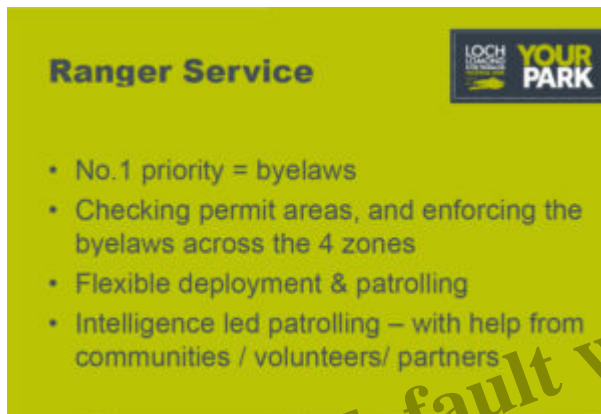


LLTNPA – Two months in and Byelaws are failing to deliver

Description

By Ross MacBeath

The new directive for Countryside Rangers – enforce the byelaws above all else.



Secret slide released under FOI

While the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park made a great hullabaloo claiming success with their byelaws on the East Loch Lomond shore, what they failed to explain was that to achieve this as yet unsubstantiated claim, they had to increase ranger patrols in the area. The problem now for the LLTNPA is the area covered by the extended byelaws covers over ten times the length of road – a vast area – and they don't have 10 times the resources.

As a result they have had to remodel the Ranger Service. Education and conservation have gone as priorities, the focus of Rangers is now on [enforcement and engagement](#).

“Take Your Litter Home” is not a strategy.

Meantime “Take your litter home” is not a strategy nor is it a policy for preventing littering. It's an educational program designed to raise awareness of littering issues in the long term and as such requires to be supported with litter bins, a litter collection and pick up strategy if the National Park is ever to be made litter free.

After over a decade watching litter polluting the park the LLTLPA still look on



The LLTNPA blinkered insistence that 'Take your litter

home' IS the only contribution they have to make to litter management is itself the prime driver for the increasing mess in the National Park.

What a welcoming first sight for visitors, a spent barbeque in the car park. How long will this and the rest of the litter pictured in this post remain, damaging the reputation of the Scottish Tourism before the Park Authority arranges for it to be cleaned up.

I was taught to put litter in a bin, my children were educated to do the same and undoubtedly their generation are teaching children the same. It is not only undesirable, it could also take 5 -10 generations to clean up. The need to do is get



a workable park cleaning strategy in place meantime and

get the decades worth of rubbish they have allowed to accumulate cleaned up.

It's somewhat ironic the LLTNPA, who berate campers for leaving litter in a bag, are themselves guilty of fly tipping at Loch Chon. I trust they paid the £200 fine or reported themselves to the Procurator Fiscal.

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, the dirty National Park

The National Park Board really need to get out of their Ivory Tower, stop listening to the tripe related to them at secret board meetings and see what's going on in the Park for themselves. The LLTNPA have not made any effort to clean up many areas before the byelaws commenced on the 1st of March 2017 so there is no frame of reference for the success or failure of the byelaws to be measured against (though the LLTNPA promised this would be done), while leaving the park in a mess for this season's visitors.



Click images to zoom

This is the state of the loch side adjacent to the Loch Venacher North permit Zone A. It is clear from the degradation on the cardboard that the above 3 images are historical.

Littering still taking place on 8th and 9th April '17 in management zones

By contrast, the two images below show litter left by visitors on the weekend of the 8th and 9th of April despite the byelaws. How can this be when policing the byelaws is now the Rangers first and main priority? One would expect extreme effort at the start of the season where the Ranger to visitor ratio is high. When the rangers can't even cope in the low season, with only a handful of visitors using the permit and management zones, this counts as abject failure.



It would appear the rangers just don't have the manpower to stop this, making the byelaws superfluous. So far it is clear the byelaws are having little effect on the negative impacts of the few. Does this result from too much talking and not enough doing?! With the claimed 4 million visitors to the park it is impractical to interact with them all – a ranger presence which focusses on problems is more important than endless time checking permits.

Serious littering, fouling and other criminal offences allowed to go on unchecked

After visiting 6 sites over a couple of weekends 3 of them showed serious littering, 2 toilet fouling and 2, instances of “fire raising” ([see here](#)), all of them criminal offences under the byelaws. There were also two instances of landowners locking gates preventing reasonable access to 2 of the permit zones.

The only possible “success” the Park has had so far is in making it harder for well behaved visitors and their families who are now unable to exercise their access rights to enjoy camping in the popular areas of the Park.

March 19th Loch Chon She



Under the byelaws it is a criminal offence to erect a shelter

overnight, which means any time between 7pm or 7am. On these light evenings, its mad that its legal for fishermen to use shelters, which are after all a piece of personal protection equipment necessary to prevent hypothermia on bad weather days, at 18. 59 but at 19.01 they are criminals. Two visitors had put up this shelter and 2 Rangers were in vicinity – I wonder how they advised the fishermen? This rule is impossible to enforce. It would require signs at every place used by fisherman in the camping management zones.

March 19th Loch Chon Campsite



At the Loch Chon camp site I witnessed two day visitors light

a fire using wood collected from surrounding area. Rangers were present and did nothing (just like at South Loch Earn) ([see here](#)). Impossible to enforce for non-campers because none of the Park's signage tell you about this and the wording of the byelaws is not clear – you need to cause damage. However, campers when they apply for a permit agree to terms and conditions that clearly state you cannot use wood you have collected and say that breach of these terms is itself a criminal offence. The byelaws are thus potentially enforceable against campers who apply for permits but no-one else.

