority responses to Traveller horse ownership.
4. Open a dialogue that recognises various positions regarding horse ownership.
5. Develop links with the mainstream horse industry to seek support for and solidarity with Traveller horse ownership.
6. Convene a second seminar to review progress made after this event.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Seminar Agenda

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. National Seminar on Traveller Horse Ownership</b> <b>Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013</b> <b>AGENDA</b></p>
---

**9:30 - 10:15**            **Registration**

**10:15 - 10:25**            **Welcome & Launch**

Chaired by Mr. Niall Crowley, former CEO Equality Authority; independent consultant  
Deputy Lord Mayor, Cllr Jim Corr, Cork City Council

**10:25 - 10:40**            **Opening Address**

Professor Fred Powell, Dean of Social Science & Head of School of Applied Social Studies, University College  
Cork

**10:40 - 11:10**            **Setting the Context from a Traveller Perspective**

Local: Chrissie O'Sullivan, Coordinator, Traveller Visibility Group, Cork  
National: Martin Collins, Assistant Director, Pavee Point, Dublin

**11:10 - 11:25**            **Learning from Experience on Horse Ownership in Britain**

Joseph Patrick Jones, Co-Chair, Gypsy Council, UK

**11:25 - 11:40**            **Experience of a Traveller Horse Project**

Paddy Fenton, Tralee Traveller Horse Project, Tralee, Kerry

**11:40 - 12:00**            ***Tea/ Coffee & Refreshments***

**12:00 - 12:15**            **Kilkenny County Council on Working with a Traveller Project on Horse  
Ownership**

John McCormack, Director of Services, Kilkenny County Council

**12:15 - 12:30**            **Urban Horse Projects & the Therapeutic, Mental Health Benefits of Horse  
Ownership**

Sharon Newscome, Irish Horse Welfare Trust

**12:30 - 12:40**            **A Traveller Man's Story about Horse Ownership**

John O'Sullivan, Traveller Mens Development Worker, Traveller Visibility Group, Cork

**12:40 - 13:30**            ***Workshops (Colour Coordinated Groups)***

**13:30 - 14:00**            **Feedback, Facilitated Discussion & End Address**

**14:00 - 15:00**            ***Lunch (Sandwiches, tea/ coffee etc)***

## Appendix 2 Workshop Questions

### 2. Workshop Questions/Notes for Facilitators

*Make sure there is someone to take notes*

#### **Introduction**

**Break into pairs** speaking to the person beside you. Briefly introduce yourself to your partner: your name, where you are from, what organisation you represent (if any) and briefly discuss:

- 1. Are there any comments, you would like to make from what you heard this morning?**

**What did you find interesting? How can any of the examples you heard about in the morning be used in your own area?**

*Return to full workshop group, with one person introducing the other one (If there are lots of people in workshop, that may be new & unfamiliar with this format, abandon this & get people to introduce themselves, not the other person)*

---

*In full workshop group :*

- 2. What do you think needs to happen locally & nationally to enable Travellers to keep horses?**

*(If this requires any prompts :Is it about developing a Traveller horse project in your area? Is it about a general horse project inclusive of Travellers?Is it primarily about land to keep horses on?Is it about adult Traveller men? Young Traveller men? Both?If there already is a horse project in your area, what further development is needed here?*

*Who needs to be involved in it?*

- 3. What are the next steps after today?**

**Who needs to work with who to move this issue forward?**

**What is the role of different agencies/individuals in this?**

*Question 3 is a follow on from Q 2. While Q 2 is about exploring & considering ways of working together to facilitate Traveller Horse Ownership, Q 3 is about coming up with more concrete suggestions on this matter which can be summarised (reported back to the plenary?)& will form the basis of future work as an outcome of the seminar.*

## Appendix 3 Members of Working Group

### Membership of the Working Group

#### Organising the Horse Seminar

Ciara Ridge,	Traveller Visibility Group
Caroline Barnard,	Traveller Visibility Group
John Sullivan,	Traveller Visibility Group
Thomas Erbsloh,	St. Anthony`s Park Community Development Initiative
Deirdre O`Reilly,	Traveller Health Unit, HSE South
Pat O`Sullivan,	TVG Placement Student
Ruth McGuane,	TVG Placement Student

#### *Externally supported by :*

Louise Harrington,	Cork Traveller Women`s Network
Brigid Quilligan,	Irish Traveller Movement

NEWS www.corkindependent.com 23 June 2011

# NO CONSULTATION

## €500 horse retrieval fine a blow to Traveller owners

**Christine Allen**  
callen@corkindependent.com



A COMMUNITY health worker with the Traveller Visibility Group in Cork has said that Traveller men in Cork are angry over the recent implementation of bylaws to increase fees for releasing impounded horses.

