

# National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 6

## Your Park Annual Update

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**Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park  
Camping Management Byelaws 2017**

**Annual Update for Scottish Ministers 2017**

Subject to Board approval

## **Contents**

- 1. Executive Summary**
- 2. Purpose**
- 3. Background**
- 4. Preparing for implementation**
- 5. Implementation**
- 6. Monitoring**
- 7. Operational review and preparing for the 2018 season**

Subject to Board approval

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The first season of the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws 2017 ran from 1st March to 30th September 2017
- 1.2 These byelaws and associated camping provision are designed to improve the camping experience and alleviate pressure on key lochshore locations by managing visitor numbers and impacts
- 1.3 300 low cost camping places (a mixture of camping permit areas and low cost campsites) were available to book online and via a telephone booking system operated by the National Park Authority
- 1.4 More than 16,000 people (including more than 2,800 children) camped within one of these permit areas or low cost campsites during this first season of the camping byelaws
- 1.5 Positive feedback was received from the majority of the 1200 people who responded to the feedback survey about the permit areas, with 87% saying that they would be 'quite likely' (29%) or 'very likely' (58%) to recommend staying over in a permit area
- 1.6 An iterative approach was taken to continually improving camping provision and communications about the byelaws throughout the season, with feedback logged daily and actions allocated accordingly
- 1.7 Most bookings for the camping permit areas (60%) came from Scotland, with 24% coming from the rest of the UK and the remaining 16% coming from the rest of the world
- 1.8 Data analysis of bookings from within Scotland were mapped against the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) revealed that 63% of bookings came from the bottom 50% of the SIMD
- 1.9 Additional Rangers were recruited and trained to help raise awareness of the camping byelaws, educating people on the specifics of the byelaws and related behaviour. Rangers only enforced the byelaws when people refused to comply
- 1.10 A total of ten cases (where the people refused to comply with the byelaws) were reported to the Crown Office, three by National Park Rangers and seven were reported by Police Scotland
- 1.11 Ongoing liaison and communication was carried out with local communities and other stakeholders
- 1.12 Feedback from campers, local communities and other stakeholders has provided useful information to identify areas of improvement in relation to the knowledge of and operation of the new byelaws

- 1.13 Preparation for the 2018 season is now underway, with further investment planned in a new low cost campsite at Loch Achray, and improvements to infrastructure at Tarbet to improve the visitor experience

Subject to Board approval

## 2. Purpose

2.1. This annual update on the first season of The Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws 2017 provides an overview of:

- the approach to implementation of the new byelaws
- how the byelaws operated in practice and
- observations on the initial impacts that the byelaws are having

2.2 The update draws from a range of information and data gathered during the first operational season of the byelaws (1<sup>st</sup> March – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017). The byelaws and associated camping provision have been referred to publically as ‘Your Park’. This update forms part of the administrative conditions attached to approval of The Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws 2017, as specified by Scottish Ministers, as outlined in 3.4 below.

2.3 Further to this update Scottish Ministers will be provided with a report no later than three years after implementation of the byelaws. The report will consider how effective the new camping management measures have been in reducing the instances of environmental damage and irresponsible behaviour as a result of implementation.

## 3. Background

### East Loch Lomond Camping Byelaws 2011

3.1 In an effort to tackle some of the historic problems associated with wild camping and irresponsible fire-lighting on some the busiest lochshores on Loch Lomond, the East Loch Lomond Byelaws were introduced in 2011, as part of a package of visitor management measures. The experience of the first three operational seasons was a significant reduction in antisocial behaviour, litter and damage to the environment and this, along with new investment to the area, saw the quality of the visitor experience in the area greatly improve. The experience on East Loch Lomond also laid the foundations for further consideration of targeted byelaws to deal with similar problems in other parts of the National Park.

### Consultation Process

3.2 During a twelve-week consultation process in late 2014, the views of stakeholders were gathered in response to the ‘Your Park’ proposals for a similar package of measures to cover other areas of the National Park facing these pressures. The results of this consultation, combined with the experience of the East Loch Lomond byelaws, informed the proposals that the National Park Authority submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval.

