

How democracy in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park is being destroyed â?? the Sid Perrie story (1)

**Description**

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You won't find photos of Sid Perrie or any other board member on the section of the LLTNPA website nor are there any contact emails - the LLTNPA does not wish local communities to know who represents them

## **Introduction**

This is the first in a series of posts which will explain how the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) has tried to silence the locally elected member for Balloch, Sid Perrie, and weaponised the Code of Conduct for board members to do so. This has serious implications not just for democracy in the National Park but more widely.

## **Background**

Sid Perrie has lived in the village of Balloch for almost thirty years, is well known in the local community and had been vocal in expressing his concerns about the first Flamingo Land planning application which would have had a massive impact on the village. In the 2022 Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) local member elections Sid stood for Ward 5, which includes Balloch and Luss, and received over 50% of the vote ([see here](#) for full results):

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## ELECTION OF A MEMBER TO SERVE ON THE LOCH LOMOND AND THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY FOR WARD 5

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<b>Electorate</b>	2378	<b>Total votes</b>	764	<b>Percentage poll</b>
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I, Graeme Forrester, Depute Returning Officer for Ward 5 in The Loch Lomond and National Park Elections, hereby give notice that the total number of votes polled for candidate at the election was as follows:-

Name	Votes
Niall Colquhoun	100
Patrick John Colquhoun	88
Drew MacEoghainn	154
Sid Perrie	420

This was quite an achievement because Sid is neuro-diverse and dyslexic and not the sort of person who is able to promote themselves through campaigning. Sid was honest about himself when filling in the Board Information Form after his election:

Please state any allergies, dietary requirements, special requirements or medical details which should be aware of: I AM DISABLED DUE TO MY DYSLEXIA. I NEED HARD COPIES OF PAPERS TO READ. I HAVE BEEN TOLD I AM ON OTHER SPECTRA TOO. THIS CAUSES ME TO BE BLINDLY SPEAKING MY MIND, THE OPPOSITE OF "SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE".

Extract from Board Information Form signed 11th July 2022

People in Ward 5 appear to have voted for Sid because they knew he was a person who would speak up for the local community without fear or favour.

## **Standing up for the local community on the Flamingo Land Planning Application**

Sid tried to represent the view of local people from the start of his time on the LLTNPA Board – which is when I first got to know him – but, as Alannah Maurer and I outlined in our letter to the Executive Director of the Standards Commission which we made public last week ([see here](#)), he was rebuffed at every turn. I will describe that in more detail in future posts but suffice to say here Sid’s response to being rebuffed was to express himself in the way he knew best.

After the arrangements for the special board meeting to determine the Flamingo Land planning application on 16th September 2024 had been signed off on the nod ([see here](#)), Sid made a last ditch attempt to get Heather Reid, the Convener of the LLTNPA, and other board members to consider the process and the conflicts of interest involved. Sid was concerned about the role of both staff, who had been involved in the appointment of Flamingo Land as preferred developer for Balloch, and Board Members who when approving the National Park Partnership Plan had given their backing to progressing one major development in the National Park – a reference to Flamingo Land.

On 26th August, a week BEFORE staff published their report and recommendations on the Flamingo Land Planning Application and a few hours before a secret board training session on the Flamingo Land planning application, Sid emailed Heather Reid, copying in other board members:

## Email 1 - 26/08/24; 0903

**From:** Alexander Perrie <R's Personal Email >  
**Sent:** Monday, August 26, 2024 09:03  
**To:** Heather Reid <Heather.Reid >; Chris Kane < >;  
'claire.chapman < >; Colin Lee  
< > 'david.fettes < >  
'david < > 'Hazel.Sorrel < >  
< > 'earlm < >  
'maurice.corry < >;  
'navidforoutan < > 'rcjohnson < >  
< > 'sarahdrmmnc < >  
'william.sinclair < > Baillie J (Jackie), MSP  
<jackie.baillie.msp@parliament.scot>; C.J.Spray < >  
IanShony.Paterson < >  
Mairi.Gougeon.msp < >  
Ross.Greer.msp@parliament.scot <Ross.Greer.msp@parliament.scot>; ministerforca < >  
< >  
**Subject:** Conflict of interest

