

Parkspeak, camping and the destruction that has started at Loch Chon

Description



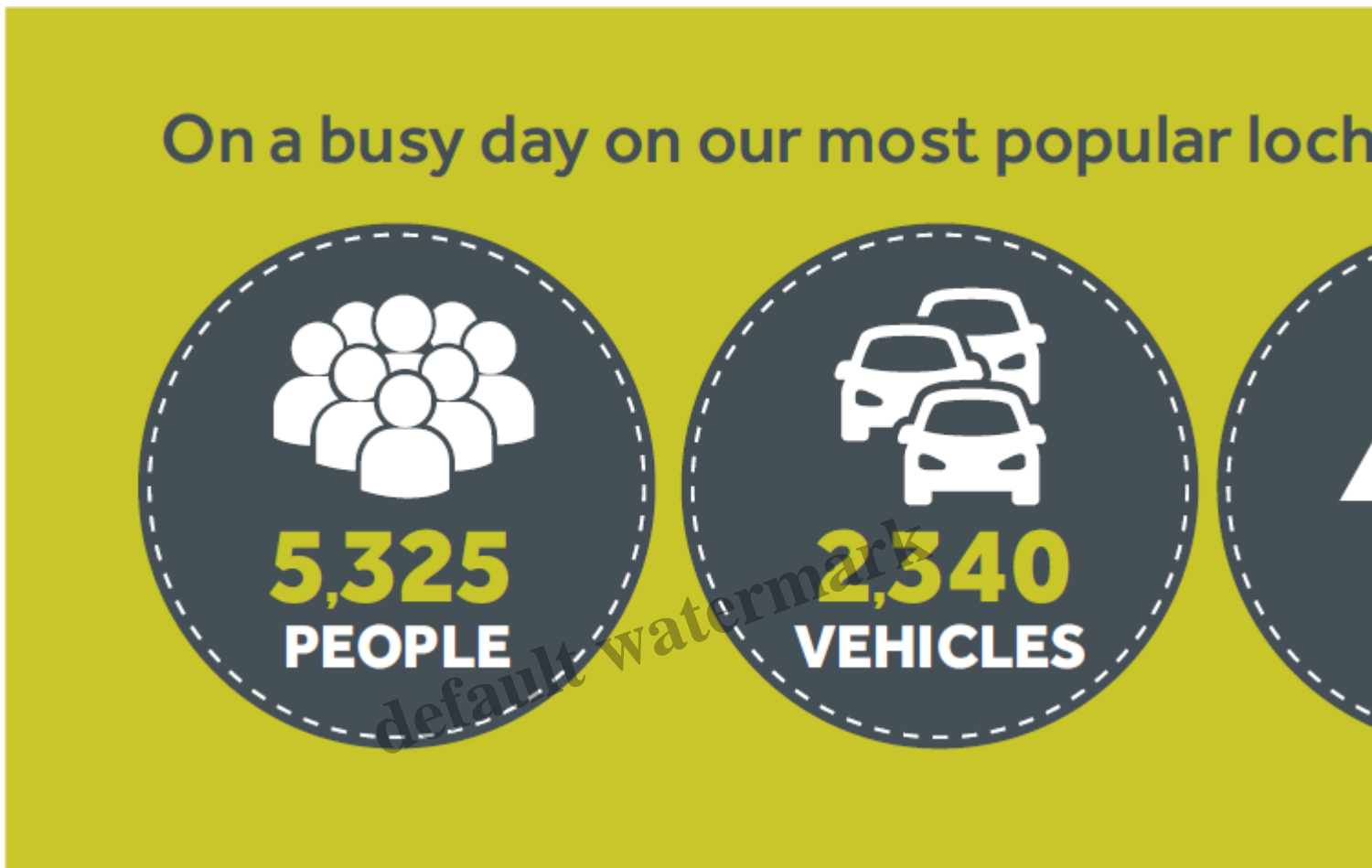
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Several readers alerted me to the piece on Good Morning Scotland yesterday about the camping byelaws and the campsite at Loch Chon. I don't think I've seen any better demonstration of the hypocrisy of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority than the video version. I am not sure this was intentional, because little of this comes across in the audio version and there is no critical reporting. In the video in three minutes you can see directly that the evidence the Park keeps recycling to justify the camping ban is rubbish and that it is destroying far more natural habitat than campers, including the irresponsible ones, ever did. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-38169667>

The ironies are multiple:

