

The camping byelaw scandal deepens as the LLTNPA breaks its promises and legal conditions

Description

Implementation Date. In addition, I have decided that the byelaws should be implemented until 1 March 2017 and this date will be specified on the form. I welcome the Park's assurances on the provision of an initial 300 camping places and the addition of more provision in subsequent years which forms part of the Camping Development Plan. This implementation date provides more time for the date of approval for the Park to complete this initial phase of camping.

Administrative Conditions Attached to Approval

Formal Report to Ministers. Ministers should be provided with a formal report of the operation of the byelaws no later than 3 years after implementation to consider how effective the new camping management measures have been, including instances of environmental damage and irresponsible behaviour as a result of implementation.

Extract from Ministerial letter to then Park Convener, Linda McKay, 26th January 2016 ([see here for full text](#))

Yesterday saw the start of the new camping byelaw "season" in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. The LLTNPA has kept very quiet about this, there is no news release, but they were taking bookings for 1st March ([see here](#)) so they are operating the byelaws again. As I pointed out in December ([see here](#)), unless the LLTNPA Board has had a secret meeting to approve the 3 Year Review (as set out above) and sent this in to Ministers, they are NOW formally in breach of the Administrative Condition. That is a serious failing by the Board. One might have hoped that civil servants at the Scottish Government would have intervened to stop it happening.

The LLTNPA are also at present breaching the assurance (first para in extract above) that they provided to Ministers before the byelaws came into effect. This was that they would provide an initial 300 camping places and increase this in subsequent years. In their 2019 Annual Update to Ministers on the byelaws, approved by their Board in December, the LLTNPA claimed that:

The season ended with 327 available low cost camping places.

That to my mind was extremely dubious. It's hard to disprove, however, because where and when the LLTNPA provides places shifts on a daily basis. They have relied on this "operational discretion" to get away with a lot in the last three years. However, partly because it's the beginning of the season and

partly because of the stormy weather (it appears only 1 permit area was booked last night) its been relatively easy to work out ALL the places available this week on the Park's booking portal. These are as follows:

- 135 places in camping permit areas ([see here for my copy of Camping places 1st March 2020](#))
- 52 places in campsites maximum (26 at Loch Chon, 9 at Loch Lubnaig and up to 17 places at Loch Achray – although the Park's website says a limited number will be available early season).



Loch Achray is an informal campsite offering the opportunity to camp on a small, beautifully located site with basic facilities. In a sheltered spot on the shores of Loch Achray, it offers 17 pitches for tents through a mixture of open and woodland camping. Parking is available on-site and you will be allocated a designated parking space when you book your pitch.

There are two accessible pitches (Pitches 16 and 17), with accessible toilets and designated parking nearby. [View a map of the campsite.](#)

Please note that a limited number of pitches will be open for the early part of the season.

- 5 Campervan places at Inveruglas

Now, even if you accept campervans should be included – I don't as they are no longer controllable by the byelaws – that is ONLY 192 places maximum, at least 108 places short of the promised 300. That is an abysmal failure. In a world where sound government and principle mattered, it would be reason enough for Scottish Ministers to repeal the camping byelaws immediately.

Both the LLTNPA and Forest and Land Scotland have failed to do as promised

The reason for this failure is partly due to Forest and Land Scotland, who are not opening Forest Drive to campers and campervanners until 15th March, despite re-opening the road on 1st March:

Three Lochs Forest Drive Q / Slighe Coille nan Tri Lochan Q

This permit area sits within Forestry Commission Scotland's Three Lochs Forest Drive which passes Lochan Reòidhte, Loch Drunkle and Loch Achray. The Drive is a 7 mile, one-way loop on a gravel road that takes about half an hour to drive around. It is popular with both campers and day visitors. Please note the permit areas along the Drive are not in alphabetical order. Permit Area Q can't be reached by car. It's located on the National Cycle Network 7 path and is suited to use by cyclists and walkers. Access to the permit area involves a ½ mile cycle or walk along the cycle path from the Forest Drive. It is 5 ½ miles from Callander on the NCN7.

Permit areas don't have set pitches; you choose where you want to camp within the area. This permit area has a maximum of 10 spaces available. Permit Area Q is on a stunning strip of land with woodland and grassy areas along the southern shore of Loch Venachar. There are numerous places to choose from, either camping directly on the lochshore or in areas further back surrounded by ancient woodland, all with incredible views over the water towards Ben A'an. Click on the thumbnails below the map for photos of the area.

