

The proposed campsite at Loch Chon and Sallochy – a look at the statistics

Description

– by Ross MacBeath

At the public meeting with Strathard Community Council, Gordon Watson, the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority Chief Executive, tried to justify the creation of a large campsite at Loch Chon by referring to the campsite at Sallochy, on east Loch Lomond. While this is also on Forestry Commission land, demand there is totally different, as this analysis shows.

While the LLTNPA have tried to say that demand is not relevant to planning applications, posted on the planning portal alongside the planning application is a Question and Answer sheet which includes the following:

Q: Why is the proposed site for 33 pitches (now 26)?

A: Following a full site assessment, this is the maximum number of pitches that the site can accommodate at periods of peak demand.

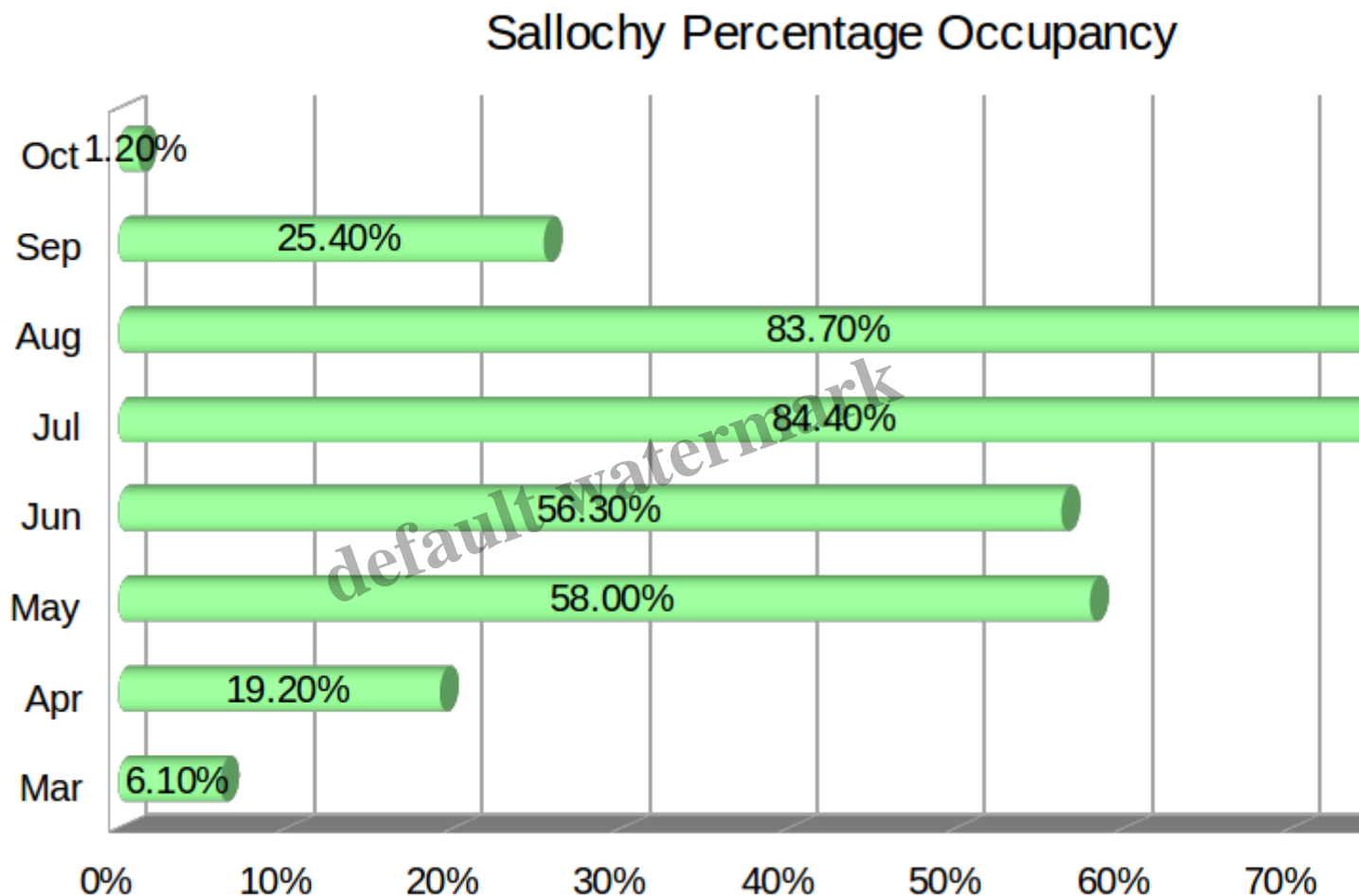
As current peak demand is nowhere near this level, it appears the Park is going to dragoon campers and force them to stay at Loch Chon, whether they want to or not. All the statistics on which this analysis is based have been obtained through Freedom of Information requests.

