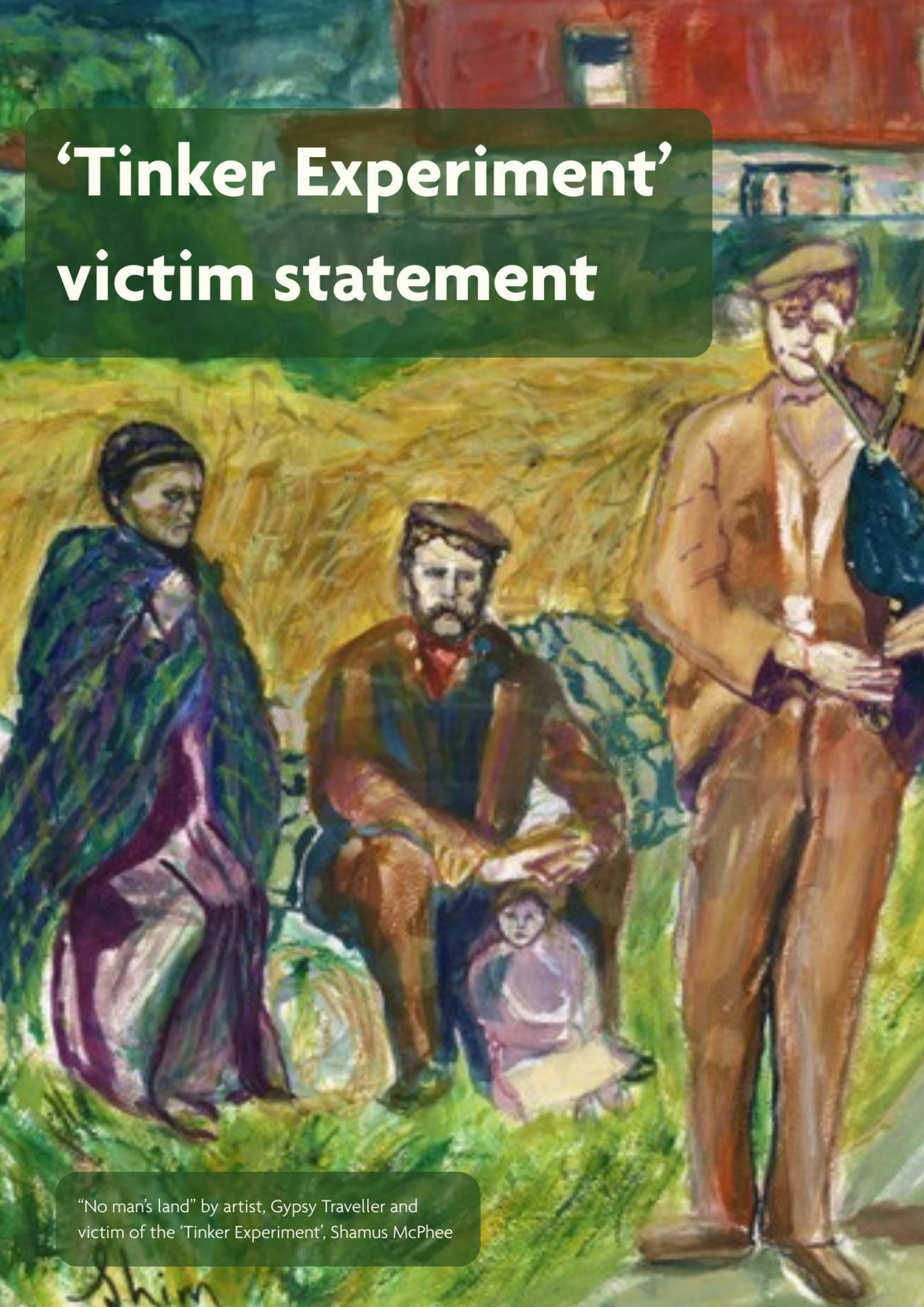


# **‘Tinker Experiment’ victim statement**



“No man’s land” by artist, Gypsy Traveller and victim of the ‘Tinker Experiment’, Shamus McPhee



This statement has been produced in response to the Scottish Human Rights Commission's (SHRC) report "No man's land": a human rights assessment of the 'Tinker Experiment' and redress for its victims.

