# Cambridge City Council apologises after flying Romani flag upside down during history month



A Labour-run council has extended an apology after mistakenly flying the Romani flag upside down, an error made during the observance of 'Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller History Month.' Cambridge City Council displayed the flag outside the Guildhall in the city centre for the month of June, intended to celebrate the significance of these communities. The blue at the top of the flag symbolises the heavens, while the green at the bottom represents the earth; the positions were reversed during the flag's display.

Sam Scharf, the council's director of communities, expressed regret for any distress caused, clarifying that the misplacement was unintentional. "Cambridge City Council sincerely apologises for any upset caused by flying the Romani flag upside down," Scharf stated. He reassured the public that once the error was identified, steps were immediately taken to correct it. The council appears committed to honouring Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller History Month, an initiative first marked in Britain in 2008, which aims to promote awareness and mitigate negative stereotypes surrounding these communities.

This incident is not isolated; similar actions by public bodies have encountered backlash. Notably, Kent Police previously stirred controversy when they tweeted a photo of officers raising the Romani flag in a show of support for diverse communities, reporting overwhelming negative responses on social media. Critics labelled the police as "out of touch," with some asserting that such displays fell under "left-wing woke politics." Deputy Chief Constable Tony Blaker defended the action, stating that it was executed in response to requests from officers belonging to Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller backgrounds, thus highlighting the police's commitment to engage positively with all communities.

In terms of demographics, Kent holds one of the largest populations of Travellers and Gypsies in the UK. Communities in areas such as Maidstone and Swale have historically contributed to local agriculture, yet they continue to face systemic discrimination and social exclusion. The term 'Gypsy' itself is rooted in misconceptions of the communities' origins, mistakenly linking them to Egypt, while the term 'Traveller' more accurately encapsulates a broader European identity.

Ongoing efforts to promote awareness and support for these communities extend beyond local councils. Recent events held by London Gypsies and Travellers aimed to celebrate contributions made by these communities to London life, confronting inequality and discrimination. Such initiatives highlight the importance of solidarity and recognition within the socio-political landscape, where Gypsies and Travellers continue to advocate for their rights amid longstanding challenges.

These ongoing discussions reflect broader societal issues and underline the necessity for increased understanding and respect for the cultural identities of the Romani and Traveller communities in the UK. The incident in Cambridge and subsequent responses from authorities demonstrate both the potential for community support and the significant challenges still to be addressed in fostering inclusivity.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790259/Labour-council-flies-Romani-flag-upside-down.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.londongypsiesandtravellers.org.uk/news/2023/06/29/flying-the-flag-in-grt-history-month/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/police-gypsy-flag-tweet-defended-229417/), [[3]](https://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/travellers-the-romany-and-roma-who-are-they-297139/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/12/10/nybn-d10.html), [[6]](https://friendsoftheearth.uk/system-change/why-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-communities-need-our-support)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14790259/Labour-council-flies-Romani-flag-upside-down.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/police-gypsy-flag-tweet-defended-229417/> - In June 2020, Kent Police faced criticism after tweeting a photo of officers raising the Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) flag to mark GRT History Month. The tweet aimed to show support for diverse communities, but it received hundreds of negative responses, with some accusing the force of being 'out of touch'. Deputy Chief Constable Tony Blaker explained that the flag was flown in response to a request from serving officers of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller backgrounds, emphasising the force's commitment to positively engaging with all communities.
3. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/travellers-the-romany-and-roma-who-are-they-297139/> - Kent has one of the largest Traveller and Gypsy populations in the UK, particularly in Maidstone and Swale. Historically, these communities have significantly contributed to the county's agriculture. The term 'Gypsy' originates from the mistaken belief that these communities came from Egypt, while 'Traveller' refers to those from Europe. The article explores the history and modern social exclusion faced by these communities in Kent.
4. <https://www.londongypsiesandtravellers.org.uk/news/2023/06/29/flying-the-flag-in-grt-history-month/> - In June 2023, London Gypsies and Travellers (LGT) organised events to celebrate Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller History Month. Activities included an exhibition in the House of Commons and a reception hosted by MP Andy Slaughter. The exhibition showcased the contributions of Gypsies and Travellers to London life, highlighting their presence in trade, craft, art, and community. The events aimed to raise awareness of the community's important place in London life and address deep-rooted inequality and discrimination.
5. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/12/10/nybn-d10.html> - In November 2024, Greater Manchester Police issued a dispersal order against Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller children who had arrived in Manchester to attend the Christmas markets. The police targeted children as young as 10, forcing them onto trains and separating them from their families. This action sparked protests in London, with activists highlighting the long history of mistreatment and prejudice against these communities. The incident underscores the systemic discrimination faced by Gypsies and Travellers in the UK.
6. <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/system-change/why-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-communities-need-our-support> - Friends of the Earth highlights the challenges faced by Britain's 300,000-strong Gypsy and Traveller communities, particularly in light of the new policing bill that increases criminalisation of nomadic lifestyles. The article discusses the historical context of Romany activism, the significance of the GRT flag, and the need for solidarity to protect the rights and cultures of these communities. It calls for a collective effort to defend and support Gypsy and Traveller communities against systemic discrimination and marginalisation.
7. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/12/10/nybn-d10.html> - In November 2024, Greater Manchester Police issued a dispersal order against Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller children who had arrived in Manchester to attend the Christmas markets. The police targeted children as young as 10, forcing them onto trains and separating them from their families. This action sparked protests in London, with activists highlighting the long history of mistreatment and prejudice against these communities. The incident underscores the systemic discrimination faced by Gypsies and Travellers in the UK.