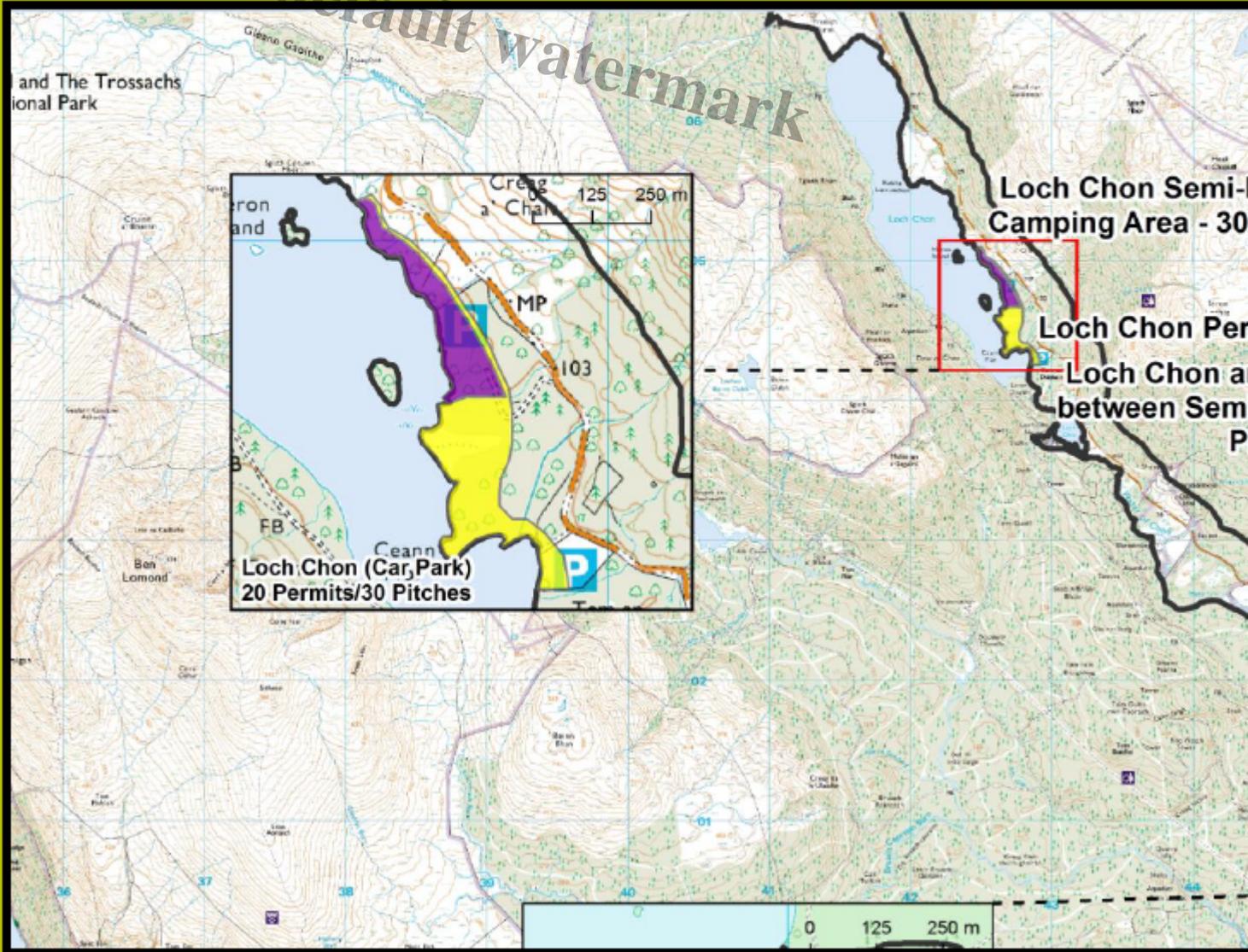


The LLTNPA Camping Con â?? manna thanks to the Scottish Information Commissioner

Description

Loch Chon



A few hours after yesterdayâ??s post on the Scottish Information Commissionerâ??s Decision ([see](#)

