

Visitor management on the west side of Loch Lomond along the A82

Description

In the last ten days I have travelled up and back down the A82 and, as usual, stopped off in a few popular visitor destinations to see how they are being managed.

Toilet provision



The mobile toilets and hand sanitising station at Tarbet

At Tarbet it was good to see that mobile toilets had been provided by the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority, as recently advocated on parkswatch ([see here](#)). They had been placed in front of the existing toilets in the cafe block, presumably because the existing capacity was thought insufficient to meet demand.

The mobile toilets were being very well patronised and I had to wait several minutes before I could get a photo without people. Everyone I spoke to was appreciative. That did not come as a surprise. Almost every visitor survey the LLTNPA has conducted over the last ten years has highlighted lack of

adequate toilet facilities as the number one concern of the public in the National Park. Having consistently ignored those surveys, the provision of what I understand to be c30 mobile toilets across the National Park sets a welcome precedent.

All, however, is not as positive as it might first appear:



The extra cleaning is, of course, welcome and necessary

These toilets are, according to the LLTNPA website ([see here](#)), only open 10am – 6pm. Why? What does the LLTNPA believe people should do before 8am and after 6pm or for sixteen hours out of every 24?

The stupidity goes further, if the LLTNPA website is to be believed (the webpage contains various bits of contradictory information). The LLTNPA re-opened most of its campsites and camping permit areas on 17th July. On 25th July there were people camping at both Inveruglas and Firkin point::



Tents in the Inveruglas camping permit area among the brambles



Tents in the high grass in one of the camping permit areas at Firkin Point

Yet according to the LLTNPA website:

Falls of Falloch	• Car Park	Open
Firkin Point	• Car park • Toilets	Open
Glen Finglas	• Car Park	Open
Inveruglas	• Car Park • Toilets	Open

Penultimate column shows status of car park, last column status of toilets

While the main toilets at Firkin Point were locked on 25th, the disabled toilet was in fact OPEN. You wouldn't have known this from the signs in the window:



It's as though many staff in the LLTNPA have simply given up trying to provide any type of service to the public. That should not be a surprise given the lack of leadership.

Having shown that it is possible to provide mobile toilets to meet demand, the public should now demand that the LLTNPA starts providing them in all the other places in the National Park where they are needed (as happens in National Parks in England and Wales). These include:

- all the camping permit areas where the LLTNPA have forced campers to congregate without facilities, thus worsening the problem of human waste. The LLTNPA acknowledged this had happened in the Three Year Review of the camping byelaws they submitted to Scottish Ministers in March. They now have no excuse for not acting and the sites where permanent toilets were once planned – such as the south shore of Loch Earn – should be the priority.
- popular starting places for day walks which lack facilities such as the Ben A'An and Cobbler car parks

Litter

As usual, litter was strewn all the way along the verges of the A82 on Loch Lomondside and a number of laybys and stopping off places were a sorry mess. Much of this problem is not caused by tourists, but by through traffic, and the continued failure of the LLTNPA to ensure that litter bins are provided in every layby. Instead of providing the necessary infrastructure, as they have started to do with toilets, I came across a number of examples of LLTNPA litter signage that I had not seen before. All are based on exhorting people to take their litter home:



Sign at path to Falls of Falloch from the car park



A slightly different message at Inveruglas



Adam, Ranger
Loch Lomond & The Trossachs
National Park Authority

We hate litter.
Everyone else
does too.

35,000 6,000

Wille Can't understand people who want to go to a beautiful place then trash it. Shocking.

Claire Just be a responsible adult and clear up your crap.

Ken Utterly inexcusable behaviour.. Fries my noggin!!

Valerie Why do people want to destroy things that give so much pleasure to others? 🙄

Erin Don't leave a mess behind! This breaks my heart

Ryan selfish eejits!

These quotes are just some of the 16,500 comments left underneath a Facebook post shared and seen by more than 917,000 people.

TAKE YOUR LITTER HOME

love it like a local

LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK
RESPECT YOUR PARK.

