

The “Visitor Experience” in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park

Description



Sign at junction south Loch Earn Rd with road to Edinample House 27th December.

Commenting on Tuesday’s post ([see here](#)) Dave Morris, former Director of the Ramblers Association and one of the architects of our access legislation, wrote:

"As we approach the 15th anniversary of the passage of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 it is worth reflecting, to Scotland's eternal shame, what is happening on the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond and elsewhere in this national park. Nobody associated with this legislation, which secured our right to roam, ever anticipated that it would result in the sort of thuggery now been

practised against campers by this National Park Authority".

Both Dave and I are strong supporters of National Parks but neither of us anticipated either that visitors to the countryside would still be faced with signs such as that in the photo above. The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority was also set up 15 years ago and has had responsibility for access matters since its creation. That an Access Authority and National Park to boot still tolerates such signs – and the field behind the sign is clearly land covered by access rights – is a disgrace.

While the LLTNPA could be excused for not knowing about every sign about access within the National Park, during the byelaw season their Rangers must drive past this unlawful sign on a daily basis looking out for “rogue” campers on their way to or from the south Loch Earn camping permit zone. That says a lot about what is wrong with this National Park. In other areas countryside rangers would be involved in resolving problems caused by landowners but not in the LLTNPA.

Judging by my experience of trying to report unlawful signs, this is probably not the fault of either the Rangers or access staff. I have, for example, not even had an acknowledgement to my email of 4th December to a member of the LLTNPA senior management team reporting the signs near Ardlui saying “Keep Out High Velocity Rifles in use” ([see here](#)). Quite a contrast to the Cairngorms National Park Authority who not only acknowledge reports of access problems but tell you what they intend to do and who is responsible for doing this.

While at best there would best appear to be no join up between the LLTNPA Rangers and their access team, given the attitudes of senior management I suspect that any seasonal ranger complaining about signs such as this risks not having their contract renewed. Whatever the explanation, the LLTNPA is failing to uphold access rights while it claims to value the “Visitor Experience”.



The 27th December was a lovely day and we passed the Edinample sign on the

way from Glasgow for a walk up Ben Vorlich. Needing a pit stop, we had stopped off at Callander, marketed as a gateway to the National Park, to find the toilets locked. At Loch Lubnaig, it was not just the toilets which were shut, the gates to the car park were locked too, although there was a sign on the back of the gate saying they would be locked at 4pm! What justification is there for a National Park trying to prevent people travelling in cars from stopping off here in winter and enjoying the loch? In the five minutes I was taking these photos, two cars pulled in in front of the locked gates and then drove away. What an appalling message for a National Park to give out.



What's the point of referring people to gate closing times if the gate is locked?

The above sign is pure parkspeak. How can people respect the environment when access to that environment is barred by locked gates much of the time. Why, when parking is being charged for, cannot the car park be kept open 365 days a year 24 hours a day? Why does the LLTNPA act as if only summer visitors are important?



We saw something like 40 people while walking up the north ridge of Ben Vorlich – people getting out taking exercise doing the healthy sort of thing our politicians exhort people to do. And that was just one hill. Most visitors people come from outside the Park, some will want to take a break from driving and many will need to go to the toilet at some point in the day but the LLTNPA acts as if the National Park is closed.

The National Park needs to get back to basics. Remove anti-access signs and provide infrastructure for visitors, jobs it was set up to do and has failed to deliver on. Unfortunately, judging by its current advert for a new Visitor Experience Manager it is still embarked on a very different course:

Job Title: *Visitor Experience Manager*

Contract: *Permanent*

Salary: *£35,495 – £42,193 (Band E)*

Working Hours: *37 hours per week – we support the “Happy to Talk Flexible Working” campaign*

Location: *Balloch*

Reference: *NPA/Dec/2017/02*

You will provide leadership, co-ordination and inspiration in managing and delivering the tourism functions and commercial partnership activities of the National Park Authority as set out in the National Park Partnership Plan and Corporate Plan. These functions include delivering new tourism products, ensuring consistent communication of destination brand and information, working with destination businesses, and delivering commercial partnership activities which will deliver income for the Park Authority.

Degree qualified in related discipline, you will have a proven track record in the tourism sector. As someone who has strong project management skills who demonstrates sound independent judgement you will understand how to approach, advise and influence both internal and external stakeholders. You will be confident, credible, proactive and creative when driving quality improvement and good practice ([see here for full advert](#)).

The whole emphasis of the Visitor Experience role is on commercial tourism rather than countryside management or helping people enjoy the landscape and wildlife, on raising income rather than on delivering the facilities that are needed. While the person appointed will be expected to work with businesses there is not a mention of them working with the people who visit the National Park or the organisations that represent them. While the sooner both our National Parks get rid of the terrible term the “visitor experience” the better, the more fundamental issue is the LLTNPA needs to re-focus on what it was set up to do rather than trying to turn itself into a second rate tourist board.

Category

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Tags

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2. Camping bye laws

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