

Programme title*

The Town the Gypsies Took Over

Date of broadcast*

13/08/19

Time of broadcast (24 hour clock)

21:00

Channel / station*

Channel 5

Your complaint

Subject* (please use 255 characters or fewer)

Racial stereotypes and unfair representation of Gypsies and Travellers by Channel 5

Description* (please use 1500 characters or fewer)

I am writing to complain about the Channel 5 programme "The Town the Gypsies took over" that aired on the 13th of August, The title of the show itself was extremely offensive and inflammatory as well as being wildly misleading. The programme was also full of Gypsy caricatures, exaggerations, and a deliberately sensationalised depiction of the Fair. This type of programme is a massive step back in the struggle for fair and equal representation for Gypsies and Travellers.

The makers showed no consideration of how this type of belligerent disregard for the truth can be extremely harmful to Gypsies and Travellers, both as individuals and as a community. Not only that, but they had clearly exaggerated minor incidents to make them seem worse. The program mainly shone a spotlight on the drunken antics of young men, rather than the Fair's true meaning, its traditions, and the old Romani and Traveller families who attend year after year

Bill Welch, a Romani Gypsy who runs the camp on the Fair Hill at Appleby and acts as a liaison between the Travelling communities and the local police, had this to say:

"If they wanted this kind of footage they could have visited any town in any country on a Saturday night. But to come here and try and stigmatise Appleby Fair as the only place this kind of behaviour takes place is massively unfair and untrue. It is nothing more than a callous, malicious attempt to further perpetuate the stereotypes which our people have suffered from for too long. It's time things started to change. Contrary to what some would have you believe, the fair went very smoothly and the crime rate was practically zero, with there being only eight arrests over a period of a week and not one report for violence or fighting. Spirits were high and there was a lovely atmosphere. The relationship between the Travelling peoples and the police has never been better."