Dear Heather,

I am writing to you to inform you officially about a conflict of interest in the way The National Park Authority has been handling the Flamingoland/Lomond Banks planning application. \*Please note that I make no comments whatsoever about the merits or otherwise of the planning application itself\*. This conflict of interest and subsequent actions of the Park Authority lays the park open to Legal, moral, financial and reputational risk. The code of conduct obliges me to obey the law of the land and if I do not report this conflict of interest and its corollary of misconduct in public office then I too would be complicit in this lawbreaking, as you will be too if you don't take decisive action on the information I am about to impart.

I refer you to the following article.

<https://parkwatchscotland.co.uk/2024/08/19/the-story-of-loch-lomond-and-trossachs-national-park-authority-and-the-flamingo-land-development-1/>

It can be found at, Posts from Parkwatchscotland for 08/20/2024, but I suspect you knew that already.

Start of the 1st email referred to the Standards Commission. The email was sent from the Isle of Lewis where Sid was on holiday

Although I had myself tried without success to get Heather Reid to address the issues I had raised in numerous posts, as summarised in the Flamingo Land Story ([see here](#)) and ([see here](#)), I was not party to this email. The email continues, using stronger language which Heather Reid then used, along with five further emails Sid sent between 26th and 28th August to make a complaint against him to the Commissioner of Ethical Standards.

## Heather Reid's complaint against Sid Perrie

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**From:** Heather Reid <[Heather.Reid@lochlomond-trossachs.org](mailto:Heather.Reid@lochlomond-trossachs.org)> t to focus on the sequence of events  
**Sent:** Monday, August 26, 2024 9:10 AM  
**To:** Douglas Smith <[Douglas.Smith@lochlomond-trossachs.org](mailto:Douglas.Smith@lochlomond-trossachs.org)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Conflict of interest

Fyi  
Heather Reid  
Convener  
Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park  
Direct: 01389 [REDACTED]  
[www.lochlomond-trossachs.org](http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org)  
[www.twitter.com/lomondtrossachs](https://www.twitter.com/lomondtrossachs)  
[www.facebook.com/lomondtrossachs](https://www.facebook.com/lomondtrossachs)

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Within seven minutes of receiving

Sid's email addressed to her and the board, Heather Reid had forwarded it to Douglas Smith, the LLTNPA staff member responsible for governance. This email was never provided to the Commissioner for Ethical Standards. Sid only found out about this because after Heather Reid complained against him he submitted a Subject Access Request (SAR) to the LLTNPA (which they took three months to answer) asking for all the information they held about him. What the email shows is Heather Reid made no attempt to engage with Sid about his concerns or engage with other board members about them but instead went straight to staff.

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**From:** Douglas Smith  
**Sent:** Monday, August 26, 2024 9:51 AM  
**To:** Anna MacLean ; [REDACTED] ; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: Conflict of interest  
**Importance:** High  
FYI from a Comms point of view. I have alerted Gordon and Stuart.

Extract from Sid Perrie's SAR

Within 40 minutes Douglas Smith, who is supposed to be in charge of governance in the National Park, had forwarded Sid's email intended for board members to both Anna MacLean, head of Communications, and alerted Gordon Watson, the Chief Executive, and Stuart Mearns, the head of

planning. These were the very staff members who had been responsible for the Flamingo Land planning application and about whom Sid was expressing concern. What Douglas Smith should have done was to advise Heather Reid that this was a matter for the board to consider. Unfortunately, in the LLTNPA it is staff who control board members and Heather Reid appears incapable of thinking or acting independently.

From this moment on Sid had no chance.

