

Blairvadach saved? How the National Park could help.

Description

On Monday afternoon news emerged that Blairvadach had been saved – for another year – as a result of the deal the Scottish Government did with the Greens last week to get support for their budget. This deal involved more money being allocated to local authorities and, with that cash in hand, the SNP administration in Glasgow quickly decided to save Blairvadach. A sign of a successful campaign.

However, its quite clear that this is only a reprieve and Glasgow City Council officials still want to get rid of their last outdoor centre. The Helensburgh Advertiser reports them as claiming [\(see here\)](#):

“Although Blairvadach will remain open we know its future is not sustainable under present arrangements”.

Why shouldn't it be? Glasgow City Council has paid for residential outdoor education since it took over responsibility for education from Strathclyde in 1996. We are a much richer country now than we were 25 years ago so why can't we afford to pay for Outdoor Education now? The word “sustainable” here is shorthand for saying the only future we can see is further cuts. Its time our public authorities started to stand up for the services they offer and the people who work in them instead of trying to undermine them at every turn.

Yes, Blairvadach needs investment – the SNP administration in Glasgow refused a proposal to investment £1m last year [\(see here\)](#) – but we also need a new vision for Residential Outdoor Education with a view to enabling all school children to benefit from it. There is absolutely no sign of that from the Scottish Government, so here's an idea.

The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority should throw down the gauntlet and ask politicians from across the West of Scotland and from all political parties to contribute to the restoration of McGregor's Landing, the former outdoor centre which lies abandoned at the head of Loch Lomond [\(see here\)](#), and how they can help fund the other Outdoor Centres around the National Park, including Blairvadach and Ardroy which also needs capital investment.

Before doing this the LLTNPA Board should amend their Outdoor Recreation Plan, the first draft of which made not a single mention of Residential Outdoor Education, and make Outdoor Education central to their plan. That plan is due to be considered at the LLTNPA Board Meeting on 16th March so staff have a week to address the deficiencies in the draft and put some proposals to the Board. If the LLTNPA did what is was set up to do, and was really committed to promoting the enjoyment and understanding of the countryside, they could I believe help transform the debate about Outdoor Education in Scotland and halt its death by a thousand cuts.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. Forestry Commission Scotland
2. outdoor education
3. outdoor recreation
4. Scottish Government

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