Appraisal of the situation at Sallochy

The Sallochy campsite which has 30 places, is on the shores of east Loch Lomond and was created in 2011. While the number of pitches is similar to Loch Chon, even with the recent reduction to 26 pitches, the layouts are different, the toilets are different and most importantly the clientele is different. Sallochy is open from March to October.

Sallochy services the West Highland Way and that is now where the majority of its users come from. Without this huge bolus of WHW travellers Sallochy would be oversized for the provision of car based camping in the area.

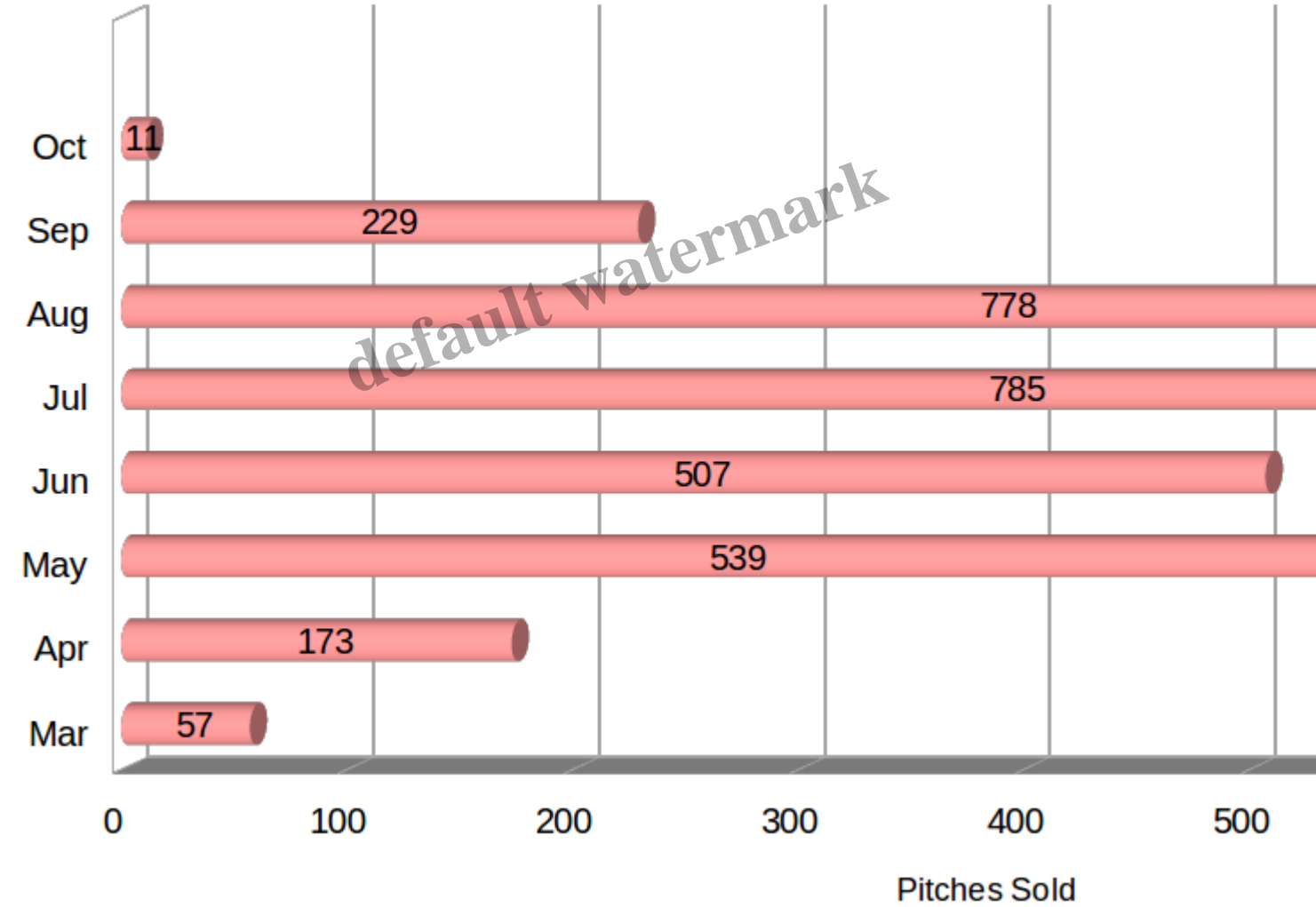
Other than July and August, the peak holiday months, Sallochy is underused for the rest of the time it is open. Percentage occupancy is high for these 2 busiest months and drops off to lower figures at other times (just like wild camping in the National Park).