New sign at Firkin Point

Any strategy for tackling the litter issue that is based on insulting people and emotional blackmail is very unlikely to work. Signs are cheap though and allow the LLTNPA to pretend it's trying to deal with the issue.

I have nothing but respect for the local people who have for years tried to clean up the beach at Arrochar. The "love it like a local" message is, however, unfortunate given the actions of self-proclaimed local and millionaire David Mouldsdale, just down the road at Tarbet, ([see here](#)) and the LLTNPA's failure to take effective enforcement action against this:



The unlawful tree felling at Ben Cruach House- such actions have a far bigger impact on the natural environment than litter.

Until the LLTNPA force landowners to respect the National Park, the likelihood of them persuading the uncommitted general public to do so is minimal.

The message is further undermined by the LLTNPA's own example as a local landowner:



Bins behind toilet at Inveruglas, owned by the LLTNPA, 25th July



Bins at Firkin Point, another LLTNPA owned site, 25th July. When I drove up past Firkin Point on 18th July, the gates were locked, so these bins would appear to have filled in a week or perhaps they were not emptied during the whole of lockdown? Note the washing up bowl on the top of bins – it was pristine.

Besides the terrible impression this gives of the LLTNPA as a landowner, what is clear is the message to people to take their litter home if bins are full is not working. Indeed it hasn't worked for years. There is no reason why this is going to change now.



On the far side of the bins at Firkin Point was a tent in its bag.

Assuming the Park's Rangers wouldn't ignore their own advice and leave waste outside of a bin, some camper took the trouble to take down their tent and leave it (and the washing up bowl) here.

Now I don't profess to understand why people wouldn't want to take their camping kit home. Perhaps having experienced camping, once was enough? Or perhaps it's because cheap tents, made by workers on poverty in Asian countries, have helped create a throwaway camping culture in Europe? What should be clear, however, is that exhortations to take this and other litter home are not going to work.

The LLTNPA needs to start taking a different approach and not rely on messaging. Adequate and regularly emptied bins are the top priority. But for specific issues, such as abandoned tents, why not get a bit more creative? For example, the LLTNPA could create points where people could leave unwanted camping equipment for it to be recycled (at the March LLTNPA Meeting some Board Members rightly raised issues about some people being able to afford the equipment necessary to enjoy the National Park and where the Park Authority could not set up a store).



Entrance to Falls of Falloch car park

During the Covid lockdown, they closed the car park at Falls of Falloch. That had the predictable consequence that people started parking along the road and the police were then called out to enforce the clearway. The consequences of those actions, which weren't necessary as the risk of anyone catching Covid-19 at the car park was minimal, are now blighting the area.

The car park was fairly full when I visited, despite the painted out sign. That is perhaps an indication that most drivers now navigate to places using google maps and no longer need signs. The painted out sign though, gives a poor impression.

No-one had bothered to remove the speed limit signs, which appear to have been put in place while re-surfacing took place.



Along the verge by the entrance was abandoned plastic police tape, presumably put up to stop cars trying to park there.



And the litter was only too obvious. In short, what should be a prime visitor attraction based on the natural beauty of the waterfall, left in a squalid mess.

My understanding is that LLTNPA Rangers come here most days to enforce the camping byelaws – there are at least two no camping signs in the Falls of Falloch car park although there is nowhere obvious to camp. Unfortunately it doesn't appear that those Rangers see it as their job to ensure that visitor facilities are maintained in an acceptable state or to get other public authorities to clear up.

The reality is that in terms of acting responsibly and demonstrating that they actually care about the countryside, our public authorities appear as much a part of the problem as a solution. The National Park was primarily created to enable the Loch Lomond and Trossachs area to be enjoyed by the public and for the National Park Authority to co-ordinate the actions of public authorities. The LLTNPA has failed to do this and appears incapable of providing any lead.

The tragedy of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park is that something that had so much potential – and the provision of mobile toilets shows what could be done given the will – has delivered so little.

Category

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