

The failure of the Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority

Description



Photo credit Luss
Estates – from last
weekend

Contributors to Parkswatch have, over the last 15 months, regularly highlighted the failures of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority to provide basic facilities for visitors. We are not the only people who have been saying this of course but in an extremely welcome development, Luss Estates, who I understand have been trying to influence the LLTNPA behind the scenes, have gone public. Their press release, about what went wrong at Luss over the weekend, is very powerful.

DISGRACE IN NATIONAL PARK: BEAUTY SPOT NEGLECTED BY AUTHORITIES

Date: 9 May 2017



(IMAGE CAPTION: Luss Litter – Sunday 7 May)

The historic village of Luss, on the banks of Loch Lomond is being neglected by local authority Argyll & Bute Council and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. The pretty village is reeling after a busy weekend; litter bins weren't emptied and were overflowing, parking meters were broken, traffic was in chaos with cars getting damaged, and out of three sets of public WCs only one was open (and that is a paid facility). The complete responsibility for all these amenities lies between Argyll & Bute Council and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park; Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park are supposed to operate all of the WCs and some of the bins, and Argyll & Bute Council are supposed to operate the remainder of the bins, the carpark and traffic management. What makes this more extraordinary is that this is almost an exact repeat of last year, so the need to manage these visitor numbers should not have come as a surprise to either Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park or Argyll & Bute Council.

Fiona Potter, owner of Luss Village Shop commented: *“Over the weekend countless tourists asked us why Luss was so messy with one lady in particular wondering if there was a national refuse collection strike. To make matters worse the parking meters were broken and it is unclear to visitors if they are able to park for more than one hour. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and Argyll & Bute Council need to fix these problems immediately.”*

It is a particular tragedy to think that Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, the first national park established in Scotland, is failing to carry out the most basic duties such as refuse management. It is very hard to reconcile the stated mission of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park (below) with the results seen in Luss this weekend.

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Mission Statement:

*'Our mission is to be the vital force in protecting and enhancing Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. The National Park covers an area of outstanding landscapes, habitats and communities – and it's our job to protect it, and reduce the impact of visitor and recreational pressures.'*¹

Simon Miller, Chief Executive of Luss Estates said: *"At a time like this it is hard to see just what is the point of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. They are failing to fulfil the most basic requirements of visitors, and are beginning widely to be regarded with something close to contempt. This is just the start of the visitor season in Luss and this kind of neglect cannot be allowed to continue. Local businesses and the community worked together over the weekend to try and deal with the litter and traffic issues to try to minimise the effect of the local authority neglect."*

Simon Miller, Chief Executive of Luss Estates noted: *"Tourism contributes over £6 billion to the Scottish economy² and significant investment is being made by the Scottish Government and VisitScotland in growing visitor numbers, yet at a local government level there is no evidence of strategic support and spending. Many people will be aware of the dramatically increased business rates which have been levied on the Scottish tourist industry and it is quite clear that this revenue isn't being directed towards local support."*

Sources

1: <http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/park-authority/what-we-do/>

2: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Business-Industry/Tourism>

RELEASE ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

A link was also provided to a number of further photos ([see here](#)) which every politician in Scotland should take a look at and then start asking questions.

The problems, which were entirely predictable given the spell of fine weather we have been having, did not just affect Luss but were evident in other hotspots in the National Park. This point was well made in another welcome press statement from the Friends of Loch Lomond and Trossachs:

“Call to Get Back to Basics

The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Chairman, James Fraser has made an urgent call for local public sector agencies to get back to basics to tackle litter, toilet and traffic management issues in a more effective way at popular lochside visitor hotspots such as Luss

and Balmaha.

He said: " Over the past weekend both locations were overrun with visitors and were unable to cope and it was evident public bodies such local authorities and the National Park Authority are not geared up to deal with the basics such as emptying overflowing litter bins and resolving traffic management problems at busy times. The current arrangements are wholly inadequate and urgently need to be addressed to ensure there is no repeat of the shambles which took place last weekend."

He added:" I understand new arrangements are supposed to be in place for different parts of the area with Councils taking on more responsibilities for traffic management and parking from the police but it is evident from the chaos with road blockages and indiscriminate parking at the weekend the Councils are ill prepared and have not staffed up at busy weekends to deal with the problems."

A flood of complaints were lodged by visitors and local residents over the weekend and many were ashamed by the dreadful state of the areas which fell well short of what is expected in a National Park."

What is great is the public are now also complaining, as you can see from [this post](#) on Walkhighland about litter at Inveruglas. Its also well worth a read and it would be hard to beat the patronising attitudes in the LLTNPA response to the complaint:

"It is unfortunate that more education needs to be done with the users of the park in terms of how they deal with their waste when in such beautiful locations."

This shows just why the LLTNPA is failing, everything is someone else's problem.

Visitors to the National Park are being ripped off by our public authorities and getting nothing in return

Meanwhile, as Magnus points out the LLTNPA charged him £4 to park his car while he was out hillwalking, fees to pay bureaucrats to patronise the public.

And its going to get worse – the LLTNPA is at present trying to lease the carpark at Balmaha from Stirling Council where it plans to install another Automated Number Plate Charging system (three were originally planned, one at Inveruglas) so it can charge visitors – again without them getting anything in return.



Photo Credit Fiona Taylor

Argyll and Bute Council are doing the same in Luss. If you want to go for a hill walk in the Luss Hills, a healthy activity which the National Park should be encouraging, and use the car park you are likely to end up paying £7 for the privilege. No-one in the LLTNPA seems to care – they would prefer people to park on the kerb so that they can then patronise visitors for not showing enough consideration for “beautiful locations”.

The connection between the LLTNPA’s failures to provide infrastructure for visitors and the camping byelaws



Illegal tent snapped from passenger seat of car west Loch Lomond Saturday 6th May

Contrast the photo above with the photos in the Luss Press Release. Yes, the photos above was from the car and its not possible to tell if the campers were adhering to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, but ask yourself what is the problem the LLTNPA should be tackling?

Should they be devoting a huge proportion of their human and financial resources to trying to chase campers away from the loch shores, whether or not they are camping according to SOAC, or should they be tackling the problems highlighted by Luss Estates and Friends of Loch Lomond and Trossachs?

What neither Luss Estates or FOLLAT have been prepared to say publicly as yet – and both supported the camping byelaws, albeit far from unconditionally – is that the camping byelaws account for many of the failures of the LLTNPA, including a failure to co-ordinate work with Local Authorities on everything from litter collection to car park charging. While the evidence shows the byelaws are unravelling anyway – see yesterday’s post ([see here](#)) – as long as they continue to direct their resources towards managing what they are not fit to manage, the National Park will continue to disgrace Scotland.

What needs to happen

James Stuart, in his speech to become convener, hinted that the LLTNPA need to change focus. He did not go far enough but his challenge now is to reverse the parrot like statements from the Park and the Scottish Government officials that the byelaws are here to stay, admit the LLTNPA has made a serious error which is preventing resources being spent where they are needed, and start engaging with organisations like Luss Estates, FOLLAT and the recreational organisations, as well as local communities, to develop a new approach.

The new National Park plan is the obvious place to start. The LLTNPA needs to “get back to basics” as FOLLAT puts it and stop pretending that they are some sort of business whose main purpose is to raise income for itself rather than cater for the needs of visitors. Parkswatch will feature a number of posts on the new draft Partnership Plan in the next few weeks and would encourage all those who have complained to the LLTNPA, to respond to it in due course.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. Camping bye laws
3. Litter
4. LLTNPA
5. Scottish Government
6. Tourism
7. visitor management

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