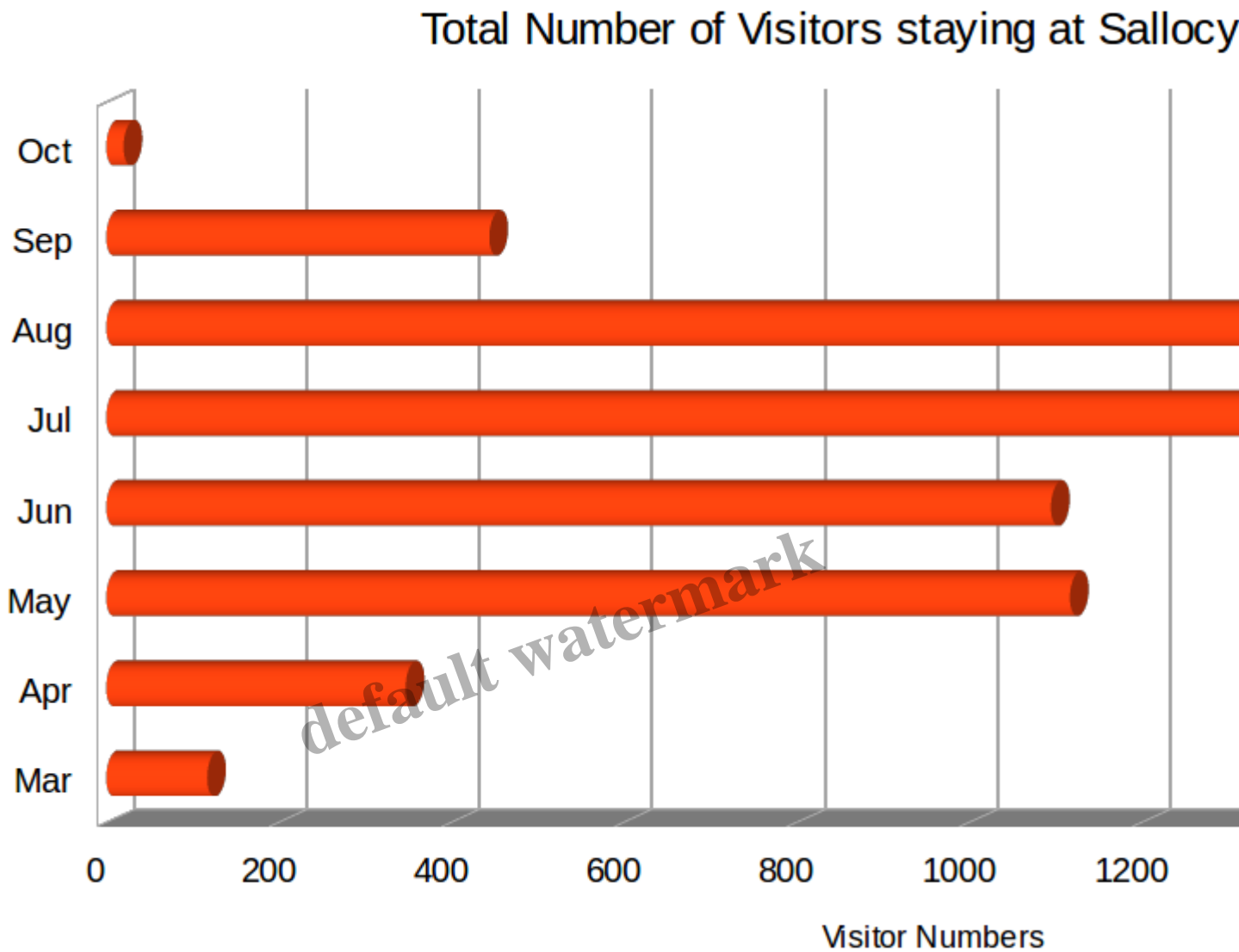
The number of pitches is 30 and this give a pitch availability of 900 to 930 per month (dependent on the number of days in the month)