Important Access Information

The Three Lochs Forest Drive is a one-way system and you must use the main entrance and exit, so please ignore any sat nav or mobile app that advises another route. There's a vehicle access charge of £2 per vehicle payable at the time of booking your camping permit. This means you can access the Drive with your permit and won't need to pay at the machine on arrival. If you're arriving by foot or by bike, access is free. Vehicle access is open to the public between 9am and 4pm, outside of these times, the gates will be locked. People with a permit can open the padlock on the entry and exit gates with a code. When you book you will be given a phone number to call for the gate code. Please close and lock the gates behind you.

Getting there: There is only one way in to the Three Lochs Forest Drive off the A821, at the top of the Duke's Pass.

Grid reference: NN548054

View in Google maps: <https://goo.gl/5HaR7M>

Grade & terrain: Accessing the Permit Area involves a 0.5 mile walk from the Forest Drive along the NCN7 cycle path. Relatively flat, wooded land at the permit area with easy access to the lochshore.

Toilets nearby: Located at the main visitor area around 3 km from the permit area. Please observe the one way system requiring a 14km drive.

Drinking water available: No

Parking facilities nearby: Limited parking nearby.

Fishing permit information: Available at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/angling

No availability for dates you have entered. However, we have found availability for alternative dates for you to choose from. Click on your preferred option to continue.

Sun 15 Mar	1 Night £5.00 10 remaining	2 Nights £8.00 10 remaining
------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------

When I tried to check the availability of camping and campervanning places on Forest Drive nothing appeared from 1st to 7th March. Then when I tried to book on 8th March this notice appeared. The red alert line and text underneath suggests the permit areas are being "opened" 15th March

That is in theory another 52 camping places (and a further 18 motorhome places) though some of these are so awful they would never be chosen by any self-respecting camper. The LLTNPA and FLS simply created a large number of permit areas here so they could claim to Ministers they had provided 300 places. Now, FLS don't even bother to open them and the LLTNPA is powerless to intervene.

There is also the FLS campsite at Sallochy although in my view this should not count towards the 300 places because it pre-existed the camping byelaws:

Camping at East Loch Lomond

Sallochy Campsite is a semi-formal campsite open between March and October. It is suitable for tents and offers composting toilets and drinking water.

Sallochy campsite will open for the 2020 season on Thursday 12 March. We are currently experiencing technical issues with the online booking system so please phone the wardens on 07826 930000 from 12 March onwards to book a pitch.

It's not all, however, the fault of FLS. The permit places that the LLTNPA provided at Firkin Point are not available either because of works taking place there. It's not clear when this will be finished and when these places will become available again – although again half of them, like FLS' at Forest Drive, are unusable most of the time.

Add all these non-available places to the 192 which are available and you just about scrape over the 300 promised to Scottish Ministers in year 1 of the byelaws.

What needs to happen?

The non-provision of these 108 plus places matters. The LLTNPA took away people's legal right to camp under access rights and made it a criminal offence to do so. To compensate for that the Park was supposed to provide sufficient supervised places, the "permit" areas. They never did so but there is now effectively a complete ban even in areas where the LLTNPA decided should be allowed to camp still. This is because it's the camping without a permit in the camping management zone which is the offence: if they don't issue permits you cannot camp legally.

Scottish Ministers should never have trusted the LLTNPA on the camping byelaws. Right from the start the whole process was corrupt: the Park manipulated the evidence; misrepresented the levels of support expressed by local communities; held 13 Board Meetings in secret; and then staff and Scottish Government officials changed the wording of the byelaws after they had been approved, accidentally making it impossible to enforce them against caravans and campervans (the main concern of local communities was encampments over the summer by caravans).

The breach of assurances from the LLTNPA – at least 108 "place"s short – and the Administrative condition relating to the camping byelaw review is now so blatant, however, that if Ministers fail to take action they will bring the processes for agreeing byelaws across Scotland into disrepute. Unfortunately, the way the byelaws have been managed, through lies and the undermining due process, appears little different to the way Donald Trump rules America or Boris Johnson the UK. It's about time the Scottish government showed they really do care about good governance. .

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. Camping bye laws
3. Forest Land Scotland
4. Governance
5. LLTNPA
6. Scottish Government

Date Created

March 2, 2020

Author

nickkempe

default watermark