

Dragged through the mud for trying to question the Flamingo Land planning process

Description

Update 6th November. At 16.00 hrs today, almost three working days after we sent the letter below, we received a three and a half page letter from the Standards Commission explaining they had informed the Helensburgh Advertiser of the Hearing and this was normal procedure. We have responded to the Executive Director of the Standards Commission asking why the Advertiser need to be given this story three months in advance and pointing out that a one line email saying they did it and would provide a full explanation why later in the week would have been enough for us not to publish our letter to her. We have also asked for clarification about a number of facts, will provide a full update in due course but until then are leaving the post as published.

On Monday afternoon the Helensburgh Advertiser published a story ([see here](#)) that Sid Perrie, the locally elected member for Balloch who sits on the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) has been referred to the Standards Commission for Scotland over a complaint about alleged bullying. It went on to announce a hearing date has been arranged for the 10th February at the National Park HQ in Balloch. The bones of the story are true, though some of the content is not, but the key point is it was leaked to the Advertiser. I know because I, along with Alannah Maurer, have been trying to help Sid respond to the allegations made against him by LLTNPA Convener, Heather Reid, and a subsequent complaint by LLTNPA Chief Executive Gordon Watson.

Whoever leaked the information about the complaint and hearing date clearly wanted to make Sid's life hell for the next three months. There are only two possible sources of this leak, the Standards Commission who arranged the hearing or the LLTNPA which booked the room but which the Advertiser reported declined to comment while the case is ongoing.

Alannah and I therefore drafted a letter on Monday evening to the Executive Director of the Standards Commission, Laura Johnston. I sent this early yesterday morning. (The original was wrongly dated the 3rd and should have said the 4th November and I have corrected that mistake below). Our letter asked Ms Johnston to confirm that day whether or not it was the Standards Commission which leaked the information about the hearing and, if not, what she intended to do about this. She has not replied, allowing rumours about Sid to grow, and we are therefore publishing our letter below. It describes the background and the main events of the last few weeks. We hope it speaks for itself but first a few comments.

The Advertiser wrongly reported that the complaint was made about Mr Perrie during a meeting of the park authority's board in June 2024 and that the investigation start in August 2024. In fact Heather Reid submitted her complaint to the Ethical Standards Commission on 29th August 2024 and it concerns six emails Sid Perrie sent between 26th and 28th August. The formal investigation did not start until December.

Sid sent those six emails prior to the Committee Report being published for the LLTNPA special board meeting which considered the Flamingo Land Planning Application in September 2024. Their purpose was to raise serious concerns about the validity of the planning process. The Balloch and Haldane Community Council also emailed LLTNPA Board Members about concerns it had at the same time.

There were several aspects to the complaints Heather Reid made about Sid's emails but the Advertiser article highlights the allegation of bullying. One could ask how a 74 year old man with disabilities, who had been completely sidelined by the board could bully anyone by sending a few emails, however strong the language used. Angry? Yes. Frustrated? Yes. But bullying?

Alannah and I had been trying to help Sid to respond to both Heather Reid's complaint, and a separate complaint by LLTNPA CEO, Gordon Watson, through due process. We no longer have any confidence in that process and hold a huge amount of information which were preparing to present to the Standards Commission hearing but which we now also intend to make public over the next three months. In our view that information shows that it is Sid Perrie, who is now off sick, who has been bullied. Sid's case, however shocking, raises much wider issues about how the Codes of Conduct for public life are being used to prevent board members and elected councillors from criticising staff or expressing dissent.

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Letter

Lorna Johnston
Executive Director
Standards Commission
By email

4th November

Dear Ms Johnston,

Complaint and proposed complaint hearing for case against Sid Perrie

We have, for the last 6-7 weeks, been actively trying to help Sid Perrie with the complaints that have been made about him by Heather Reid, Convener of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Board and Gordon Watson, its Chief Executive. We are writing in response to your letter of 31st October informing Sid that the hearing for the complaint from Heather Reid (Case Reference NPA/LLT/4184) will be held on Tuesday 10th at February at 9.30pm in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park headquarters and the leak of this information to the press today <https://www.helensburghadvertiser.co.uk/news/25591067.loch-lomond-board-boss-referred-standards-commission/#Echobox=1762187241>.

We would be grateful if you could confirm by return whether or not it was the Standards Commission which leaked this information to the press and, if not, what immediate steps you will take to deal with this. We make that request in the context of what has happened over the last two weeks which we set out below.