At every stage of the project, the SHRC has sought to ensure that victims of the experiment could lead and meaningfully contribute to this work. The report relies on testimony from victims who generously shared their stories with researchers. This victim statement - written by one victim on behalf of those who participated in the research - gave victims the opportunity to reflect in their own words on the findings of the report, as well as to reiterate the change they want to see.

**Thank you to the victims for their time, expertise and trust.**





A number of the victims who have suffered as a result of the appalling ‘Tinker Experiments’ were involved with this research which led to the report by the Scottish Human Rights Commission on the Tinker Experiments and cultural denial.

We wish to impress upon all of the actors of the experiment - both governmental and non-governmental - how deeply affected we have all been by the ‘Tinker Experiments’. It is not simply ourselves, but those who have passed over without seeing this day and others who have not been involved with this research.

Whether the experiment concerned directed camps, degrading huts, ghettoisation or child removals and trafficking to the colonies, both utterly cruel, we cannot stress how deeply impacted our lives have been.

Whilst apologies, which are welcome, have been given by the Scottish Government, the Church of Scotland and Perth and Kinross Council - the first of 27 councils involved in the Tinker Experiment to apologise - there has not been word from other churches involved. We have also not received apologies from charities deeply involved in the trafficking nor the police nor Department of Health, which actually sanctioned this dreadful human rights scandal.

Therefore, it is imperative, that those who lived through the ‘Tinker Experiment’ be involved in serious dialogue about redress, restitution and reparations. Specifically, victims would like to see the acceleration of health, social and economic needs assessments recommended by both Scottish Government reports published on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2025 and a list of the following measures implemented thereafter:

1. Medical treatments and therapies identified by the victims ought to be fast tracked.

2. Steps to address the ambiguity around racial and ethnic status which is perpetuating the discrimination ought to be investigated. This should be instead of framing the experiments as social policies.
3. Steps towards true cultural recognition, including the following:
  - National platforms to tell the story of the Tinker Experiment correctly without inaccuracies, using arts to promote cultural expression.
  - Memorials and statues.
  - Investments in Gypsy Traveller led projects and initiatives, especially those run by or involving the victims.
  - Creation of a cultural centre dedicated to peace and tolerance.
4. Cultural heritage status for Bobbin Mill Woods. This should be recognised both as centuries old camping ground and as the site of the first and last 'Tinker Experiment' site. Cultural heritage status should be fast tracked with official acknowledgment of the spiritual and cultural importance afforded to it.
5. Investigation of a transfer of assets at Bobbin Mill site to residents once the site has been upgraded to an acceptable standard.
6. Restitution, including damages for the loss of appropriate education, and in some cases denial of training post-school and denial of employment opportunities. This is despite high academic attainment.
7. Restitution, for the denial of normal life opportunities such as having a social life should be seriously considered. This should include consideration of the interference with the ability to marry and found a family as a result of the cultural dislocation, resulting from cultural denial.
8. Where restitution of life chances is not possible (such as careers, marriage, founding a family, lack of pension or ability to access the property ladder) a

reparations package encompassing generous, appropriate financial compensation should be made available. The reparations package should be created with flexibility to address the gravity of the human rights violations; damage done; losses sustained, as well as the protracted nature of the legacy effects of unresolved trauma, both generational and intergenerational.

9. A total reset of the status quo policies and means by which they are pursued, via a new transformational approach and framework to include, rather than exclude, experiment victims or their families, and where appropriate, training given to monitor evolving cultural initiatives for growth.

A final word. We would like to make a comparator here with those who have suffered greatly due to Horizon and the Postmaster scandal. There are many postmasters who have had a sizeable chunk of their life just wiped out.

In our case, it should be remembered that the harm we have and continue to experience as a result of the 'Tinker Experiment' started at birth and we've had our entire lives ruined by it, this should be acknowledged.

Thank you.

