

A look at the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority's Boat Registration Audit

Description

INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES REPORT REF No S/019/20 (June 2019)

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority Boat Registration Process Review



The Boat Registration Audit, undertaken by West Dunbartonshire

Council, was considered by the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority's Audit and Risk Committee on 29th June 2019 ([see here item 6](#))

"1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General

An audit was conducted on the Boat Registration Process. The review covered the registration and the re-registration process for boats using Loch Lomond. Power driven boats, including jet skis, are required to be registered by the Loch Lomond Byelaws 2013. Over 5,000 boats and jet skis are registered annually."

(NOTE: only power driven boats are required to register). **Comment:** Nowadays some sailing vessels are capable of travelling at speeds of 30 knots, notably Moths (and I have seen these on Loch Lomond) which raise the hull out of the water on to foils. When Loch Lomond Sailing Club hold races/regattas they are travelling in substantial groups.



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The LLTNPA are encouraging watersports such as Open Water Swimming, canoeing and paddle-boarding. Water sports participants are free to go anywhere on Loch Lomond. I certainly wouldn't like to be, say, a swimmer, on the receiving end of a flotilla of yachts suddenly appearing from behind an island! An accident waiting to happen? At least power boats skippers, not having sails obscuring their vision, have a better view of the water and can stop their engines immediately if necessary. Safety in and on the water is paramount. While the byelaws apply to all vessels, only power boats have to register with the Park. Surely the time has come for sailing boats to register too!

“The review highlighted that opportunities exist to strengthen internal controls and enhance the service provided, the most important of which are listed below;”

Comment: *“..... enhance the service provided . . .”* What service would that be? Improving the process of boat registration is only a tool for the LLTNPA ; not a service for water users.)

“The registration process . . . of obtaining the information required and updating the database is very time consuming and opportunities exist. . . for. . . a more automated registration process;”

Management should consider whether all persons registering a power driven boat should be required to provide two forms of identification and whether copies of this identification retained by the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA). Evidence of identification may be required where contraventions are notified to the Procurator Fiscal;”

Comment: how does this fit with Data Protection legislation, I wonder? (see [here, explanatory notes](#) where there is a reference to LLTNPA complying with the 2018 Data Protection Act but no explanation for how

data will be used, how long it kept etc). And note the Procurator Fiscal.

“Management should review the registration forms to identify whether all the information currently requested is required. Staff involved in the registration process should be reminded of the requirement to check the registration forms are fully completed and signed by the boat owner. Full details of these opportunities and any other points that arose during the audit are included in the Action Plan, which forms Section 3 of this report.”

Sample of current registration requirements and the audit

- *“Have YOU previously registered a vessel(s) on Loch Lomond? (2) YES/NO Is this sold or closed? YES/NO”*

Comment – “closed”?? The audit did not comment on jargon and whether the form was comprehensible to the public.

- *“What is the Registration No. of the vehicle you NORMALLY use to trail your vessel to Loch Lomond?”*

Comment: this seems a totally irrelevant question.

The Annual Mark

Missing from the audit is any detail on how the lettering, numbering and Annual Mark, which power boats are required to display under the byelaws, is being managed or processed.



The Annual Mark (at the right of the picture) indicates that your vessel is registered for that year. The colour and number changes annually ie. 19 corresponds to 2019.

My understanding of the original purpose of the lettering and numbering of the registration, along with the Annual Mark one is obliged to display on one's vessel, was to enable LLTNPA Water Rangers to identify

- a) where the boat was moored/berthed
- b) who owned the vessel
- c) how many vessels were moored/berthed at any given location.

Had that been the case c) would have provided information to the LLTNPA as to how many vessels were registered.

At present the following letters are used:

L = Leven ; C = Cameron House Marina ; R = Rowardennan ; A = Ardlui

T = Taret ; B = Balmaha ; V = Visitor (this was a later addition)

However, the following lettering can still be seen on vessels:- D = Duck Bay (no longer a marina); M = Milarrochy (no longer a slipway) and are therefore no longer locations for registration.

Moreover, as vessels have changed hands and the new owners changed mooring/berthing facilities the lettering and numbering appears to have remained with the vessel. So what is the point of the lettering if it has no meaning?

Also, the numbering appears to be irrelevant for anything other than identification as vessels new to the registration process appear to be allocated the next available number up without any numbers being discarded or re assigned. Non-vessel owners seeing a vessel registered for example at Cameron House Marina (CHM) as, say, C 5678, might assume that there are 5678 vessels berthed at CHM. In fact it has berths for approx. 200 vessels. The numbering, therefore gives no clue as to how many vessels are in any one location. Nor does it give any idea of how many vessels are actually registered with LLTNPA for Loch Lomond! And why just Loch Lomond?

Given the above it is no wonder that it is some years now since Loch Users have had sight of a breakdown of figures as below. An updated table, as below, used to be part of the information one received with one's annual re-registration documents from LLTNPA.

Boat type	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Fishing	754	802	776	778	798	718	789	713	630	583	604	592	545
PWC	686	769	780	782	796	715	772	821	681	575	590	634	637
Motor-boat	248	240	248	248	219	200	247	224	215	197	228	212	185
MotorCruiser	875	923	911	872	874	784	884	761	809	707	744	769	753
Speedboat	1,806	1,862	1,900	1,908	1,907	1,579	1,693	1,504	1,266	1,111	1,109	1,077	992
Tender	391	427	449	489	525	522	560	493	437	384	427	384	357
Trade plates	20	25	24	21	28	2	0	9	18	20	11	11	24
Yacht	283	279	297	287	276	271	292	243	234	191	205	188	183
Other	340	322	329	306	262	328	442	385	370	369	419	370	418
TOTALS	5403	5649	5714	5691	5685	5119	5679	5153	4660	4137	4337	4237	4094

This is the last table I have which gives any useful information not only to loch users but, I would have thought, to LLTNPA itself.

