

Local communities and camping bye-laws

Description

Mike Wade, in an article in the Times on Saturday <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/scotland/article4684602.ece> has done a great service in showing that local communities are far from unified in their support for camping bye-laws. After quoting Stuart Fraser, of the Oak Tree Inn at Balmaha, which has been vocal in its support for the bye-laws, he quotes not just one but four residents from the Callander area who are opposed to them: Gene and Liz Maxwell who live on a farm and run a shop; Roger Drapper proprietor of James Bayne Fishing Tackle; and Ronnie Kerr a former Glasgow taxi driver. (While Mike quotes me in the article, I had no idea he was looking at this).

Now I know of other people who live in the Park who are against the bye-laws but few, so far, have been prepared to speak out publicly and none to my knowledge have been quoted in the mainstream press. So my congratulations to Mike for finding local Park residents prepared to speak out and for a great piece of investigative journalism. Congratulations too to the people who have spoken out – it is not easy to speak out given the scale of the misinformation put out by the Park.

For, central to the case put by the Park to Ministers was that local communities were united behind the bye-laws. It did not matter that a majority of respondents to the Your Park consultation opposed the bye-laws so long as local communities supported them. All, however, is not as it appears.

Community Councils were, initially, far from supportive of the bye-laws proposal with a couple classed as ‘negative’ (Trossachs and Luss and Arden), a couple as ‘positive’ and most as ‘neutral’. [FOI 2015-046 Appendix B Your Park consultation meeting notes](#) The list on the Park’s consultation tracker is far from complete but the comment ‘manage closely’ recorded in the tracker sheet alongside many community councils suggests that the Park worked hard on representatives on community councils during the consultation process.

Just how the Park managed to get all the Community Councils to say yes to the Your Park consultation I will consider in a forthcoming blog but if you look behind the positive answers to the Your Park consultation (do you support camping byelaws etc?) the actual responses from Community Councils to the Your Park consultation was very different to what the Park would have people to believe. A few examples:

399) Balquidder, Lochearnhead and Strathyre Community Council: ‘there seems to be a misconception, amongst a minority of visitors, that they can bring a caravan to the lochside and leave it parked up for the whole ‘fishing season’. This ruins the opportunity for other genuine visitors’! ‘Nothing said against camping under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.’

460) East Strathearn Community Council: wanted all laybys along Loch Earn to be accessible to all, a reference to the encampments which used to block them; ‘We absolutely support any measures that will discourage any semi-permanent occupation of our loch shores’. *Against encampments, not camping per se.*

568) Luss and Arden Community Council: supported creating another campsite at Luss and one Firkin point; wanted bye laws extended Glen Douglas; said that bye laws won't work unless police and rangers intercept youths coming to camp before they get too drunk. *This indicates that policing is the real issue.*

608) Trossachs Community Council: in favour but said that byelaws should only be introduced if adequate camping provision has been provided; unfair on responsible campers if the bye laws were to be put in place without adequate provision; also argued that individual land owners should be able to grant permission to camp on their land which is critical to ensure that the bye law does not prevent some aspects of responsible camping.

619) Arrochar, Tarbert and Ardlui Community Council: supported the consultation in principle, particularly for campsites; wanted new campsites at Inveruglas, Tarbet and Firkin as a starting point and said that "We are happy that bye laws will be flexible and meet local needs". *The Park had obviously not told them there was no flexibility in the original proposals, it was campsites or nothing.*

There is absolutely NOTHING in any of the community council responses to show that they were against camping according to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Rather the responses show that they saw the byelaws as being a means of addressing certain problems they were experiencing. This begs the question of just what the Park was doing about those issues.

As respondent 606) A former teacher said: "Your consultation creates an us and them situation between yourselves (and those lucky enough to live in the Park) and the wider public who are the majority of users and for who the Park was created".

Mike Wade has done us a great favour in starting to breakdown the them and us, the suggestion that the interests of people camping according to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code are somehow detrimental to the interests of everyone resident in local communities within the Park.

Category

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Author

nickkempe