- Loch Chon is described as “Scotland’s first purpose-built wild campsite” – I suspect the juxtaposition of “wild” with “purpose built” was fed to the Reporter, Kevin Keene, by LLTNPA staff but most people would regard “purpose-built” and “wild” as contradictory. And this is the same National Park which claimed “Our bye law proposals will **not** restrict true wild camping outside the zones – over 95% of the National Park’s areas is still available for true wild camping”. In the Park’s view then “wild camping” could never take place close to the road and they were never planning to ban it. Just a few weeks ago in the Board Paper that approved the camping “strategy” this was described as a semi-formal campsite but Parkspeak has moved on and now, we have “wild” campsites by the road.
- Except of course, as the video clip makes clear, the diggers are in and large quantities of aggregate are being dumped onto textiles to create a new path that was never needed.
- Near the beginning of the clip a ranger speaks *“the ground around is damaged by fires, repeated fires in lots of in different locations, there’s damage to vegetation by camping, there’s [slight pause] there is not much litter at this time of year, November”*. As the Ranger says all this she is gesturing all around but.....at what? All you can see behind her is green grass with no sign of damage from either tents or fires (though there is a tree stump). Struggling to find litter to point to, there is a slight loss of words (or maybe cut before before moving to a new location) before the Ranger continues *“but there is still a pedal bin that someone has used as a fire pit”*. Campers cannot win, light a fire on the ground and you are causing damage, light a fire in a receptacle to protect the ground and you are still to blame. Now maybe there was more damage than was shown in the video, but I think the photo at the beginning of this post which I took early this year is a reasonable indication of how much “damage” is caused by fires and tents. While saying all of this the Ranger appears totally unaware of the diggers that are working just behind her – how does that compare in terms of damage and what does she think will be the impact of the new shipping container toilet blocks? I suspect though her Chief Executive was also just behind her and she probably had little choice about what she said.
- As for Gordon Watson, Chief Executive and chief hypocrite, he is introduced walking by the newly constructed path and then slightly away from it towards what will be a camping pitch saying “so we will have a bark path to an area cleared of grass”. The fact is the LLTNPA is clearing more vegetation at Loch Chon than is damaged by campers lighting fires in the whole of the National Park. The LLTNPA though would prefer to see order, the suburban order of constructed paths to fixed pitches, instead of anything wild, whether this is wild nature or wild humans. The reporter, Kevin Keane, unfortunately did not question Gordon Watson about this.
- Instead Gordon Watson was given time to express the Park’s latest attempt to justify the byelaws “many of these places are no go zones for people wanting to take access so we want to provide the opportunity for people to enjoy these areas again”. The LLTNPA has never provided any evidence of no-go zones, apart possibly from encampments of caravans that may have blocked certain laybys, particularly on the north shore of Loch Earn, which could be addressed, had there ever been the will, through Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act.
- Gordon Watson then repeats the claim to try and ram it home referring to “behaviours that are putting off people taking access”. As he said this, his face I thought told a story, and I wondered if he was regretting including the graphic below from the Your Park consultation which shows lots

of day visitors go to the same places as day visitors (unless there are seven people to to tent!). The LLTNPA is simply trying to imply there are divisions between people where there are none; most people who camp are also day visitors.



- Its hard too to fit Gordon Watson's claim with Kevin Keane's introductory comment at the beginning of the piece about "increasing numbers of people are turning the picturesque into the grotesque". Within the context of Loch Chon, where there are very few campers ([see here](#)), this is all claimed without any hint of irony. No mention either is made of the failure to make any provision for campervans and that the west Trossachs management zone will become campervan free.

Now I don't blame the Reporter for failing to pick up these points in a three minute piece or for not being more sceptical about what the Park staff said. Now the slides have been released from the secret board briefing sessions there is very good evidence of how the LLTNPA has tried to manipulate the media and the population but it is easy to fall for what they say. The LLTNPA devote considerable effort to spin as illustrated by the slide below.

Your Park Communications phases



Slide from April 2015 just before the meeting which approved the byelaws

“We asked, we listened” – the LLTNPA never listened. The slides from the secret Board Briefing in September 2014 shows they had decided to ban camping BEFORE the charade of the Your Park

consultation was launched in October but it was very important appeared to do so, hence the media strategy.

Look at box two and you can see that the claims of Gordon Watson on Good Morning Scotland are an iteration of the theme that the LLTNPA “*want to encourage everyone to make the most of the outdoors*”.....but now added to this is “if it wasn’t for those pesky campers and caravanners who are driving everyone else away”.

The LLTNPA’s media presentation of camping issues appears to have changed from there being ‘too many campers have an unsustainable impact on the natural environment’, for which there is no evidence, to “*campers stop other people enjoying the natural environment*”. I think this is because the LLTNPA need to try and convince people that campers are driving others from the loch shores in order to justify the fact that they wish wish to turn vast swathes of the loch shores into camper/van free zones without neither campsites nor permits. The environmental argument is complete nonsense, as the BBC film clip shows, shows they are playing the people card.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. access rights
2. camping
3. Camping bye laws
4. LLTNPA

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