

Camping management arrangements – fermenting conflict between visitors.

Description

By Nick Halls



Remains of fly tipped mattress, Cuilag

As a resident of Ardentinnny, I routinely travel between Ardentinnny and Glasgow by road. I make it a practice of stopping on Loch Lomond side to visit the camping places, for which permits are required, at Suie Field and Cuilag, situated on the shore between Inverbeg and Luss.

Access to both camping areas is from laybys off the A 82 [T] road, which follows the line of the Old Military Road, sometimes directly on it. There are a number of places where the old road still exists, used as laybys or closed for vehicles and used as part of the cycle and pedestrian way. They are often loops taking cars away from the side of the main A 82.

In respect of the management and conservation of the National Park environment, I monitor the litter and refuse left, the 'long stay' caravans and mobile homes, the litter and soiling left by heavy goods vehicles parked up overnight and the state of the camping places. I chat to campers, and people using caravans and mobile homes.

In the past, my approach and engagement in conversation seemed welcome, and taken as just a part of a Scottish experience, garrulous, old locals coming up and talking rubbish. I do this partly to entertain but also to gather 'intelligence' about strangers, as is the country way.

In previous reports, I have expressed concern about the ubiquitous litter problem, fly tipping in parking places, the state of camping sites and a failure of the part of the NP Authority to tidy camping places, maintain safe and cleared access and to generally make the places for which people have to pay welcoming and worth the money.

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Overgrown path Suie field – photo Nick Kempe

The path, from the lay-by, used for access to Suie Field beach is still overgrown, with historic litter strewn amongst the undergrowth, with trip hazards, and the beach and camping sites usually show signs of litter – it is obvious to me that the responsibility for the squalor is shared between campers and day visitors, both of whom have a penchant for fires, and eating food with a lot of packaging, and leaving plastic bottles.

Judging from the position of litter everybody using the location contributes to the litter, and many use the locality as a toilet.

In the past I have seen mattresses, garden rubbish and soft furnishing dumped on the shore of the

Loch from this lay by – they are difficult to photograph due to the steepness of the bank, and my infirmity. They can sometimes remain for 6 months or more.

It is not clear to me who has the legal responsibility for removing the rubbish, Argyll & Bute Council, the NP Authority, the land owner or Transport Scotland as the organisation tasked with managing trunk roads. What is clear to me is that the NP Authority, if it has any integrity, has at least a moral responsibility to maintain the amenity of the NP for which it is responsible. I cannot believe Park Rangers do not see what I see!

A new issue addressed in this report is how Camping Management arrangements are souring relations between visitors and residents.

The latest evidence from Cuilag

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Culag (beach) Cùileag



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



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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.



The sign indicating the camping area, showing the path to the beach, and the parking place and big goes underneath the main road in a culvert, draining onto the beach.

I have reported previously on the squalor, garbage and fly tipping evident at the car park, from which the camping places on the beach at Cuilag are accessed. I have attempted to stimulate action to clear up the car park, enhance the landscaping and clear the rubbish from the burn. I visit it at least fortnightly to assess if 'feed-back' from the public results in any action.

During a visit on 06/06/2017, I took up to date photographs of the fly tipping and visited the beach, it was coarse weather, following the pleasant spring.

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The initial tipping is garden rubbish, the subsequent tipping seems to be household waste, some might have been added by either; campers, day visitors after a picnic, passers by or by people staying in caravans or mobile homes. Without a forensic examination, it would be hard to know.

I avoid taking photographs that include, tents, cars, caravans or mobile homes, especially if they are occupied, because it is an invasion of privacy and also because showing the category of those present suggests that they are responsible [as was done while assembling the propaganda evidence to scapegoat campers]. In all drama presence is assumed to be evidence of guilt!

While taking photographs, the resident of a caravan present on site, stormed out shouting and screaming for me to 'f... off', assuming I guess, that I was gathering evidence of their responsibility. There was a threat of violence! Having lived in Glasgow this was not outside my experience, but the show of aggression is very unusual in the countryside. What struck me was that they asserted the rubbish was nothing to with them, it had been left by campers. Indeed, I could accept that some of it might have been, but garden waste and what looked like nappies were unlikely to originate from campers, of the type who might use Cuilag beach in unpleasant weather.

