

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 8



Your Park: Scottish Ministers' approval of Camping Management Byelaws

Paper for Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1. Following approval by the National Park Authority Board on 27 April 2015, the Park Authority submitted its 'Your Park' proposals for camping management byelaws for consideration by Scottish Ministers in May 2015. The proposals outline a strategic approach to the management of camping in the National Park, on some of the National Park's most popular lochshores. In conjunction, the submission to the Scottish Ministers confirmed a commitment to deliver improved camping provision in the Camping Management Zones to accommodate lochside camping experiences in a more sustainable and managed way.
- 1.2. On 26 January 2016 Dr Aileen McLeod, Minister for the Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform, wrote to the National Park Authority confirming approval of the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws with two formal modifications.
- 1.3. The purpose of this paper is to inform members of the Scottish Ministers' decision and to seek approval to progress with preparations for implementing the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws as amended and delivering the associated camping provision by the commencement date of 1 March 2017.

2. Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- a. **Note** the Ministers letter confirming the **Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws** as laid out in Appendix 1;
- b. **Note** the Minister's formal modifications; to implement the byelaws on 1 March 2017 and to reduce the length of the seasonal period to which the byelaws apply by one month, March to September each year, rather than March to October;
- c. **Note** the Minister's administrative conditions to provide a report reviewing the operation of the byelaws no later than three years from the date of implementation and to also provide an annual update on the implementation of the byelaws.
- d. **Agree** that officers conclude proposals for camping provision
- e. **Agree** that officers progress preparations for the implementation of the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws to commence on 1 March 2017.

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3. Introduction and Context

3.1. The Your Park proposals were developed over the last two years, and included significant opportunities for public engagement and stakeholder representation. This resulted in a refined set of byelaws being submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval along with a commitment to the provision of further camping opportunities in the form of campsites and camping permits within the camping management zones. The following timeline provides a reminder of the process:

- Stakeholder engagement and listening phase (Jan – Jun 2014)
- Board approval of proposals (Sept 2014)
- Public consultation (Oct 2014 – Jan 2015)
- Amendments (Feb/Mar 2015)
- Board approval to submit to Ministers (April 2015)
- Application for confirmation (May 2015)
- Notice to public (June 2015)
- Ministerial consideration (July – Dec 2015)
- Ministerial confirmation (Jan 2016)

3.2. In May of 2015 the proposed byelaws, set within the context of Your Park and the supporting evidence, were submitted to Scottish Ministers for consideration. This automatically triggered a statutory confirmation process which allowed for further representations to be made to Scottish Ministers by the public and other stakeholders.

3.3. On 26 January 2016 Dr Aileen McLeod, Minister for the Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform, wrote to the National Park Authority to confirm the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws, see **Appendix 1**, with a start date of 1 March 2017.

3.4. The approval of the byelaws has been made with two formal modifications. The first reduces the period of time that the byelaws operate by one month, meaning the byelaws now apply from 1 March and end on 30 September each year. The second modification is to set an implementation date for the byelaws of 1 March 2017. The Minister's letter also included administrative conditions attached to the approval including the requirement for a formal report on the operation of the byelaws no later than three years from the implementation date, and an annual update on the implementation of the byelaws. The Minister's letter welcomed the Park Authority's assurances that 300 camping spaces would be made available by the implementation date.

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3.5. It is noteworthy that in approving the byelaws, the Minister states:

“Having visited the Park on a number of occasions over the summer months to see for myself the range of issues being faced, and from meeting key representatives on both sides of the debate, many of whom acknowledge the existence of problems, I am left in absolutely no doubt that steps must be taken to manage issues more effectively and that proportionate camping management byelaws are an appropriate and necessary part of the solution.”

4. Next steps

4.1. Now that byelaws have been confirmed, work can progress on preparing for implementation on 1 March 2017. The three main areas of activity are:

- Camping infrastructure: conclude the Camping Development Plan including campsite provision and camping permit scheme; design and install information and advisory signage for visitors.
- Operational management: prepare administrative and support systems for managing camping activity and byelaw enforcement and monitoring; prepare operational arrangements such as staffing models, systems and training.
- Communications and public engagement activity to raise awareness of the byelaws and improved camping provision within the camping management zones that will be in place for the 2017 season. This is in addition to continued education and information on responsible access and behaviour in the National Park.

4.2. The 2016 season will be used to ensure that the public are well informed about the new arrangements for camping in the National Park, with a positive and enabling approach being taken to encourage responsible use of the area whether camping at sites or by applying for a permit to wild camp within designated areas across the four camping management zones.

4.3. The National Park's Ranger Service will be key to positively engaging directly with those camping and in the implementation of the new byelaws.

4.4. As with the introduction of any new management measures, a detailed monitoring and review framework will be established to record the impact of the measures and identify any areas for improvement or change. The three-year review of operation of the byelaws will report on how effective the new measures have been and in particular in addressing environmental damage and irresponsible behaviour. Annual updates on the implementation of the byelaws will also be supplied to Scottish Ministers.

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5. Conclusion

- 5.1. This is the most significant development in managing visitor impacts in the history of the National Park to date. It is most welcome that the Minister has recognised that, at this time, the package of measures including byelaws in Camping Management Zones (covering less than 4% of the National Park) is required at this time to protect the National Park and address these longstanding issues which have damaged some of the most accessible and popular lochshores in Scotland.
- 5.2. The National Park Authority was given a very clear purpose to ensure it can progress the conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage, whilst also ensuring the public enjoyment of these special qualities through recreational activities. The new byelaws enable the National Park Authority to balance these aims, and secure a sustainable, long term approach to the management of camping in the Park.

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