

Lies, damned lies and statistics (1) – the Loch Lomond & Trossachs NPA’s review of the camping byelaws

Description



Collection of graphics from LLTNPA camping byelaw review consultation

I was prompted to start Parkswatchscotland as a means of combatting the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA)’s proposals to create camping byelaws. Having been involved, as President of the Mountaineering Scotland, in negotiating the agreement which was eventually enshrined in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 I believed there other ways to address the problems associated with lochside camping in the National Park. I still do.

Quite a few of my early posts for Parkswatch were devoted to explaining how the LLTNPA were manipulating the byelaw consultation process and the public (e.g [see here](#) and [see here](#)). Over a decade later, the LLTNPA are using similar techniques in their public consultation on the review of the camping byelaws. This post, the first in a series, looks at the claims from the consultation document shown above ([see here](#)).

The LLTNPA regularly uses percentages in consultation documents, as high percentage changes can be used to make things look good or bad as desired. Percentages without numbers are, however, meaningless as in the percentage increases in campsite bookings at Loch Chon and Loch Achray shown at the top right of the graphic. Without dates and supporting data the 90% increase at Loch Chon, for example, could be explained by the fact that many of the pitches the LLTNPA created at the new campsite were unusable when it first opened, added to which there was no water for a time ([see here](#)). Initial numbers were therefore very low, entirely the responsibility of the LLTNPA, but they are now claiming the increase since then as a sign of success. Far more useful to know would be the percentage of places that have been unavailable since the two campsites and permit areas were created along with the data behind that.

The LLTNPA do, however, quote numbers in relation to the claim (bottom right) that there has been a 117% increase in “overnight stays” in permit areas between 2017 and 2025. Overnight stays are not the same as the total number of individuals camping (an individual might state several nights) but the statistics about the total number of people camping each year from 2017-2025 tell a rather different story:

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Who's coming to camp?



Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park

These statistics were part of a board handout, passed on to me in January by Sid Perrie the then local authority representative. I was not clear whether these figures include people staying in motorhomes in permit areas but the lumping of

If you select and compare the years 2017 and 2025 from these statistics, they show an increase in numbers of individuals camping of just over 90%, not as much as 117% (which is maybe why the LLTNPA used the latter to report the increase) but still very high. Clearly, the number of individuals camping and overnight stays, while not reporting exactly the same thing are connected.

