

Where is the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Outdoor Recreation Plan
2017 – 2021?

Description

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From the helm looking north. Photo Credit Mary Jack.

This post looks at how little of the ORP 2013-17 ([see here for plan](#)) has been fulfilled from a Water User's perspective.

At the time of writing this article there has been no sign of a new or even 'refreshed' Outdoor Recreation Plan to replace the outdated 2013-17 ORP. The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (LL&TTNPA) Board papers & Agenda for the (previously unscheduled) October Board Meeting appeared on the Park Website on the 16th Oct.'19. The ORP is not on the Agenda despite it being stated at previous Board meetings that it would be presented at the September Board Meeting – which was billed as a Strategic Development day for Board Members on the Park Calendar! Indeed, as you will see further in the post, its been delayed and delayed!

Background: public consultation and the Draft Outdoor Recreation Plan 2013 – 17

“On 17 June 2013 the National Park Authority Board approved the Outdoor Recreation Plan for Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. The plan outlines commitment to actions and aspirations which enhance outdoor recreation opportunities across the Park from 2013 to 2017. The plan has been developed in conjunction with a variety of stakeholders.”

“Introduction: The following report summarises the responses received from the 12 week public consultation held by Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority from 1st August 2012 to 24th October 2012 on the Draft Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP). The Park Authority invited responses from the general public, partners, local businesses and interested agencies via an online consultation tool. In addition, paper copies of the plan were available on request.

2.0 Response Profile: A total of 60 responses were received to the consultation. 54% organisations & 46% members of the public. Appendix 1 shows a list of organisations which responded. Note: Organisations include community groups and local businesses.”

“Appendix 1 – List of organisations who responded

Organisation Respondents: Trossachs.co.uk, Helensburgh Canoe Club, The Great Trossachs Forest, Callander Countryside, Abernethy Ardeonaig, Walk Wild Scotland, Wild Biking Business, Outward Bound Metro, RSPB Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Trossachs Riding Action Group, Scottish Natural Heritage, Strathclyde Passenger Transport, CnDo Scotland, Loch Ard Sailing Club, Loch Lomond Sailing Club, Loch Lomond Association, RYA Scotland, Sportscotland, Stirling Council, Ramblers Scotland, Cruise Loch Lomond, Mountaineering Council of Scotland, FCS, Skidaddle, Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs, Boturich Castle, Luss Estates, Bike Trossachs/McLaren Leisure Centre, Glenfalloch Estate, Love Loch Lomond, Balloch & Haldane Community Council, Kilmarnock Community Council”.

Those were the days when USERS were invited to participate in consultations. Nowadays it appears to be largely Government Quangos. It would be interesting to know which, if any, of the above USERS have been consulted this time around. I am on the committee of the Loch Lomond Association (LLA), which represents water users on Loch Lomond, and have no knowledge of them being

consulted about the revised plan. (I have checked back through the LLA Committee Minutes in case my memory is letting me down.)

Progress on actions agreed in the 2013-17 Outdoor Recreation Plan

“This Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP) outlines commitments and intentions held by all stakeholders which will enhance outdoor recreation opportunities across Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park over the next five years.”

“... the main purpose of this plan is to ensure cross-partner co-ordination, stakeholder agreements and commitments to complete actions ...”

“What is an ORP Action?”

An action has received commitment from the lead partner that it is of high value and will be included within five-year work plans. Headline actions within this plan are:

- *Signed core paths network*
- *Long Distance Route development*
- *Promoted network of public berthing opportunities on Loch Lomond*
- *Expansion of Wheelie boat provision ([boats for all abilities – see here](#))*
- *Upland paths project*
- *Development and promotion of Trossachs and Cowal mountain biking network*
- *Park wide semi-formal camping network”*

So how have the NPA performed from a water user’s aspect?

Fishing



Photo credit Mary Jack

“The Park Authority will look to work with stakeholders to investigate suitable wheelie boat business opportunities on Loch Earn, Loch Lomond and Loch Venachar.”

