

LIBERTY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

20 JUNE 2020, ONLINE

This AGM was held during the Coronavirus pandemic. When lockdown was announced, Liberty contacted members to let them know that a smaller AGM would be held and that the Policy Council would be given the power to vote on motions to ensure Liberty could continue with 'business as usual'.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED

1: THE IMPORTANCE OF JUDICIAL REVIEW

This AGM notes Liberty's ongoing and core commitment to the rule of law, access to justice, and the universal protections of the Human Rights Act 1998 and European Convention on Human Rights.

This AGM further notes the vital role judicial review has played in securing justice, giving effect to the rule of law and checking the abuse of Executive power.

This AGM therefore acknowledges with serious concern the recent pattern of Government pledges on judicial review, its commitment to establish a 'Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission', and plans to 'update' the Human Rights Act; all of which act as thin veneers which will seriously weaken the ability of ordinary people to hold the Government to account.

This AGM condemns any forthcoming Government proposals that would restrict scope and access to judicial review as a means of challenging decisions of public bodies including the Government.

2. GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER RIGHTS

This AGM notes the broad range of motions from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s that stand in solidarity with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

This AGM recognises that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are among the most disadvantaged people in the UK and have the worst outcomes of any ethnic group across a huge range of areas, including education, health, employment, criminal justice and hate crime.

This AGM further recognises with serious concern the ongoing prevalence of racism and discrimination faced by Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, and condemns the use of divisive ‘othering’ language by the Home Secretary during the launch of the consultation ‘Strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments’ in November 2019.

This AGM welcomes the Court of Appeal judgment in London Borough of Bromley v Persons Unknown [2020] EWCA Civ 12 and affirms the Court’s finding that “the Gypsy and Traveller community have an enshrined freedom not to stay in one place but to move from one place to another.”

This AGM strongly opposes the Government’s plans to criminalise trespass and strengthen police powers of eviction, and believes that if implemented, they will lead to further discrimination against Gypsy and Traveller communities, as well as restricting access to education and healthcare.

This AGM reasserts its long standing and ongoing solidarity with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and resolves to resist the draconian powers targeting these Communities.

3. STATE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF DISABLED PEOPLE CLAIMING BENEFITS

This AGM notes with deep concern:

1. The tragic deaths of Errol Graham and Jodey Whiting among many others that have been linked to the withdrawal of their disability benefits
2. That more than three quarters of claimants who appeal against assessment

decisions telling them that they are fit for work have those decisions overturned

3. That Freedom of Information Requests (FOIs) suggest the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have destroyed internal reports into benefit-related deaths

4. Numerous reports from Parliamentary Select Committees, Coroners Judgements, the National Audit Office and many disability groups that have outlined the systemic failures of DWP safeguarding processes for many years

5. The failure of the DWP to learn lessons and launch an independent inquiry into links between their policies and procedures and the deaths of disabled people

6. Reports of falsification of medical assessment reports by outsourced companies.

This AGM condemns:

- a. The DWP's destruction of internal reports into benefit-related deaths
- b. The systemic risk that the structure and processes underpinning the benefits system, including mandatory reconsideration, breach claimants' human rights.