

Camping “Your Park” newspeak

Description

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The LLTNPA camping development strategy map for east Loch Lomond is wrong, depicting campsite

campsite at Cashell. Not a single Board Member picked this up. At the very least locally elected Board Councillor Martin Earl should have done so.

The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority on Monday 24th October approved what it called a [camping development strategy](#), all 27 pages of it, along with a ten page Board [paper](#). Prior to the meeting I showed [\(see here\)](#) that the strategy would create a huge shortfall in camping places in the National Park but not a single Board Member at the meeting questioned the numbers. Nor did any of them pick up the errors in the Report, such as in the map above. If the Board is incapable of even getting basic facts right, it's not surprising they are unable to question the Orwellian newspeak which permeated the papers and starts with "Your Park" which means "no longer your National Park".

Examples of LLTNPA newspeak in the Camping Strategy

False claim

"The Camping Development Strategy sets out.....how 300 places will be delivered by 2017.....and how the Park Authority will invest in facilities within 2017 and in subsequent years".

It doesn't. The Strategy includes in its target of 300 camping places (a figure which was in any case plucked out of thin air) a number of camping places that were already in place (9 at Loch Lubnaig and 22 at Salloch which were in place before Your Park and created as a result of earlier plans) while the only investment described is for this financial year, 2016-17.

False claim

"Wherever possible, opportunities to accommodate motor homes are also identified. Opportunities are constrained within each site due to the desire (whose?) to meet a range of visitors from within constrained sites" and "Motorhomes will have places to stop that provide the right facilities all across the Park".

Motor-homes of course don't need facilities – the difference between a motor-home and campervan being in part that motor-homes have their own toilets. Motor-homes simply need somewhere to park and currently dozens do so along the roads through the management zones. The LLTNPA is going to limit this to just 20 across the four management zones and one way it's going to make this easier to enforce is to introduce automated car parking recognition systems at places such as Tarbert where up to 40 campervans have been counted this year. Board Member Colin Bayes, commented on the number of motorhome places at the meeting saying the number may appear small but he hoped in

future businesses will provide places for campervans and motor-homes to spend the night. Does this not prove part of the agenda behind the camping byelaws is to force people into the hands of local businesses?

False claim

“a key consideration is whether sites can safely accessed by car from the public road”

The LLTNPA has used this claim as an excuse for not providing a single camping or caravan places along west Loch Lomond north of Inveruglas. However, it has failed to explain why safety is a key consideration for campervans but NOT for day visitors arriving by car? If day visitors are allowed to park off road then there should be no issue with campervans doing the same. Again, not a single Board Member questioned this claim. Perhaps this is because the LLTNPA, who state several times that they are working closely with Transport Scotland, are secretly working to try and block off the informal pulling off places by the A82 (which will simply stop everyone from enjoying the lochside). Neither did a single Board Member ask, if road safety is such an issue, why permits could not be issued to all those campers who arrive by canoe, foot, or bicycle. Where there are car safety issues, the answer is to create clearways not camping byelaws, as has already happened on east Loch Lomond.

Double speak

“there is an excellent opportunity to contribute to improving to health outcomes by encouraging more people to get active in the outdoors”

How reducing the numbers able to camp on popular weekends by 500 and introducing charges for camping is going to encourage more people to get active in the outdoors is not explained. The LLTNPA has not produced a shred of evidence that campers put other people off enjoying the lochsides; on the contrary, the ranger patrol figures show day visitors and campers mixing. There is in fact a considerable amount of research that shows that being in the outdoors, which is what campers do, improves people's health and therefore that the LLTNPA's proposals to ban people from being able to remain in the outdoors for for any length of time is an attack on health. Health Minister, Shona Robison, should really tell the Park to get their act together.

Double-speak

“By addressing the negative impacts associate with irresponsible camping it is aimed that the popularity of the area will increase”

One of the main justifications the LLTNPA has come up with to justify the camping ban (the justifications keep shifting) is that there are just too many campers along the loch shores but now, to justify reducing the numbers of campers, it wants to INCREASE the number of day visitors who, by the way, also drop litter, have an impact on vegetation and do all the things that campers do. The Park of course has no plan to address any impacts from day visitors or campers and that's the problem, not the numbers.

