

The time to let people from Glasgow out to enjoy the countryside is now

Description



Cairnsmore of Carsphairn (right) from Dugland. A huge wind farm is being extended into what was once a remote area.

Yesterday, I drove down to Glen Afton from Glasgow for a run over the hills. I had a reasonable excuse for doing so. I was so frustrated by the stupidity and unfairness of the latest coronavirus regulations ([see here](#)) that if I hadn't gone out I might have done something that risks spreading Covid-19. Like sitting on a crowded pavement outside a pub in G41 drowning my sorrows.

I was out for almost 8 hours and the only people I saw were at the very end, out for a walk to the dam. Although I suspect the fuel stations and shops in South Ayrshire could have done with my custom, I had taken care to prepare and didn't stop. Despite the systematic destruction of the landscape around Glen Afton, I came back refreshed.



Turbines, powerlines, industrial forestry and the destruction of peat



If you look the right way there is still some beauty left in the landscape. View north down Glen Afton.

Back home, I heard about Patrick Harvie MSP, whom I believe still stays in Glasgow, meeting up with three people *inside* a pub in Edinburgh ([see here](#)). “An honest mistake” he claimed. I’d like to see him defending that in the courts.

The hypocrisy masks a much greater issue, the failure of our politicians – of all political parties – to challenge the unfair and unjust attempts by the Scottish Government to curtail the rights of people to go out and enjoy the countryside during the Covid pandemic. The only Scottish politician who, as far as I am aware, tried to challenge this was Andy Wightman. But he left the Greens and failed to get elected to the Scottish Parliament as an independent. Perhaps someone in the Greens will now be brave enough to stand up for outdoor recreation – the right to enjoy “the green” – and demand that the Scottish Government re-thinks the restrictions regulations?

There are signs that the Scottish Government is having a re-think anyway. Despite rates of Covid-19 being higher in Clackmannanshire than Glasgow, it has not re-imposed restrictions on travel there. It is now saying the success of the vaccination programme and the low numbers in hospital may allow a different approach. What it’s not saying is how many of the reported Covid cases are of school children – from living on Glasgow’s southside I know significant numbers of pupils have been sent home because of positive lateral flow tests.

Nor is the Scottish Government admitting the shift in public opinion or that it is risk of losing public support. I know of several people from Glasgow who had trips north planned before the latest lockdown and went anyway: to backpack, to tour in campervans or stay in self-catering accommodation. The risks of any of those people spreading Covid-19 through doing so were absolutely tiny and, in the cases of those who had had two jags, probably infinitesimal.

Others, who had booked serviced accommodation, have had their bookings cancelled. Some are feeling very frustrated because they have had two jags. If we want to reduce the spread of the virus in future, the Scottish Government needs to focus on preventing the people most likely to have the virus, which includes those from areas where there are outbreaks, from mixing indoors. There is no need for blanket travel restrictions to achieve this. All the Scottish Government needs to do is to make it illegal for people from areas with outbreaks – this would be better done by postcode than by local authority area – to mix with others indoors outside their postcode area. Given the effectiveness of the vaccines, this could be refined a step further and exceptions made to allow those who have had two jags to stay in places where they might mix with others indoors.

Yes, a few people will break the “rules”, by giving false addresses or going into pubs in other areas, but that, as Mr Harvie has shown, is happening anyway. Most people and businesses, however, are all to aware of the risks of spreading the virus and will do the sensible thing, as accommodation providers have shown in cancelling bookings.

This weekend is a public holiday in Glasgow. The Scottish Government should do the right thing and officially endorse the right of residents in Glasgow to go out and enjoy the countryside, with all the benefits that will have for their mental and physical well-being. There can no justification for allowing children to mix in Glasgow’s schools while prohibiting their families from taking them out to the beach.

Category

1. Access rights

Tags

1. access rights
2. Covid-19
3. outdoor recreation
4. Scottish Government

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