	March	April	May	June	July
Total Pitches Rented by Month	57	173	539	507	785
Total People By Month	117	347	1117	1095	1806
% Occupancy	6.10%	19.20%	58.00%	56.30%	84.40%

Sallochy Number of pitches Sold per M



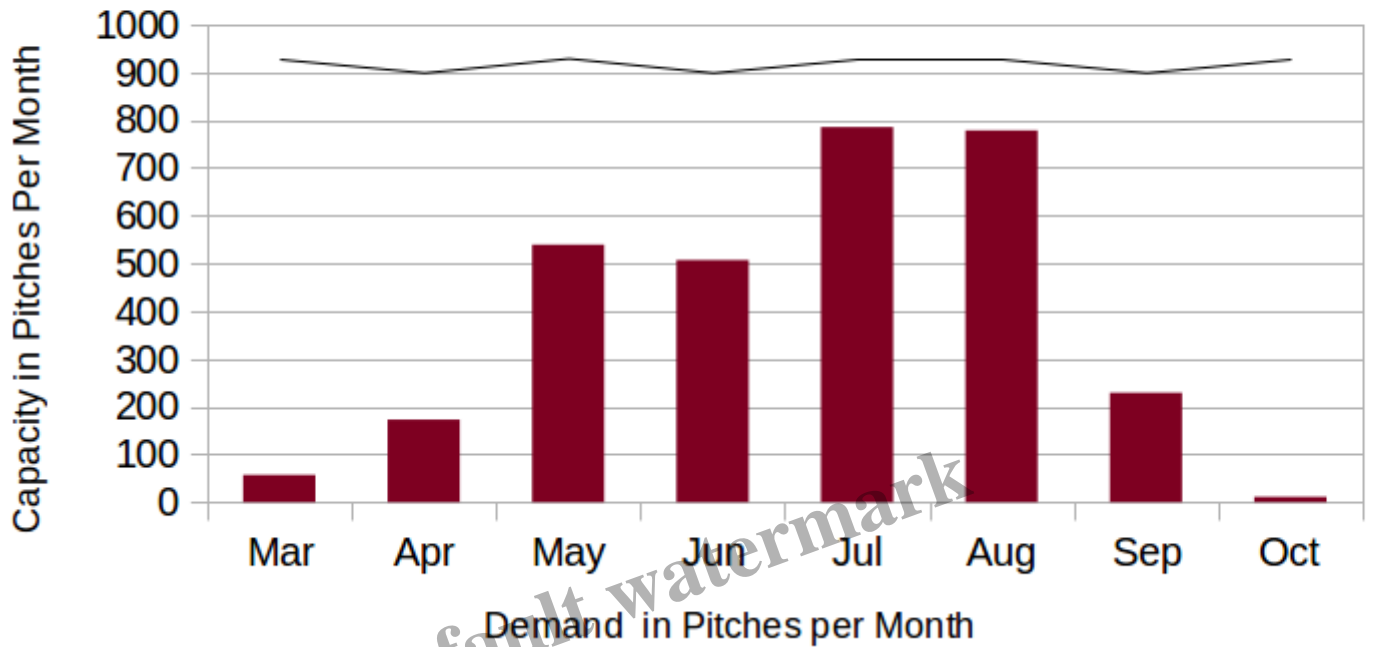
The same pattern is shown if you look at the number of campers rather than tents.