False claim

“Care has also been taken to ensure that camping opportunities are well connected to other recreation opportunities in the area”

This is not true. There is still NO camping provision at Balmaha despite this being the area which a high proportion of backpackers on the West Highland Way reach at the end of their first day and despite various organisations suggesting camping provision is badly needed there. There is NO camping provision for all the people who currently fish the west shore of Loch Lomond north of Inveruglas. There is no new camping provision around Loch Long despite this area having lost a large number of camping places and the Arrochar Alps being so popular for walking and climbing. The camping strategy provides for just 8 new places at Rowardennan when this is both on the West Highland Way and at the foot of Ben Lomond.

Failure of understand access rights

“investment is focussed in those locations where higher number of camping opportunities can be provided”

Not a single Board Member asked what if campers want to find places on lochsides away from other campers? Central to Scotland's access legislation is it puts the power to decide to go firmly in the hands of the individual, along with the responsibility to access that right according to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The LLTNPA wants to replace this by a bureaucratic and managerialist approach which herds people together.

False claim

"The investment of public money in facilities needs to ensure the maximum benefits to deliver the best camping experience in the Park".

What constitutes "maximum benefits" and "best camping experience" is not defined. Not a single Board Member asked what it meant or questioned how the £250,000 the LLTNPA is still planning to invest this year at Loch Chon, where there is no demand for a 26 place campsite, meets this criterion. The LLTNPA is however now hedging its bets: *"any on site facilities will be designed as self contained units which can be transferred to another site if necessary"*. What the paper does not say is that the shipping containers the LLTNPA is using for toilet blocks at Loch Chon have to be plumbed in to a new water supply and sewerage disposal system and if the Park was really wanting to test demand, portaloos would be a much cheaper and more sensible solution.

Double speak

"The intention is that this investment coupled with the byelaws will build confidence in Loch Lomond and Trossachs that is a safe and enjoyable place to come and camp"

Or as Orwell might have put it, "we are reducing the numbers of campers to enable more people to camp".

False claim

On Loch chon *"its already a popular camping location"*.

According to the LLTNPA's own data its one of least popular lochs for camping in the National Park, which is no surprise as its hard to get to.

Re-writing history

On North Loch Venachar, *"there is limited vehicle parking"* and *"There are no public facilities to support camping"*

And why is this? Because the LLTNPA ripped up the 5 Parks Plan, though it has never admitted to doing this, and replaced the 29 car parking places with just 12 and failed to install a toilet block! It beggars belief that Board Members, Linda McKay the Park Convener, who lives on the shores of Loch Venachar, and Martin Earl, who lives closeby are not both fully aware of this – yet they said nothing.

Newspeak in the media – we welcome camping by banning it

After the Board Meeting, various pieces appeared in the media including an interview on newsdrive – (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07z38m2#play> at about 56.30 minutes into the programme) with Simon Jones, the Director of Conservation of the LLTNPA, and Brendan Paddy the acting Director of Ramblers Scotland. Simon claimed at the start that *"I think its important Mhairi to say first of all its not a camping ban. We very much welcome camping tin the future but its going to be through a permit system"*. Look up any dictionary and the definition of ban is *"Officially or legally prohibit (something)"*. That is exactly what the LLTNPA is doing. Its trying to prohibit camping on the lochsides in the National park except for in official campsites and the few places that are covered by permits. The fact that anyone breaking this ban will be committing a criminal offence proves the point.

It was great to hear Brendan go on the offensive and his description of the byelaws as a “bureaucratic rigmarole” was spot on.

What needs to happen

The explanation for all this newspeak is that the LLTNPA has dug itself a deeper and deeper hole based on the prejudices of its senior staff and Board Members and has had to resort to ever more contorted to try and justify what it is doing. I don't think this will change while the current Board is in place but if it was a good starting point for language would be that used in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

The outdoor recreation movement need to start challenging the language the LLTNPA has been using. Cut through the newspeak in the camping strategy and the fact is that the LLTNPA has lamentably failed to produce new camping facilities in the places that are needed and has no effective plan to change this as I will show in my next post on this.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. access rights
2. camping
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