Ten days before your letter of 31st, on 21st October you had written to Sid stating:

â??I can advise that, in terms of its Hearing Rules, the Standards Commission may conjoin complaints about the same Respondent and consider them at the same Hearing. Given this, and the fact that you have indicated you require more time to respond to the other complaint, the Standards Commission proposes that a date for the Hearing into this complaint is not arranged until further information about the likely timing of the referral on the other complaint is provided by the ESC.â?•

The justification you gave to Sid for your about-turn was that the Ethical Standards Commissionerâ??s investigation into the complaint by Gordon Watson (NPA/LLT/4230) was likely to be referred to you until February and the *â??complaint concerns your conduct in relation to a small number of emails, sent in August and September 2024, that you do not appear to dispute sending. Despite this, you appear to have been afforded an exceptionally long time to respond to the ESCâ??s investigationâ?•*

Sid has never disputed sending the emails but has had great difficulty, in part it appears because of his dyslexia and neurodiversity, in getting the Ethical Standards Commission to understand why he sent them and the issues at stake. Since being elected to represent Balloch on the National Park Authority Board, Sid has been trying to represent the concerns the local community and has been raising questions about the planning process that led to the second Flamingo Land planning application and other actions by National Park staff in Balloch. He has felt rebuffed and bullied at every turn. With the decision meeting about the Flamingo Land planning application approaching, and none of the questions he had raised answered, he sent the emails in an attempt to get the Convener and other board members to address the issues. He does not apologise for the language, it was a last desperate attempt to get his fellow board members to consider the issues. They failed to do so. Instead, Heather Reid decided to use the emails to try prevent Sid from attending the special board meeting.

Sid, as you should now know, is both neuro-diverse and dyslexic. Given his difficulties in using computers and emails, he was advised one way to prove what had been going on prior to the complaint was to submit a Subject Access Request. It took three months for the LLTNPA to respond with a document almost 600 pages long. Through that Sid found out a number of things he had never been told but became paralysed by the amount of material which he chopped up and sorted into piles on his living room floor. That then began to weigh on his mental health, along with how he was being treated by the rest of the board, on top of which he had various physical health problems. You will have seen from the Commissionerâ??s investigation of Nick Kempeâ??s complaint about the LLTNPA Convenerâ??s behaviour at the June 2024 meeting that he agreed Heather Reid had shut Sid down but argued this was justified and that a one-off event could not constitute bullying. The truth is that is how Sid has been treated at every LLTNPA meeting he attends, public and private.

Throughout the summer period Sid had kept contact with us. He felt considerably better after his holiday on Lewis and upon his return shared his Subject Access Request with us. With our support we thought Sid would be able to start responding to the complaints, as long as this was in manageable chunks, hence the letter to Angela Glen on 20th September about issue 1e) which is contained in Appendix 4 of the report submitted to you. We had hoped that Mr Bruce would welcome our helping

Sid to respond to the complaint but instead, without any notice or negotiation, he submitted a final version of his complaint investigation to you. In our view this ignored most of the points we had helped Sid make.

Undeterred, having seen your letter to Sid saying you expected Mr Bruce [the Ethical Standards Commissioner] to provide timescales for the investigation of the second complaint by 31st October, on 28th we helped Sid draft an email to Mr Bruce explaining realistic timescales for responding to the second complaint, taking account of Sid's health issues and various commitments we have. We believe Sid managed to copy this to your office but in case you have not seen it here is what was said about Sid's health issues:

•[We have redacted 8 lines of information about Sid's specific health issues because they are personal].•

Mr Bruce failed to respond directly to Sid about these requests (and declined Sid's suggestion of an in-person meeting with one of us present to discuss) but instead copied him into the letter which he sent you at 12.21 on 31st October. Mr Bruce failed to acknowledge that Sid's health problems might have contributed to the delays and rejected his request for 1-1 meetings saying no further information was required: how he could assert before seeing Sid's further responses to complaint material that his staff were requesting is unclear.

Unsurprisingly, Mr Bruce's letter has caused Sid considerable stress • he contacted us immediately • but that letter was then followed two and a half hours later by your letter (sent at 14.57) announcing your U-turn and informing Sid of the hearing date. We are supposed to believe that it took you just two and a half hours from receipt of Mr Bruce's letter to decide to reverse your previous decision to hear the two cases together, confirm a hearing date and panel members, reserve a room for the hearing in the LLTNPA HQ and draft a letter to Sid. That stretches credibility to the limit.

The LLTNPA HQ is the very place where Sid feels he has been bullied and silenced for the last three and a half years. Your decision to hold the hearing has sent Sid's stress levels through the roof, on our advice he sought medical attention and today has been given a 28-day sick note a copy of which Alannah will forward separately.

As if that was not bad enough, on Monday afternoon the details of the hearing were leaked to the press along with some misleading information about the complaint. We would like to believe that it was the LLTNPA which did this, it would be par for the course for how the LLTNPA have treated Sid for the last three and a half years, but given your recent letters I am afraid we are no longer so sure, which is why we are seeking confirmation by return whether or not it was your office which has leaked the information to the press and, if not, what you intend to do about it.

It is difficult to see how the Standards Commission can now give Sid a fair hearing and we also request your views on that by the end of today. We don't believe that is an unreasonable request given the short time it took you to go ahead with this hearing and hold it in the LLTNPA's HQ.

Yours Sincerely,

Nick Kempe and Alannah Maurer

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. democracy
2. flamingo land
3. Governance
4. LLTNPA

Date Created

November 5, 2025

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