

The rotten ideology of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority

Description



Fire Edinchip Estate 5th September 2016

I passed this fire last Sunday at the start of a walk round the Glen Kendrum horseshoe, near Lochearnhead. It was still burning when we came back 6 hours later.

By chance, Ross MacBeath had just passed on to me an FOI response he had made to the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority which contains this statement on the rationale for the camping byelaws:

*The basis of the byelaws is evidence of a problem that the Park Authority has been unable to fully resolve. **The Park Authority has no evidence of landowners camping on their own land, lighting fires and causing a detrimental impact on the environment** or other people's enjoyment.*

Forget for a moment the dozens of examples of landowners in the National Park doing things that have a detrimental affect on the environment or people's enjoyment of it (bulldozed tracks, deer fences, inappropriate developments on wild land, blanket conifer plantations, destruction of biodiversity etc) and just consider fires.

The fire in the photo – and we saw an estate vehicle drive off leaving the fire unattended – is likely to have had a far worse impact on the environment than several dozen small camp fires. The biggest impact will have come from burning general rubbish which could have released toxic fumes into the environment – which doesn't happen when campers or day visitors burn untreated dead wood. The fire is also on the grass verge and because of its size it will have left far bigger burnt patch than those the LLTNPA presented as justifying byelaws. So, will the LLTNPA use this evidence to refer the Edinchip Estate to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency? I am sure they won't. Within the LLTNPA there is one set of rules for landowners and another for everyone else.

This is not just hypocrisy, its driven by deep seated ideological beliefs that perceive visitors as the cause of potential problems while being blind to similar or much greater impacts caused by landowners. There is no understanding that landowners have far greater powers to cause environmental damage than visitors (just look at the Glen Falloch Hydro Schemes). The LLTNPA claim that they have no evidence of landowners causing damage to the environment. Well, if you don't look, you won't find it: direct your Rangers to patrol popular places for visitors and instruct them just to record data for those places, and the data you hold will mostly be about visitors. How about the LLTPNA directing its Rangers to do an audit on all the farm rubbish in the Park? It would then have a different type of evidence on litter that it has quite simply ignored.



This farm litter, opposite Park Convener Linda McKay's House, at the east end of Loch Venachar which I originally photographed in 2015 was still there a year later. The Ranger Patrols pass it daily during the summer but it is never recorded so the Park has no evidence of this problem.

The camping byelaw proposals are not primarily about evidence at all, but about ideology. At heart this is an argument about who, if anyone, should be allowed into your backyard (and note the perfect field for a campsite just to the right of the Venachar dam in the field by Linda McKay's House).

For an extreme example of this, it's well worth reading this article about the eviction of homeless campers from Anchorage in Alaska (thanks very much to Anne MacIntyre for sending this to parkswatch) <http://www.adn.com/alaska-news/anchorage/2016/09/07/police-post-eviction-notice-for-residents-of-tent-camp-near-valley-of-the-moon-park/> Don't just read the article, read the comments to understand where neo-liberalism takes people in relation to what happens in their backyard. One is from a guy who, after joining the general condemnation of the campers for being homeless, argues against any public provision of toilets because if you provide a toilet, someone will eventually get hurt in the toilet, sue the Council, that will cost millions and result in higher taxes for local residents! The perfect excuse for the failure of the LLTNPA to improve the infrastructure for visitors.

Category

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Tags

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