

Loch Achray campsite – the LLTNPA fails to deliver

Description



Photo Credit Ross MacBeath.

Following my post on the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority's war on campers ([see here](#)). I submitted an FOI request asking for the LLTNPA to explain reasons the Loch Achray campsite had not been opened (it was due to open in March 2018) and to make this public. On 10th September I received [this reply](#) and am delighted that the LLTNPA has agreed to my suggestion that a public explanation would be appropriate. You can read it [here](#).

As is the LLTNPA's wont, it has tried to bury bad news under spin:

"With a particularly sunny summer, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park has been busy and camping has been a popular way for people to enjoy the National Park. Loch Chon campsite has proven particularly popular this season with bookings up more than 50% versus 2017. Feedback from campers who've stayed at Loch Chon campsite remains consistently positive with 96% of survey respondents saying they would recommend camping at Loch Chon."

Its hardly surprising that bookings at Loch Chon are up because the LLTNPA has failed to open the 17 places promised at Loch Achray and there are now so few places elsewhere where people can legally camp by the lochsides. But its the figure of 96% of survey respondents saying they would recommend camping at Loch Chon which stretches credulity to the limit this is the campsite that was without water for much of the summer and whose toilets stank. The satisfaction figure is up on that reported to Scottish Ministers in December 2017:

“92% of respondents said that they would be quite likely (18%) or very likely (74%) to recommend Loch Chon campsite”.

Yes, its a beautiful place and I know outdoor folk are hardy types but the feedback suggests less than 1 in 20 visitors has been put off by the lack of basic facilities. Staggering! With the Information Commissioner having last week appointed someone to investigate the Park’s refusal to release under FOI the detailed comments accompanying the survey for last year, I hope the truth will eventually emerge.

The position at Loch Achray

The LLTNPA’s update on Loch Achray, dated September 2018, starts with a lie:

“This month, the new campsite at Loch Achray on the Three Lochs Forest Drive was due to open to the public”.

The original plan was for the campsite to open in March and the LLTNPA stated this in their report to Scottish Ministers in December 2018:

“The focus for the 2018 season is the investment in an upgraded campsite near Loch Achray, working with partners in Forest Enterprise Scotland. Subject to planning permission being granted, the campsite will be completed in spring 2018 providing an additional 17 camping pitches, two of which will be all ability access.”

It then goes on to say that *“However, this week, the National Park Authority has made the difficult decision not to open the new campsite this season.”* Since the LLTNPA won’t keep its campsites open a day beyond the end of the camping byelaw season – more madness, no toilets for campers in October- what this means is that if the Loch Achray campsite opens next March it will be a year late. The reasons given for this are:

- *Adverse weather in the early part of the season causing delays to the original construction period* **Comment:** the beast from the east – the original explanation given to the Board in June for the delays.
- *Additional construction works required on drainage and foundation works* **Comment:** there is nothing on planning portal about these additional works
- *Delays in the supply of prefabricated buildings*
- *Delayed completion of works by the contractor*
- *A fault in the off grid electrical communication system resulting in there being problems with the operation of the power supply on site.*

The electrical communication system fault has resulted in problems with the operation of the power supply on site. This is the most significant issue as the current lack of power has a knock-on effect on the operation of the electronic flood and fire alarm systems for the site and also means staff are unable to quickly communicate with others in the event of an emergency.

This last, appears the most significant point. The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency objected to the campsite because the site was at risk of flooding and, while dismissing that advice, the LLTNPA proposed to install flood warning systems. In the absence of a suitable flood warning system the campsite has not opened – despite the LLTNPA taking on two new members of staff as campsite wardens last March.



The design of the toilets and associated infrastructure is a significant improvement on what was installed.
Photo credit Ross MacBeath

What needs to happen

Despite having learned some lessons from Loch Chon, it appears the LLTNPA still does not have the necessary expertise to install the infrastructure which is needed in the National Park and as a result of this has failed to deliver its promises to Scottish Ministers. After its belated decision to explain what has gone wrong, I trust that will be openly and honestly reported in this year's report to Scottish

Ministers on the camping byelaws.

Meantime the LLTNPA Audit Committee should be conducting a full investigation into what has gone wrong.

Category

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