If you compare Current Demand (2015) and Capacity at Sallochy it looks like this:

Demand and Capacity at Sallochy

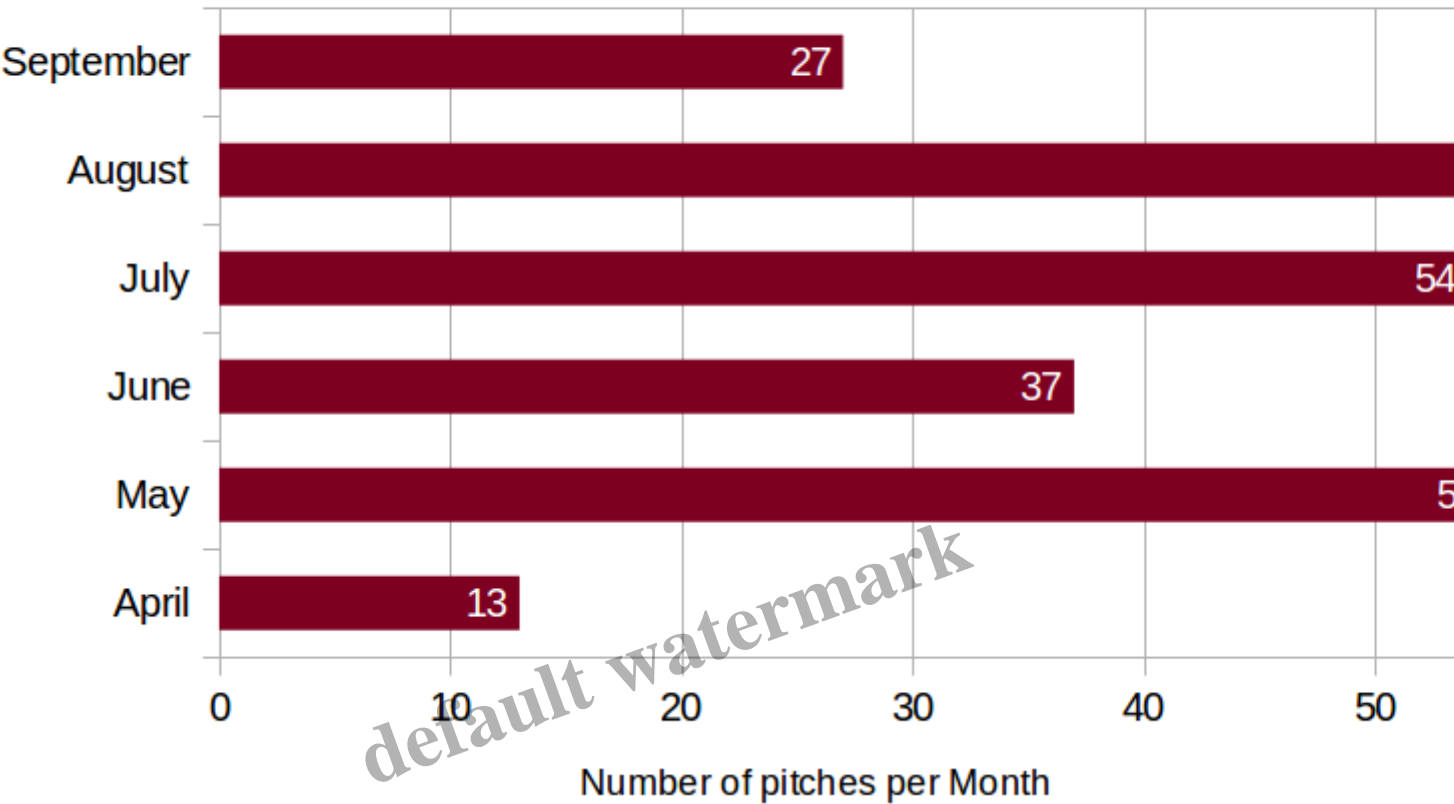
30 Pitch Site



The conclusion is that Demand and Capacity at Sallochy are well matched in the peak summer months, less so in May and June but the site is virtually empty March, April September and October or more than half the season.