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**From:** Heather Reid <Heather.Reid@lochlomond-trossachs.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 26, 2024 11:57 AM  
**To:** Christopher Spray <C.J.Spray@[REDACTED]>; Ronnie Erskine [REDACTED]; Sarah Drummond [REDACTED]; Claire Chapman (claire.chapman@tabardit.co.uk) <claire.chapman@[REDACTED]>; Colin Lee <Colinlee@cemvoscotland.org.uk>; Martin Earl <earlm@stirling.gov.uk>; 'william.sinclair@argyll-bute.gov.uk' <william.sinclair@argyll-bute.gov.uk>; Maurice Corry <maurice.corry@argyll-bute.gov.uk>; Hazel Sorrell <Hazel.Sorrell@west-dunbarton.gov.uk>; Bailie Rhona Brock <RBrock@pkc.gov.uk>; David Mackie <[REDACTED]>; David Fettes <[REDACTED]>; Jai Shonny Paterson <JaiShonny.Paterson@argyll-bute.gov.uk>; Richard Johnson <[REDACTED]>  
**Cc:** Douglas Smith <Douglas.Smith@lochlomond-trossachs.org>  
**Subject:** Email Correspondence from Sid Perrie

**CAUTION: This email originated from an external organisation. Do not follow guidance, click links, or open attachments unless you have verified the sender and know the content is safe.**

Dear Board Member,

I am writing in respect of the email that was sent to you by Board Member Sid Perrie earlier this morning making serious but unfounded allegations against the National Park Authority and its staff. I have today met with senior officers and our external legal support and I can confirm that the National Park Authority does not have a conflict of interest in relation to the Lomond Banks planning application (2022/0157/PPP). The Report and Recommendation of the Director of Place on that application will be published on 2 September 2024 and the site visit, hearing and determination will take place before the Board on 16 September 2024. I would advise you that it is important that you do not respond to Mr Perrie's email or forward it to any other party or respond to any media enquiries in relation to it. I will be issuing a formal response to Mr Perrie later today and will share a copy of that email with you.

Extract from SAR

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Just three hours after receiving Sid's email Heather Reid had, without any attempt to investigate the concerns expressed by Sid, apparently discussed his email with the very staff responsible, called in external legal support, declared Sid's allegations "unfounded" and instructed all other members of the board to say no more. Not a single board member appears to have supported Sid.

Sid had been due to attend the LLTNPA Board Training session that afternoon remotely from Lewis. This could have provided an opportunity for board members to discuss Sid's concerns but instead, LLTNPA staff removed him from the meeting after he had logged in:

**From:** [Douglas Smith](#)  
**To:** [Anna MacLean](#); [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Conflict of interest  
**Date:** 26 August 2024 14:54:51

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Hi again,

For information – the Convener went back to Sid and everyone included in this email to advise that his allegation against the NPA and its staff is unfounded and that the report will be published on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept and site visit, hearing and determination will take place on 16<sup>th</sup> Sept as planned.

Sid logged in remotely to the Board Planning training this afternoon but it was not deemed appropriate that he remain in the meeting given his accusations and questioning of the planning process. He was removed from the meeting.

From a Comms point of view – we may see the unfounded accusations being released to the press and receive requests for comment.

Best,  
Dougie

Heather Reid and senior staff were clearly doing everything they could to silence Sid Perrie. None of this was explained in the complaint Heather Reid submitted to the Commissioner for Ethical Standards a few days later.

Sid sent five further emails on the 27th and 28th August, one in response to a letter from the Balloch and Haldane Community Council (BHCC) to Board Members and the remaining four to Heather Reid alone, a vain attempt to try and get her to reflect on how the LLTNPA had got to where it had. It was possibly Sid's persistence and determination to push the concerns also expressed by the BHCC in their letter, which prompted Heather Reid to submit an "urgent" complaint to the Commissioner of Ethical Standards on 30th August to try and stop Sid attending the Special Board Meeting:

*"Given the high profile nature of the planning application in question, the importance of the integrity of the planning process and ultimately the ability to conduct proceedings on 16th September safely, I am requesting that the Standards Commission look at this complaint with the utmost urgency"*

The Commissioner, to give them credit, declined the urgent request.

