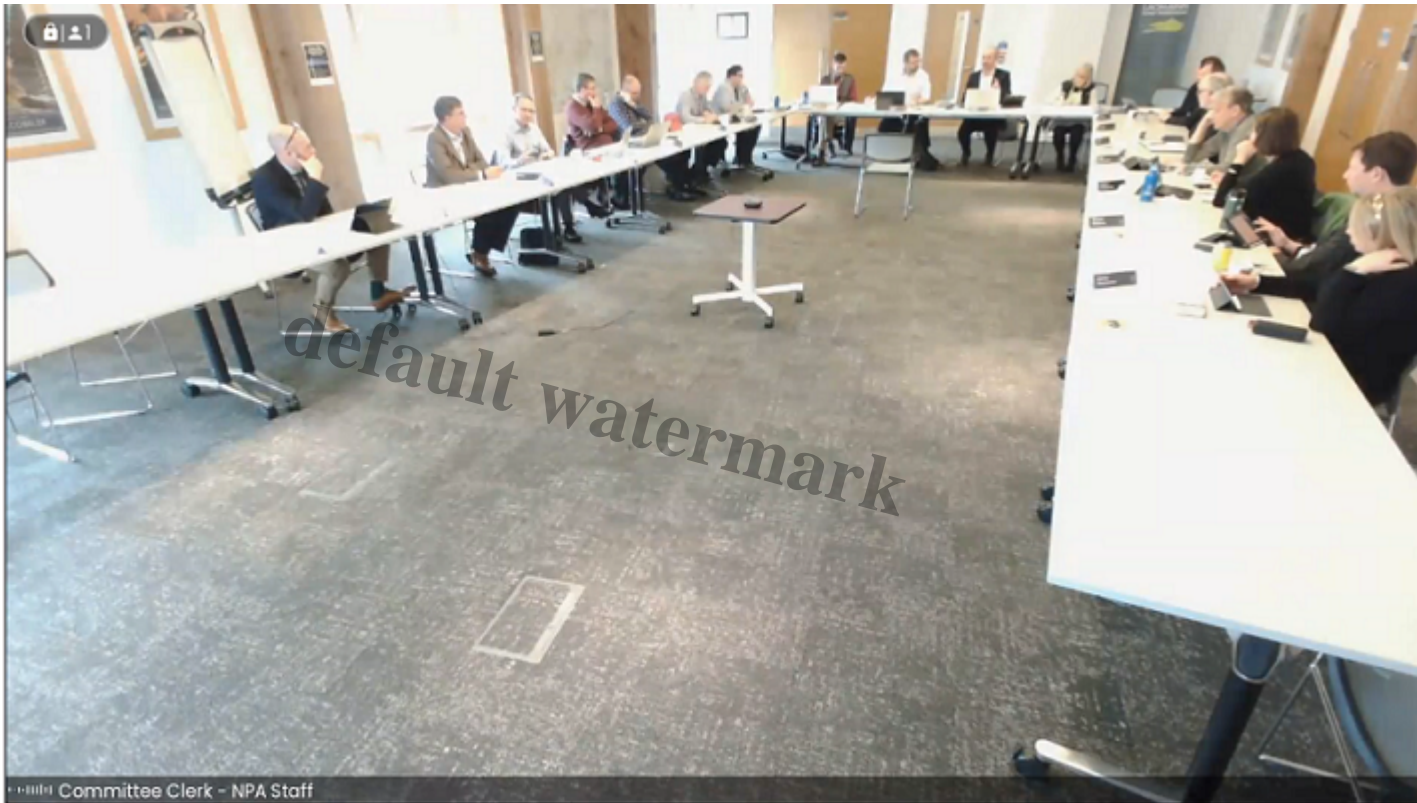


The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority – incompetence, data protection, risk and secrecy

Description



Screenshot of LLTNPA Board Meeting Monday 14th March – microphone visible on centre table

The shambolic organisation of Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) Board meetings was again ([see here](#)) evident last Monday. While it is right that the LLTNPA has decided to continue broadcasting its meetings live following the end of lockdown, unfortunately the quality of the sound at this meeting was even worse than the quality of the picture. Most of the contributions from board members and staff were completely inaudible and after a couple of hours frustration I gave up trying to follow proceedings.