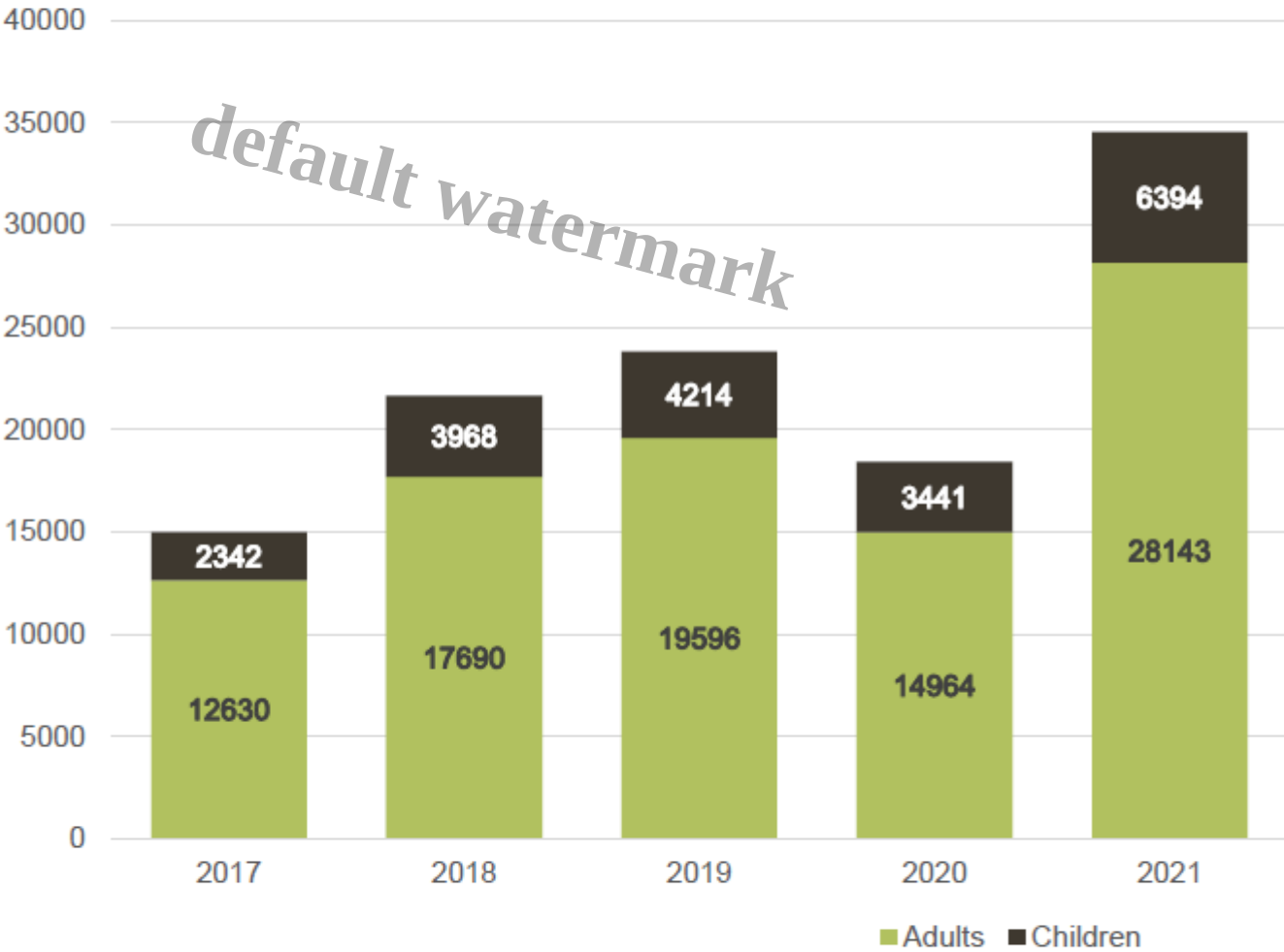
If instead of just taking the statistics for 2017 and 2025, you consider every year inbetween, what the bar chart above shows is the number of people “camping” in permit areas in 2025 was lower than it had been in any of the previous four year and, if anything, there is a downward trend. It is important to note, however, that the decrease last year may not be indicative of reduced numbers of people wanting to camp but the significant reduction in the number of permit places available ([see here](#)).

The claim in the graphic in the bottom left hand corner that there has been a 91% increase in adults and an 87% increase in children camping or campervanning, while it does not provide any figures, appears to be based on these same two years. What the bar chart shows is that is not the real story and that it is the variations between those dates which matter.

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Understanding demand

Annual total number people camping
areas (split by number of adults and



Reviewing the Camping Management Byelaws

This chart presented to the LLTNPA board at a secret strategy session last September, did not include as those sent to me by Sid.

I have included this slide, although it is in most respects the same as the later one from Sid Perrie shown above, because of the original title, “understanding demand”. This said nothing about demand as the figures do not include any information about those who want to camp in National Park, whether in a permit area or elsewhere, but cannot do so for various reasons (e.g because a permit area is closed, fully booked or inaccessible without a car). This comes to the key question which the consultation fails to consider, how many people would like to camp in the areas covered by the camping management zones but are prevented from doing so by the camping byelaws and the permit system?

Part of the LLTNPA’s case for the camping byelaws were the numbers camping on the loch shores in the National Park were Bizarrely, they are now trying to make it look as though numbers of campers has increased since the introduction of the byelaws!

Less Brave Heart than Brave New World!

[Note to readers. I scheduled this post before leaving for Slovenia and Austria a few days ago and am unlikely to blog again now for a few weeks]

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. Camping bye laws
3. Governance
4. LLTNPA

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