

Car park charges and gates are being used to prevent access to the National Park

Description





I visited the south Loch Lubnaig car park for the first time on Sunday, on the way back from a day on the hill, and was struck by the signage. I think it proves the dangers of car park charging I made in my [post](#) two weeks ago. Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority would have visitors believe that the charges are to help maintain the car park. In fact I suspect a significant proportion of the charges collected is being used to pay for the people who come round to lock the gates of this car park each night and other car parks where the LLTNPA has not yet installed pay and display machines. Some of the money will also contribute to the installation of gates at all the car parks controlled by the LLTNPA. This is a National Park that is supposed to be promoting access but instead is paying people to prevent it. This needs to be stopped.

When I asked Gordon Watson, the Chief Executive of the LLTNPA, the reasons why gates were installed across the car park outside the Park Convener, Linda McKay's House on the Invertrossachs Road on South Loch Venachar, this was his response (Complaint 093 response dated 14th December 2014):

With reference to your questions about the installation of gates at the car park located at Loch Venachar, as landowner, the Park Authority is permitted to install fencing and gates. Gates have been installed at this location to assist with vehicle management during periods of peak demand, and on occasions when there are unusually high water levels. The gates have not been closed in the way you describe.



Gate at first Invertrossachs Road car park – Loch Venachar House, the home of the Park convener,

This was nonsense and I followed it up as I had photos showing the then recent flooding at Loch Venachar where water levels were well below the carpark – indeed a local person informed me they had never known the loch to flood that high. I also could not understand how a car park could assist with traffic management on what is generally a very quiet back road. This is the Park's Response – [EIR 2015-014 Response](#). What it proves is part of the response from Mr Watson to my complaint was simply made up. EIR 2015-014 clearly states that the Park had "no written information about the basis of the decision to install gates at the car parks", "does not hold information about flooding on the loch shore at the location on the car parks on south Loch Venachar" and had no information from the police or Stirling Council about any need for traffic management. So the National Park held absolutely no evidence to substantiate Mr Watson's claims as to why the gates were installed – not the first time this has happened.

The wider problem is that the letter shows that people like Mr Watson are being allowed to take decisions that fundamentally affect access rights (and its worth knowing Mr Watson lives in the National Park):

"The decision to install gates was an internal decision by officers [note the LLTNPA avoided my question as to who authorised the installation of the gates]. This decision follows the same approach as that taken at other visitor sites that have been improved by the Park Authority, including Loch Lubnaig North and South, Milarrochy Bay, North Loch Venachar and Firkin Point."

If this is true, a group of senior staff would appear to have taken a decision to install gates with a view to keeping people out across the National Park. (If its not true, the Park Board is responsible). I would question how on earth this promotes the statutory duty of the National Park to promote public enjoyment of the countryside? Why shouldn't campervans pull in and spend the night at south Loch Venachar or Firkin Point or anywhere else? Elsewhere in the Highlands people are generally welcomed but in the Loch Lomond and National Park everything is done to discourage visitors unless they pay for it at times the Park decides. I think it significant that Linda McKay, the Park Convener, while apparently fully aware of the installation of gates as neighbours were notified (though the letter indirectly shows she did not comment) did not think to raise the wider access implications. More evidence that NIMBYIST attitudes and assumptions in the LLTNPA start at the top with the Chief Executive and the Convener.

Category

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1. access rights
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