April 2nd Tents pitched outside permit zone but in a management zone

Two weeks later in Forrest Drive down by Loch Achray, I had a chat with a family of 4 adults and 2 kids who were all enjoying a bright warm spring day on the 2nd April '17 at an illegal camping pitch on the South side of Loch Achray,



The family were experienced campers and with three tents, a shelter and a toilet tent they were certainly well prepared. All in all the kids were having a wonderful time fishing with plenty of space to run around the tent and on the loch side where large grassy expanses abound. They seemed blissfully unaware of the rules by just pitching here outside a permit zone. However, they were caught the day before and again today, Sunday 2nd,



when they should have been made aware of their crime.

However they were not asked for a permit or moved on. The reason why is perhaps explained by the image to the right. The Forestry Commission sign states this IS a permit zone when the actual permit Zone 'L' is on the opposite side of the Drive. Not even FCS know where people are allowed to camp!

Zone 'L', opposite, is however unsuitable for camping as there are no viable pitches

Had the family purchased a permit for the adjacent zone L they would not have been able to camp there. Images showing why can be seen in the [Zone L gallery](#) or [the full report is here](#). Perhaps the Rangers allowed the illegal camp on the shore because it is impossible to camp in Zone 'L' another complete failure as a camping zone claiming 9 pitches.



Zone 'L' is however being used for toileting and the rangers of course are powerless to prevent it. Now, while having a crap is not covered by the byelaws for the general public, it is covered by the camping permit terms and conditions breach of which is a criminal offence. There is a clear breach here – toilet paper for example has to be carried out – but I just wonder just what is the LLTNPA's modus operandi for catching people in the act of shitting in the woods. That would surely make an interesting read.

This incident is recent, possibly a week ago, certainly within the management season. It would be impossible to attribute this to any individual permit holder without photographs or witnesses and of course it's just as likely to be a day visitor (its not just campers who need toilets). So the byelaws themselves fail to make any material difference to this illegal fouling. They are no more than an unwelcoming threat and intrusion on every visitors day in the park, compounded by the inevitable attempt of a pair of rangers to engage is a 10 minute dialogue. What can they do with the [nearest toilets 45 minutes away by car](#) (round trip) from any permit zone on Forest Drive?

Rangers attend an incident April 19



camping area a bit further along the loch on Saturday night, the 1st of April, where some live tree chopping had taken place. They explained that rangers attended at an incident at the loch side and some raised voices followed. Hopefully we will see a report sent to the Procurator Fiscal for this damage but it will be interesting to see if the report is for breach of permit terms and conditions or under the existing law of damage to property.

The important point here that the presence of Ranger patrols failed to stop the damage occurring in the first place again confirming the Ranger Patrols are ineffective and just a huge revenue expense that would be better invested in infrastructure such as provision of wood for fires.



10th April Loch Achray South. No change here with black

plastic bags left at the gates and water bottle left by the campfire, the byelaws clearly making no improvement. What is and always has been required of course is litter bins which would prevent bag like this being ripped open by foraging animals. The LLTNPA have failed to elucidate how this mess will be cleared up without a litter management policy.

Gates Firmly Locked, so is this zone even active?

Somewhat strange for an advertised camping zone that can be booked on the permit site, these gates are locked like no other, with two padlocks through heavy duty chains and 3 bike locks with additional rope loops and a barbed wire fence to boot.



entering the zone it is also clear it is this zone is currently being used by visitors.

Why this is listed as a camping zone at all is a mystery when the gate is obviously permanently locked.

So how can this be allowed to happen at such a prominent site.



There was also evidence off toileting at Loch Achray

South, which would be illegal if done by a permit holder although strangely enough not illegal if done by someone without a permit (though they of course would have been committing a different criminal offence if they had pitched a tent here without a permit. Perhaps the Rangers, in cases like these, check names and addresses of recent permit holders and then contact them to ask if they are responsible? How can the Rangers ever know if its a camper or day visitor responsible, as was the case for most of the fire, barbeque and toileting incidents described above.

Against all reason the LLTNPA accost visitors with their futile byelaws.

The LLTNPA has added a dozen or so new criminal offences for campers and campervanners through the back door by making breach of their permit terms and conditions a criminal offence. One rule for campers applying for permits, another for everyone else. It has reduced their credibility to that of a petulant child. It's just embarrassing.

The main tool at the Ranger's disposal now is fear and threat of prosecution. While that may very well be a useful and perhaps even an acceptable way to prevent serious criminal offences its scandalous this could be applied to pitching a tent or staying 4 nights in a zone instead of 3

The LLTNPA were advised from people who understood outdoor recreation and criminal behaviour that the byelaws were never going to be an effective deterrent and affect the wrong people. It should be clear to all now that other than some reports to the Procurator Fiscal when Rangers just happen to be in the right place at the right time, the majority of contraventions of the byelaws will go undetected because Ranger cover is just too infrequent. While this frequency is inversely proportional to the time Rangers spend pestering visitors with their visitor engagement, its still unlikely to be enough, even if rangers did stick to patrolling and adopted the policy for all petulant children of being seen and not

heard.

Category

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Date Created

April 28, 2017

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