

Public transport and our National Parks (2)

Description

There was more press coverage last week about the reduction in cycle storage capacity on the West Highland Line

http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14388363.Campaigners_warn_that_train_refurbishments_will_slash

On Friday I received a response to my letter to Gordon Watson about whether the Park had made any representations about the impact this would have on tourism in the Park. I covered the potential impact on the National Park in a previous post <https://parkswatchscotland.co.uk/2016/03/18/public-transport-national-parks-1/> As is usual, the reply was in the form of an FOI response: the answer appears to be that the Park has made no attempt to influence Transport Scotland or the Government on this issue [FOI 2016-011 Response](#)

I hope that tourism and cycling interests will now put pressure on the Park to speak out. While there is an unspoken rule between public authorities that they do not criticise each other in public, Transport Scotland is listed as one the Park's key partners in the LLTNP Partnership Plan 2012-17. You might have thought therefore that Transport Scotland would have consulted the Park about the reduction in cycling capacity on the West Highland Line and – assuming they failed to do this – the Park would have made representations when the news became public.

You might also have thought that Transport Scotland was signed up to the transport objectives set out in the Partnership Plan and the Park would be deeply concerned by the proposals to reduce cycling storage on trains which can only undermine that plan. Among the statements in the plan are the following:

- “There is great potential for improvements to scenic routes, viewpoints and public transport” – but not apparently if you want to put your bike on a train to Tarbert and take the cycle route back to Glasgow
- “There is a lack of value attached to maintaining existing infrastructure and assets to a high standard to support tourism” – as now is further evidenced by the proposal to reduce cycle storage capacity on trains
- “Creating, co-ordinating and promoting a wider range of well integrated transport options which will appeal to visitors.....” but not apparently if this is about increasing opportunities to take your bike on the train

Priority for Action	What does this Mean?	Target for 2017	Lead Partners	Relevant Organisations
VE11 Range of Sustainable Transport Opportunities	Linking public transport with recreation and tourism opportunities is crucial especially as the Park looks to meet climate change targets (and with the high price of fuel). There are opportunities to put in place new services that deliver a better visitor experience and reduce emissions from cars.	By end 2014 have in place a suite of self-sustaining water bus services on Loch Lomond with hubs at Tarbet, Balmaha and Loch Lomond Shores. Link with other forms of public transport and cycling and walking provision. By 2017 have joined up services between key lochs, such as Loch Long, Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Park Authority • Scottish Enterprise • Private businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strathclyde Passenger Transport • Tactran • Sir Walter Scott Trust • Scotrail • National Park Destination Development Group • Community Development Trusts • Local Destination Groups

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The statement that “linking public transport and recreation and tourism is crucial” is spot-on but if those words are to mean anything, the Park needs to speak out about changes to trains which will undermine this and make the links far worse for cyclists. Transport Scotland, meantime, need to start acting as a partner to the plan instead of unilaterally. Bizarrely, they are not listed as a relevant organisation in VE (Visitor Experience) 11 on sustainable transport. Perhaps the new Environment Minister, who chairs the annual reviews of the Park’s Partnership Plan, will knock some heads together but I suspect it will need more campaigning to achieve this.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. cycling
2. LLTNPA
3. Minister Environment

- 4. public transport
- 5. Tourism

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