

Dogs and the Cairngorms National Park

Description

The Cairngorms National Park Authority has, with Scottish Natural Heritage, issued a short educational video on dog walking in the National Park <https://t.co/ZsYpjNosWL>. This is to be welcomed. The Land Reform Review Group, which reported to the last Scottish Parliament, concluded that access rights were working well but there were a number of areas where further education was needed. Dog walking was the priority area for further work (camping was not seen as a major issue at all and the Review Group rejected representations from the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority that the legislation needed to be amended to remove the right to camp by roads). The CNPA video should be seen as a positive initiative by a public authority to implement the recommendations of the Land Reform Review Group.

SNH also, to its credit, engaged with commercial dog walkers to draw up a new code of practice. An exemplary way to do things in contrast to the LLTNPA who failed to engage seriously with recreational organisations about how to educate people about reducing the impacts of wild camping.

The dog video, which is aimed at visitors, includes information on the impacts of dogs on wildlife. Good stuff and something that I think Dick Balharry, the great Scottish ecologist who died last year, would have approved of. I remember him saying to me how he thought there should be NO dogs in National Nature Reserves. This, however, begs the question about landowners dogs. Anyone who has walked by estate buildings in the National Park will have experienced the howling of dogs in kennels and earlier this year I came across a very nice keeper (he kept his most dangerous looking dog by his side as we passed!) running six or seven dogs at Dalnaspidal. The purpose of these dogs of course is to assist with hunting and what is not said publicly at present is that this includes anything that the estates perceive as vermin or might prey on red grouse. For estate dogs helps keepers track down ground nesting raptors, mountain hares and stoats all of which are persecuted in the National Park. I suspect estate dogs are responsible for far more damage to wildlife on grouse moors than visitors dogs but let's not wait for a three year scientific study before anyone acts on this.

So, my question is when will the National Park and SNH be producing a video on good practice for local estates? Indeed, should they not go further and introduce licensing of dogs on estates and set conditions about what they can be used for? Or follow Dick Balharry and ban dogs completely from National Nature Reserves or indeed the National Park and make legitimate hunting a bit more challenging?. I suspect if any of this were to happen the number of dogs in estate kennels would drop dramatically.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. access rights
2. CNPA
3. grouse moors
4. hunting
5. LLTNPA
6. visitor management
7. wildlife persecution

Date Created

May 29, 2016

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