

The impact of the camping byelaws on north west Loch Lomond

Description



The first pulling off place on the A82 south of the section where the traffic lights used to be

Every time I travelled along the A82 last year I spotted people camping in breach of the camping byelaws in the tent free zone the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority has created between Inveruglas and the Falls of Falloch. The northern part of this was not included originally within the Loch Lomond West camping management zone but was deliberately extended to force people to stay in the Ardlui and Ben Glas farm campsites. That was completely unnecessary as the Ben Glas campsite is a good one – one of the best in the National Park – and most people stayed there anyway.



Northern part of West Loch Lomond camping management zone – NB the car park at Tarbet is NOT currently operated as a permit area for campervans

This section of the west Loch Lomond camping management zone along the A82 is time-consuming and difficult for the Park to police. The main people who camp here are anglers and people on their way to somewhere, whether by bike or car, who often stop off after Park Rangers have finished work for the day. Few people realised that camping was banned here and that created a hole in the byelaws. Any thoughts, however, that common sense might be allowed to prevail – people camping here did no harm – and west Loch Lomond might be quietly forgotten has been dispelled over the winter. Park “No Camping signs” have now appeared at almost every pull off place along this section of the A82. Yesterday, after a fantastic day on the hill, I stopped off to take a look at the section just south of Pulpit Rock (and the horrible new extension of the A82 out over the Loch – due a planning award surely?!).



The second pulling off place

The first and second pull offs, which are only 100 or so metres apart, provide all the evidence the Scottish Environment Minister should ever need that camping was never a great problem here and that the camping byelaws are NOT the solutions to the problems that undoubtably do exist.



View along the second pulling off place, with the No Camping sign to left of tree and two dumped tyres visible. The first pulling off area is by the bend where the car has just come into view

The second pull off was covered with flytipping and general litter, as bad as any of those photos the Park promulgated of abandoned campsites in order to persuade people that their proposed camping ban was justifiable. The main issue, which the Park covered up during the camping byelaw consultation, always has been litter and flytipping.



Tyre number 3 had been rolled down the slope onto the beach

Its clear that Rangers patrolling here on a daily basis searching for people who are doing no harm but are now camping unlawfully is having no impact on the real problem.



Grassy area between first and second pull off

In contrast to the disgraceful mess alongside the road, the areas away from the road where people camp were yesterday almost completely litter free.



Indeed, although leaving fire pits in place does not conform to the letter of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code – “leave no trace” – the grassy areas where people have camped recently looked cared for. If that is because the Park Rangers have been in and cleared them up – and everyone accepts that a minority of campers do leave a mess – why haven’t they cleaned up all the pull-offs and laybys which are what most people see?



This ribbon, by the first pulling off place, was property of the fire brigade and presumably left after an accident

Apart from the litter and fly tipping which has presumably been dumped by private individuals or businesses, what struck me was the lack of care and destruction caused by our Public Authorities. A bit of fire brigade litter is a minor issue, but recent road works – presumably have been carried out under the aegis of Transport Scotland – are another matter:



The impact of these road improvements is far far greater than the occasional and temporary mess left by irresponsible campers or indeed fly tippers. Its ugly, with no attempt at mitigation, and destroyed a short section of what used to be fine loch shore along one of the most beautiful lochs in Scotland.



It makes the average rip rap bouldering above and below hydro intakes which have done so much to damage the landscape of the National Park look well designed. One wonders if this is how Transport Scotland proposes to upgrade the rest of this section of the A82? Any National Park worthy of the name should be stepping in and saying NO now.



Old tarmac has been used to create a vehicle ramp down to the Loch shore to facilitate the creation of the new embankment

At the last LLTNPA Board Meeting there was some discussion about why Loch Lomond has been assessed as being in such a poor state in terms of how it functions and its levels of pollution. The problems, I believe, start with bodies such as Transport Scotland which have paid scant regard to either landscape or ecology along the loch shore. The Park would be far better devoting resources to PREVENTING this officially sanctioned destruction than stopping innocent campers from enjoying the countryside.

