

Post truth Park

Description

C7	Land management plans	By 2017 25% of all private land in the National Park has a long-term management plan.	Our pilot phase is complete and evaluated. Our revised m have been made with National Farmers Union Scotland and scheme.
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Extract from Review of National Park Partnership Plan 2013-14

I have been trying since the summer to obtain copies of the "Land Management Plans" which the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park claim to have agreed with certain landowners (my appeal is with the Scottish Information Commissioner). The content of these plans seems to me important for understanding how far the LLTNPA are getting landowners to manage their land according to the National Park's statutory objectives. A couple of months ago however I realised that the Review of the National Park Partnership Plan for 2013-14 (extract above) claimed the pilot phase of these plans had been evaluated. I assumed from this statement that there would be some sort of evaluation report of these management plans, which might even say what progress had been made in achieving National Park objectives, and so submitted another information request. I received this response a month ago:

"any information you hold on the (2014) evaluation Plans as set out below in the Review of the NPPP 2

As outlined in the 2014 review of the National Park Partnership Plan, the pilot phase of land management plans (previously known as Whole Farm Plans) has been completed and evaluated. Relevant searches have been carried out in the process. Information has been located in various updates and reports which are attached in Appendix A. These extracts show that the pilot phase was underway on four land management plans.

This appears to confirm that the pilot was evaluated BUT the information provided [EIR 2017-071 evaluation land management plans Appendix A](#) consists of extracts of reports given to the National Park's Delivery Group (which oversees progress against plans) and reference to Board updates. There is nothing that remotely resembles an evaluation. The nearest any extract gets to this is one

which says "lessons have been learned" but without saying what!

I wrote to the Park's Director of Conservation last week and asked if an evaluation report existed, yes or no, and so far have not had an answer. LLTNPA senior staff appear to find such questions, which are about truth, not spin and marketing, difficult to answer. Meantime, staff appear to have misled both the Board - not the fault of the current Conservation Director, it was before his time - and the Minister.

Our Public Authorities talk a lot about values but when listing these, I cannot recall "truth" ever being mentioned. Yet a commitment to truth should arguably underpin everything else our National Parks do. Unfortunately, as with other Public Authorities, our National Parks have been under pressure to reduce spending while telling the world everything is going wonderfully and they can keep doing better on less. Its been very hard in these circumstances for Boards to retain a clear eye on the truth. What starts as spin and omissions, eventually becomes totally detached from reality and ends up a lie - little different to Donald Trump but said more nicely. The claim in the Review of the National Park Partnership Plan to have evaluated the land management plans pilots - exactly what the LLTNPA should have been doing by the way - is just one example.

While I can understand how things might have gone wrong in this way - I have been there myself - this is no longer about isolated instances (the Review Report for Ministers on the Camping Byelaws [\(see here\)](#) is a case in point). I am not sure how far Board Members appreciate this - there is far too little questioning of senior staff - or how the LLTNPA is losing its reputation for probity, but they need to start putting truth and facts back at the centre of everything the LLTNPA does.

Meantime, the Information Response does reveal the names of the handful of landholdings with whom Land Management Plans were agreed, Portnellan, Benmore Farm, Loch Dochart and Inverlochlarig (which form a geographical block) and that a contractor was appointed to provide them with advice on renewables. That raises some interesting questions about what advice the LLTNPA was giving on the landscape impact of hydro tracks - which it acknowledged at the last Board Meeting was an issue - and is even more reason the information in the land management plans should be made public.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. Freedom of Information
2. Governance
3. LLTNPA

Date Created

December 14, 2017

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