### Approval Process

3.3 On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2015 a letter of application was submitted by the National Park Authority to Dr Aileen McLeod, (who, at the time was) Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform. This sought confirmation of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws, using powers conferred upon the Authority in Paragraph 8 of Section 2 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. The proposals submitted to the Scottish Ministers included:

- The implementation of camping byelaws across four Camping Management Zones covering less than 4% of the Park's 720 square miles
- The creation of a permit scheme to support the byelaws allowing informal camping in defined areas of the Camping Management Zones – see Appendix 1
- The creation of campsites with low cost bookable pitches and basic facilities
- Delivering 300 camping spaces in the first year of the byelaws operating, with more to be added in subsequent years
- The simultaneous revocation of the East Loch Lomond byelaws to coincide with the introduction of the new byelaws

3.4 Following a period of ministerial consideration the proposed Camping Management Byelaws were approved by Scottish Ministers on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016. Formal modifications that were requested of the National Park were that:

- *'The proposed period of operation of the byelaws would be reduced by one month; running from 1<sup>st</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> September rather than to the end of October as previously envisaged. This included the area where the East Loch Lomond byelaws had operated for eight months of the year.*
- *The implementation of the byelaws was moved to 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017'*

Two administrative conditions were also applied:

- 1) *'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.'*
- 2) *'The National Park will provide Scottish Ministers with an annual update on the implementation of the byelaws.'*

This report is the first of these annual updates.

## 4. Preparing for Implementation

4.1 Preparatory work that was necessary to allow the implementation of the byelaws was split into three development and delivery areas:

- **Camping Infrastructure and Management:** a Camping Development Strategy including delivery of campsite provision and camping permit scheme; design and installation of information and advisory signage for visitors.
- **Operational Management:** administrative and support systems for managing camping activity and byelaw enforcement and monitoring; operational arrangements such as staffing models, systems and training.
- **Communications and Engagement:** a communications plan with key messages about the new byelaws and camping provision within the Camping Management Zones for the 2017 season. Continued educational activities and provision of information including face to face engagement to the public on responsible access and behaviour in the National Park.

### Camping Infrastructure and Management

4.2 The Camping Development Strategy was approved by the National Park Authority Board on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016. This strategy set out the details of the camping provision to support the byelaws. This involved the provision of a mix of low cost camping facilities throughout the four Camping Management Zones including:

- **Permit Areas:** that give a 'wild camping' experience with no formal facilities. Bookable for a small administrative fee, the permits provide a temporary exemption from the byelaws. These areas are monitored by the National Park Authority and the number of permits within each area can be raised or lowered to help ensure the environment is protected and the visitor experience is enjoyable.
- **Permit areas with services:** operate in the same manner as other permit areas, but provide additional toilet and parking facilities at higher use areas. Some of these permit areas are located next to existing facilities.
- **Informal Campsites:** similar to the low key campsites at Salloch and Loch Lubnaig, these new campsites provide an informal camping experience, but with purpose-built simple facilities such as toilets, fresh water and allocated parking. Pitches are bookable for a low cost fee.
- **Motorhome/campervan provision:** will be provided in suitable off road locations to stop overnight.

- 4.3 Location of camping provision across the four Camping Management Zones also took into consideration a number of factors including varied visitor experience, popularity of existing areas, safe and easy access from public roads, recreation routes and parking areas and the ability to sustainably support camping volumes. Considerations for investment were then based on criteria including; land ownership, impacts on communities, site constraints and anticipated site popularity.
- 4.4 Signage was also an important part of the new camping infrastructure. This signage is varied and includes road and path signage, and boundary signage. Advice was taken from Transport Scotland and liaison was undertaken with the relevant local authorities and land owners before signage was installed. See Appendix 2 for signage examples.

#### Operational Management and Administration

- 4.5 The operational management of the byelaws covered the introduction of new systems and associated data, the creation of new policies and procedures, partnership agreements, staff deployment models and training.
- 4.6 The key preparatory work for this element of the project included:
- The creation of a monitoring framework and the adaption of a Global Information Tool to allow Ranger staff to gather data efficiently in the field
  - Developing a new online camping booking system to allow visitors to easily book camping permits and to provide an efficient way of monitoring the permit scheme
  - Designing systems and processes to use the powers given to the National Park Authority under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 with respect to issuing Fixed Penalty Notices and reporting cases of littering and fly-tipping to the Procurator Fiscal
  - The design and trialling of a new Ranger deployment model that was responsive to visitor patterns and situations arising on the ground
  - Close working with Police Scotland who provided advice and support with Ranger deployment modelling and Police planning through Operation Ironworks. Forest Enterprise Scotland has also been a key delivery partner for assistance with the design of systems and with the delivery of many permit areas and the campsite at Loch Chon, and a proposed campsite at Loch Achray
  - Procedures for enforcement of the byelaws were created that support the National Park Authority Visitor Management Engagement and Enforcement Policy
  - Training was undertaken in relation to the enforcement process to equip staff with the skills needed to help ensure that people could comply with the byelaws and to be able to correctly escalate the situation if preventative approaches were not successful



### Guiding principles of the byelaws

4.7 The Visitor Management Education and Enforcement Policy was prepared before the implementation of the byelaws and sets out the approach that the National Park Authority will follow to manage visitor behaviour using legislative powers throughout the National Park. In summary this policy focuses on the use of public education and preventative approaches, before enforcement, as the primary methods for ensuring byelaw compliance.

