

Disappearing campsites and the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Development Plan

Description

Following my last post on camping provision in the LLTNP <https://parkswatchscotland.co.uk/2016/04/27/con-loch-chon-loch-lomond-trossachs-national-parks-disappearing-camping-plans/> I asked Gordon Watson, the Park's Chief Executive once again about the outstanding campsites which had been agreed for the Trossachs back in 2012 and to clarify how the Park's draft Development Plan would encourage new campsites [email to Gordon Watson](#)
[28th April 2016](#)

On 25th May I received [EIR 2016-017 Response](#) which states “no decision has been taken about the outstanding proposed campsites in the Five Lochs Management Plan”. I very much doubt this and believe it is yet more obfuscation. I wonder if the Park can explain what it has been doing at the site it owns on North Loch Venachar which was originally designated as a campsite and which I visited with Nick Halls on Monday 15th May?



Extract from the 5 Loch Visitor Management Plan produced by the LLTNPA show the Plan for North Loch Venachar, with a camping area on the right. The full plan and key to the diagram can

be found on page 37 of the Five Lochs Plan http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/images/stories/Looking%20After/PDF/5%20Lochs/5LochsPlan_2012_web.pdf



The newly created carpark on North Loch Venachar. The original plans were for twice as many car parking spaces (there bays on the road side of the car park have been removed) and for these to be gravel, not tarmac. The whole carpark has been “suburbanised” compared to the original

plans – is this appropriate for our National Parks?



The two spaces for motorhomes included in the original plans at the west end of the carpark have been removed and appear to have been replaced by a picnic bench.

Why would the LLTNPA have not provided any spaces for motor homes, as planned, unless it had actually taken a decision not to allow them to use this site overnight?



The original plan was for a toilet block in front of where the white van is parked and for a septic tank to be installed under the carpark.

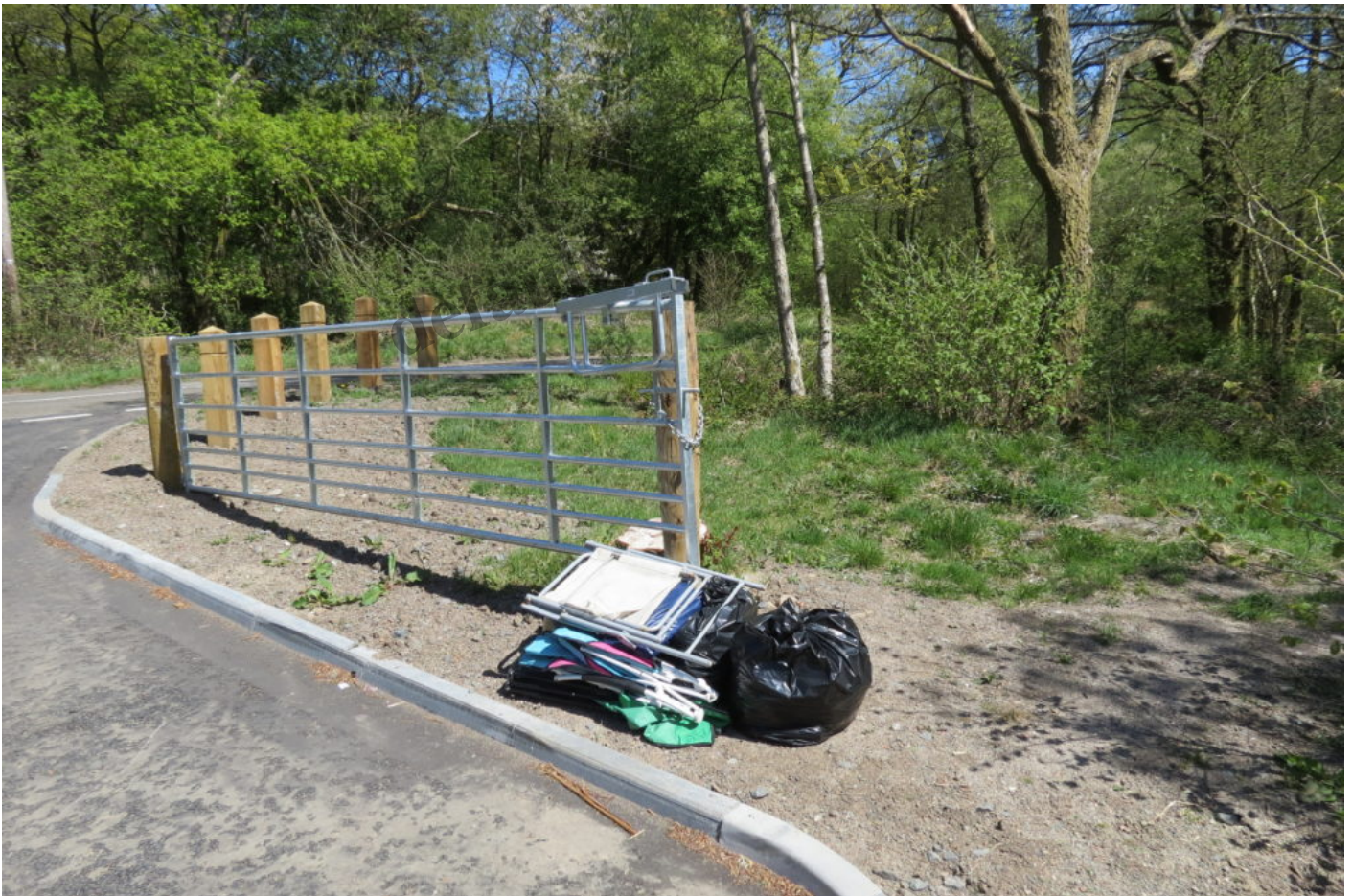
Unless a septic tank has been built under the carpark as planned it is difficult to see how a toilet block could now be provided, except at considerable extra cost. This casts doubts on the statement by the Park that no decision has been taken on a campsite here.



