

The story behind the new infrastructure to support visitors in Arrochar

Description



The mobile toilets at the car park at the head of Loch Long. Photo credit Friends of Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Last week the Arrochar and Tarbet Local Community Development Trust, in partnership with the Friends of Loch Lomond and Trossachs, Luss Estates and local businesses, launched a new initiative to welcome visitors to the area ([see here](#) for news release). This involves the provision of two sets of temporary toilets, one at the head of Loch Long and another at the start of the popular path up the Cobbler, new information panels and wardens to welcome visitors and improve the appearance of the local area.



The new information panels

The whole initiative is extremely welcome. Its four and a half years since I first blogged about the human faecal waste by the side of the path up the Cobbler ([see here](#)), a consequence of the lack of toilet provision at one of the best used car parks in the National Park, while the marine litter at the head of Loch Long ([see here](#)) has been a national scandal which our public authorities have lacked the will to address. Hopefully, the temporary wardens will be able to make some difference.



Litter above the beach at the end of April after lockdown was released

What is striking about the initiative is not just that its local volunteers who have driven it – a lot of hard work has been involved – but that its been mainly funded by NatureScot's *Better Places Green Recovery* grants scheme (with some additional contributions from the the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust and the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme).

While the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) is mentioned in the news release as having been part of the local tourism recovery group, they appear to have contributed not a penny in funding. That is despite being awash with money. Earlier this year the LLTNPA were given an extra £3 million by the Scottish Government, £965k of which was left unallocated at their March Board meeting. Although the LLTNPA Chief Executive appears to have decided to commit much of this on employing additional managers ([see here](#)), it's hard to believe that all has now been spent.

This rather begs the question, why didn't LLTNPA senior managers recommend to their Board back in March that mobile toilets were needed in Arrochar and that some of their cash pile should be allocated to help the local community there? Or if not in Arrochar, one of the other local settlements in the National Park that lack toilet provision? I am not privy to any negotiations that may have gone on between the local consortium behind the project and the LLTNPA, but from the outside it doesn't look good. The whole point of having a National Park Authority is that it should get behind projects like this and make them happen. Instead, once again, the LLTNPA appears to have abdicated all responsibility.

While the local community deserve credit for obtaining funds from NatureScot, if the LLTNPA had funded the initiative that would have released Green Recovery cash to be spent elsewhere in Scotland. But perhaps the lesson here is that the Scottish Government would have been better awarding NatureScot the £3m it gave to the LLTNPA? It appears that the LLTNPA may have realised the risk because, after failing to issue any news release welcoming the Arrochar initiative, on 2nd June it announced its own Green Recovery Fund ([see here](#)) for local communities in the National Park. Shamed into action!

The LLTNPA is not the only culpable public authority in this case. Despite the extortionate charges it exacts for using the Cobbler car park ([see here](#)), Argyll and Bute Council has also failed to provide any funding for the initiative. What's more the toilets for the Cobbler have been placed not in the car park they manage, the logical place, but on Forest and Land Scotland's land at the start of the path up the hill. It would be hard to make up if it wasn't true.

Take arguably the two most dysfunctional public authorities in Scotland, Argyll and Bute Council and the LLTNPA, and it's hardly surprising that the local community in Arrochar has been forced to turn elsewhere for support. Well done them for getting this far! But in the longer term, if this temporary initiative is to be superseded by something more permanent, they will require the LLTNPA Board to get a grip of their senior management and start investing in local communities and local visitor infrastructure.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. LLTNPA
2. Local communities
3. NatureScot
4. Scottish Government
5. visitor infrastructure

Date Created

June 9, 2021

Author

nickkempe