More on the camping con at Loch Chon

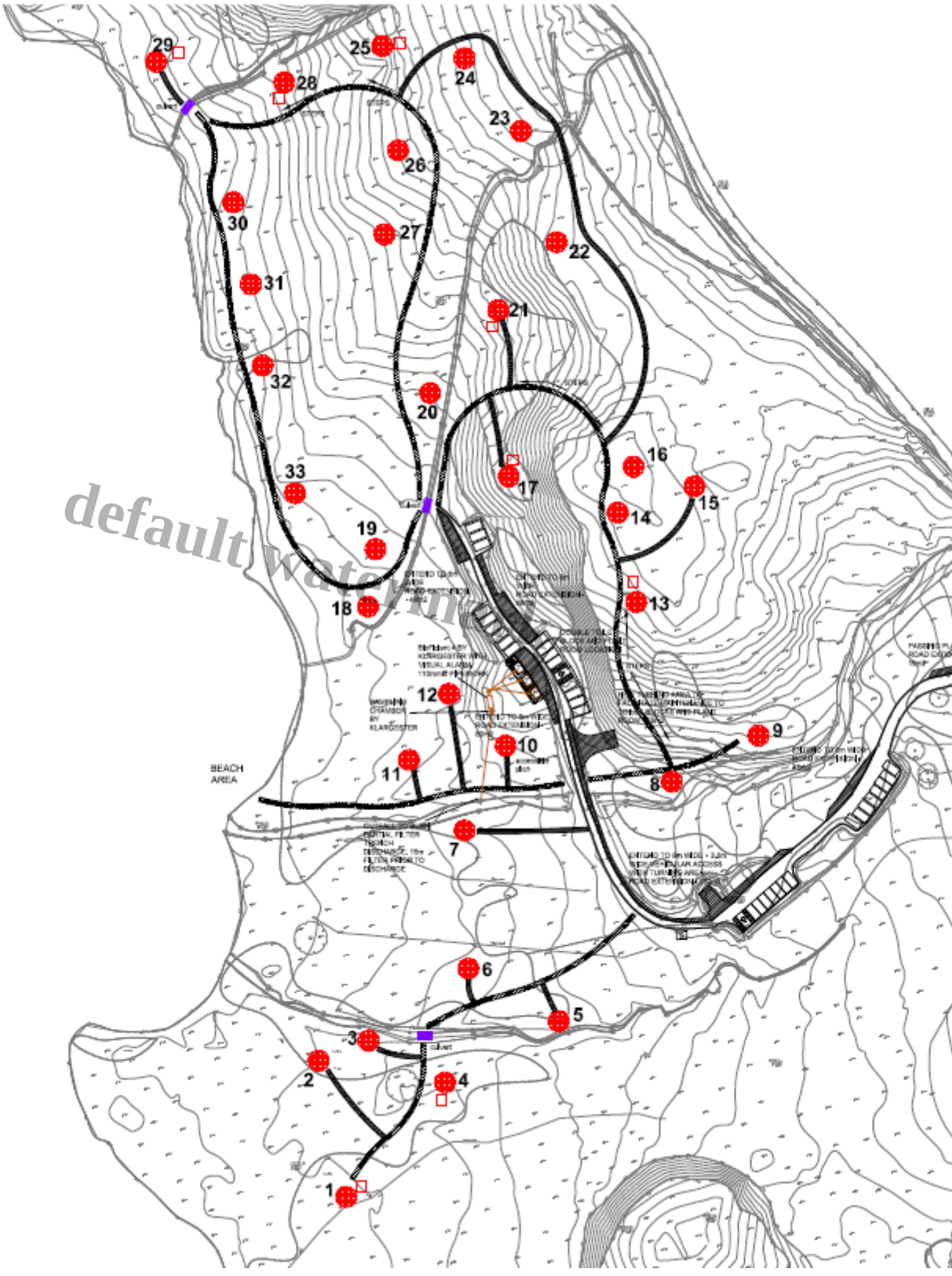
Description



Artistâ??s impression of improved camping at Loch Chon, in The Trossachs (LLTNPA Press Release)