### Communications and Engagement

4.8 Communication and engagement formed a key element of the preparation of the introduction of the byelaws. Ensuring visitors, local communities and businesses were given enough information was important not only to raise awareness of the byelaws, but also to allow campers to make an informed decision about the type of experience they can expect when camping within the National Park.

4.9 The key preparatory work for this element of the project included:

- Sending of updates and attending meetings with Community Councils to allow communities to ask questions about the operational management of the byelaws
- The creation of new camping pages on the National Park website to help with the understanding of the byelaws and what camping provision is currently available with the National Park. See Appendix 3 for examples of updated camping webpages and booking system. These webpages linked to the refreshed 'Respect the Park' webpages offering information on enjoying safe and responsible access to the National Park
- The creation of a new 'Camping in the Park' leaflet and a refreshed 'Angling in the Park' which provided more detailed information on both activities and maps showing related facilities
- Press releases and media appearances providing information about the byelaws to a national audience
- The creation of a series of short videos which covered 'Why we have byelaws', 'Camping in the National Park' and 'What is a Permit Area'. These videos were shared on social media, and provided easily accessible information to frequently asked questions about the byelaws and gave first time campers advice on how to camp responsibly
- The design and introduction of signage at Camping Management Zone boundaries and within permit areas
- The introduction of a Your Park Stakeholder Forum to allow communities and other stakeholders to receive and share information and feedback on the progress of the project

## 5. Implementation

5.1. The Camping Management Byelaws 2017 went live on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017 and over the season the new infrastructure, systems and procedures that were created to support the byelaws have been tested. Throughout the season the National Park Authority has been collecting data and gathering feedback from communities, staff, partners, land owners and visitors using a variety of methods. The combination of testing systems and gathering feedback has allowed the National Park Authority to make effective changes throughout the season in a continuous cycle of improvement.

5.2 During the first season work focussed on the three development and delivery areas:

- **Camping Infrastructure and Management:** including the development and management of permit areas across the Camping Management Zones, the establishment and operation of Loch Chon campsite in Strathard, further signage installation and development of future camping proposals by Loch Achray on the Three Lochs Forest Drive.
- **Operational Management:** including the administration of the permit booking system, education about responsible camping and, where necessary, enforcement of the byelaws by National Park Ranger staff, volunteer input and monitoring projects.
- **Communications and Engagement:** including liaison with communities, land managers and local businesses within the National Park and a variety of local and national stakeholders and media.

### Camping Infrastructure and Management

#### 5.3 Permit Area Operation

As of the start of the first byelaw season on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017 there were 41 permit areas across the Camping Management Zones. The permit areas were spread throughout the four Camping Management Zones and provided a variety of visitor experiences including along lochshores, open and woodland environments. Permits were booked online via the National Park website or via a telephone booking line. Permits cost £3 per tent or motorhome per night (with a maximum bookable number of three nights stay in one permit area in line with Scottish Outdoor Access Code guidance on wild camping).

Permit areas differ in size and terrain type and permit holders can choose to camp in any suitable area within the permit area, as no specific pitches are highlighted.

The permit areas are defined using signage that includes marker posts for boundaries (where no natural barrier is present) and a sign showing the layout of the permit area.

