

Forest Drive and more shenanigans from the National Park Authority

Description

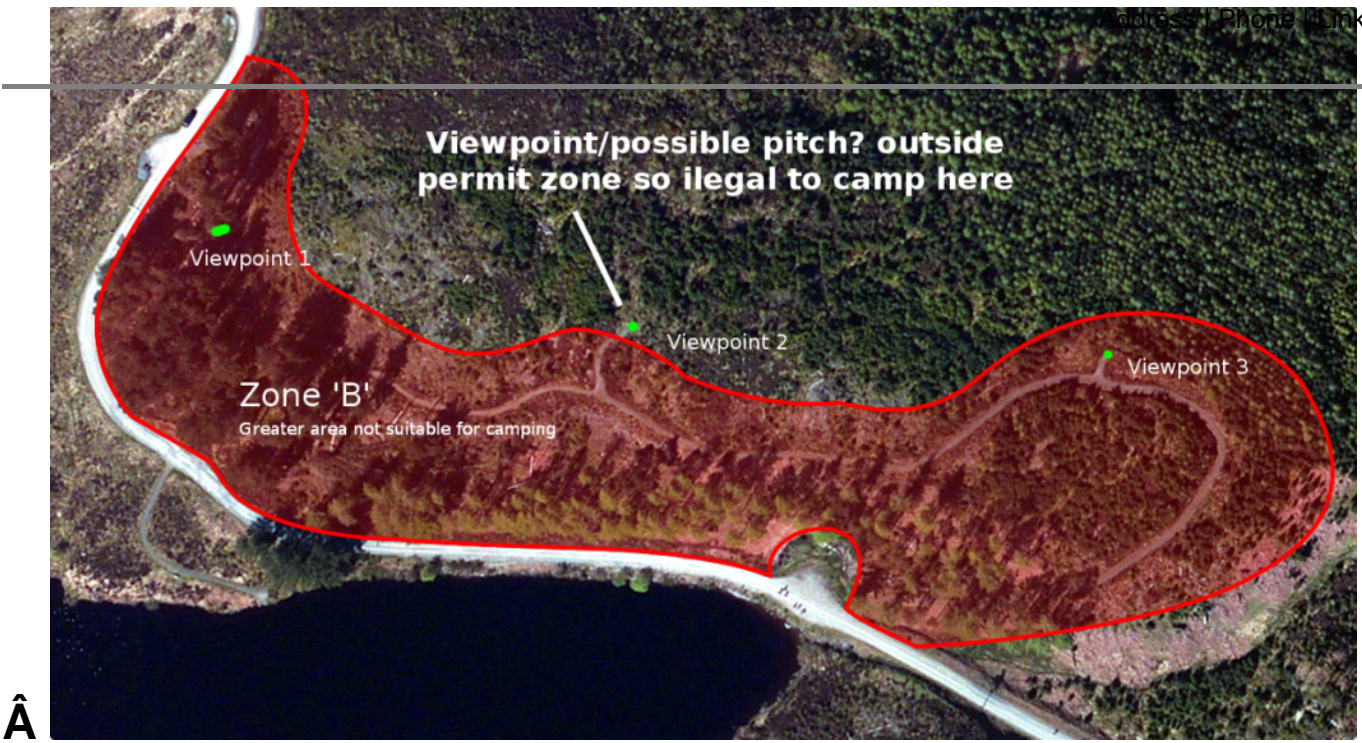
By Ross MacBeath

Camping Forest Drive Zone B – 19th March 2017



Nothing more than Viewpoints pretending to be camping pitches.

This Forestry Commission map above details the path (green dots) through what is now Permit Zone 'B'. It doesn't refer to any camping locations, but hosts three viewpoints. With the lack of any other viable places to camp in the Lochan Reoidhte section of Forest Drive, it appears the LLTNPA has effectively re-designated these viewpoints as the 3 camping pitches it claims to have created in this zone. In point of fact view point 2 is outside the permit zone, so if you camped there you would be risking a criminal record and £500 fine.



Camping Spot 1

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Hardcore standingÂ picnic area available for camping?

At first glance, Viewpoint 1 appears suitable as a camp pitch however it is an extension to the path, formed as a raised platform with the same compacted hardcore surface covered over with moss where tent pegs are unable to penetrate over most of the site.Â Unable to stake out and secure the tent to the ground disqualifies this as a viable camping pitch.

Not family or group friendly

Though the largest of the 3 spots, an area this size can barely fit the footprint of a pop up tent or a self standing 2 man tent.Â For an experienced wild camper (in the real sense) walking through the uncampable terrain round about, this pitch might be manna from heaven, but these pitches are supposed to meet the demand for camping out of cars and this site is not family or group friendly nor does it offer privacy or solitude.Â This may be a reasonable picnic site with it's fire ring and log seating seen as a welcome bonus, but its very poor for camping.



