

## The mismanagement of public car parks in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park – Lake of Menteith

### Description



Sign at the entrance to the one public car park at Lake of Menteith. Photo credit Parkswatch Reader 19th June

The Lake of Menteith, east of Aberfoyle, is one of the many places in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park that it is difficult for the public to access. It's on the Glasgow-Stirling X10A bus route ([see here](#)) which offers six buses a day Monday to Friday, a reduced service on Saturday and none on Sunday. The bus journey takes two hours from Glasgow. There is just one public car park close to the Lake with another at the ferry to Inchmahome Priory which is for paying customers only.



Photo credit Parkswatch Reader

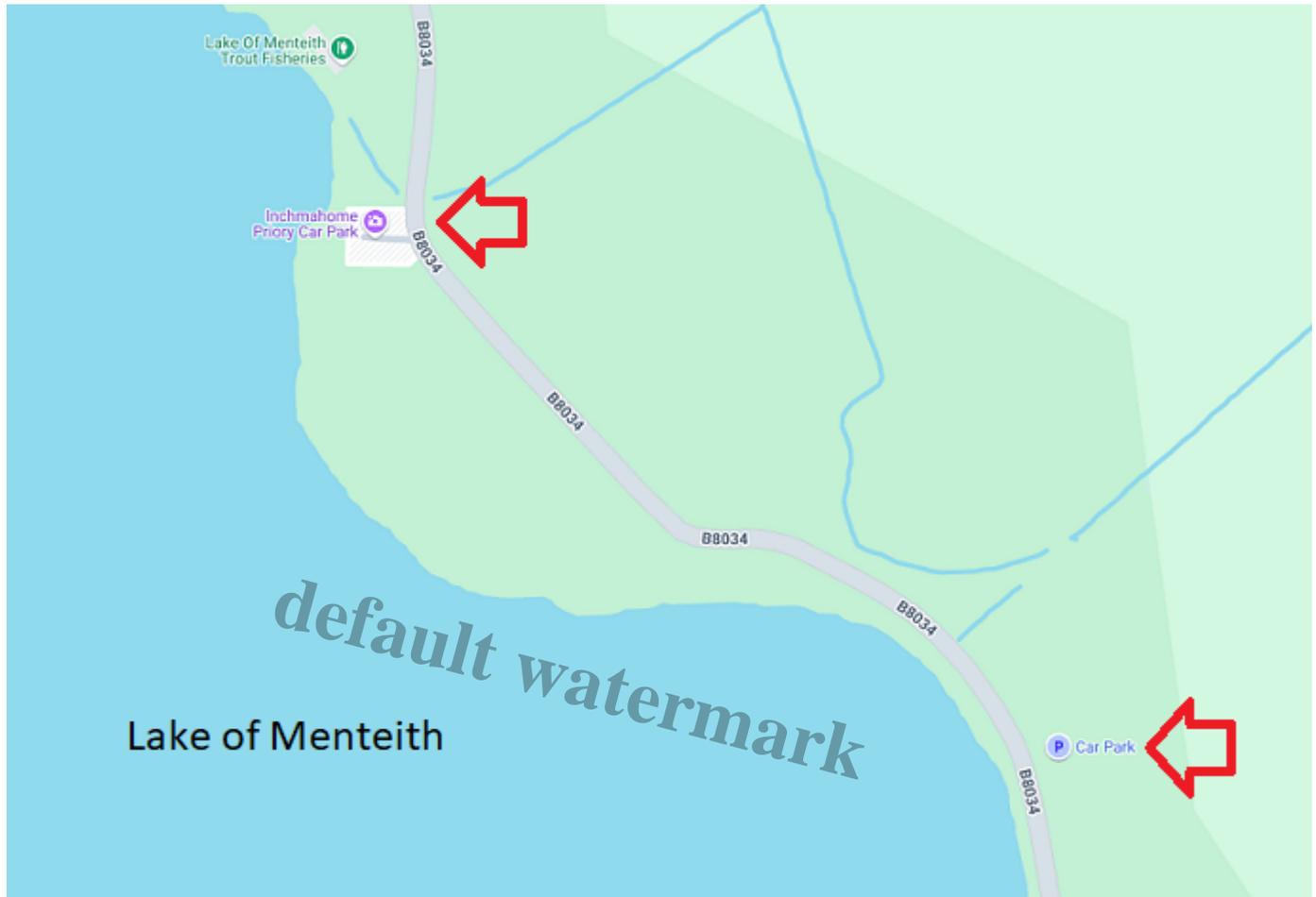
Last week a reader got in touch to say that this public car park has been closed to allow a private forestry company to use it for timber operations.



