One law for landowners, another for the hoi polloi?

Description



Photo from Luss Gathering Facebook page 2017 (it took place Saturday1st July) â?? count the tents

The Luss Gathering takes place each year on Luss playing fields which now form part of the west Loch Lomond camping management zone. Since last year the camping management byelaws have made it a criminal offence to erect a tent in a camping management zone without explicit authorisation from the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority. Mostly such authorisation is granted through the camping permit system the Park has created but this only allows tents to be put up in specified permit areas. Luss is not one of them, no doubt because some local residents had blamed camping for all the problems of anti-social behaviour the village was experiencing and so no camping under permit is allowed close by.

The other way permission to put up a tent can be obtained is to apply for an one-off exemption to put up a tent or tents. Decisions about such exemptions are, under the Parkâ??s procedures supposed to be advertised on the Parkâ??s weekly planning list which I have been monitoring for some time now. Most of the applications are from Duke of Edinburgh and Scout Groups, with hard-pressed voluntary Scout Leaders and teachers, no longer able to organise expeditions which stay overnight in the camping management zones without the Parkâ??s permission. The bureaucracy and additional workload is signficant and I feel for the (mainly youth) groups involved. They were, just like other responsible campers, never part of any problem â?? indeed being supervised, the chances of such expeditions causing any damage were minimal â?? but nevertheless the Park has required them to apply for permission to camp.

I tend to recall applications from other bodies for exemption from the camping byelaws â?? that from the Loch Ard Sailing club comes to mind â?? but donâ??t remember seeing one for the Luss Highland Games. I have double-checked all planning applications decided for the Luss and Arden Community Council since April on the Parkâ??s planning portal and cannot find any appllcation to exempt the Luss Gathering either. I am thus reasonably certain that the Luss Gathering did not apply for and were not granted permission to pitch the tents that feature on the photo above. If I am correct, all those responsible in putting up these tents have committed a criminal offence. Ridiculous I know, as common sense tells us that these people have done no wrong.

