

A new low for the local member elections in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority

## Heather Reid on why Loch Lomond needs new board members

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Heather Reid urges residents to join and vote for new members for the board of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (Image: LLTNP)

By Heather Reid (Convener, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park board)

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article ([see here](#)) that appeared in the Helensburgh Advertiser last Saturday 13th June in the name of Dr Heather Reid, the Convener of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA), appeared about a month too late. It states "nominations are now open", when they closed on 4th June, and "We'll be hosting online and in-person information sessions throughout May and June for anyone who wants to learn more" when the last information session was on 2nd June.

Although the article may have been based on an old news release, had the Advertiser been informed that the election in Ward 5, the area closest to Helensburgh, will be uncontested it might not have quoted Dr Reid urging residents to vote:

- (4) As there remains only 1 validly nominated candidate in Wards 2 and 5, there will be no poll in these Wards and on 9 July 2026, the validly nominated candidates below will be declared elected.

Ward	Surname of Candidate	Other Names
Ward 2 (Breadalbane and The Trossachs)	<b>FETTES</b>	Davy
Ward 5 (West Loch Lomond and Balloch)	<b>EWING</b>	Louise Gallacher

Red underline highlights existing local elected board members

To vote, there needs to be a choice of candidates and in two out of five wards in the National Park that hasn't happened.

## Why is democracy in the LLTNPA in such a critical state?

The power of officials has been steadily increasing since Gordon Watson became Chief Executive over a decade ago and has got worse since Dr Reid, Heather the weather, became Convener. There is a connection between this history and the lack of candidates putting themselves forward for election in Ward 2 and 5.

Dr Reid's complaint to the Ethical Standards Commission against Sid Perrie, the locally elected member for Balloch, for trying to raise concerns about how the LLTNPA had handled the Flamingo Land planning application, resulted in the Standards Commission for Scotland (SCS) suspending him for the last six months of his term of office ([see here](#)).

Sid, who is 75 and is neurodiverse, decided not to stand again having been silenced every time he tried to raise issues on behalf of the local community. Sid has been fighting on, however, having appealed to the Sheriff Court who, unlike the SCS, has accepted he has been unwell and have delayed his appeal until October.

Having talked to several people active in local communities within the National Park, they no longer believe it is possible for locally elected members to influence what the LLTNPA does. They also believe anyone who tries to speak out will pay a considerable price for doing so. In other words there is no point standing and doing so risks far more trouble than the £228.69 daily fee is worth. A quote from Heather Reid's article confirms this:

*While each member is elected by a local ward, their role is to represent the interests of the whole National Park.*

Nowhere is it written in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 that the function of locally elected members is to represent the Park Authority rather than local constituents. This is, however, what LLTNPA senior management drum into local board members the moment they are elected through an extensive induction programme designed to put them under the thumb of the Chief Executive. Until Sid Perrie, no-one challenged Gordon Watson and he responded by excluding Sid from meetings and by submitting his own complaint against Sid to the Ethical Standards Commissioner (about which more anon).

Another quote from Heather Reid's article further demonstrates how she does not see any difference between members appointed by the Scottish Government and those elected by residents of the National Park:

*We're also really keen to hear from people from all backgrounds.*

It is bad enough that are now picking what sort of person gets appointed by the Scottish Government ([see here](#)) but as I argued in an earlier post "MSPs and local councillors are NOT recruited" and nor should be local members on the LLTNPA board. Heather Reid's message, however, is that locally elected members will be treated like appointees and expected to do as they are bid.

## **The local members standing for re-election**

Apart from Sid Perrie, the other four locally elected board members are all standing again, with David Fettes already elected unopposed for Ward 5:

Ward	Surname of Candidate	Other Names
Ward 1 (Cowal and North Loch Lomond)	<b>BURTON</b>	Helen
	<b>HOLM</b>	Gordon
	<b><u>PATERSON</u></b>	<b><u>Shonny Iain</u></b>
Ward 3 (Callander)	<b>BLACK</b>	Jack
	<b><u>JOHNSON</u></b>	<b><u>Richard</u></b>
	<b>KING</b>	Daisy
Ward 4 (East Loch Lomond and Port of Menteith)	<b>ARCARI</b>	Dave
	<b>CAMERON</b>	Gregor
	<b><u>MACKIE</u></b>	<b><u>David</u></b>

I don't recall any of the other locally elected members ever standing up for Sid Perrie, defending his neurodiversity or his right to speak out. but maybe I missed something. What I do know is that none who were present at the board meeting where Sid proposed locally elected members should have their own LLTNPA addresses supported his proposal. Perhaps they were too cowed to do so but this makes it very difficult for any local constituent to question their elected representatives at election time on their record over the last four years.

The various flaws in our National Parks' electoral system ([see here](#)) means all local residents have to decide between candidates, unless they know the person, is a short 250 word statement that is circulated with the postal ballot papers. With election expenses limited to £100, even candidates keen to communicate with voters in their ward face considerable impediments to doing so.

This electoral system suits those who have no real interest in representing local views and that, combined with how locally elected members are expected to do the bidding of staff, has resulted in local residents becoming increasingly disengaged with the LLTNPA undermining its democratic legitimacy.

The LLTNPA's annual accounts show the attendance record of board members and in those for 2024/25, the most recently available ([see here](#)), I have underlined the record of those local members

who have stood for re-election:

Configuration of Board at 31 March 2025					Statutory
Name	Nature of appointment	Date of most recent appointment	End of term	Committee membership	NPA Board (4 meetings)
<b>Martin Earl (1)</b>	(c)	01/10/2022	30/09/2027	A, CE, PI, LRB	75%
<b>Claire Chapman (1)</b>	(b)	01/11/2022	31/10/2026	CE, PI, LRB	75%
<b>Sarah Drummond (1)</b>	(b)	01/11/2022	31/10/2026	CE, F	75%
<b>Ronnie Erskine (1)</b>	(b)	01/11/2022	31/10/2026	A, CE, PI, LRB	100%
<b>Heather Reid (1)</b>	(b)	01/11/2022	31/10/2026	CE	100%
<b>Christopher Spray (1)</b>	(b)	01/11/2022	31/10/2026	A, CE, PI, LRB	75%
<b><u>Iain Shonny Paterson (1)</u></b>	(a)	08/07/2022	09/07/2026	PI, LRB, F	<u>50%</u>
<b>Hazel Sorrell (1)</b>	(c)	01/10/2022	30/09/2027	PI, LRB	75%
<b>William Sinclair (1)</b>	(c)	01/10/2022	30/09/2027	A, PI, LRB	100%
<b>Maurice Corry (1)</b>	(c)	26/10/2022	30/09/2027	A	100%
<b>Rhona Brock(1)</b>	(c)	01/10/2022	30/09/2027	F	75%
<b><u>David Mackie(1)</u></b>	(a)	08/07/2022	09/07/2026	A, PI, LRB	<u>100%</u>
<b><u>David Fettes (1)</u></b>	(a)	08/07/2022	09/07/2026	PI, LRB	<u>75%</u>
<b><u>Richard Johnson (1)</u></b>	(a)	08/07/2022	09/07/2026	PI, LRB	<u>100%</u>
<b>Gerry McGarvey (1)</b>	(c)	02/12/2024	01/12/2029	F	100% (1/1)
<b>Sid Perrie (1)</b>	(a)	08/07/2022	09/07/2026	F	75%
<b>James Messis (1)</b>	(d)	01/01/2025	01/01/2026	*	100% (1/1)

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1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

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