

The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority local member election results

Description

Here they are. The newly elected members of [@lomondtrossachs](#) Board (minus one), as voted for by those who live in the National Park bit.ly/2J4LKle



Willie Nisbet, David McCowan, Bob Darracot and Billy Ronald

The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority local member elections, which takes place by postal vote, were counted on Thursday. While the LLTNPA has only published the names of the successful candidates ([see here](#)) the full results can be found on the Stirling Council website [Election results-2018](#). This post takes a look at the results in the light of my earlier critical commentary on the deficiencies in the National Park election process ([see here](#)).

That all the successful candidates were once again men is a reflection of the fact that only 2-3 out of the 24 candidates were women. This raises two questions. What is it about the LLTNPA which puts women off standing? And, given the Scottish Government's oft stated commitment to a gender

balance on Boards, will this mean that all the new Ministerial appointments will be women?

At the last LLTNPA Board meeting concern was expressed by some locally elected members that two former Councillors who had been on the Board were standing for election. Their concern was that, while there is nothing in the rules to prevent councillors standing as local candidates, it had not been the intention of the Scottish Parliament in setting up the tripartite structure of our National Park Boards â?? Cllrs nominated by local authorities, Ministerial appointment and directly elected candidates â?? that they should be dominated by local councillors. In the event one of the Councillor candidates, the Tory Martin Earl (missing from photo above) was elected, and the other, independent Councillor George Freeman wasnâ??t. Having heard all the Councillors on the Board argue at the September Board Meeting last year that their number should be abolished because there was so little for LLTNPA members to do ([see here](#)), I found it incredible that either had the gall to stand.

Ward commentary

In Ward 1, Cowal and north Loch Lomond, Bob Darracot won with 113 out of 677 votes or with less than 17% of the vote, a reflection of the large number of candidates and the first past the post system. Whatever Bobâ??s merits as successful candidate, I suggest that this provides all the evidence the LLTNPA needs to recommend to Ministers that the first past the post system needs to change.

In Ward 2, Billy Ronald saw off the challenge from the disgraced Owen McKee but not by a large majority. Since my last post on the elections, the Standards Commission have confirmed that where a person has avoided being suspended by the Standards Commission by resigning, a suspension cannot be imposed at a later date and that they are looking at the issues:

The Standards Commission recently undertook a review of the ethical standards framework in Scotland, when responding to the Committee on Standards in Public Lifeâ??s consultation on ethical standards in local government in England. We identified, during the review, that certain aspects of the statutory provisions governing the Standards Commissionâ??s powers in respect of sanction may be problematic / a weakness in the framework. We intend to advise the Scottish Government, in due course, of our concerns and suggestions in respect of certain aspects of the framework in order to determine whether there is any scope for amendments or improvements to be made. You may wish to contact your MSP to advise them of your own concerns. For information, a copy of the consultation response is available on our website at www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/about-us/news/response-to-committee-on-standards-in-public-lives-review-of-ethical-standards-in-local-government-in-england.

This I believe is most welcome as was their confirmation that the LLTNPA had sought advice from them about Owen McKee standing for the LLTNPA Board again. The LLTNPA have moved from trying to covering Owen McKeeâ??s trading in Scotgold shares while convener of the Planning Committee under previous Convener Linda McKay to seeking advice about what they should do under new Convener James Stuart. Thank goodness and letâ??s hope this basic good governance now becomes routine.

In Ward 3, former Councillor Member Martin Earl was elected beating Chris Martin by 29 votes and getting less than 30% of the vote. Another case where proportional electoral system might have had a very different result, with third placed candidate John Watson also attracting a significant number of

votes. I suspect Martin Earl might have been helped by the letter which appeared in the Stirling Observer last week from former Councillor Fergus Wood. The anonymous response (which was published too late to influence the election) exposed the hypocrisy which was no doubt widely picked up locally:

Conflict of interest in national park poll

I note with concern the intention of Councillor Martin Earl to stand for election as representative for Callander in the forthcoming Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park poll.

If elected he will be wearing two hats at the meetings, which I believe could lead to a conflict of interest.

In the previous administration I attended these meetings representing Stirling Council. True, I was also on the park board but the park was represented by the locally-elected board member David Warnock.

I firmly believe that locally-elected members of the park board should not be associated directly with Stirling Council. They can thus better serve the interests of both the park and their community.

Fergus Wood,
Kinlochard

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Voters have the last say

Dear Editor

Former Councillor (and Provost) Wood's letter in last Friday's Observer regarding Martin Earl's candidacy for a place on Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park board is somewhat remarkable.

I offer this observation having a person who has never voted for the Tories in my life and never will.

Mr Wood suggests that there will be a conflict of interest should the people of Callander elect Martin Earl.

It's worth recalling that when he sought planning permission for a campsite on the shores of Loch Ard last year, Mr. Wood's application omitted important information.

A letter dated April 6, 2017, from Mr Wood's architects to the park authority confirms that in submitting documents relating to the application, they "misinterpreted" a section of a form and indicated that Mr Wood was not an elected member of the board when in fact he was Stirling Council's representative on the body and also sat on its planning committee. The application was corrected after the omission was pointed out.

Either he or those advising him forgot to declare what hats he was wearing. I don't think we will have that problem with Martin Earl if he was to be elected this week.

Ultimately, we the voters will decide – as we did when bringing Mr Wood's political career to an end.

Name and address supplied

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In Ward 4, east Loch Lomond and Port of Mentieth, where there were only two candidates Willie Nisbet again won. Willie hardly says a word, so its difficult to know what he believes, but he did vote with two other locally elected Board Members against taking a fee increase at the last Board Meeting.

The most interesting result however was in Ward 5, Balloch and west Loch Lomond, where David McCowan held his seat with almost 40% of the vote. There were five candidates, including the father of WDC Council leader, who has just done an about turn on Flamingo Land, former Councillor Ronnie McColl. Again, its possible that with a more proportional electoral system there might have been a different result. The interest comes because David McCowan has business interests are likely to be affected by any Flamingo Land decision ([see here](#)) and may well be unable to vote on the Planning Application despite the strong views of most of his constituents.

Set against this, he has probably been the locally elected member most prepared to speak out on the last Board and was, for example, raising issues about the LLTNPA's failed approach to litter before any other Board Member. Maybe that ability to think independently is recognised and valued locally and will be brought to bear on the Flamingo Land planning application?

What needs to happen

In the light of the election results, it will be interesting to see how far the LLTNPA will be prepared to have an open debate about the adequacies and fairness of its local election processes at its next meeting and whether it is then prepared to make representations to the Scottish Government on the need for those electoral processes to be reformed. A more proportional electoral system would be a good start but I believe a more fundamental review of the current system, looking at how to make it more democratic, is required.

With a bit of imagination, our National Parks could provide an opportunity to try out new models of democracy such as voters being given a right of recall or say two member seats, with one man and one woman elected in each ward.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. Governance
2. LLTNPA
3. Scottish Government

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