

The camping byelaws – lies and incompetence at Firkin Point

Description



General view of the shoreline along zone D where the Park claims that 9 tents can be pitched under system

Last Thursday I wrote to Park Convener James Stuart asking to lead a deputation to the next Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority Board meeting on Monday 19th June about the Park's selective application of the camping byelaws ([see here](#)) and failure to provide the 300 "new" camping places they had promised the Scottish Government. Its a brief letter ([see here](#)), at the end of which I have offered to take to James Stuart to have a look for himself. On Friday, I discovered he would not have to travel far from the Park HQ to see for himself clear evidence that someone in his staff team

has been telling lies about the number of camping places and of the Park's failure to provide basic infrastructure for visitors.

Firkin Point Zones C and D

Having previously blogged on Firkin Point ([see here](#)), I visited again on the way to Colonsay specifically to take a look at Zone D, which I had not visited before. The Park claimed that 9 places were available on 1st March under their permit scheme [EIR 2017-035 Camping provision](#).

PERMIT AREAS WITH SERVICES		
WLL	Inveruglas Inbhir Dhubhghlais	5
WLL	Firkin Point A Rubha Firkin A	3
WLL	Firkin Point B Rubha Firkin B	2
WLL	Firkin Point C Rubha Firkin C	1
WLL	Firkin Point Motorhomes	0
WLL	Firkin Point D Rubha Firkin D	9

The claim that Zone D has facilities should be taken with a pinch of salt, and not just because the toilet “facilities” were closed until 1st April.



Zone D is approximately 400m long so if you were camped at far end of zone that's a 1200m walk to the toilet. The Park's website claims that Zone D is 700m from the toilet, which sounds better than 800m on the map.

Firkin Point D

Rubha Firkin D

CAMPING
IN THE PARK



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



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.

LOCH
LOMOND
& THE TROSSACHS
NATIONAL PARK

The so called

“camping permit” zone itself is very narrow, sandwiched between the old road and the loch. It mostly comprises a steep and vegetated bank and sloping pebbly beaches, neither of which are any good for camping. There are also ice scoured rock slabs and two patches of mostly sloping and uneven turf.



There is very little flat ground in the turfy area near the start of the zone. There is a log pile to the left

The few flat places suitable for pitching a tent are very small. Probably the best is at the start of the 400m zone.

There is no further turf where you could pitch a tent until the far end of the zone. The main part of the zone comprises pebbly beaches with rocky areas in-between.



There was nowhere on first beach suitable for pitching a tent. Note how the wet area extends halfway down the beach.



The second beach is longer and again sloping. The “tideline” of debris marking previous high water be clearly seen 2/3 way up the beach.

Since it claims 9 places were available on 1st March in this zone, the Park clearly expects people to pitch tents on sloping pebbly beaches such as this. I challenge their Board Members to come out and spend a night in a tent on this beach to judge for themselves whether this is possible. On 1st March however it wouldn't have been possible even for the most desperate of campers because the water level in the loch was much higher and all the beaches here would have been underwater.



The third pebbly beach offered probably the best beach possibility for camping for someone with a pop-up tent. Like all the beaches, useless for most campers.



The other area of turf is at the far end of the zone. It is narrow and mostly sloping. It would be just about possible to pitch two single person tents here, on the path to the bench, and camp in reasonable comfort.



In total therefore Zone D allows for three tents to be pitched on turf and, if the water of the loch is low enough, for a couple of pop-up tents to be placed on the flatter areas of the generally sloping beaches. That's five places in all at best against the 9 the LLTNPA claim to have "provided" here. Its worth noting that if you take a look at the information on the Park's permit system, there is NOTHING to tell the prospective camper about the very real challenges of camping in the nine "places" which are still advertised as being available here. A case of breach of the Trades Description Act.

I re-iterate my challenge to James Stuart:

Prove the LLTNPA's claim to have provided 9 camping places in Zone D by spending a night here with members of your Board. To make the challenge easier for you, since I don't believe many of your Board Members or senior staff camp at the best of times, and to provide independent proof you have done this, I suggest you bring three other members of your Board and senior staff team (or the Minister for the Environment Roseanna Cunningham if you so wish). I will invite 5 recreational people – well known campers such as Cameron McNeish and Chris Townsend – and representatives from recreational organisations to join in, all of whom have experience of camping in difficult conditions and you can here what they have to say. (And, just in case, I will suggest to them they bring bivvy bags so we can sleep out under the stars should it prove impossible to pitch a tent on one of the sloping beaches)

Meantime, unless and until James Stuart can prove me wrong, I maintain that the LLTNPA has lied about its camping provision in Zone D of Firkin Point, just as it has done on Forest Drive. Unless James Stuart takes action to correct these failures – rising to my challenge would provide proof of good intentions – and unless he and the rest of the LLTNPA Board do this, the Scottish Government needs to start holding them to account.

There's plenty else wrong at Firkin Point



Arriving at the first camping area in Zone D, I was met by this bagged rubbish, which could have been left by campers but it could also have been left by anglers out for the day. There are no litter bins, despite this being described as a “permit zone with facilities”. What happens is what happens across the Park: most people (whether day visitors, local residents flytipping or campers) bag their rubbish and then leave it. While I wish people wouldn’t do this, that is the reality the Park needs to address. Since there is no-one whose job is to collect litter – Park Rangers who check this site daily for rogue campers without permits just walk by – the bags remain, an open invitation to wild animals, which then scatter the contents. (The chopped branch by the way came from a log pile described above – if the Park provided this, that would have been a step forward).



Since my last visit, this sign had gone up next to one of the motorhome permit signs in the Firkin Pt parking area, a sign which illustrates the failure of the LLTNPA. What the Park should be doing is investing in basic facilities such as chemical disposal points – it provides none at present. Instead its wasting money policing campers.



Written across the entrance to the motorhome permit area are these road markings. Talk about contradictory messages!



Several signs have gone up in the Firkin Point parking area which claim that there is no right of passage between 7pm and 7am. These are an attempt to stop campervans staying here for free (you have a right to stay overnight in a vehicles on a public road). The signs do not say under what power the LLTNPA is trying to do so. I don't believe they have such powers and are acting ultra vires. This is a National Park out of control. James Stuart, the new Convener, needs to rise to the challenge and start holding his staff to account and I hope too he agrees to a deputation coming to speak to the next Board meeting so these issues can be discussed in public.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. Camping bye laws
3. LLTNPA
4. Minister Environment

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