Some months back I had indicated to the current Chairman of the Loch Lomond Association that boaters used to get this information and an A4 sized/4 page leaflet called 'Main Sheet' or 'Main Sail' with the re-registration Pack. He asked LLTNPA for a breakdown of the registrations and despite receiving three lots of information none of them showed the breakdown requested. This failure to report on the information the LLTNPA holds was also referred to by the Audit: "*There are several pieces of information requested on the registration form which are not then recorded in the Access database or used in other ways by LLTNPA*"

Part of the Registration form requires the following:-

Vessel Name: <input type="text"/>	Length: <input type="text"/>
Manufacturer: (5) <input type="text"/>	Beam: <input type="text"/>
Model: (6) <input type="text"/>	Main Colour: <input type="text"/>
Hull Identification Number (HIN): <input type="text"/>	Other Colours: <input type="text"/>
Vessel Type: (7) <input type="checkbox"/> Motor Cruiser <input type="checkbox"/> Yacht <input type="checkbox"/> Motor Boat <input type="checkbox"/> Jet Ski <input type="checkbox"/> Rib	<input type="checkbox"/> Speedboat <input type="checkbox"/> Tender <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing Boat <input type="checkbox"/> Jet Bike <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Engine Manufacturer: (8) <input type="text"/>	Engine Serial No: <input type="text"/>
How many engines? <input type="text"/>	Type <input type="checkbox"/> INBOARD <input type="checkbox"/> OUTBOARD (tick)
Total Horsepower: <input type="text"/>	Fuel: <input type="checkbox"/> PETROL <input type="checkbox"/> DIESEL <input type="checkbox"/> Electric <input type="checkbox"/> LPG(tick)
2nd Engine Serial No: <input type="text"/>	
If you take your vessel to Loch Lomond on a trailer, where do you NORMALLY launch it? (9) <input type="text"/>	
What is the Registration No. of the vehicle you NORMALLY use to trail your vessel to Loch Lomond? <input type="text"/>	

As can be seen from the Registration Form above a great amount of detail about one's vessel is required. LLTNPA do have the information but appear to be just not willing to share it. Why would that be?

Reasons for the Audit

The Main Report gives three reasons for the audit:

2.2.2 *The scope and objectives of the audit were agreed as being to examine whether the boat registration process is operating effectively and to highlight any opportunities identified to improve the process going forward.*

2.2.3 *The Boat Registration Process is driven by the Loch Lomond Byelaws 2013 which set out the requirements for registration. Work is currently being undertaken by the Ranger Team Leaders and the Legal Advisor to identify improvements to the byelaws for implementation when the byelaws are next updated."*

So this is really what it is about. It's the entree to making changes to the Loch Lomond Navigation Byelaws which are to be reviewed in 2020. (see below)!

2.2.7 *There has been no previous audit of the boat registration process [developed in 1995 prior to the creation of the LLTNPA].*

Findings and recommendations on registration

2.3.9 *The overall process for boat registration and re-registration was found to be very time consuming and manual. Significant time, paper and postage costs are incurred in the process.*

Audit Recommendation :- a) Management should consider whether an automated system could be implemented which would allow, for example:

- *boat owners to register their details online which would directly populate the boat registration database;*
- *the re-registration process to be carried out on line, for example by owners confirming they continue to agree to the terms and conditions for use; and*
- *all information to be stored electronically to eliminate the need for paper copies of registration and re registration forms to be printed and retained. The full system requirements should be reviewed to ensure that any new system(s) can:*
 - *Record contraventions, multiple launch pass purchases and all other required information; and*
 - *Provide required PI [performance indicator] information.*
- *In addition LLNTPA should consider whether the new system(s) should provide on line access to rangers whilst on patrol.”*

Like the Camping Byelaws this raises further questions about Data Protection ([see here](#)). How long will this information be held? Who has access to it? Etc. etc.??

“2.3.5 A sample of boat registration forms was reviewed. Recommendations have been made in Section 3 of this report in relation to the following issues which were noted:

- *The two forms of identification, which the Registration form states are required to register a boat, are not always provided. In some instances no photographic identification is required and email applications have been processed where no identification was provided;*
- *Boat owners do not always provide all information requested on the registration form and this information is not followed up by LLNTPA when they receive the form. Two instances were identified where the registration form was not signed by the owner; and*
- *All the information provided by the boat owner on the registration form is not entered to the Boat Registration Database and is not collected or used by LLNTPA.”*

Comment: Audit Findings 2 recommended: *“Management should consider whether two forms of identification are always required, what forms of identification are acceptable and whether copies of the identification should be retained.”* The management response to this was: *“Legal to clarify identification requirements with the Procurator Fiscal”*. That opens up yet another can of worms!!

The forthcoming review of the Loch Lomond (navigation) byelaws

The current Navigation Byelaws were supported and contributed to by the Committee of the Loch Lomond Association (LLA) under the Chairmanship of Peter Jack (my husband). At that time many LLA monthly meetings were attended by NPA staff and ideas put forward by both parties were thrashed out together. Conservation, environment and safety, amongst other important issues, were thoroughly discussed.

There has long been a school of thought that some water sports activities should be restricted to specific areas of Loch Lomond. This has been resisted in the past by a large variety of water users as it makes a nonsense of ‘free passage’ and the water version of ‘freedom to roam’.

LLNTPA CEO Gordon Watson has said at numerous LLNTPA Board Meetings that the Loch Lomond Navigation Byelaws are working well. Let’s hope the old adage ‘ If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’ will be

remembered! Meantime, the LLTNPA needs to make the data it holds public.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. conservation
2. Governance
3. LLTNPA
4. water sports

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