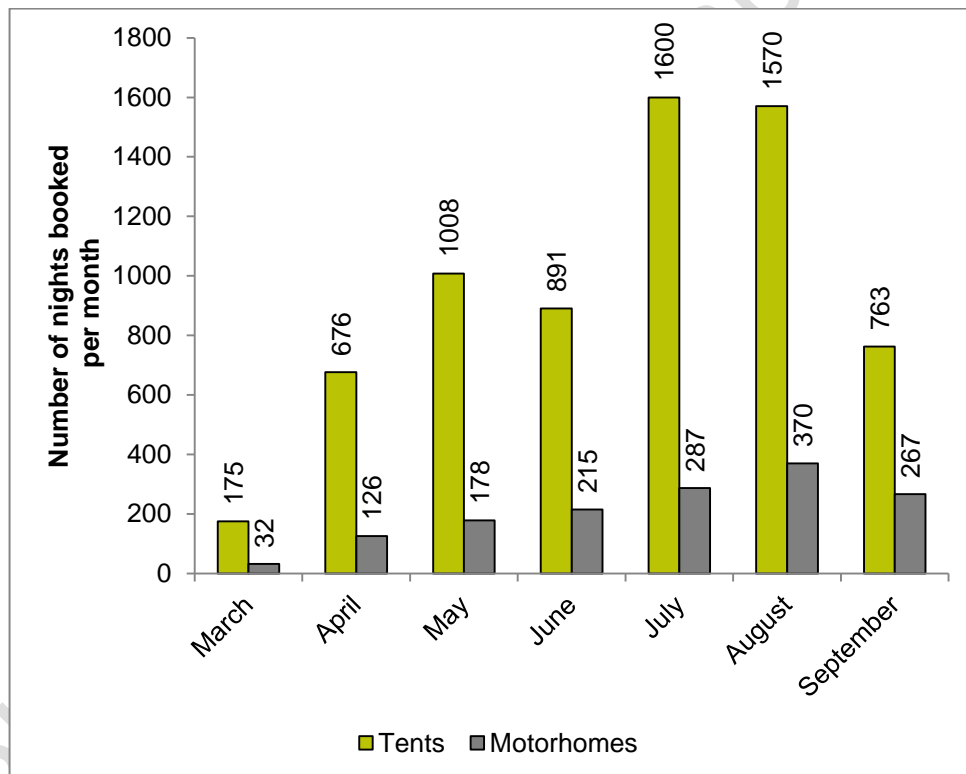
Once the season was underway, an initial review of permit areas was undertaken and adjustments and improvements were made to provision. Some permit areas within the 3 Lochs Forest Drive were reviewed and new permit areas were introduced to improve the camping experience.

Following discussions with Police Scotland, it was agreed that they would use roads legislation to deal with unlawful encampments and irresponsible use of motor vehicles in laybys, and therefore motorhome permits would no longer be provided in these layby areas.

#### 5.4 Permit Area Use

The following figures summarise a breakdown of permit area use over the first season:

- Over the season a total of 6,129 bookings were taken. This is representative of 8,158 nights of camping, which breaks down as shown in the chart below:



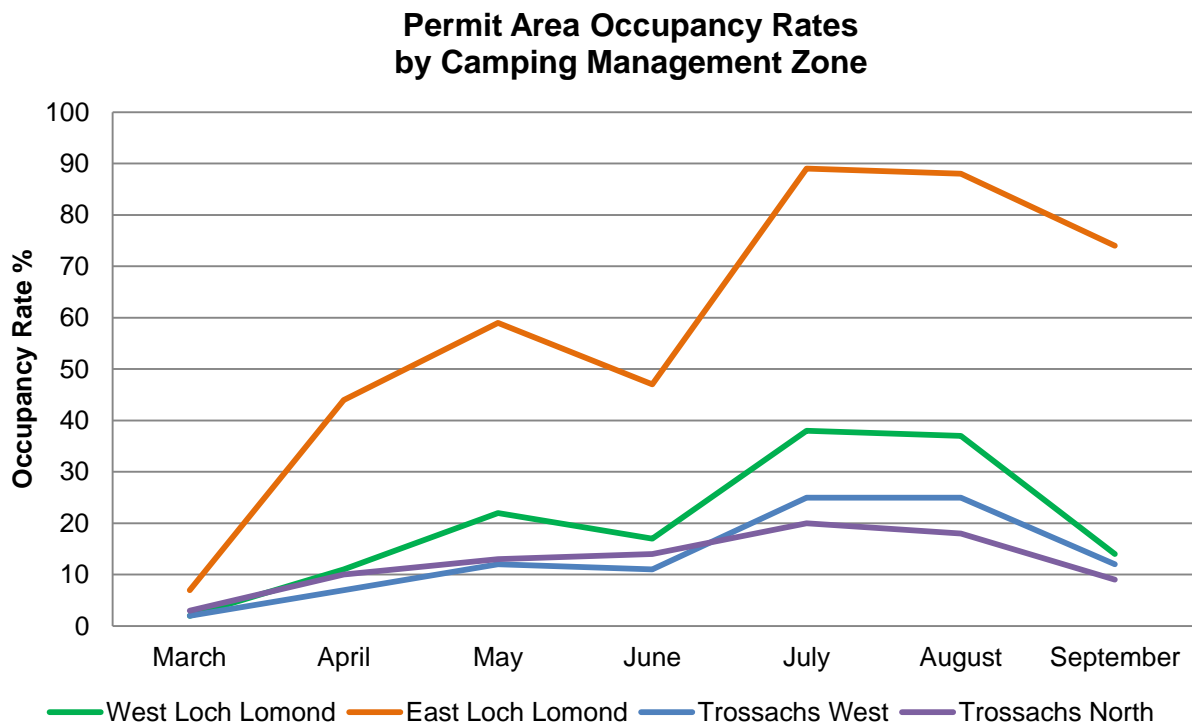
- The total number of people who camped in a permit area over the season was 14,863 of which 2,325 were children
- During the season 4,914 bookings were for tent camping representing 80% of bookings and 1,215 motorhome bookings were made representing 20%
- The majority of bookings (73%) were made for 1 night stays, 22% of people booked for 2 nights and the remaining 5% for the maximum allowed stay of 3 nights

- 60% of permit bookings were from Scotland, 24% were from the rest of the UK and the remaining 16% from the rest of the world. See Appendix 4 for permit area bookings by home locations.