*“ACTIONS: * ORP Action 25: Angling in the Park leaflet * ORP Action 68: Responsible fishing education * ORP Action 56: Wheelie Boat project”*

A leaflet has indeed been produced 'Angling in the National Park' ([see here for download](#)) (fishing is now angling). It includes a sizeable section on "Camping in the Park" with sub-headings on Byelaws; Camping Management Zones, Permit Areas and Day Visits:

- *"This may not be the same place you are fishing as not all the fishing areas are covered by camping permits"* (Permit Areas)
- *"even if you are not staying overnight, you will need a camping permit to put up a tent, wigwam or bivouac"* Day Visits).

Whilst much of the leaflet is laudable, as can be seen it also reduces the freedom fishermen had previously. There was no mention that the Park intended to do this in the ORP.

The only reference I can find to wheelie boats on the angling pages of the Park website was at Lake of Menteith Fisheries, (which pre-dates the 2013-17 ORP, so no progress there).

Kayaking & canoeing Loch Lomond – central and north

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Canoe /kayak – at the Narrows Inchconnachan island. Photo Credit Mary Jack

*“ACTIONS: * ORP Action 32: Network of fit for purpose access and egress points throughout Loch Lomond * ORP Action 57: Balmaha capacity issues resolved”*

So far as I am aware egress points have not been resolved and I understand there have been some issues at Aldochnay on the west shore.

In 2018 & 2019 the road to Balmaha was closed to visitors on occasions due to capacity issues.

Motor boating



*“ACTIONS: * ORP Action 43: Overnight moorings on Loch Lomond * ORP Action 44: Promoted Sea Lochs opportunities supported by shoreline infrastructure * ORP Action 58: Promoted network of public berthing opportunities on Loch Lomond * ORP Action 60: Loch users education programme * Aspiration: Strategically placed re-fueling station on Loch Lomond * Aspiration: Programme of training events on basic boat skills”.*

Little change here either. No overnight moorings have been created (which would reduce pressure on the islands):



Traffic jam at Luss Pier. Photo Credit Mary Jack.

- Any network of public berthing on Loch Lomond is very limited with pontoons at Luss shared with private boat hirers
- At Inveruglas and other 'public' pontoons commercial ferries take priority
- The only re-fueling stations on Loch Lomond are at private marinas i.e. Cameron House at south end and Ardlui at the north end!
- No Programme of training events on basic boat skills. This is up to boaters to do as I did and pay for training with an RYA certificated private business.

*“Personal Water Craft (PWC) includes jet-skies and jet-bikes ACTIONS: * ORP Action 60: Loch users education programme”*

There is no such programme.

*“Recreational Towing ... The two public launch facilities on Loch Lomond are the Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway at Balloch and at Milarrochy Bay, north of Balmaha. ACTIONS: * ORP Action 59: Community Outdoor Sports Hubs (Balloch and Callander)”*



The Milarrochy slipway was closed without any public consultation. Photo Credit Mary Jack.

- Facilities have been reduced as there is now no launching permitted at Milarrochy Bay.
- No Community Outdoor Hub at Balloch tho' there were talks some years ago of one being built on ground owned by NPA at the pierhead at Balloch and which ground, I believe, was subsequently included in the Flamingoland plans!

Rowing

*“ACTIONS: * ORP Action 59: Community Outdoor Sports Hubs (Balloch and Callander)”*

There is no Community Outdoor Sports Hub at Balloch though there is at Callander.

Sailing

*“ACTIONS: * ORP Action 44: Promotion sea lochs opportunities supported by shoreline infrastructure * ORP Action 60: Loch users education programme”*

There is no Loch users education programme by the LL&TTNPA.