One is needed for both campers and day visitors – as soon as you are in the trees toilet paper is only too apparent.



The area earmarked for a campsite on the original plans, the carparking area is behind the trees



In the original plans a recycling point (litter collection) and woodstore (for fires) was planned by the gate. Its not clear if this will be installed but is clearly needed.



The car park gates already fitted with locks to keep people out – this is public land in a National Park

Its interesting that the LLTNPA has installed metal gates at North Loch Venachar. Gates were on the original plans unlike those at the carpark on the south shore which was constructed a year ago.



The south Loch Venachar quay carpark site directly adjacent to Loch Venachar House, the home of the Convener of the LLTNA Linda McKay (behind the fence). At this site wooden gates have been installed though there were none on the original plans.

Many would say the use of natural material for gates is more in keeping with the ethos of the National Park and would help avoid “suburbanisation”. I believe the LLTNPA needs to explain publicly why it has installed wooden gates at south Loch Venachar but metal gates at north Loch Venachar and who took the decision.

I hope the photos illustrate that while it is not yet impossible to create a campsite at north Loch Venachar, the way the recent works have been undertaken suggest a decision has in effect been taken. Appended to this post are a further set of questions I have asked the Park about this. I believe that any work now to create a campsite here is likely to result in significant extra costs. What is far more likely is the Park will try and introduce its proposed permit system, where you have to pay to camp even where there are no facilities. The Park would have been much better constructing a toilet at this popular site on north Loch Venachar than giving an estimated £345k to Forestry Commission Scotland to construct a new campsite at Loch Chon where very few people visit. If they had done so

as planned, the unsightly toilet paper littered around the trees would have been a thing of the past – another opportunity missed.

The solution to these failures is quite simple. Engage publicly with the recreational organisations about the proposed camping development plan instead of refusing to divulge details and doing everything in secret.

The Park's Development Plan and camping

I had heard Gordon Watson speak at the Scottish Council for National Parks AGM last month where, in response to a question, he had asserted that he saw the Park's Development Plan playing a facilitative role in encouraging new campsites. I took this as an encouraging response but it was plainly just words. The key words in EIR response 2016-017 are "the delivery of new campsites will be supported should they be proposed". What this confirms is that the Park has no intention of using its planning powers to help create new campsites where they are needed but will only support them where they are proposed by others and ONLY in certain places as you can see from this extract from my [Response – Development Plan and Camping](#)

*"The Guidance on Visitor Experience states "We are likely to support tourism development within towns, villages and land allocated for tourism" and "We are likely to support small scale tourism development with good access to the existing network of paths, infrastructure or visitor facilities the red shaded areas on maps" (P11). It goes on to state "an informal touring caravan or campsite would be likely to be considered small scale" (P12). Apart from an area around Glenbranter and between Crianlarich and Tyndrum all the red shaded areas are on the east side of the National Park and while covering the Trossachs lochs do NOT cover west Loch Lomond, east Loch Lomond or Loch Long. So, what this means in terms of the Local Development Plan as worded is the LLTNP is NOT supporting new "informal" campsites in the west side of the National Park. **This is totally wrong and I wish to object. The National Park Authority needs to allow small scale sites in the west of the National Park area.**"*

To be clear it's NOT the Park's proposed policy under the new Development Plan to support new campsites in most of the western half of the National Park.

I will come back to the Development Plan in due course but the claim in EIR 2016-017 response that "it is incorrect to say that your suggestions were rejected" should be taken with a large pinch of salt. They were mostly simply ignored although proposals for campsites in specific areas, such as Balmaha (originally proposed by Friends of Loch Lomonds and Trossachs and SCNP) were actually rejected. What the EIR confirms is that the Park has no intention of using the Development Plan to address the lack of camping provision in the National Park. This is perhaps hardly surprising given the Park is still

swithering about delivering campsites on its own land. Its a matter that the new Environment Minister, Roseanna Cunningham, who has responsibility for the National Parks needs to address.

My further questions to the LLTNPA following receipt of EIR 2016-017 Response

“Thankyou for this response. I was out visiting the North Loch Venachar site ten days ago and saw that work had been done to the carpark. This does not conform to the original plans in the 5 Lochs Visitor Management Plan. I would therefore request that you provide me with all written information you hold about the work that has been completed at the North Loch Venachar site including plans and how much of the allocated budget from last year and this has been spent on the works to date (creation of the tarmac area, wall, gates, signage and some seats). I would also appreciate a response to the following specific questions:

- why was it decided to replace the gravel car parking spaces marked on the original plan with tarmac?*
- why have the number of car parking bays been reduced from the original plan? Specifically what has been decided about the 13 car parking spaces shown on the original design for the north side of the carpark?*
- why are there no parking spaces for motorhomes? (two were marked on the original map).*
- has the treatment/septic tank marked on the original design been installed under the carparking area? If not, how could a toilet block still be possible for this site as originally proposed in the 5 Lochs Management Plan?*
- is a wood store and barbecue stands still planned for the area around the carpark? (none are in evidence but I appreciate the intention may be to install these now the main works are completed)*
- is a recycling point still planned for this site (none was in evidence but is clearly needed)?*
- are the four picnic benches which I saw all that is planned for the site or is the intention to provide the seven which were illustrated in the original plans?”*

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. LLTNPA
3. Minister Environment

- 4. planning
- 5. visitor management

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