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**National Park reflects on first four months of camping byelaws**

Feedback gathered during the first four months of new National Park camping seasonal byelaws is being used to help inform improvements to the camping experience in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.

The Park Authority has welcomed the positive response from campers so far and is taking proactive steps to address any teething issues and negative feedback.

Since the byelaws were introduced on 1st March, the Park Authority has been gathering feedback through online surveys sent to everyone who books a permit and through on the ground engagement with visitors, communities and partner organisations. The byelaws are in effect from 1st March and 30th September each year.

Online surveys have received a strong response rate, and show that 85% of respondents would recommend staying in one of the new permit areas and 92% found it easy to buy a permit.\*

The Park Authority’s Rangers are also experiencing a largely positive response from visitors to the Camping Management Zones with the vast majority adhering to the new byelaws. Communities in some of the areas have also passed on observations of changing attitudes and increases in day visitors.

As well as inviting and acting on the feedback from visitors throughout the first four months, the National Park Authority has been continuing dialogue with key partners on the operation of the byelaws.

This feedback and dialogue is being used to fine tune visitors’ experience, and where necessary, make adjustments. This includes:

* Moving some permit areas within the Three Lochs Forest Drive in The Trossachs away from forestry operations, increasing the number of places for motorhomes on the Drive and continuing to work on developing signage.
* Improving visitor information and advice on camping areas on the online booking system.
* Collaboration with Police Scotland to further develop our joint enforcement approach to the management of encampments and anti-social behaviour in some lochshore laybys, while promoting the enjoyment and appropriate use of these environmentally sensitive spots.

Going back over a number of years, some lochshore laybys have had issues with encampments of motorhomes and caravans creating negative impacts, damaging the environment and preventing access for other visitors.

Ongoing discussions on how best to manage these issues have agreed that Police Scotland will use roads legislation to deal with unlawful encampments and irresponsible use of motor vehicles in laybys. People with campervans and motorhomes can use lochshore laybys to stop and rest (including sleeping overnight if necessary), but encampment on a road (including laybys) is an offence under road traffic legislation and will be managed by Police Scotland accordingly, in cooperation with land owners. Camping permit areas for tents adjacent to some lochshore laybys are unaffected.

As a result the National Park Authority will no longer provide permits for motorhomes to stay in laybys but will focus on continuing to provide great locations for overnight motorhome stays at key off-road visitor areas around the National Park. These include Inveruglas and Firkin Point and additional motorhome permits in the popular Three Lochs Forest Drive in the Trossachs. The Park Authority will continue to closely monitoring how the byelaws are working and gathering feedback from campers and other visitors, as well as local communities.

Gordon Watson, Chief Executive of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority, said: “It is early days, but overall there has been a very positive reaction from visitors and we are already seeing a welcome difference in the areas we are trying to protect, with less abandoned campsites and irresponsible fire-lighting. It is great to see such significant positive feedback on the camping experience from the survey responses too.

“There has also been some negative, but mostly constructive feedback and this, along with our own close monitoring, is being used to help us fine tune things. We’ve said all along that we would do this and the changes we are making demonstrate our commitment to listening and addressing issues where we can.

“We particularly support the contribution from Police Scotland on how inappropriate encampments in some lochshore laybys will be addressed to ensure these locations are accessible for more people to enjoy.

“The changes we have made are all aimed at providing a more positive experience for visitors while protecting our busiest lochshores. We look forward to welcoming people camping and staying in motorhomes, and hearing their views as the season goes on.”

The seasonal byelaws, which apply to just 4% of the National Park, were introduced to manage pressures and environmental damage caused by the sheer number of people camping in some areas and the anti-social behaviour of some going back a number of years.

Richard Graham, Chair of St Fillan’s Community Council, said: “The thing that has struck me most since the byelaws were introduced is the lack of damage, graffiti and litter. These are less evident and it also seems to be less congested.

“People who said they would never come back because of antisocial behaviour are coming back. I speak to fishermen who are delighted with the byelaws because they are experiencing less trouble on Loch Earn.

“Families are also coming back to picnic spots that they had just stopped coming to. In our community we are actively encouraging people to come and enjoy the area so this is amazing to see.”

Further information about camping in the National Park, including the byelaws, detailed maps of the Camping Management Zones and the booking system for camping permits can be found at [www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/camping](http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/camping).

**Ends**

**Notes to editors**

**Issued by Big Partnership on behalf of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park**

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**Notes to Editors**

* The Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Camping Management Byelaws 2017 were approved by Scottish Ministers in January 2016.
* The byelaws create Camping Management Zones around some of the Park’s busiest lochshores where, between 1 March and 30 September, campers must book a permit (unless resting in a layby) or stay in a campsite. There is no change to camping throughout the rest of the National Park.
* 2272 camping and motorhome permits have been booked since the byelaws were introduced on 1st March 2017.\*
* A Your Park Stakeholder Forum has been established to provide a range of partner organisations including the Scottish Canoe Association, Mountaineering Scotland and Ramblers Scotland with the opportunity to share ideas and provide feedback from their members as the byelaws are implemented.
* Gordon Watson, Chief Executive of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, is available for interview on request.

\* Figures quoted in this release cover the period from the 1st March to 26th June 2017. In that time approximately 2270 camping or motorhome permits have been booked since and 492 people have responded to our feedback survey after their visit.