Swimming – Open water

*ORP Action 59: Community Outdoor Sports Hubs (Balloch and Callander) * Aspiration: Promotion of safe open water areas with facilities and safety guidance *TS Action 51 : Promote a calendar of events that reflect the destination brand.*

Again, no Community Outdoor Sports Hub at Balloch (and no provision for this in the Flamingo Land development).

The Loch Lomond Association produced a Boat Safe/ Swim Safe guide in their Loch Lomond News and Review magazine 2016 and only then did the LL&TTNPA agree to pick up the baton and work with LLA to produce and publish a leaflet.

There has been a calendar of swimming events which, I understand, were subsidised by public monies e.g. Great Scottish Swim, European Open water Championships.

Monitoring Success of the Outdoor Recreation Plan

“It is vitally important that the Outdoor Recreation Plan bring tangible benefits to the area by concentrating all stakeholder resources towards agreed targets...”

AIM: Confirmation that actions are being completed within intended timescales.”

As can be seen from the above very little progress has been made on the water sports/activities front. So much for timescales!!

So at what stage is the ‘refreshed’ Outdoor Recreation Plan currently?

Extracts from June 17 2019 Board papers – Annual Operational Plan 2018-19 Notes

“3 The replacement for the Outdoor Recreation Plan was originally intended to be drafted by December 2018, however the timeline was extended to allow other areas of work to develop and to ensure that comprehensive stakeholder engagement was allowed time to develop. The Draft will be going to the September 2019 Board meeting. Project work around Park Mobility Initiatives stalled due to partner capacities which were out with the control of the Park Authority.”

There was no Board Meeting scheduled for September but a Strategic Development meeting where it was not clear whether the public would be admitted.

“6 First two measurements were delivered. As was previously highlighted, due to differences in the timing between Local Development Plan 2, Outdoor Recreation Plan and Core Path Plan review it was not possible to collaborate on engagement between the different processes.”

Annual Operational Plan 2019-20 Progress

“National Park Partnership Plan Outcomes: 5. Recreation Opportunities: The National Park has a wide variety of well promoted and managed outdoor recreation opportunities providing for a range of abilities and interests . 6. Water and Recreation: There are more opportunities to enjoy water-based recreation and sporting activities across the Park’s lochs, rivers and coasts while maximising safety for all users and protecting the quality of water environments. 7. Visitor Economy: The Park’s visitor economy is thriving with more businesses and organisations working together to create a world-class destination. (aligns with the delivery of the Outdoor Recreation Plan)”

The LL&TTNPA claims to be on track with Water Recreation (6.3) but the only reference is to:-

“Work with RoSPA to deliver a water safety project in the Park comprising of a safety audit, targeted education and information using multiple media formats and a water safety policy for the NPA.”

Then under para 18 there is:

“Target continual improvement in the management of, compliance with and delivery of accessible and high performing statutory and regulatory functions and reporting: the Loch Lomond 2013 (Navigation) and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Camping Management Byelaws 2017 – on track – Reduced level of recorded byelaw contraventions on Loch Lomond between March 2019 and March 2020 levels – Reduced level of recorded camping byelaw contraventions between March – September 2019 from 2018 levels – Procurement of new boat to maximise efficiency of water patrols and allow safer and

efficient maintenance to navigation marks.

Note my records of Navigation marks date back to 2015 and some are still not fixed in 2019!!

“7. Improving and extending the National Park’s recreational path network and effective promotion of land and water recreation opportunities. On track – Refreshed draft Outdoor Recreation Plan (and associated consultation/engagement plan) presented to the National Park Authority Board by June 2019”

This was included in June 17 2019 report to the Board and although there was no sign of the ORP it was still claimed as being ON TRACK!!!

So, who has been ‘consulted’ and ‘engaged’ in the yet to be finalised ORP? When will the refreshed ORP appear? Given the above track record how can we have faith in timescales / publications from LL&TTNPA let alone that actions will be delivered?

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. access rights
2. byelaws
3. camping
4. Camping bye laws
5. Governance
6. LLTNPA
7. visitor management

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