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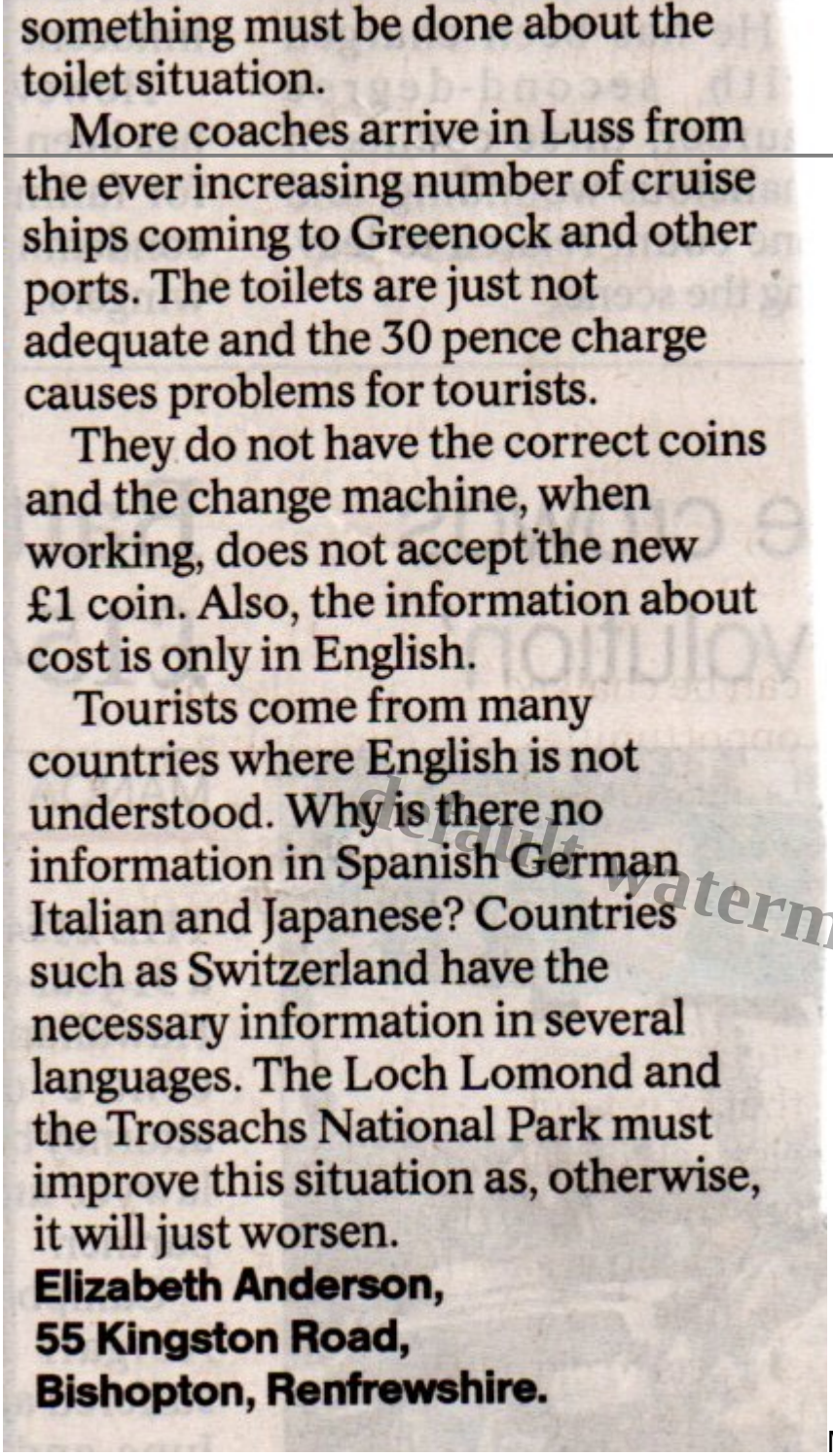
But neither has Mr Trout, the angler who is being prosecuted simply because he broke the byelaws for doing what he has done for years (see here), just like the people who organise the Luss Gathering. Neither has done any wrong. Mr Trout told me that the police officer employed by the National Park, PC Barr, when cautioning him, had told him the law is the law and has to be enforced. It would be interesting to know how many events PC Barr or other police officers have attended over the summer â?? I cannot believe that there was no police presence at the Luss Gathering â?? and what action they have taken. My guess is none but I would be more than happy to publish information from the police or the LLTNPA if I have got this wrong..

The camping byelaws are daft but since during the Your Park consultation both Luss Estates and members of the local community in Luss strongly supported them, there is an argument they should be made to live by the rules they have created for everyone else. I would prefer it if they now joined those of us who believe the camping byelaws were never justified, are completely unfair and a complete waste of resources and call publicly for them to be dropped at the earliest opportunity.



something must be done about the toilet situation.

More coaches arrive in Luss from the ever increasing number of cruise ships coming to Greenock and other ports. The toilets are just not adequate and the 30 pence charge causes problems for tourists.

They do not have the correct coins and the change machine, when working, does not accept the new £1 coin. Also, the information about cost is only in English.

Tourists come from many countries where English is not understood. Why is there no information in Spanish German Italian and Japanese? Countries such as Switzerland have the necessary information in several languages. The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park must improve this situation as, otherwise, it will just worsen.

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Meantime, there was a helpful reminder of the real problems which the National Park Authority should have been addressing at Luss in this letter which appeared in the Herald on Monday. It is significant that it is from someone who is in the tourism industry. The new National Park Partnership Plan needs to completely change the focus of what the Park is doing, from wasting money and resources on trying to chase off responsible campers to the provision of the basic infrastructure the Park needs.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. Camping bye laws
3. landed estates
4. LLTNPA
5. Local communities
6. Tourism

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