### Demand for camping permits

5.5 Camping is largely seasonal so demand for camping tends to fluctuate with weather, weekends, public and school holidays.

- The average occupancy rate (number of permits booked divided by the number available) across all of the camping permit areas was 15%
- At times of peak demand, all campers who wanted to stay in a camping permit area were able to do so. The busiest day of the year for tent bookings (where occupancy rates for the permit areas was highest) was 12<sup>th</sup> August when 92% of all available camping permits were sold.
- Occupancy rates by Camping Management Zone are shown in the graph below:



### 5.6 Permit Area Visitor Feedback

Everyone who stayed overnight in a permit area was sent an online survey on the day they were due to leave the area. More than 1200 people took the opportunity to share their feedback and any suggested improvements. Feedback was logged daily and any actions arising were prioritised. The following figures provide a summary of that feedback. This information is visualised in Appendix 5.

- 85% of respondents booked their permit before they arrived at their pitch

- 93% of respondents said they found it easy (32%) or very easy (61%) to buy their camping/motorhome permit
- 5% of respondents said they did not feel they were provided with enough information about how the byelaws operate
- 86% of respondents said they found it easy (42%) or very easy (44%) to find the permit area they had booked
- 87% of respondents said they would be quite likely (29%) or very likely (58%) to recommend staying over in a permit area
- 46% of respondents had met a National Park Ranger during their stay

### 5.7 Camping Bookings by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) rank

A question emerging from the Your Park Stakeholder Forum was the home locations of those making camping bookings, in relation to linking levels of deprivation with accessibility of camping in the Camping Management Zones.

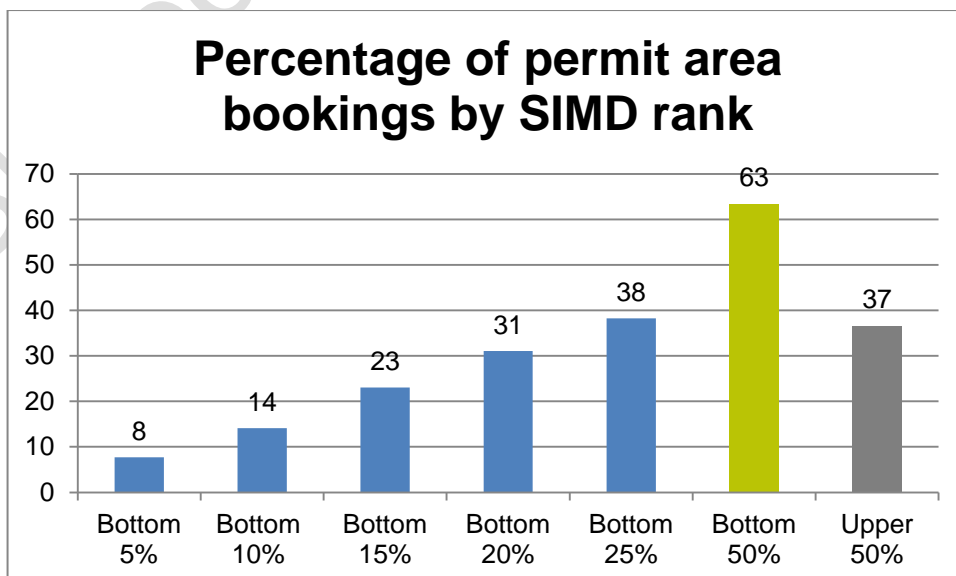
Using postcode data, an analysis was conducted of permit area bookings that came from Scotland, with the results mapped against the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is:

*“the Scottish Government’s official tool for identifying areas in Scotland concentrations of deprivation by incorporating several different aspects of deprivation (multiple-deprivations) and combining them into a single index.”*

Source: <http://www.isdscotland.org>

Of the 3,680 permit area bookings that came from Scotland, 63% of them came from postcodes with the bottom 50% of the SIMD, with the remaining 37% coming from postcodes within the upper 50% of the SIMD.



## 5.8 Loch Chon Campsite Operation and Bookings

Loch Chon campsite provides a semi-formal camping experience with toilet facilities, access to fresh water and allocated parking. The site offers 26 pitches set amongst woodland on the shores of Loch Chon and pitches can be booked using the same booking system as for permit areas. The campsite is priced at £7 per adult per night, and children under 16 camp for free.

