

The LLTNPA management of camping permit areas on the west shore of Loch Lomond – at Suie Field & Cuileag, by Nick Halls

Description



Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Suie Field camping permit area – all photos taken 14th March, two weeks after the permit areas were “open for business” Photo credit Nick Halls

The LLTNPA is discouraging camping at designated sites.

Following the implementation of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority Management Zones on 1st March and the requirement to purchase a permit for the use of designated sites or risk a criminal conviction I revisited two sites to refresh my recollection of the environmental

condition of the areas.

Suie Field

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Suie field

An Suidhe



Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park is a special place. You are in a Camping Management Zone, which has been established to help protect the National Park.

Camping in this area from March to September requires a permit, which can be bought online at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org

For more information call 01389 722001



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Failure to comply with the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws 2017, between March and September, can result in a fine of up to £500.



The Board in October agreed there should be permits for four tents at Suie Field Halls

Photo Credit N

Notices informing potential campers of the designated areas and requirement for a permit, are in place. However, nothing has been done to enhance the amenity of the area and it remains in a similar state in which I found it in the Autumn of 2016 – with un-cleared fire sites, litter stuck in the bushes and bramble under growth, and access obstructed by moribund damaged wire fences, strands of brambles, mud and debris.



Photo Credit Nick Halls

The remnants in the fire places seem to be from last season.



Photo Credit Nick Halls

The site and access to it has been left as unappealing as possible.

People responsible for much of the litter appeared to be day visitors using the nearby parking area and accessing the beach. There is evidence of undergrowth near the lay-by being used as a toilet, but surprisingly none very evident in the vicinity of the camping area.

The lay by is littered with bags thrown down on the shore and evidence of fly tipping. Much of it is food wrappings and drink cartons disposed of by people parking in the lay by, but there is also evidence of burning industrial rubbish (below).



Photo credit Nick Halls

Some of the litter on the beach might be wind-blown from the opposite shore, but the prevailing wind would suggest that far more litter ends up on the Eastern rather than on Western shore.

The litter in the photograph below was immediately next to the newly installed notice marking the southern limit of the camping zone.



Photo credit Nick Halls

No effort seems to have been made to make the area accessible or attractive or to enhance the quality of the environment in preparation for implementing charging for camping permits. Most visitors would wonder what they were paying for!

The zone identified on the notice as the camping site is mostly overgrown with brambles and scrub and is virtually inaccessible and very little of it is suitable for camping – yet with little effort and no detrimental impact on the environmental quality the whole area could be restored to rough permanent pasture and meadowland.



Photo credit Nick Halls

It is hard to avoid concluding that the LLTNP is deliberately trying to make camping at the site as unappealing as possible, and is doing nothing to facilitate camping with or without a permit.

It raises the suspicion that the NP is allowing the brambles and undergrowth to overtake the whole area thereby making camping impossible.

It is becoming blindingly obvious that the camping management arrangements are more to do with social exclusion than protection of the environment or making 'non-campers' feel safe. Nor are they anything to do with maintaining the amenity for other categories of visitors.

It appears to be discrimination against a category of visitors who behave no better or worse than any other group.

In fact, if the evidence of abuse of the environment in the National Park were to be presented fairly, campers, even irresponsible ones, would probably be shown to be relatively innocent of the worst and most widespread impacts, which appear to arise from activities of residents.

Cuilag

Culag (beach)

Cùileag



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The LLTNPA also allocated four places for tents at Cuilag in October. Photo credit Nick Halls

I was depressed by Suie Field but Cuilag hammered the message home.

The carpark from which the access track leads is disgusting, with evidence of fly tipping of building and garden waste, and burning of industrial rubbish. It is a disgusting place, which could be made quite pleasant and welcoming.



Photo credit Nick Halls

There is building and garden waste tipped into the burn running alongside, which threatens to obstruct the flow of the burn.



Photo credit Nick Halls

Actual camping on the beach is practically impossible and likely to be pretty uncomfortable, but looks as if it is easy to erect temporary shelters to provide overhead cover while fishing – so it seems that fishermen are the group being discriminated against at this location. The beach is not particularly extensive or attractive and there was surprisingly little litter, although there are active fire sites, among the rocks on the beach, the impact of which are ephemeral compared with the fly tipping.



Photo credit Nick Halls

There is also a memorial to somebody's parents, which suggests that the area is regarded as special by at least one family.

Along the beach, beyond the zone designated for camping with a permit, there was evidence of either extraction of gravel, or using beach material to reinforce the bank of the loch to protect the field above.



Photo credit Nick Halls

Further along a large oak tree has been felled and the branches used to reinforce the bank for what appeared to be a similar purpose.



In terms of environmental impact this activity by a land manager dwarfs any impact arising from camping, the felled tree probably represents more wood than all the campers using the western side of the loch have cut during the last decade.

What is becoming increasingly evident is that there is one rule for the residents of the National Park and a totally different one applied to visitors.

Anybody concerned about the urban populations right to access and seek enjoyment in a natural environment, or anybody concerned with equality, a fairer society or maintaining the quality of our joint

environmental heritage should be hanging their heads in shame, that a public body should be permitted to introduce the arrangements that now apply to camping in a Scottish National Park. Also, any official with a true commitment to the conservation of the environment and encouraging understanding and respect for it, who colludes in this arrangement should be questioning their own integrity.

If this is representative of the future of Scottish society, whatever its constitutional future, it's something about which we should all be very concerned.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. Camping bye laws
3. landed estates
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5. LLTNPA

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