

More lessons from the Dolomites (1) – path maintenance



am just back from a week ski touring in the Dolomites, a holiday delayed for two years because of Covid. I was last in the area four and a half years ago, after which I wrote a number of posts comparing land and tourism management in the Dolomites, which was declared a World Heritage Site in 2009, with Scotland's National Parks ([see here](#) for example).

While human impacts are less obvious when the land is covered in snow, even in such conditions those charged with looking after Scotland's National Parks could still learn a great deal from how protected areas in Italy – or indeed other mountain areas in Europe are managed.



The path between the bends in the military road to Prato Piazza on a murky day showing how trees cleared.

While we spent much of our holiday off-path and above the snowline, the weather deteriorated in the second half of the week and instead of a high traverse over from the Sennes Hut to the Prato Piazza, we took a more circuitous route which involved descending to the valley floor and ascending by the military road which had been constructed in the First World War. Wherever trees had fallen across the path – and trees do get blown over in alpine forest or knocked down by avalanches but on nothing like the scale we have recently experienced in Scotland – they had been cleared.



Some of the clearance of trees was recent, others from some time ago. The implication was clear: this path is maintained regularly, something I had also witnessed five years ago when walking the Alta Via 1 ([see here](#)).

I could not help contrasting this with the situation I had witnessed on the Ardchullarie path in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park which I had walked a few weeks previously ([see here](#)):



If asked to rate how paths are maintained, it would be something like Dolomites World Heritage Area 10, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) 0.

This is not an accident but a consequence of decisions by those responsible for managing the recreation resource. Neither the Cairngorms National Park Authority or the LLTNPA have any plan to maintain our existing path networks, inadequate as those networks are.

There is no need for this. In the Dolomites each night we paid a tourist tax of three euros. This helps pay for things like path maintenance and other tourist infrastructure and, if introduced in Scotland, would empower local communities to do the same. Unfortunately, in Scotland there appears almost no political will to do so, not even in our National Park Authorities which could be showing a lead on such matters.

Category

1. Cairngorms
2. Loch Lomond and Trossachs
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Tags

1. CNPA
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