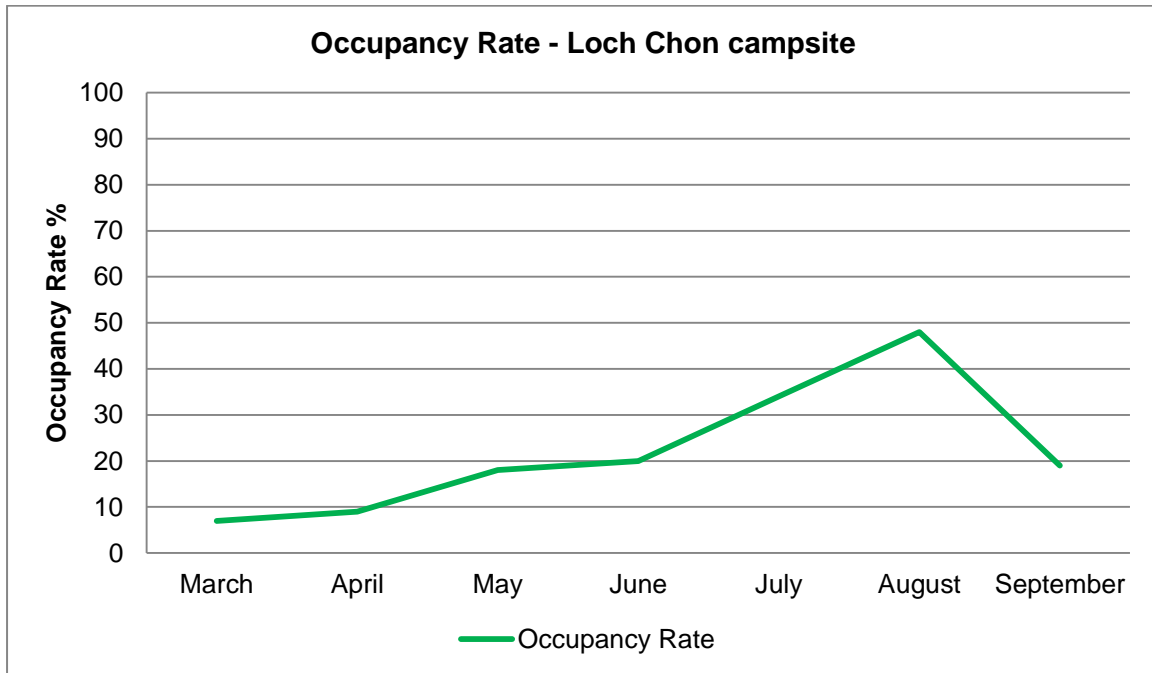
The campsite is staffed on a morning and afternoon rota system using seasonal National Park Rangers who undertook basic maintenance on the site, provided help and advice for campers.

An ongoing issue with the new drinking water supply system at the campsite during the first season meant that campers were provided with alternative bottled water during their stay. This issue is being resolved during the closed season, allowing fresh drinking water to be available when the campsite reopens in March 2018.

The following figures summarise a breakdown of the use of Loch Chon campsite over the first season.

- Over the entire season a total of 837 bookings were taken which was representative of 1,242 nights of camping.
- The total number of people who camped at Loch Chon campsite over the season was 2,052 of which 518 were children.
- The majority of bookings were made on line with 75% of campers using this booking method the remaining 25% of people used the telephone booking service.
- Bookings could be made up to 8 weeks in advance of arrival date with 22% of people booking their pitch on the day of arrival.
- The majority of bookings (61%) were made for 1 night stays, 30% of people booked for 2 nights and the remaining 9% for the maximum allowed stay of 3 nights.
- 72% of campsite bookings were from Scotland, 20% were from the rest of the UK and the remaining 8% from the rest of the world.

Occupancy rates at Loch Chon campsite are illustrated below:



- The average occupancy rate in Loch Chon Campsite was 22% percent. There were days in the peak holiday months of May, July and August when the Loch Chon campsite was either at full capacity, or almost at capacity.

