

The National Park Plans in the media spotlight

Description



Park camping by-laws seem to be largely about income generation

THE plea by James Stuart, Convener of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority, for public responses to the draft National Park Partnership Plan is worth our attention ("An important dialogue to be had on the future of our national park", Agenda, The Herald, April 19). Under previous conveners this national park has been losing its way, its most serious mistake being the introduction of by-laws to control camping and the use of campervans. The Easter bank holiday provided a good opportunity to see these by-laws in action. It provided confirmation that the by-laws, with associated permit system, were less about camping management and more about income generation for the park.

What I found led to four main conclusions: in the majority of the permit areas the park had made no extra provisions for campers or campervan users, apart from the erection of by-law notices – the only



change for those who had been camping in lochside locations for many years was the arrival of park rangers demanding £3 per tent or campervan; the park appeared to have made no attempt to clear litter away from loch shores before the bank holiday and it was newly arriving campers who were doing the job for it; virtually all campers were enjoying camp fires, with the wood brought with them (including pallets and even old furniture) or sourced from windblown timber in nearby plantation forest; those in campervans were subject to permit charge while those in adjacent touring caravans were not – yet another example of the legal incompetence that underpins these by-laws.

I attended the park board meeting last December and heard Mr Stuart's impressive speech as he sought election to the convener'ship. Sound action now needs to follow those fine words. Sorting out the shambles over litter collection and the provision of firewood would be a good start. Perhaps the park should consider reducing the size of the ranger service and replacing it with an effective litter collection and firewood provision service. I might even help them pick up some of the litter and pay £3 for a nice bag of firewood for my camp fire – far better than a permit bureaucracy that fundamentally undermines Scotland's statutory rights of public access to our land and water. The partnership plan is the opportunity to correct this situation and restore some sanity to the bonnie banks. It requires our input by July 3.

Dave Morris,
2 Bishop Terrace,
Kinneswood,
Kinross.

CALM OUTLOOK:
But can there be agreement about Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park camping by-laws?

[On Wednesday, James Stuart, new convener of the National Park had an agenda piece in the Herald to promote the consultation on the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park draft plan \(see here\).](#) It included a commitment to engage properly recreational organisations – a implicit indictment of the way the LLTNPA bludgeoned through its camping byelaws – but a welcome step in the right direction. The response from Dave Morris (above) shows the disastrous consequences.

The wider point though is the LLTNPA did not just fail to consult with representative organisations, they failed to consult any of the people who actually camp and stop in campervans along the loch shores. I saw a good illustration of this yesterday morning driving up the A82 to climb on the Ben. There were campervans everywhere, in the Transport Scotland laybys which are exempt from the byelaws, on road verges (which are also exempt although the LLTNPA has not recognised this), in car parking areas where they are not (unless covered by the permit system as at Inveruglas and off-road.



campervans at Tarbert

Anyone who actually slept the night in the campervans in the above photo were committing criminal offences although I doubt any of the owners knew it. What the photo illustrates is the byelaws are completely unenforceable for campervans anyway. If challenged by a Ranger all the campervan has to do is move onto a road verge or into a layby. Complete nonsense. The LLTNPA would have never got itself into this mess if it had actually talked to the people who use campervans. So, how

about some proper visitor surveys instead of the latest dumbed down ones that say nothing asking people what they need? I suspect the answers will include 'be left alone to make our own decisions' and Chemical disposal points. Where are the chemical disposal points in the National Park (I have asked) and what are the plans to increase them? Err..

And over to the Cairngorms National Park Authority

Following its lengthy coverage of National Parks in January, Scotland Out of Doors on Saturday included an interview Hamish Trench from the Cairngorms National Park Authority. Its right at the start [BBC out of doors](#). Mark Stephen asked some searching questions about what partnership actually means and whether some partners have more power than others highly recommended. While Hamish Trench's answers were carefully worded, the really important thing is that CNPA staff appear prepared now to articulate a vision for the National Park integral to which is large scale conservation. While I don't believe this can be achieved through the current ways of partnership working, which favour landed interests over everyone else, the fact that the CNPA is promoting this vision in public is in a sense a challenge to those interests. Intelligent questions from the media, such as those put by Mark Stephen, can only help change the parameters of the debate.

Category

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