Caroline Vasseur told the Cork Independent this week that many Traveller men have reported that their horses are removed from leased land and later found roaming. They now have to pay €500 to collect those horses from Cork City Council.

The fee, announced by the Cork City Joint Policing Committee at Easter, soared from €126.97 to €500 per animal and was put in place to curb the number of straying and neglected horses found in Cork City over the last year.

"Traveller men cannot afford to pay these fees. They are not responsible for these horses that are

and have too much respect for the animals to neglect them."

She said the release fee also exceeded the market value of horses.

"Travellers don't keep horses as an economic asset."

She said Travellers men had not been given receipts for release fees paid to the City Council before now and she said that security firms which had been hired by county councils, throughout the country, had remained largely unregulated, "leaving room for heavy handed tactics and abuse of power by those firms".

She also believes that a consultation process should have taken place while developing the by-laws.

"While Traveller men recognise that animal welfare is at the centre of the bylaw, they fear that without the support of Cork City Council to lease grazing land, as part of a Traveller specific accommodation programme, the

new fee will make it impossible for men and their families to keep horses and preserve an essential part of their culture."

Caroline explained that Traveller men in Cork keep horses as pets and companions, and having horses provided a way in which generations of Travellers could connect.

She added that many settled people did not understand this cultural need and that many had little tolerance for Traveller men and their horses.

"It's a vital part of Traveller culture and necessary for the good mental health of Travellers. As well as that, Travellers are legally allowed to have their horse-drawn vehicles on the main road."

The Community Health Worker stated that the Progress Report on the Traveller Interagency Process (2008) stressed the importance of horse ownership in light of the cultural and social needs of Travellers.

"The gradual extinction of Traveller horse ownership could have a profound impact on Traveller men's mental and physical health, adding to their sense of loss and the further erosion of their heritage and culture."

"For a social group whose suicide rate is seven times higher than that of the general male population of Ireland and who is at a huge disadvantage in terms of accommodation, employment and equality, the new bylaw is just another blow to the Traveller community," she said.

Caroline Vasseur called on Cork City Council to consider the cultural needs of Travellers ahead of any provision of halting site that would include space of horses, and for Cork County Council to assist Travellers in acquiring and leasing land in the county.

She also said that consultation should take place with Travellers before by-laws are passed with effect their lives.

Caroline Barnard-Vasseur, Health Development Worker of the Traveller Visibility Group.  
Photo: K Aheme

found neglected," Caroline said.

She explained that Traveller men had reported a number of incidents whereby horses had been taken from land, leased by Travellers, where horses had been grazing.

"They have reported that ropes are cut and gates are broken through and horses are taken from leased land. They have no control over this,"

She stated that Travellers were glad that they had not been implicated in the recent media coverage about neglected animals, adding that the emaciated and dead animals found in urban areas recently had not belonged to Travellers.

"They feel very strongly about this kind of behaviour."

She said she was also aware of situations where-

by young men in housing estates were buying horses for around €20 to play with, before discarding them.

"They do not have the knowledge or skills and don't have proper feed for the horses. These horses are abandoned soon after being bought."

"Traveller men are extremely knowledgeable and skilled when it comes to taking care of horses

Cork Independent 26/06/2011

# Release fee for seized horses is raised to €500

HORSE owners who have had their animals seized in Cork city will have to pay four times more than previously to retrieve them under tough new measures being introduced.

The package of measures to tackle the high number of straying and emaciated horses in Cork city were unveiled yesterday by city manager Tim Lucey at a meeting of the Cork city Joint Policing Committee in City Hall.

Earlier this year, 19 dead horses were found in Cork city over a two-week period. And last month, a horse amnesty was held as a pilot project in the north west of the city in a bid to reduce the number of horses.

Some 27 horses had to be put down last year after being seized, because they were so emaciated.

Horses which are impounded can be retrieved by their owner at a cost of €126.97 — a figure which authorities have viewed as too low, enabling people to retrieve the horses easily.

Now, the release fee will be €500. Additional horse amnesties will also be held in other parts of the city as a result of the success of the recent one.

Some 60 horses were brought to a site on the north west of the city by a number of horse owners targeted in the amnesty. Forty-eight were classed as being in good condition, while 12 were impounded. Eight of those later had to be put down because of their poor health.

Under the measures unveiled yesterday, it was recommended that an education programme be pursued to help young people look after horses.