#### 5.9 Loch Chon Campsite Visitor Feedback

Campers booking permits were given the opportunity to complete a survey to feedback on their experience and to ascertain directly what suggestions they had for improvements. The following figures summarise the key findings of this feedback survey. This information is visualised in Appendix 6:

- 95% of respondents booked their pitch at Loch Chon campsite before they arrived
- 88% of respondents found it easy (21%) or very easy (77%) to book their pitch
- 88% of respondents felt they were provided with enough information about the campsite
- 92% of respondents said that they would be quite likely (18%) or very likely (74%) to recommend Loch Chon campsite
- 89% of respondents met a National Park Ranger during their stay at the campsite

#### 5.10 Signage

Signage formed an important part of the measures needed to operate the byelaws effectively. Three categories of signage were designed for use within each of the Camping Management Zones:

- **Threshold Signage** to be used at points of entry and exit to and from the Camping Management Zones, on road signage and long distance walking and cycling routes
- **Permit Area signage** included posts highlighting the boundaries to the permit areas, orientation panels to assist campers and signs to mark motorhome bays
- **Repeater signage** includes small signs designed to remind people that they are in a Camping Management Zone and that they cannot camp outwith designated areas. Additionally 'hot spot' signs are only designed to be used in areas where people have regularly been found in breach of the camping byelaws.

The quantity and location of signage to support the byelaws was carefully considered so as to provide an appropriate level of information to visitors whilst minimising the visual impact of new signs.

### Operational Management and Administration

#### 5.11 Administration

Bookings both online and telephone bookings are managed by a National Park Authority bookings team. Bookings can be made by visitors online or with staff over the telephone up to eight weeks in advance. As well as taking bookings, staff who took camping related calls were often asked general visitor enquiries and were able, in some cases, to help tailor a visitor's camping experience to their requirements. The majority of bookings were made on Fridays and Saturdays. Rangers also assisted people without permits who wished to camp, by completing online, telephone or if required, retrospective bookings.

#### 5.12 Permit Authorisations

Provision was made to allow organised groups to apply for permission to camp within Camping Management Zones but outside of permit areas. This allows groups such as Duke of Edinburgh expeditions and youth organisations to camp at no charge. Information and an online application form are available on the National Park Authority website. Contact was made with the main group bodies (Scouts, Duke of Edinburgh etc.) in advance of the byelaws to make them aware of the byelaws and the mechanism in place to allow them to continue with excursions and expeditions. In the 2017 season, a total of 12 Group Authorisation requests were received and approved.

#### 5.13 Ranger Patrols

The National Park Ranger service provided the majority of the public facing engagement through a mixture of full time and seasonal staff. In preparation for the first season of the new camping byelaws additional seasonal Rangers were recruited and trained. A more flexible deployment model was used, allowing Ranger Team



Leaders to deploy Rangers to where they were needed most, providing a more responsive service.

The patrols, split into early and late shifts, were primarily tasked with welcoming people to the Park, raising awareness of the byelaws, educating people on the specifics of the byelaws and related behaviour. Rangers only enforced the byelaws when people refused to comply. Whilst on patrol Rangers also captured visitor related data including visual counts of people, tents, vehicles, fires and estimated litter levels.

As the season progressed, an increase on Ranger time was focussed on light touch maintenance of permit areas to remove litter and undertake some vegetation clearance.

#### 5.14 Volunteers

National Park Volunteers assisted in providing information and inspiring visitors, allowing Ranger staff more time to spend actively patrolling the Camping Management Zones. In addition volunteers also assisted with maintaining the quality of the permit areas with targeted litter picks.

#### 5.15 Byelaws and the Environmental Protection Act Enforcement

When required, enforcement of the byelaws was carried out by Rangers or Police Scotland officers. The following figures summarises these actions:

- During the first operational season of the byelaws 828 individuals' details were taken and warnings issued for alleged contraventions of Camping management byelaws.
- A total of 10 cases were reported to the Crown Office, three by National Park Rangers and seven were reported by Police Scotland. Byelaws that were contravened included Unauthorised Camping – Byelaw 6, Fire-lighting – Byelaws 8a & 8b, Provision of Details – Byelaw 9 and Removal from a Management Zone – Byelaw 13.
- During the same time period Park staff issued four Fixed Penalty Notices for camping related fly-tipping.

#### 5.16 Communications and Engagement

A communications plan was prepared and implemented in the lead up to 1<sup>st</sup> March and throughout the season.

This focused on raising awareness of the byelaws by providing clear information across a range of channels including:

- Media
- Social media
- National Park Authority's website

- Partner newsletters and websites
- Printed materials
- Face to face updates to community groups and stakeholders

A suite of promotional materials and digital content was produced to support promotion of the byelaws. These included leaflets targeted at key audience groups, tear off maps, blogs and informational videos (see Appendix 7 for links to these).

#### 5.17 Media

A total of 54 pieces of media coverage were achieved from January to November 2017, across national, regional and trade media, including print, broadcast and online. The majority of coverage was the result of proactive press releases issued by the National Park Authority Communications Team. Reactive enquiries were responded to quickly and opportunities to further raise awareness through the media were capitalised on as they emerged.