â??As part of the plans which will come into effect for the 2017 season, feasibility work is already well advanced at Loch Chon in The Trossachs on land managed by Forest Enterprise Scotland. It is proposed that the picturesque site at Loch Chon will accommodate 30 tent pitches alongside facilities including a fresh water supply, waste disposal and toilets. Similar sites will be created across the four management zonesâ?•. (LLTNPA Press Release 26/01/16 welcoming the Ministers approval of the camping byelaws).

The Loch Lomond and Trossachs Press Release bears NO resemblance to the planning application the Park has made to itself (see here) which shows fixed pitches, all set back from the loch



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Under the LLTNPAâ??s actual proposals the pretty scene in the first photo, which is on the beach well to the left of any of the pitches, could not happen. Its propaganda based on a conviction that you can fool most of the people most of the time â?? what the Park is actually planning includes wooden

camping platforms on the hillside.



Illustrative campsite design submitted to Scottish Ministers as Appendix 4 to the bye-law proposals

What is more people camping near the beach as in the first photo would be in breach of the byelaws and committing a criminal offence.
Note also the claim that similar sites would be delivered across the four management zones. The LLTNPA has still not announced any other site and now has only six months to deliver. I doubt it will and there is no time now for any public consultation but then the LLTNPA develops all its important plans which affect people who live in, visit and care about the National Park behind closed doors. If the Park fails to deliver the promised campsite that is yet another reason for the new Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham to reverse the decision to approve the byelaws.

There has been no further news about the Parkâ??s planning application to itself (see here) on Loch Chon but I suspect this is because the LLTNPA is secretly trying to win over the local community, many of whom rightly objected to its proposals. I hope they hold out. Its worth reminding Gordon

Watson, the Chief Executive, what he committed in writing to the local community about the byelaws and the Parkâ??s camping plans back in April 2014 Loch Ard meeting notes (obtained through an FOI request):

Enjoy Mr Watsonâ??s reference to Loch Drunky, but the points that stand out for me are:

- The Community Council suggested campsites at Loch Katrine, Loch Arklet and various other locations in the area. This would have fitted well with my suggestion that there should be a network of small campsites in Strathard linked by the current path network which is underused. A great opportunity to promote weekend cycling and backpacking trips. This has been ignored and instead the LLTNPA wants one big campsite at Loch Chon.
- The Community Council wanted to allow camping at Loch Arklet, but because the byelaws have been extended there and the Park is refusing to consider a campsite, camping will be banned there completely.
- Most of the campers at Loch Chon are fishermen who obtain fishing permits from Forest Enterprise Scotland.

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Now local people have been concerned about fishermen leaving a mess at Loch Chon and I believe this was partly why there was local support for the proposed camping byelaws. However, byelaws were never needed or the right solution: the Forestry Commission Scotland should have been managing these issues, its their land after all. They could have simply removed fishing permits from people who did not abide by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code when camping or undertaking other activities (fishing itself is not covered by access rights). Instead, FCS have simply abandoned all their visitor management responsibilities at Loch Chon and have been only too pleased to see the National Park step into the void and pay for a campsite on their land. The FCS should have been creating campsites throughout the Trossachs and the western part of the National Park where its by far the largest landowner.

The FCS as well at the LLTNPA has betrayed local and recreational communities and I hope both will start demanding it either starts to play a constructive role in Strathard or is held to account by Scottish Ministers. In my view the best way out of the mess that LLTNPA and FCS have created in Strathard would be for a tourism and recreation plan for Strathard which is developed openly and transparently with the local community and recreational organisations.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. Camping bye laws
3. LLTNPA
4. Local communities
5. planning

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Author
nickkempe

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