It appears to have been at this point that the LLTNPA instructed their solicitors to try and bar Sid from the meeting by claiming it was he who had a conflict of interest. While Sid disputed Anderson Strathearn's arguments, by that point the Committee Report recommending Flamingo Land be rejected had been published and it was clear that Gordon Watson and Stuart Mearns had swung in the political wind. On the advice of a local MSP, Sid decided it would be better not to attend the meeting. At that point, if Heather Reid's real concern was about a "smooth meeting" to decide the application and if she had had any sense, she would have withdrawn her complaint against Sid.

Instead "she" or rather "they" persisted in the way they had started (with Gordon Watson then adding a second complaint to the mix):

*"I attach the emails that have caused me to submit this complaint as well as a spread sheet where we have extracted key details and have referenced where we believe the Code of Conduct has been breached." (Extract from complaints form due to be considered by the Standards Commission)*

Unfortunately, the Commissioner for Ethical Standards failed to clarify if this was a complaint by Heather Reid, Heather Reid and staff or Heather Reid and other boards members or to consider all the evidence of a conspiracy against Sid.

## The investigation by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards

Instead, when the Commissioner for Ethical Standards formally started their investigation last December they considered Heather Reid's complaints under five different parts of the Code of Conduct. The first three of these contain allegations about how Sid treated staff at the LLTNPA:

*a) disrespected, bullied or harassed Board members and staff of the LLTNPA by, for instance, referring to the planning application as a "planning farce" and that "they will be guilty of misconduct in public office" contrary to paragraphs 3.1 and 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 of the Code;*

*b) undermined an individual employee or group of employees, or raised concerns about their performance, conduct or capability in public for instance by referring to the Chief Executive as producing a "masterpiece in half-truths, evasions, fallacies and obfuscation" and engaging in "misconduct in public office" contrary to paragraph 3.8 of the Code;*

*c) sought to take unfair advantage of his position in his dealings with employees or brought undue influence to bear on employees to take a certain action, including asking or directing employees to do something which the Respondent knows (or should reasonably know) could compromise them or prevent them from undertaking their duties properly and appropriately, contrary to paragraph 3.9 of the Code;*

As I have shown in this post Sid's emails were intended not for staff but for board members, politicians and in one case also the chair of the BHCC and also sent privately. It was Heather Reid, not Sid, who passed the emails on to staff without a thought for the consequences.

The allegations in a) and c) that Sid "bullied or harassed" staff and sought "to take unfair advantage of his position in his dealings with employees or brought undue influence to bear on

employees to take a certain action are both completely ridiculous. While c) was found not proven by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards it is still scheduled to be considered by the Standards Commission in February. It should have never been investigated.

Similarly, the allegation in b) that Sid disrespected staff in public is also completely ridiculous. Currently a Glasgow City Councillor, Fiona Higgins, is in the news for having been referred to the Standards Commission for an online post in which she said a senior council official was wilfully and cynically misleading councillors and the public (see here). While I hope to show in further posts how the various Codes of Conduct have been developed by officials to prevent all public criticism by elected representatives stifling all democratic accountability the fact is that Sid did NOT publicly criticise LLTNPA officials in these emails.

Unfortunately, no sooner had Sid, who had been really struggling to respond to these complaints, informed that Commissioner for Ethical Standards that he was getting support to do so from Alannah Maurer and myself, than the Commissioner decided to conclude his investigation and send his report to the Standards Commission. It is not fit for purpose and so far Mr Bruce has refused to withdraw it.

It is not Sid who is the bully but the system which has been designed to prevent people like him from speaking out about the LLTNPA's (continued (see here) and (here)) involvement in the Flamingo Land planning application.

## Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

## Tags

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

## Date Created

November 13, 2025

## Author

nickkempe