Its the only pitch in Zone B with some views, but the one looking north takes in the enormity of forest drive and it's huge roundabout and the other is spoiled by forestry operation waste wood.Â While we have all grown to expect the Forestry Commission just to leave everything they cut down that has no monetary value, It would be reasonable to expect when they are charging access they should at least make an effort to clear the site of debris and even more so now it's designated a paid for camping pitch..

Camping Spot 2, it's illegal to camp here, it's outside the permit zone.

Camping spot 2 and Camping spot 3 in reality are no more than the end of hard core paths which at

onetime offered views over the surrounding area. Now the forest has grown around them and there are no views to be had. Camping here would be the equivalent of camping in a cupboard. The two areas shown are at the end of the paths where they level out. They are both narrow and the second one too small to hold anything larger than a kids tent. Like viewpoint 1, due to the hardcore



There seems to be some disconnect from reality in the minds of National Park staff who are selecting these permit zones. It's highly unlikely that anyone would visit this site and even consider camping here as it exhibits none of the desirable qualities that the National Parks website promotes as typical park camping areas, "Loch Side Views" and "Sunsets over Water", "Grassy Knolls in Woodland Settings" and what we might expect here, "Mature Trees with expansive Leafy Forest Floors" between.

The Park Authority should know the requirements for recreational camping

Recreational Camping pitches by definition require space around them to allow human occupancy for cooking, relaxing and just playing around by the tent. The LLTNPA terms and conditions state that a 5 x 5 metre area is the maximum a visitor can occupy having purchased a permit. Yet on Forest Drive campers are expected somehow to enjoy a wonderful recreational camping experience in something between 2 and 5 square metres.

The Park Authority needs to stop using the footprint of the tent as the sizing criteria for a recreational pitch – claiming that any small gap in the brambles or heather counts as a camping place – and take on board that 5 x 5 metres of usable ground is the minimum required.

The designation of "Camping (Permit) Zone" to this area is a fantasy

As with so many of the other camping permit zones created by the LLTNPA, the Greater Area of Zone B just does not have any places suitable for pitching a tent



The maps provided by LLTNPA misrepresent the situation on the ground. They show what appears to be a forest location with an open grassy space or flat ground to the north and east of the tracks and a wider area at the start of the zone nearer the gate. This all gives the impression of choice for a would be visitor but in reality there is not.

So as elsewhere the scale of the camping provision is greatly exaggerated misleading visitors into the false impression they have the ability to choose a pitch anywhere within the boundary of the Zones.

The so called camping zone is on a hill side and the entire area between the Forest Drive up to the almost parallel track through the forest is a slope too steep or too rough for camping. This photograph of the quarry that is now a designated Motor Home pitch – is this a place you would want to stop off in a campervan? – give a good idea of the slope steepness.



Going north beyond the forest track the ground levels out a little however the entire area is the remains of a previously harvested forest that nature has reclaimed. The video gives a view of the real situation in the entire zone including the forested areas.

The areas to the side of the track are overgrown, rough in places and unsuitable for pitching tents with views only in a couple of places. In any cases these paths are promoted for day visitors and while camping right by such a path offers the camper no privacy it also intrudes on the experience of the day visitor who is forced to walk right by the tent. The LLTNPA has claimed that shore camping prevents day visitors from visiting the loch shores when actually there is space on the loch shores for all, unlike here.



The Permit Booking system refers to limited parking being available for the 3 camping places in Zone B or the two further places across the drive in Zone C. Apart from the site for a campervan at the end of Zone B (photo above) there is nowhere else to park. Moreover the Park's terms and conditions state you must not park on the verge so it's a bit of a mystery where, if 5 groups ever camped here, where they are going to park.

No new camping provision, no new facilities, price hike 250%

Before the Camping Byelaws it cost £2 to access Forest Drive and was free to camp in Zone B and C if you were determined to do so. It now costs £5 pounds to camp from your car, two and a half times more for no added value. This is a ridiculous considering there are no facilities, there are no viable pitches nor any choice of places to pitch a tent. This is not an attractive location in National Park terms and does not even guarantee your right to park within the permit zones.

The Park Authority have failed to provide the requisite number of pitches in Zone B

The LLTNPA's attempt to take control and manage access in the National Park is a disaster. It's difficult to categorise Forest Drive as failure, as that would imply that some remedy was possible. The LLTNPA clearly understands nothing about camping – its staff really need to get out and do it – and have made no effort to provide any positive experience for campers. This is despite inviting

people, some of whom will have never camped before, to camp here. It has without doubt been a conscious decision, fully underwritten by the LLTNPA board, to create a customer facing web presence and a network of signs that misdirects visitors and con Government Ministers and other stakeholders into believing that 300 “new” camping places have been delivered.Â Â Clearly, they have not.

All this is being done with slight of hand, using those age old propaganda devices maps,Â pamphlets and press releases (fantastically designed – who would ever think they were a pile of mince?) to mask their continuing breaches of trading standards, advertising standards, even on occasion, health and safety standards.Â How is this ethical and how does it meet the standards for services that the public has a right to expect?Â Why is Forestry Commission Scotland going along with this?

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. Camping bye laws
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