Photo credit Parkswatch Reader

EuroForest said nothing about how long the car park would be closed or to point people to alternatives (there are none on the B8034).

Nor was there any notice from the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) to explain this and on what basis, if any, it has agreed to the closure. The LLTNPA website has a page on Lake of Menteith ([see here](#)) provides a link to the google map which shows its location:



The Inchmahome and public car park are both shown on Google Maps

The LLTNPA's web page explicitly refers to the car park and exhorts the public to use it:

*A small car park on the east side of the lake offers easy access for open water swimmers. The Lake of Menteith is named as a must-do Scottish wild swim.*

It also states:

*There are many picnic spots along the lake shore, where you can admire wonderful scenery, and the nearby Menteith Hills have a large network of paths for walkers, trail runners and cyclists.*

Picnic spots which now no-one can access. There is no mention on the web page of the closure of the car park.

The title deeds for the land, which is called Montcrieff Wood and is part of the Rednock Estate, make no mention of the car park or any reference to the LLTNPA or any right of the public to use it. Nor does the car park ever appear to have been granted planning permission, unlike that for the Inchmahome Ferry. It is possible therefore that, despite having their name on the sign, the LLTNPA never had an agreement with the estate to allow the public to use this car park and the estate has not bothered to

inform them about the closure.

If so, the existence of this car park which forms part of the essential visitor infrastructure in the National Park has always hung from a very shoochy peg. It begs the questions of what, if anything, the LLTNPA has done to address that and what other car parks might be at risk? I will now try and find out.

## **A National Park which is putting its own corporate interests before those of the public**

The closure of the Lake of Menteith car park contrasts with the lavish amounts of public money the LLTNPA is spending on car parks on its own land.

Besides the £2.4m the LLTNPA wishes to spend on landscaping the car park at the Pierhead in Balloch ([see here](#)) the "Place Investment Strategy update" to June Board meeting reported ([see here](#)) that Phase 1 of the upgrade to the LLTNPA's site at Tarbet on the west shore of Loch Lomond, funded by £750,000 from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, is now in its "Defects Rectification phase". This, the report claimed, has transformed the site "into a sustainable low-carbon destination": among the defects that need to be "completed as quickly as possible" are "the grass-reinforced seasonal overflow parking" and the utility network upgrades to allow the EV chargers to be installed.

The truth, as Geoff Riddington argued almost two and a half years ago ([see here](#)), is the Tarbet masterplan offered "little more than an improved parking area". The main improvement reported in the board report is that "the improved vehicle circulation has been working well to reduce conflicts between different types of users". Reducing the number of vehicle collisions is not what most people would regard as sustainable development!

While lavishing money on the car parks it owns, the LLTNPA still locks the public out of many in the evenings, while also preventing public access to the Forest and Land Scotland car parks at Loch Chon ([see here](#)) and Salloch ([see here](#)) where it provides campsites. This undermines the ability of the public to exercise their access rights "a problem accentuated because what little bus provision there is in the National Park rarely continues into the evenings, to the detriment of both visitors and local residents.

Keeping car parks open, as the LLTNPA eventually did at Firkin Point, would cost nothing and save the money spent paying people to lock them every evening. As for the £750k from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, part of it would have been much better spent compulsorily purchasing the small car park at Lake of Menteith to guarantee access to this essential facility.

### **Category**

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

### **Tags**

1. access rights

2. land reform
3. LLTNPA
4. planning
5. visitor management

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**Author**

nickkempe

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