The Evening Echo, 19/04/2013



Some of the audience attending the National Seminar on Traveller Horse Ownership at the Millennium Hall, City Hall. Picture: Larry Cummins

# 'Ownership of horses part of Traveller DNA'

By ALAN HEALY

TRAVELLER ownership of horses is the last tangible remnant of their nomadic lifestyle and should be protected, a seminar in Cork has heard.

The National Traveller Horse Ownership event took place in City Hall as part of the Cork Lifelong Learning Festival and was attended by more than 100 people.

Its aim was to discuss the proper ownership and care of horses and follows roundups of horses in Cork in recent weeks carried out by the gardai and Department of Agriculture officials.

The seminar was organised by the Cork-based, Traveller Visibility Group (TVG) and it heard from various speakers including representatives of Pavee Point, the Gypsy Council in the UK, the Irish Horse Welfare Trust and the



Speakers James Cronin of Tralee Horse project; Joseph Patrick Jones, chairman, Gypsy Council, UK; Martin Collins, co-director, Pavee Point with Thomas Erbsloh, community development worker and Ciara Ridge and Caroline Barnard of the Traveller Visibility Group at the seminar. Picture: Larry Cummins

Tralee Traveller Horse Project.

Some pointed out that proper care of horses was essential but people needed to realise that ownership of horses was

part of Traveller culture.

Chrissie O'Sullivan of TVG said the issue was about both sides taking responsibility and looking at positive

ways to address any issues.

"Somewhere deep within the Traveller DNA is a desire to be involved with horses," she said. "Traveller ownership of horses is the last tangible thing of our nomadic way of life."

City Councillor Jim Corr also addressed the seminar on behalf of the Lord Mayor and said horse ownership was an integral part of Traveller culture.

He said however that certain instances such as grazing on open green areas had led to conflict with the settled community.

Martin Collins of Pavee Point said that in 2008 Ireland's horse racing industry was given €61m in subsidies while Travellers did not receive any funding for the care of their horses.

The seminar heard from other areas such as Tralee, Kilkenny and the UK as to how horses are cared for.

The event was chaired by Niall Crowley of the Penalite Authority.

Evening Echo, 21/03/2013

## HORSE SEMINAR TO ADDRESS NEGLECT FEARS

**Peter Horgan** March, organised by Traveller Visibility alongside a multi-Cork city horse show. The seminar will address fears about

the extent of horse ownership and neglect in the city and will take place in Cork City Hall on 21 March. Several stakeholders have expressed a desire to use the seminar as a means to clear up misconceptions on both sides of the horse ownership debate. "Anything that deals



A dumping site in Malton where a horse had to be put down last month.

with the welfare of animals and raises awareness is to be welcomed," said Lisa O'Donovan of the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

"The fact is that not enough feed is being put down in Cork. I don't know why that is the case as I can't get any answers as to why the feed is not being put down. There is responsibility towards the owners to provide for their animals, nobody is exempt from the law.

"I look forward to the seminar in the hope that it will have positive and proactive decisions."

**Welfare** The move was highlighted and welcomed at the Joint Policing Committee this week as representatives stressed the importance of animal welfare.

"I think the issue, as far as roaming horses, and particularly neglected horses which is upsetting for residents in an area, is long overdue," said Labour Cllr Catherine Clancy.

"I look forward to

more so that there will be concrete measures for people who own horses and neglect them, so that we can deal with it as a commensurate and through the law. There is no place for roaming horses within any community and we need to stamp out that act."

This view was echoed by Fine Gael's Patricia Gough, who highlighted the recent sulky racing on the Mallow road as an example of equine abuse.

"What the traffic and gardai were being abused. I think the abuse of the horses on that occasion was just heart-rending," said Ms Gough.

"We are having a forum shortly on horses and I think the boundaries of the city is no place for horses. Horses are not being catered for, they are being neglected, abused and I proposed we should have a passport for horses and that has to be implemented. We can have all the rules we want but if we don't implement them, they are a waste of time."

Chair of the JPC, Cllr Tony Fitzgerald stressed

out in light of 170 horses in poor condition with no fodder within the city boundaries.

"I understand that the gardai are organising a meeting with the owners of lands where horses are kept," said Mr Fitzgerald.

"As chair I intend to prioritise the implementation of the proposed bye-laws in particular for the seizure of horses from private lands where the owner has not given permission for horses to be kept."

Sian Fein's Chris O'Leary called for those owners of animals in distressing situations to be held accountable by authorities.

"Anyone who owns an animal has a duty of care," said Mr O'Leary.

"Any owner whose animals are caught in circumstances that we are seeing should never be left in charge of those animals again. We've all seen 'Into the West'. People use empty houses to shed horses and we have to be have to make sure those people attend the forum."

Cork Independent 21/03/2013