There is no excuse for this. Councils like Highland have managed to webcast their meetings successfully for years. Unlike the LLTNPA, they also publish the recordings on their website to enable members of the public to see what is being decided in their name. Had the LLTNPA published this recording, they would have been a public laughing stock and been deluged with complaints. The LLTNPA need to sort out the technical shambles. While senior management will probably see this as a reason to stop live streaming of LLTNPA meetings, if the board committed to being more transparent it would help drive their staff to become more competent and do basic things like checking whether technology actually works before using it.

The previous week, there was another example of LLTNPA incompetence. They sent out an email about visitor management but openly copied this to all 260 recipients, revealing their names and email addresses. They then tried to recall the message before issuing this apology:

From: Jane Cook <jane.cook@lochlomond-trossachs.org>
Date: 10 March 2022 at 10:24:31 GMT-5
To: Jane Cook <jane.cook@lochlomond-trossachs.org>
Cc: Information Management <infomanagement@lochlomond-trossachs.org>
Subject: Email Distribution Error

Good afternoon

I have to advise of a distribution error in our email of 10 March 2022 10:53 inviting you to attend our virtual briefing session this Friday on visitor management planning for this season. The email sent this morning shared the addresses of all recipients, instead of being blind copied.

I would like to apologise for this error, which has been reported to the National Park Authority Data Protection Officer. I would be most grateful if you would delete the email if it is still in your mailbox. We trust that this inadvertent sharing of your email address will not result in any unsolicited email correspondence, however should this be the case we would recommend that you use the blocking function in your email account to prevent any subsequent unwanted correspondence.

The email will be re-issued shortly and I trust that this administrative error will not deter you from joining our briefing session tomorrow.

If you have any questions or concerns about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Jane Cook

Executive & Business Support Manager

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park

Good for Jane Cook that she made her name public! Too many LLTNPA official hide behind anonymous email addresses, like "governance manager". It's ironic that while senior LLTNPA officials protect themselves from being identified by the public, they scatter the emails of members of the public to the wind. One wonders if the LLTNPA's data protection officer have reported this data breach to the Information Commissioner's Office and if so what the response will be?

Unfortunately, the public are never likely to find out. One of the agenda items I struggled unsuccessfully to follow was the discussion on the draft Risk Management Framework (item 6 [see here](#)). The Framework is full of the usual management speak: references to the “international standard for risk management”; references to “risk appetite statements”; colour coded risk assessment matrices etc. It’s the sort of thing that justifies the LLTNPA employing ever more managers rather than frontline staff who actually do things to benefit the public or the natural environment.

But the risk management framework also commits the LLTNPA to keeping information about risks secret claiming that the corporate risk register is a “confidential document”:

6. Risk Registers

6.1 Types of register

We maintain a strategic Corporate Risk Register and a Projects Risk Register for Projects.

6.2 Corporate Risk Register

The Corporate Risk Register is a confidential document which sets out the “across the board” risks that could threaten our core business and the way it operates. The Corporate Risk Register is maintained on our R Drive. (insert link)

6.3 Project Risk Register

The Project Risk Register identifies risks that could threaten project activities. This register is maintained by the Project Team, and is reviewed by the Project Board. Where necessary, Project Board has the ability to escalate a risk to the Corporate Risk Register, if appropriate.

There is no justification in keeping the Corporate Risk Register secret. A few years ago it used to be published and discussed openly at Board Meetings ([see here](#)). It appears more than coincidence, however, that since then a number of leases entered into by the LLTNPA have failed ([see here](#) and [here](#)). The LLTNPA has refused ever to explain publicly what has gone wrong or how much public money they have lost, discussing this in confidential Board sessions. In short, they have tried to cover up what went wrong.

By continuing to publish the corporate risk register, the LLTNPA would have revealed the extent of these failures and how they responded, hence why that too has been turned into a secret document. I will now try and force the LLTNPA to release it under Freedom of Information laws but the increased secrecy appears to have been condoned by the civil servants who liaise with our National Park Authorities and is part of a trend towards increased government secrecy.

The important point here is that the most effective way the LLTNPA Board or any other public authority can reduce risks to their organisation is to commit to transparency rather than bureaucracy. Where public authorities are open about what they do it not only enables the public to hold them to account, it drives improvement, whether that is the organisation of meetings, protection of data or managing public finances.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

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