

The former Tarbet Isle permit area – how's it different to Forest Drive?

Description



A road to nowhere? How would anyone know that this road led to the former Tarbet Isle campervan still existing tent permit area? There are no signs

Following my posts on the unlawful application of the camping byelaws to campervans ([see here](#)) this week I took a look at the Tarbet Isle permit area. This is one of the areas where the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority has refunded campervanners who had purchased permits – an admission that they had done so unlawfully.



The signage – now redundant – only appears when you reach the edge of the so-called permit area

The first thing that strikes you about the area is there is no signage to it (see photo above) from the main road. If you are travelling north along the A82 from Tarbet, you might just notice the track up to the left, but there is nothing to tell the anyone who has heard of the byelaws and knows that the Park is trying to force people to stay in permit areas, that you could stay – or have stayed in the case of campervanners – without fear of prosecution. In fact there is no signage to any of the permit areas along the A82. While that was a failure in terms of the byelaws, its a welcome failure as if people don't know where the permit areas are, its almost impossible to stop them from stopping off somewhere else. Its a failure the Park would be best not trying to remedy, otherwise its likely to waste yet more money on signs, such as that at Tarbet Isle, which then become redundant (left).



At least at Tarbet Isle the former gates across the track have been removed. Why Forestry Commission Scotland has no gates at Tarbet Isle but has gates and locks them at Forest Drive is a mystery. Perhaps its to prevent a right of passage being created? You only have a right under the byelaws to sleep overnight on roads where there is a right of passage.



The former campervan permit area, where you can now once more stay for free, is hardly inspiring, the sort of high quality experience the Park says it wants to promote for visitors, but its ok. Its big pluses are its flat and being slightly above the road its much quieter than by the lochshores. There are no views and no facilities and some people might feel a bit vulnerable here.



I suspect most campervanners, like most people, would prefer to stop off by the loch shore even because it is noisier because it has great views and the bumpy shoreline is very interesting. It feels like you are in a National Park – the campervan permit area could have been almost anywhere.



The map of the permit area (close up above) shows the former campervan permit area by a dotted red line, the wider permit areas in dark green and the flatter part of the permit area in light green. The path by the sign, marks the boundary, and shows just how steep and tree covered much of the permit area is. Why the Park spent lots of money delimiting wider permit areas where it is absolutely impossible to camp I am not sure. Maybe though this wider area is where people can sleep in hammocks slung between trees without committing an offence so long as they pay £3 for the privilege?



Its a good five minute walk through the permit area before you reach anywhere you could possibly consider camping. That's not much good for cycle tourers or canoeists, worried about being prosecuted for camping by the road or on the lochshores. The woodland was lovely in the sun but sloping and covered in vegetation, again unsuitable for camping



There was one obvious camping area, which had been used by campers, and where some kind person – possibly from FCS – had left a couple of logs. Highly commendable. There was no obvious source of water though and so to me, while its good the potential for camping up in the woods here is being advertised, this should not be seen as compensation for banning people from camping on the lochshores. I am awaiting the breakdown of the Park's statistics (which show numbers of tents booked on West Loch Lomond but not by permit area) but I suspect the demand for camping here will not be high.

What is the justification for the remaining campervan permit areas?

The LLTNPA and FCS need to explain why they still trying to charge campervans for staying at Forest Drive – indeed they have increased the number of permits for campervans there – while dropping permits at Taret Isle.

The LLTNPA also needs to explain why its now saying campervans can stop off in the parking area at

the end of the short forest road at Tarbert Isle but to do so without a permit at the similar turning area at Firkin Point is still according to them a criminal offence.



The campervan permit places at Firkin Point are in the no parking area – which raises more legal questions I care to cover here!

Tarbert Isle provides more evidence, as if more was needed, that the legal basis for the decisions made by LLTNPA staff need to be made public.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. Camping bye laws
3. Forestry Commission Scotland

4. LLTNPA

Date Created

July 14, 2017

Author

nickkempe

default watermark