The LLTNPA's plans for West Loch Lomond

The March LLTNPA Board Meeting considered a new paper on a camping development framework ([see here](#)), which was notable for its vagueness and lack of commitment to new provision. It had short section on all four camping management zones, starting with West Loch Lomond:

Current camping provision:

Campsites for tents, motorhomes and campervans	Campsites for motorhomes and campervans	C
Glen Loin House	Loch Lomond Holiday Park	N
Beinglas Farm campsite	Lomond Woods	
Luss caravan		

10

and camping			
Ardlui Holiday Park			

Unfortunately, five years after starting to map camping provision in the National Park, the LLTNPA still can't get its basic facts right. The paper fails to mention the camping and campervanning permit areas at Inveruglas. Its not possible to tell whether anyone from the Board picked this up at the meeting – they should have – as they are not webcast as they should be.

The paper then made some vague recommendations for West Loch Lomond under the heading, "opportunities":

Opportunities: The motorhome and tent permit areas in this area have high occupancy rates which would suggest that there may be a demand for additional low cost camping provision at some of the key visitor destinations such as Firkin Point and Inveruglas and the area around Arrochar. As part of

any Arrochar and Tarbet master planning low cost tent camping provision and overnight motorhome parking should be considered. The planned upgrade to the A82 from Tarbet to Inverarnan may provide additional low cost camping opportunities for tents and motorhomes especially if road realignments leave stretches of the old carriageway unused. Balloch, at the south of Loch Lomond, has been highlighted as a town with strategic tourism opportunities but at present there is no provision for tent camping in or around the town.

Unfortunately, this too appeared designed to mislead the Board and the public:

- First, the LLTNPA is already working on creating a new motorhome permit area at its car park at Tarbet which has been upgraded. The issue, I would suggest, is whether they have the legal right to levy such charges (see map above which shows Tarbet as a campervan permit area – on current maps there is NO permit area shown here).
- Second, campervans have the legal right too stop off overnight at all the pull off points along the A82, including those featured in this post. Turning some of these into permit areas with charges but no facilities – as is being suggested here – is NOT what is needed. The problem, indeed the injustice, is that campervans can stop off while campers can't.
- Third, the claim that the A82 upgrade may provide some additional low cost camping provision along stretches of redundant carriageway north of Tarbet is staggering. Unless the LLTNPA can find a way to remove rights of passage along any such sections of road, campervans will still be able to stop off and stay in these places quite legally because of the legal rights vehicle owners have to stop off on the road network. And as for tents, there are already some excellent places for camping, so why not under the Park's logic just turn them into permit areas NOW?



Sign by the third pull off – note the recently dumped heap of surplus tarmac across the path



The third pull off leads down to this green sward, which has clearly been used by campers and was again in very good condition compared to the road side

The trouble for the LLTNPA is if they were to allow people to camp once more along the north west shore of Loch Lomond they would have effectively admitted they were wrong to try and create a tent free zone here in the first place. Unfortunately, the A82 upgrade here, if recent work is anything to go by, appears likely to wreck most of the shore line here and prevent anyone, whether campers or anyone else, from enjoying it.



The fourth pull off area where I stopped

The fourth area I pulled off, a bit further south, while littered with NO camping signs, had more parking space and better access to the loch shore. Its a more obviously attractive place to stop and needs to be preserved and not destroyed by the A82 upgrade. At first sight it appeared better cared for – litter free – but you did not have to look very far.



The fourth tyre!



At the last Board Meeting reference was made to a clean-up of the A82 involving Park staff – a very welcome initiative – but unfortunately this is not nearly enough.

What needs to happen

There never was any justification for trying to ban camping along the A82 north of Tarbet, numbers were never that great and impacts slight. This post has shown that there are far greater problems that the LLTNPA should be addressing along this section of the A82, which impact on both the landscape and people's ability to enjoy it. While the Park might not have sufficient resources to deal with all of these problems, they could do a lot more than they are at present if they avoided wasting resources on trying to enforce the camping byelaws.

Imagine, for example, if instead of putting up expensive NO camping signage over the winter, the Park had installed litter bins and got Argyll and Bute Council to get their bin lorries to empty them as they go up and down the A82?

As long as it continues with its attempts to try and ban innocent campers, rather than re-think its entire strategy, the LLTNPA will fail as a National Park. Unfortunately, the papers presented to the Board continue to be factually inaccurate and to misinform and until this changes, the Park is unlikely to alter course. My recommendation to Board Members is that instead of relying on what they are told by

senior staff, they should get out and see for themselves. Much of the Park is not a pretty sight for anyone who cares to look and the reasons for this have little or nothing to do with campers.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. Camping bye laws
3. conservation
4. landscape
5. Litter
6. LLTNPA
7. Minister Environment
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