

Equality of access to the countryside – the black hole the size of Wales starts in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park

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CHANGING PLACES TOILETS IN N CHECK OUT THE BLACK HOLE THE S

FORT WILLIAM

West Highland College

Distance from Tyndrum: **47 mi**
Travel time from Tyndrum: **1 hr**

Open between 9.00 and 17.00 during the week, closed on weekends

PORTTREE, ISLE OF SKYE

Portree High School

Distance from Tyndrum: **154 mi**
Travel time from Tyndrum: **3.5 hrs**

Variable opening hours

BARRA, OUTER HEBRIDES

Garadh a Bhagh a Tuath

Distance from Tyndrum: **130 mi**
Travel time from Tyndrum: **6+ hrs**

Open Mo - Sat 7.00-21.00

HELENSBURGH

Helensburgh Leisure Centre

Distance from Tyndrum: **38 mi**
Travel time from Tyndrum: **1 hr**

Open Mo-Su 6.30-21.00

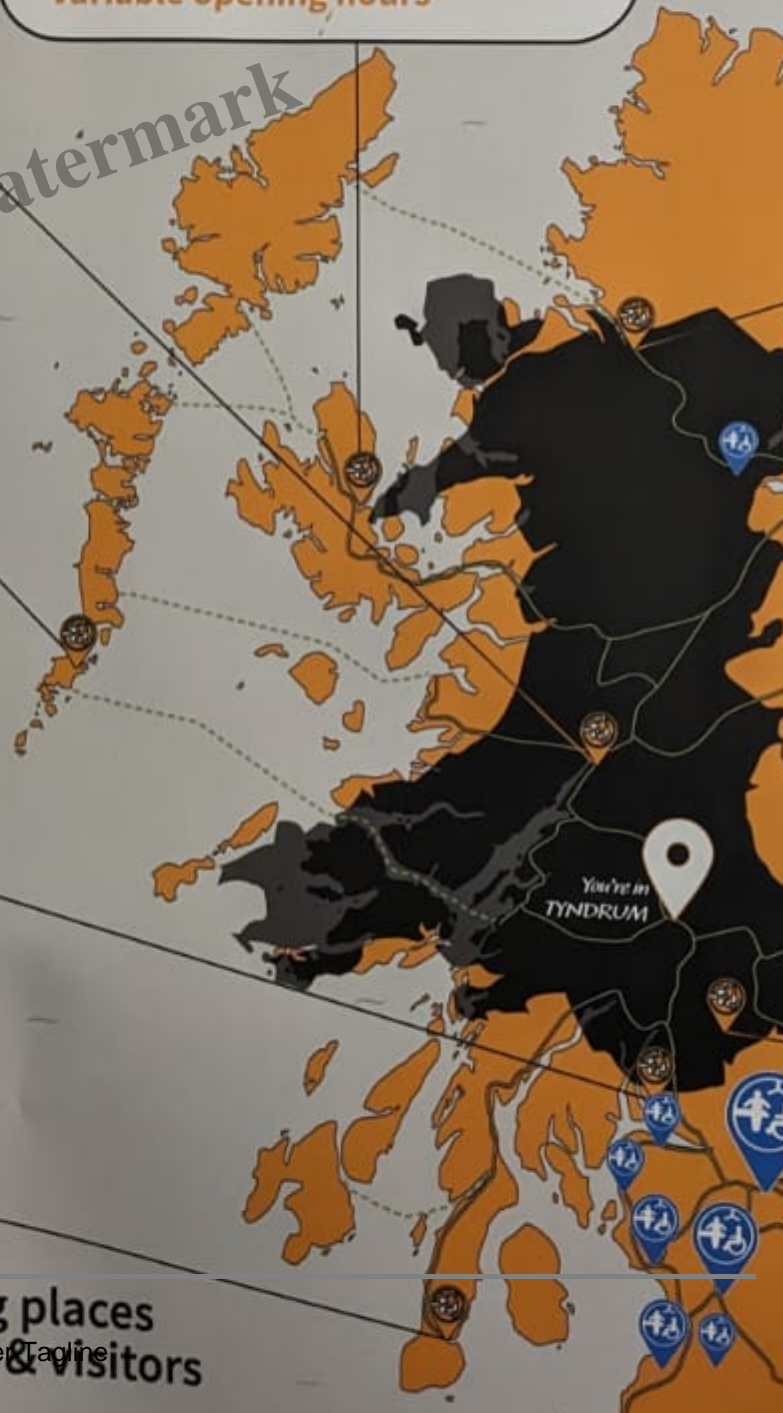
Located off a trunk road

CAMPBELTOWN

Aqualibrium

Distance from Tyndrum: **102 mi**
Travel time from Tyndrum: **2.5 hrs**

Variable opening hours



I was in the Real Food Cafe at Tyndrum a few weeks ago but missed this sign ,about the lack of suitable toilets “changing places” for people with disabilities. It is absolutely fantastic to see local businesses in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park campaigning for better infrastructure, not just for tourists but for people living in local areas.

Various recent posts ([see here](#)) and ([here](#)) have commented how the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA)’s draft National Park Partnership Plan makes several references to the importance of equality of access while failing to address the basics, like the locked gates which make access by people with disabilities impossible. Toilets that people with disabilities and their families/carers can use are equally important.

Last year the Scottish Government issued planning guidance about “Changing Places Toilets” ([see here](#)). The recommendation that such fully equipped and accessible toilets be incorporated into all large new public buildings will not do much to fill the hole in rural areas. Nor will the declaration by the then minister that such toilets are a “fundamental human right”. Without investment such declarations are meaningless.

As a result of pressure from campaigners, the UK Government set up a £30 Changing Places fund for England. While the SNP pledged to create a £10m fund in Scotland in their 2021 manifesto, nothing has so far happened.

Tyndrum, at the northern edge of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, was identified as the top priority for a new Changing Places toilet in Scotland. The Tyndrum Infrastructure Group have responded by designing and finding a location to build a fully accessible toilet but this requires funding. In May they launched a petition to the Scottish Parliament ([see here](#)) – which now has a cross-party Changing Places Toilets group – calling for the promised £10m to be made available without delay.

Significantly, there is not a single reference or commitment to the need for more toilets for people with disabilities in the LLTNPA’s draft NPPP. The LLTNPA, despite all its claims about valuing local communities, is completely out of touch with grassroots activity in the National Park. The basic issues is that any fine words about equality of access mustn’t be allowed to cost a penny.

The problem and need goes far wider than Tyndrum. The National Park was created in large part because Loch Lomond and the Trossachs was close to a large proportion of Scotland’s population, including those with disabilities, and new infrastructure was required to enable them to enjoy the area. If the National Park had really been committed to equality of access there would be suitable facilities throughout the National enabling people with disabilities to enjoy its special qualities.

The LLTNPA has completely failed to make best use of its assets to facilitate those ends and in 2022, through a secretive process, agreed to declare two of its former visitor centres, at Luss and Balloch, surplus to requirements. Either could have been used to provide a Changing Places Toilet..

The Scottish Government has recently and very belatedly advertised the place on the LLTNPA Board which was vacated by the previous convener, James Stuart, in January. If the Scottish Government is serious about Changing Places Toilets being a fundamental human right they could do worse than appoint someone from the Tyndrum Infrastructure Group or a disability rights activist to the LLTNPA

Board. Such a person might also help force the LLTNPA to take up the problem of all the locked gates and other unnecessary barriers to access across the National Park. What would be good for people with disabilities would also benefit everyone else.

Please sign the petition if you have a moment.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

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Author

nickkempe

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