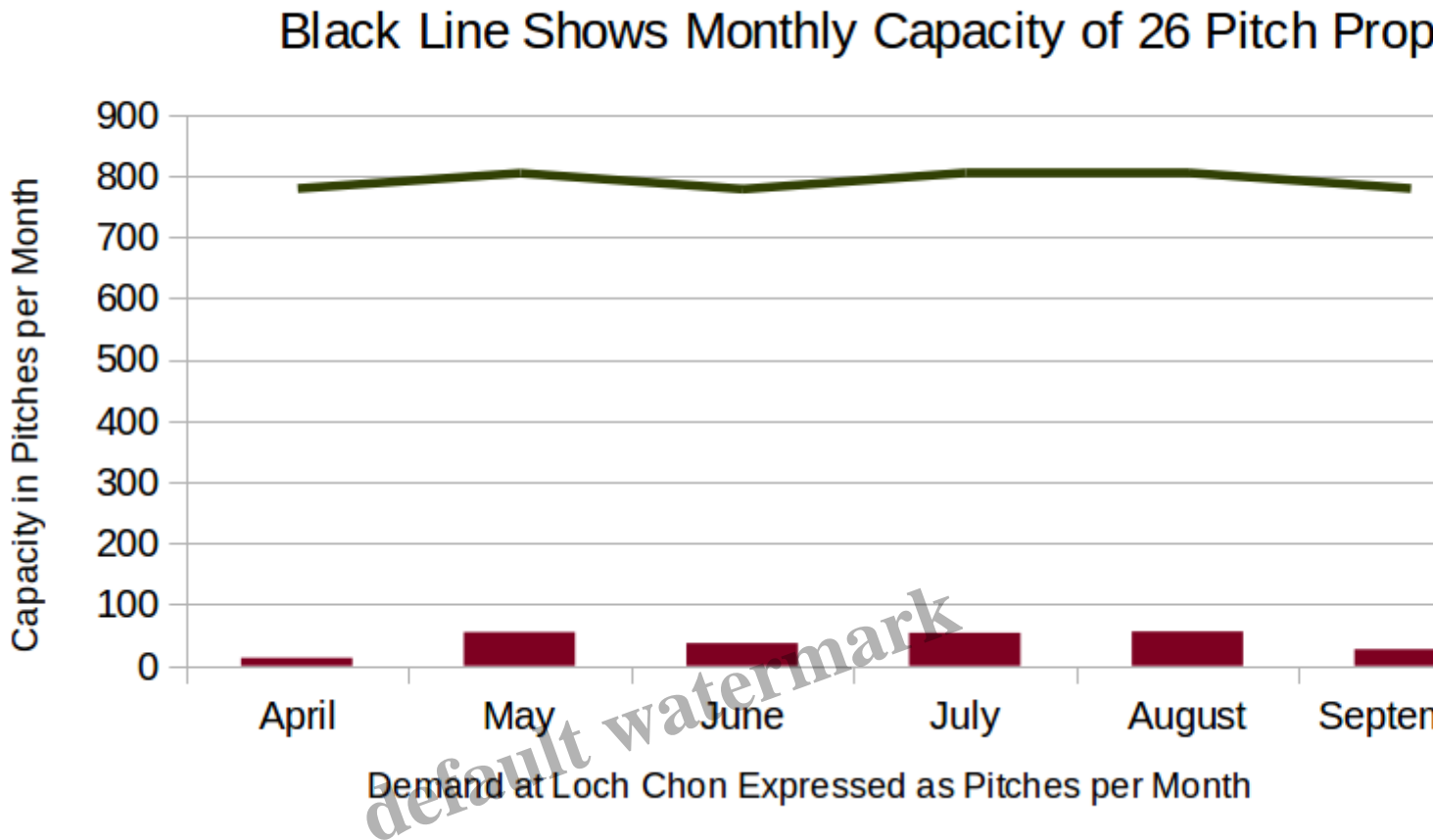
Current Demand for Camping in Loch Chon

Current Monthly Demand at Loch Chon



The number of pitches is based on tents recorded by Rangers. While the records only cover weekends as no ranger patrols are made midweek, however midweek numbers are insignificant. The Current Demand does not come anywhere near the capacity of the Park Authorities new 26 Pitch proposal for Loch Chon, the total Number of pitches per month is 806 (May, Jul, Aug) and 780.(Apr, Jun, Sep).

The current demand applied to the new site shows a huge over capacity.



To apply the same design criteria to Loch Chon as used at Sallochy, where demand is fed by the West Highland Way, makes no sense. While there is a path network in the area, the only way demand will rise is if people can camp elsewhere and link campsites, but the byelaws will stop that. A portion of this camping provision should be sited along the path network in the area. The 9 place Loch Lubnaig campsite would be a much more valid comparison of the size of campsite needed.

The site at Sallochy and its demands have no relationship to Loch Chon and it is not helpful to associate the two as being similar in this respect.

Return on Investment

Gordon Watson stated at the public meeting the LLTNPA would build the site and review the situation next year. Surely it would be better to review the situation properly before committing the Park Authority to spending £345,000. It's reasonable to assume once spent a need for the LLTNPA to get a return on investment will drive forward promotion of the area as a centre for camping and other sports. Whether this will work is doubtful and the money is likely to be wasted.