On 1<sup>st</sup> March, the BBC covered the first day of the byelaws at a UK level across BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio 2's Jeremy Vine Show, BBC 5 Live news, BBC Radio Scotland's Drivetime and Reporting Scotland, as well as on its own digital channels.

#### 5.18 Online

A new camping section of the National Park website was developed to provide detailed information on all of the camping options available. Between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 30<sup>th</sup> September the camping pages of the website were viewed 264,604 times.

Posts promoting camping and the byelaws on Facebook had a total reach of 88,614, while Twitter posts reached 40,355 people.

A series of short, informative videos about camping in the National Park posted on YouTube, Twitter and Facebook were viewed a total of 18,664 times across the three channels.

Google AdWords, search engine advertising was used to promote the new campsite at Loch Chon, resulting in 2,195 clicks and 19,628 impressions.

#### 5.19 Stakeholder engagement

Key stakeholders were identified in the preparation of the byelaws and communications and engagement activity was developed to reach each audience.

A Your Park Stakeholder Forum was created with meetings held in November 2016, March 2017 and November 2017. Membership of the Forum is made up of representatives of community councils, community development trusts, landowners, partner public sector organisations and non-governmental organisations including those with an interest in outdoor recreation and access.

Articles were developed and placed in partner and NGO publications and websites as well as in the Park Authority's e-newsletter to local businesses.

Individual face to face meetings were also held with a range of stakeholders including landowners, partners and NGOs. Written and in person updates were provided to community councils throughout the year.

## **6. Monitoring**

6.1 Monitoring the impacts of the new byelaws draws upon a range of qualitative and quantitative data, including the views of campers, partners, local communities and stakeholders, along with targeted environmental survey information. At this point in time, a few months after the first season, no conclusions are being drawn as to impacts within this annual update report. The observable impacts will be laid out in the three year report to Scottish Ministers in 2019.

6.2 During the 2017 season the following monitoring methods were used to gather qualitative and quantitative data:

- Monthly fixed point photography of camping areas at several sites within the Camping Management Zones to map the visual changes to the immediate environment.
- Vegetation surveys at several sites within the Camping Management Zones, recorded twice a year in spring and summer to observe any potential changes in herbaceous and woody species.
- Water quality sampling details at several sites within the Camping Management Zones to observe any potential changes in water quality linked to recreational use.
- Surveys of views from a range of interested parties including campers, partners, local communities, National Park Authority staff and stakeholders.

## **7. Operational Review of the 2017 Season and looking forward to 2018**

7.1 Throughout the first season there has been an ongoing process of refinement and adaption during the season as lessons have been learnt from testing new systems and procedures and responding to feedback from staff, visitors, partners, landowners, businesses and communities.

7.2 After the completion of the first season, an operational review process was carried out by the National Park Authority to capture learnings from those involved in the Your Park programme. This included conducting feedback sessions and online surveys with a view to identifying potential improvements in operational management of the byelaws, site management and visitor experience ahead of the 2018 season.

7.3 This process has identified the following areas of challenge and improvement to consider moving forward:

- Reinforcing public messages on what the new byelaws are, where they apply and what they mean
- Providing additional camping provision when permit areas are restricted due to adverse ground conditions or land management operations

- Provision of additional motorhome/campervan facilities
- The problem of litter and human waste continues to be a longer term problem at some permit areas and further work is required to reduce this issue which has negative effects on the surrounding environment and visitor experience.
- As yet, it has premature to draw conclusions from regarding any noticeable changes in levels of litter and antisocial behaviour. This is something we will continue to monitor and gather feedback on in subsequent seasons.
- Improving mobile connectivity in and around campsites to allow easier online and telephone bookings and improve access to information
- Making popular camping pitches more robust and resilient to heavier use and adverse weather conditions
- Finding flexible signage solutions to reinforce byelaw messages at wild camping hotspots within Camping Management Zones
- Monitoring potential displacement of campers from Camping Management Zones to other nearby areas
- Level of resources required to maintain new byelaws longer term.

7.4 Looking ahead the proposals for the provision of camping opportunities and related facilities are outlined in the Camping Development Strategy, published in October 2016 (see Appendix 7). The focus for the 2018 season is the investment in an upgraded campsite near Loch Achray, working with partners in Forest Enterprise Scotland. Subject to planning permission being granted, the campsite will be completed in spring 2018 providing an additional 17 camping pitches, two of which will be all ability access. Improvements to car park surfacing at Taret should also provide better facilities for motorhome/ campervan stopovers.

7.5 Work will also focus on aiming to reduce the environmental impacts of high levels of camping at South Loch Earn and the National Park Authority will continue to explore additional sustainable camping provision across the Camping Management Zones.