[here](#)) and the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park's failure to provide me with the slides presented at the secret Your Park Briefing Sessions, I received them by email ([see here for accompanying letter](#)). This is not a coincidence as the Park have monitored everything I do and say for quite some time. The power of social media! I don't believe though that the Park have sent the slides because they are concerned about what the public think about them taking over 4 weeks to send a set of slides as ordered by the Scottish Information Commissioner, its that they are worried their minders at the Scottish Government might ask them questions. If asked, the Park will simply shrug off the delay as a minor oversight on their part rather than part of a systematic attempt to deprive the public of information.

A quick look at the content of the slides though has shown me why the Park did not want them in the public realm. They provide further proof that the Park's proposed camping ban is not based on any rational evidence, of its complete inability to deliver basic facilities like camping places and of the way it has systematically tried to manipulate public opinion (and the withholding of information is part of that).

The slide above on the plans for Loch Chon, which have been covered extensively on Parkswatch, ([see here](#)) and (here) provides a good example. This slide was presented to Board Members at secret briefings on 13th and 15th April 2015 two weeks before the Board formally approved the "Your Park" recommendations at the Board Meeting on 27th April. The discussion at the open Board Meeting which is where the Park is supposed to take decisions was over in half an hour I know because I timed it. I realised then that the Board had already made their decision on the byelaws in secret beforehand and this slide is just one example of how thoroughly Board Members had discussed the Your Park proposals before they went public. The Board had nothing to discuss on 27th April because the decision had already been made in private at Briefings such as this. This is a fundamental failure in democracy and accountability.

The numbers on the slide tell a tell. Regular readers will recall that the planning application the Park submitted to itself to build a campsite at Loch Chon earlier this year was originally for 33 places but, after community protests, was reduced to 26 places with Gordon Watson, the Park Chief Executive, claiming this number of places was necessary to make the campsite financially viability.

Trossachs West Camping Management Zone

Table 4: Trossachs West camping provision 2017

Site		Tents	Motorh
Campsite			
	Loch Chon	26	
Permit area			
	Loch Ard south west	6	
TOTAL		32	

So, the Park has cut the numbers of people it was prepared to allow to camp at Loch Chon from 50 in April 2015 to 26 now. Ignore the fact that there is not even the demand for 26 places at Loch Chon ([see here](#)) and think about what this shows about the Park's claims that the National Park can only sustain 300 more camping places above those provided in formal campsites. The National Park claims there are too many campers, but one moment is prepared to accept 50 at Loch Chon, the next 26. The Park also claims it needs to reduce campers to sustainable levels and has fixed on 300 as the total number of places it would allow, in addition to pre-existing campsites, across the four management zones. This raises questions not just about how the Park decided one moment that the natural environment around Loch Chon could sustain 50 places and the the next 26, but also why the areas the 24 surplus places were transferred to could suddenly sustain this extra number of places. The truth, as this slide demonstrates (and you might also wish to note that the permit area at Loch Ard has changed from 5-6 places) is that the number of places is based on prejudice, the NIMBY interests who dislike people camping on popular lochs, and political expediency (so when the Strathard Community Council objected the Park simply transferred the places to the Forestry Commission land at Forest Drive because they knew FCS could not object publicly).

The even more worrying thing shown by the slide is the extent to which the National Park is exercising its powers arbitrarily. For everyone who cares about access rights the choice is whether to oppose the byelaws or subject yourself to the arbitrary authority of the Park. No-one should trust the current propaganda from the Park on its camping plans that numbers are not fixed because they want to be flexible. This is code for saying if we get a complaint from a NIMBY, we will simply change the area where people are allowed to camp. The recreational movement needs to re-assert that access rights and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code are the only appropriate way to manage informal camping in the

National Park.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. access rights
2. camping
3. Camping bye laws
4. Forestry Commission Scotland
5. Freedom of Information
6. LLTNPA

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