

Camping and caravans, litter and flying tipping – can the LLTNPA change direction?

Description



The camping permit area at Inveruglas. The campervan “permit” area is by the car visible on the left

On 15th May, after climbing in Glen Coe, I stopped off to show my climbing partner the camping permit area at Inveruglas – one of several the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park has created which are not fit for purpose. Most of the permit area – like many others in the National Park – is overgrown with vegetation, much of which is bramble which no-one in their right mind would camp on. There is one small space which has been cleared of bramble and is sloping and bumpy:



I have never seen anyone camping here. My climbing partner described it as “horrible”. Someone in the LLTNPA must know this but it doesn’t stop them trying to sell permits for up to five tents here on their online permit booking system ([see here](#)). My reckoning is three small tents could just about fit – but perhaps five Board Members could come and camp here for the night and prove me wrong?

The LLTNPA has had to systematically inflate the number of permits beyond the capacity of many permit areas so they can claim to Scottish Ministers to have provided the 300 “new” camping places they promised would accompany the camping byelaws.

My companion went back to Inveruglas to have another look on 25th May and realised that a van “parked” on our first visit was still there.



It had actually been abandoned and he sent me some photos to prove it.



On 13th June I dropped by and the van was still there – so it has been there now at least a month. This is on land leased and managed by the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority which Rangers patrol on a daily basis. So what has the LLTNPA done about this?

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The presence of the van rather undermined the new posters which have gone up at the edge of the campervan permit area at Inveruglas.

The message in the posters, however, which is about roadside litter, are welcome. This appears to be an initiative of the newly appointed Litter Prevention Manager who appears to understand what the real problems are and where the LLTNPA needs to focus its efforts (instead of trying to ban innocent campers) No-one has ever talked of banning drivers from the National Park because of all the litter thrown from cars:

“Litter Prevention: The appointment of our first ever Litter Prevention Manager has already enabled a focus on some quick wins; notably, in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council a joint roadside litter pick (124 bags) on the A82 between Duck Bay and Luss. More joint activities are planned as part of Keep Scotland Beautiful’s #SpringClean19 – including six volunteer events and an all staff, all day litter challenge”

(Extract from Chief Executive Officer Report to Board June 2019)

So, on one small stretch of the A82, 124 bags of litter. How does that compare to the litter left by campers and fly-tipping?

Gordon Watson the Chief Executive goes on to say under same item on “Litter Prevention”:

“Great progress has been made engaging with the Procurator Fiscal and Justices of the Peace on byelaws, litter and fly-tipping with the National Park Authority being responsible for half of the six reported national successful prosecutions for fly-tipping last year.”

Its great the Park is starting to take flytipping more seriously, just a shame that Mr Watson still appears to equate it with camping.



Dumped caravan with Ben Lomond on right

Last week I also spotted a caravan which had been deliberately dumped in a layby south of Firkin Point (its number plates had been removed). Abandoned and crashed ([see here for example](#)) vehicles appear to be quite a problem in the National Park.

On the other side of the A82 , the remains of the burnt out caravan north of Luss I had reported on in April ([see here](#)) had been removed.

In the same layby there was an encampment with three caravans:



Now, while there are laws to deal with encampments, I don't believe this encampment was causing a problem. Its tucked away, there is plenty of space and there was little sign of litter by the caravans – except bagged up.



There was also nothing to associate the dumped wheel in the bay beyond with the caravans (just as there is nothing to associate most of the flytipping in other laybys with campers). This sort of dumping goes on the whole time.

Its worth reflecting, however, that one of the main justifications the LLTNPA gave to Scottish Ministers and local communities for introducing the camping byelaws was to address problems caused by (some) caravans encamped in laybys. The byelaws were never implemented against caravans because of the legal right people have to stay in vehicles overnight on the road network and also because off-road some residents of the National Park live in caravans. Last year the LLTNPA announced they had handed over to Police Scotland responsibility for dealing with vehicle encampments, effectively admitting the byelaws were unworkable and unnecessary.

It was interesting to read, therefore, the Annual Report for Operation Ironworks for 2018 ([see here](#)). This is the initiative that takes place each year to address crime and anti-social behaviour among visitors to the National Park and is led by Police Scotland in partnership with the LLTNPA and Forestry Commission Scotland. Although there is quite a bit on enforcement of the camping byelaws – six months after the Park reported on this to Ministers – there is NOT a single mention in the whole document about Police Scotland action against encampments of caravans.

Now I don't blame the police for this, they have far better things to do and no doubt appreciate that people trying to work in the National Park over the summer need to have somewhere to live. It does,

however, show up the stupidity and hypocrisy of the camping byelaws. The LLTNPA has been wasting huge resources trying to ban something that never was the main problem and has ended up in the untenable position of banning tents from places where it now allows campervans and caravans to stop off.

If you want further proof the byelaws haven't worked, consider this photo from the LLTNPA section of the Ironworks Report:



Abandoned Campsite at Loch Venachar – April 2018

Creating permit zones clearly hasn't, as intended, stopped people from abandoning their campsites.

And for those who believe tents abandoned like this justifies banning campers, consider the time it takes to clear up this mess compared to that dumped along the A82 and then explain why we don't ban all drivers. Yes, camping litter is a problem, but not one that has ever justified removing people's right to camp.

The Litter Manager appears to have made a good start in doing practical things to tackle the major litter issues that the LLTNPA has failed to address for so long. For them to succeed, however, will I believe require the LLTNPA to change direction and I don't think they will do that unless forced to do so. The photo above shows the focus of senior management is still on the wrong things.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

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2. Camping bye laws
3. Forestry Commission Scotland
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