

Linda McKay
Convener
Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Headquarters
Carrochan
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26 January 2016

Dear Linda

APPLICATION BY LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY FOR CAMPING MANAGEMENT BYELAWS

Further to your letter of 18 May 2015, I am writing to advise that, after very careful consideration, I have decided to approve, subject to modification, the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority's application for new camping management byelaws across four proposed management zones within the National Park.

I am very much aware of the significant level of interest and strength of feeling which has been expressed in relation to these proposals by both supporters and objectors alike. Many will welcome the decision but I know that some will be left disappointed. Having visited the Park on a number of occasions over the summer months to see for myself the range of issues being faced, and from meeting key representatives on both sides of the debate, many of whom acknowledge the existence of problems, I am left in absolutely no doubt that steps must be taken to manage issues more effectively and that proportionate camping management byelaws are an appropriate and necessary part of the solution. I fully acknowledge that the Park has sought to manage issues related to environmental damage, volume camping and instances of irresponsible behaviour in a variety of ways over the last 13 years and that the current proposals, building on the success and experience of the camping management byelaws at East Loch Lomond, have not been arrived at without detailed and thorough consideration.

During my visits to the Park and from the photographic evidence, I have been struck by the extent of damage to some areas of the Park. I believe that year-on-year pressure in the same areas would, if left unchecked, risk these special places being lost to future generations, continue to have a negative impact on local communities and business, risk the Park's reputation both at home and abroad as being a premium tourist destination, and undermine the statutory aims of our National Parks as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

As you know, a wide range of views have been submitted to me during this process, including concern about access rights and a perceived 'ban on camping'. Clearly, these are important issues but I am satisfied that the measures are not a ban on camping but, rather, they will provide the means to manage camping on a long-term basis to safeguard fragile environmental areas of the Park via a more sustainable approach to visitor management. The ability to camp by a range of users will be enhanced via investment in improved facilities, bookable pitches and the availability of permits within the camping management zones, and the ability to 'wild camp' outside the limited management zones all-year and in the management zones out of season are unaffected by the measures. I do not consider that the measures are incompatible with the right to responsible access provided via the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, which is clear that access rights are dependent on responsible behaviour, respect for privacy, safety, livelihoods and Scotland's environment.

Formal Modification

Seasonality. I have decided to reduce the proposed period of operation of the byelaws by 1 month. This means that the byelaws will operate between 1 March to end September (7 months) in any one year, rather than 1 March to end October (8 Months) as previously envisaged. This modification will also have the effect of reducing by 1 month the operation period of the current East Loch Lomond Byelaws which are to be covered by one of the new proposed management zones.

Implementation Date. In addition, I have decided that the byelaws should not be implemented until 1 March 2017 and this date will be specified on the face of the byelaws. I welcome the Park's assurances on the provision of an initial 300 camping places by this date and the addition of more provision in subsequent years which forms part of the Park's Camping Development Plan. This implementation date provides more than a year from the date of approval for the Park to complete this initial phase of camping provision.

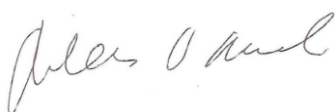
Administrative Conditions Attached to Approval

Formal Report to Ministers. Ministers should be provided with a formal report of a review of the operation of the byelaws no later than 3 years after implementation. The report should consider how effective the new camping management measures have been in reducing the instances of environmental damage and irresponsible behaviour as a direct result of implementation.

Annual Update to Ministers. I would like the Park to provide Ministers with an annual update on the implementation of the byelaws.

I should be grateful if the Park would continue to liaise with my officials over final wording of the byelaws which should take into account the formal modification outlined above together with any other points of detail.

Kind regards



AILEEN MCLEOD