

PE1751/B

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority submission of 1 November 2019

Firstly, we would point out that the legal framework to propose and operate byelaws to regulate potentially damaging recreation activities already exists within the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 Section 12. This allows byelaws to be made by any Access Authority to restrict access rights in certain circumstances as listed in the Act, subject to approval by Scottish Ministers. A similar provision exists in Paragraph 8 of Schedule 2 to the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 which also allows National Park Authorities to make byelaws that can restrict access rights in certain circumstances as listed in the Act in order to achieve the National Park's statutory aims. Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority has introduced Camping Management Zones utilising Paragraph 8 where impacts are managed by restricting camping to identified camping permit areas and established basic campsites. Our view is that a further piece of legislation is not needed when the current Land Reform Act provides an appropriate mechanism for all Access Authorities in Scotland.

We have many years' experience of managing the negative impacts associated with some wild camping in the National Park, and specifically have been operating the current camping management byelaws since 2017, as outlined in the SPICe briefing attached to petition PE1751. The camping management zones are concentrated only on narrow popular lochside areas next to public roads where years of over use and irresponsible behaviour were having a considerable negative impact on the environment, communities and the wider visitor experience. This followed an initial successful camping byelaw area established in East Loch Lomond in 2011. The vast majority of the National Park is still open for responsible wild camping. The decision to establish these targeted byelaws was not undertaken lightly, and was based on a great deal of evidence gathering resulting from several years of proactive and reactive management techniques, primarily through education and awareness messages delivered by our Ranger Service at wild camping hotspots in the Park. The evidence base for the byelaws and background to the May 2015 application to Ministers can be found on the following webpage. The need for the byelaws was also guided by views taken from an extensive public consultation, and stakeholder engagement in 2014.

In relation to the detail of the petition we would consider it important to differentiate between the impacts of small scale wild camping by those travelling on foot or bike as envisaged in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, from vehicle-based wild camping close to public roads where there can be much larger encampments for lengthier periods of time.

The current Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Camping Byelaws have now operated for three seasons. We note that the SPICe briefing includes our annual review reports for the first two seasons. The third season will be presented to our Board in December. As a condition of approving the Byelaws we will also be presenting a

report to Scottish Ministers in March 2020 setting out what impacts they have had over the first three years.

Finally, we would point out that the bylaws have not been introduced in isolation. Our approach to the successful management of negative impacts and behaviours is to ensure the right combination of camping provision, information and guidance on responsible use, and the ability to utilise enforcement as a last resort. Within the Camping Management Zones we have ensured a minimum of 300 camping places through a combination of developing small campsites with basic facilities and identifying camping permit areas across the byelaw areas. This operation requires significant resources including the establishment of an easy to use online booking system, extensive visitor information and on-site signage, and a sizable Ranger Service seasonal operation to guide the public, manage camping areas and ensure compliance. We have been very pleased by the high level of response to our customer feedback surveys which have helped guide improvements to our sites and information and have reflected a high level of satisfaction with the experience provided. We are also monitoring other aspects of the effects of the byelaws which will be included in the three year report.

I trust that the forgoing assists with your consideration of the petition