

Loch Long – the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park marine dump

Description



Loch Long last Sunday – photo credit Louise Brimelow

Its now almost a year since the Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham visited the head of Loch Long at the invitation of local MSP Jackie Baillie and local residents ([see here](#)) to see the litter problem. The local community has been organising clear-ups for years but the sheer volume of rubbish swept up by the sea was beyond their capacity to address.



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

Roseanna Cunningham used her visit last March to say how the Government had committed £500k to address the problem of litter sinks and

“We are considering how the money can be best used for immediate and long-term gain – I want to see genuine benefits delivered for Arrochar and other communities which face similar problems.



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

The evidence of these photos suggests that the fund has had no impact at Arrochar as yet.



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

I understand that Marine Scotland are now supposed to be have taken on responsibility for removing the rubbish but because of limited resources wait for “sufficient” litter to build up before removing it. If this is true, the question should be when does Marine Scotland believe enough is enough?



View along shore of Loch Long on 14th Dec – photo author



Seaweed and rubbish deposited on shore 14th December – Photo credit author

Is it really acceptable that this amount of rubbish should be left on the shore in the National Park for two months?



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

When is enough enough?



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

One might have hoped that the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority would be saying publicly that this is unacceptable in a National Park. They created a hue and cry about litter left by a small minority of campers in order to ban camping but have remained almost totally silent about the much bigger litter issues in the National Park. I appreciate their resources are limited but shouldn't the priority be to clear up places like Loch Long rather than waste resources policing the camping permit system? Perhaps their new Litter Manager ([see here](#)) will make it their priority for action?



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

Argyll and Bute Council is as hypocritical, collecting its access tax of £9 a day on hillwalkers using the car parks at the head of Loch Long while being doing nothing to ensure the land about is free of litter.



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

Its all very well for Roseanna Cunningham to say “*Through our national litter and marine litter strategies, we aim to reduce the amount of litter entering our marine environment*” but what is being done about the problems on the ground?

Of course we need to reduce litter but there is no escaping the fact that once litter is dropped, whether onto land or sea, it needs to be picked up if our countryside and shores is not to become a rubbish dump.



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

Unfortunately wider Government action that is being taken to reduce the amount of litter entering the environment, as previous commentators on parkswatch posts on the subject have said, is far from sufficient:

“We are taking action to protect our seas from the effects of plastics with many actions including a commitment of introducing a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, establishing an expert panel to consider policies on single use materials such as coffee cups and straws and we are also the first in the UK to propose a ban on plastic stemmed cotton buds.” (Roseanna Cunningham at Arrochar).

The main amenity issue at Arrochar is not plastic straws or cotton buds – though a coffee cup or two were visible – but larger items of litter and packaging in all its forms.



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

Until such time as we achieve zero waste, unless sufficient resources are devoted to clearing up litter the problem will remain.



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

The unstated issue is lack of resources resulting from austerity. Whatever preventive action is taken, more money needs to be spent on litter collection and clear-ups.



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

While litter is a major problem for some wildlife, for example plastic ingested by turtles and sea mammals, other wildlife can flourish alongside it. I have seen filthy litter strewn lagoons in Africa full of waders. The problem of the litter at the head of Loch Long once it has been swept up by the sea is primarily an issue of amenity.



The marine litter then gets blown by the wind onto areas well beyond where it was dumped by the sea. Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

The amenity issue is not being addressed because the powers that be, both the Scottish Government and the public authorities attending Roseanna Cunningham on her visit, are preoccupied with managing budgets rather than making the argument for what needs to happen and working out where the money should come from.



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

If the Scottish Government is not prepared to increase public expenditure – which I believe it could do given the will (e.g a tourist tax in the National Park could be used to fund increased litter picking and collection) – then it needs to divert resources from elsewhere. The money the Park wastes on policing campers is an obvious place to start and comes under Roseanna Cunningham's aegis. Repeal the byelaws and she could release resources for litter picking tomorrow.



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

Unfortunately, I have come to the conclusion that one of the reasons we have such a terrible litter problem in Scotland and in the National Park is that our politicians and public authorities simply don't care enough to take resolute action, whether to reduce litter (reduce packaging, compulsory recycling, impose littering penalties) or to ensure its picked up. It is always someone else's responsibility. The National Park was set up to give a lead but is now responsible for the leadership vacuum.



Photo credit Louise Brimelow 24th February

Its time that the state of the head of Loch Long was seen as a national disgrace and a disgrace to all the public authorities involved. The solution, which local community and visitors deserve, is obvious. Regular clear-ups. We don't need any strategy or plans for that, just a bit of political will and leadership.

Category

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Date Created

February 26, 2019

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