Vehicles

The other primary concern for the community at Strathard has been the number of vehicles that could be attracted to the site. Its harder to compare Loch Chon with Sallochy in this respect because at Sallochy many of the campers walk in from the West Highland Way. Moreover while there is a reserved Car Park for those who have purchased a tent pitch there is also a public car park and this is one of few places you can still stop off on east Loch Lomond. So, there is no direct correlation between pitches sold and vehicles counted.

The vehicle recorder for the public car park shows the Recorded figures for vehicles and their occupants using the car park at Sallochy in the 2015 season is 17,089 cars and 30,760 people an average of 1.8 persons per car. While a higher proportion of visitors are likely to access Loch Chon by car, the total will be much lower unless fuelled by displacement or marketing by the LLTNPA to achieve a return on investment. Its thus very difficult to predict vehicle numbers but it is likely to be low.

What is needed at Loch Chon

What is called for is another solution, and that is simple to achieve. Create a 12 pitch formal site supported by a 6 pitch informal site (without defined pitches) in a designated area that can be used when the small number of days when the peak demand rises above the capacity of 12 pitches, around 5 days in the 2015 season and that will take care of the low frequency high demands of good weather days.

The Planning Committee on Monday should think again and reduce the size of the campsite.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. LLTNPA
3. planning

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