I visited the beach, by the degraded muddy path, which is eroding into a gully by drainage from the parking place, which is washing minor litter down to the beach. It is a 'trip and slip' hazard for visitors carrying camping equipment and picnic materials.

There were no campers or picnickers because the weather was vile, and the level of the Loch rising, inundating the preferred camping location. Along the back of the beach was a line of litter, concentrated where I assume people picnicked, during the preceding good weather, because a lot of it was heavy alloy used for disposable BBQ.s and BBQ food containers, and there were signs of places where they had been used.

My conclusion is that the accumulation of litter is contributed to by all and sundry, but the 'sign' that made it seem acceptable is fly tipping that had nothing to do with visitors. Evidence for this surrounds the parking place, slightly camouflaged by spring growth.



Accumulated tip obscured in summer by undergrowth.

I took a look at the bed of the burn, it confirmed what I have observed elsewhere, that nearly every accessible culvert, bridge and drain, seem to be used as convenient garbage disposal points.



The burn has been almost completely obstructed with garbage, the majority of which is garden waste, which is being washed down onto the beach and into the Loch. It seems very unlikely that the majority of this rubbish is dumped by visitors, but an urban visitor might assume if a place looks like a dump it probably is a dump, and might add to it.



The garbage (above) has been dumped from the cycle way onto ground above the culvert shown in previous photograph. The amount does not suggest that it originates from visitors, and implies local knowledge.



To validate the observation above, a picture of tractor tyres dumped in a drain in Glen Finart. The most casual observation would confirm that this sort of dumping is ubiquitous throughout the Scottish countryside, and very long lasting. These tyres could have been dumped before the creation of the National Park, by a contractor during the last clear fell, decades ago.

Responsibility for sorting out the mess

When I knocked on the caravan door to explain my purpose, I was confronted by anger, lack of understanding of the issues which concerned me, and a feeling that they were being accused falsely of

being responsible for the state of the car park. It took me some time to calm them down and persuade them that I did not believe they were responsible, but the Local, NP and Roads Authority jointly shared responsibility for garbage collection and maintaining the amenity of a beauty spot.

The response was to blame me, because there is no garbage receptacle of any description into which to put rubbish, pointing out that it might be alright for me, [I drive a van] but they only had a crowded car and had no way of removing rubbish. There is some validity in both these observations.

“Take your litter home” may be responsible behavior but when some of the flytipping appears from local residents, is it really practical for either day visitors or mobile campers? The evidence suggests people dump stuff because there is nowhere to put the garbage.

The evidence of Duck Bay, is that the garbage disposal facilities are insufficient, because they are usually overflowing after a nice weekend, and relative to the amount in and around bins, the amount left lying by picnic tables is relative minor, however unsightly it may be.

Placing a skip in carparks where fly tipping and litter is a problem, would at least enable anybody to place litter in a receptacle, whatever its origins, and permit a speedy and routine tidy up. The cost of such provision would still come from the public purse, whichever Authority were to take responsibility – to which everybody contributes in one way or another. If the cost fell on a Local Authority it would be met from taxation harvested from the whole population, not just Council Tax payers. No cost of a public service is met solely by the resident of the NP, least of all the cost of NP Authority itself which is funded also entirely by grant from central Government.

The lack of positive action suggests that each authority operates in isolation, without any coordination, and there is no ‘buy in’ to NP Policy which seems to be developed in a ‘silo’. There just seems to be a reciprocal denial of responsibility from those who have a duty to sort this out.

I assumed that the creation of the NP would produce an authority to coordinate the activities of all public bodies, commercial interests, resident and visitors, to conserve the valuable qualities of the Loch Lomond and Trossach National Park and enhance them for all concerned; not to foster discontent between residents and visitors, and animosity between categories of visitors, by scapegoating some and catering for others, with no over-arching policy.

Everything I observe is redolent of incoherent ‘ad hoc’ activity, with no plan or strategy, in a culture of

blame and denial, identifying scapegoats, and shifting responsibility. Other reports suggest the authorities are incapable of taking effective enforcement action, even against a tiny minority of campers!

The situation is quite shocking, probably very expensive, and exposes an NP Authority that is just not up to the job. There is a serious risk that in the current political, social and economic turmoil the suggestion will be made to do away with National Parks. Now, I would be ambivalent about supporting such a proposal! I would support public condemnation of those involved in the Governance of the LL & T NP, and designating them as unfit for public office.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

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