



1. Purpose

- 1.1 The following report reviews the operation of the East Loch Lomond Camping Byelaws following three seasons of implementation as part of a wider suite of measures to address entrenched anti-social behaviour and environmental degradation associated with high volumes of camping during the summer seasons. The report sets out the approach to implementation, how the Byelaws operate in practice and the effects that the package of measures are having on the area, drawing from a range of information gathered during the three year period.

2. Background

Visitor Management Issues

- 2.1 The Byelaws were introduced as part of an extensive package measures to tackle long standing visitor management problems on the east side of Loch Lomond. These promote a higher quality visitor experience in the most heavily visited area in the National Park. The multiple problems arising from decades of entrenched behaviours comprised significant alcohol fuelled anti-social and criminal behaviour, vandalism of visitor sites and to infrastructure, uncontrolled fires, tree felling for firewood (including at SSSI sites), the use of public spaces for toileting, littering, noise from large congregations of people during the hours of darkness and high volumes of unmanaged camping activity along the length of the shore line.
- 2.2 The impacts of these issues during the peak summer periods had a significant negative impact on the experience and safety of responsible visitors as well as the quality of life of local residents. The internationally renowned West Highland Way long distance route passes through this area presenting an extremely negative impression of the National Park and Scotland to UK and overseas visitors. Despite years of educational activity, ranger interaction with visitors, collaboration with police services and a high profile Respect the Park campaign, little impact was being made on the anti-social behaviours at the core of the areas problems. Significant public resources were being used to contain the issues through high frequency of ranger and police patrols, rectifying vandalised sites, and the collecting of large volumes of litter, much of it emanating from abandoned encampments.

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Operation Ironworks – Joint working with Police Scotland

- 2.3 In addition to the immediate impacts of these activities, the years of excessive and irresponsible use had led to cumulative degradation of the environmental fabric of this valued lochside, for example habitat degradation in protected areas (tree cutting for fire wood and fire scorching) and the basic loss of ground vegetation leaving extensive areas of bare ground (see Appendix 5).
- 2.4 During the lead in to proposing a Byelaw, significant collaborative work was progressing with Central Scotland Police to respond effectively and to try to prevent these behaviours. Operation Ironworks, established in 2008 plays a key part in tackling the issues in the area. This significant collaboration with Police Scotland emerged from the early East Loch Lomond Watch initiative which was effectively a rural neighbourhood watch scheme to what is now a well established operation rolled out each year. Operation Ironworks is funded by the NPA and provides a flexible and highly responsive increased police presence at visitor management pressure points right across the National Park area. The early focus of the initiative and patrolling activity has been on East Loch Lomond with initial policing targeting hot spot sites such as Sallochy, Rowardennan and Manse Bay. This operation provided the capacity to provide high profile visible patrolling and direct face to face contact with visitors. The outcome was that some of the more extreme behaviours were being tackled and prosecuted through the criminal justice system with some high profile cases being reported in the media. Ultimately, this initiative alone did not have a sufficiently preventative impact to reduce the occurrence of these entrenched behaviours.

East Loch Lomond Visitor Management Plan

- 2.5 Throughout the development of various previous initiatives, there was strong collaboration with the local Buchanan Community Council representing the residents whose lives had been made intolerable during busy summer months. Anti-social behaviour also raised serious issues of community safety. In the light of the slow and limited impact of measures up to that point, the community became strong advocates for stronger preventative measures. The East Loch Lomond Visitor Management Plan (Published 2009) was developed by a steering group consisting of the key partners, Buchanan Community Council, the community development trust, Forestry Commission, National Trust for Scotland, Police Scotland and NPA. This Plan co-ordinates all of the operational activity and infrastructure improvements that are

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fundamental to supporting the introduction of stronger regulatory measures to prevent these impacts.

2.6 The approach adopted by the East Loch Lomond Visitor Management Plan involves three complementary strands of activity:

- Infrastructure and services;
- Education and awareness raising; and
- Enforcement and regulation

The co-ordinated implementation of key actions under these categories was seen as critical to effectively address the issues, whilst also creating positive opportunities to improve the experience of the area for visitors. These three pillars of visitor management are now embodied in the National Park Partnership Plan 2012-17 and are embedded as the approach taken to other areas of the Park.

2.7 Examples of the key actions taken on East Loch Lomond include:

1. Infrastructure and services

- Sallochy informal camping area with 22 pitches built and opened, including day visitor parking, toilets and signage.
- Rowardennan car park improvements, including signage.
- Milarrochy visitor facility toilet upgrade and signage improvements.
- National Park Visitor Centre at Balmaha refurbished, including visitor information and toilet upgrade.
- Road verge landscaping and fencing/walling to manage dangerous parking.
- New clearway signage for road verges on C6.
- NPA rangers and FCS wardens co-ordinated services at Balmaha, Milarrochy, Sallochy and Rowardennan.

2. Education and awareness raising

- Respect the Park campaign to promote responsible behaviours and encourage reporting of incidents;
- Improved information and face to face contact for visitors at National Park Visitor Centre, Balmaha; and
- Informative leaflets, information panels/signage displayed in prominent locations, displays and web-based information.

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3. Enforcement and regulation

- Camping Byelaws introduced;
- Alcohol Byelaws introduced;
- Clearway status on C6 clarified to public and enforced;
- Operation Ironworks to increase police patrolling activity at key times; and
- Respect the Park to encourage reporting of incidents direct to police.

Camping Byelaws

2.8 The introduction of additional enforcement measures was seen as critical to the success of the overall package. Many of the most severe problems experienced emanated from alcohol consumption associated with camping on roadside locations close to the lochshore. Also camping was taking place in environmentally sensitive locations which were ill suited to large numbers of tents and associated car parking. A byelaw was proposed which sought to restrict camping along the road corridor between Drymen and Rowardennan with the exception of designated camping areas. The designated sites included the two existing commercial sites at Milarrochy and Cashel and a new site created on Forestry Commission land at Sallochy. Sallochy was the largest and most notorious area of unmanaged camping activity where the most extreme incidents took place. This presented a significant opportunity to provide new managed camping provision in a popular location and in an informal setting.

2.9 At the same time Buchanan Community Council resolved to formally request that Stirling Council introduce a byelaw to restrict the consumption of alcohol outdoors in the same area. This underwent a separate process to the Camping Byelaw through Stirling Council. The East Loch Lomond Camping Byelaws were confirmed by Scottish Ministers on 10 March 2011. The confirmation required two modifications to be made:

1. To apply the Byelaws seasonally from March to October; and
2. The Byelaws not to apply to daytime use of windbreaks or umbrellas

These modifications were made and the Byelaws subsequently became effective on 1 June 2011. The Byelaws have been in place for three seasons, the first season from June to October 2011, and subsequently March to October 2012 and 2013.

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3. Preparing for implementation: April – May 2011

Following the confirmation of the Byelaws by the Scottish Minister in March 2011, preparations got fully underway for the start date of 1 June 2011.

The 2 months period up to the Byelaws taking effect to enable the following preparatory and awareness raising activity:

3.1 Legal arrangements

- Public notice in local press and NPA offices;
- Copies of Byelaws deposited at local authority and NPA offices; and
- Scheme of delegation approved to allow officers to deal with exemption requests

3.2 Operational arrangements

Police and National Park rangers are responsible for enforcement of the Byelaws. An enforcement strategy was developed by both organisations to ensure a smooth introduction of the Byelaws. This included:

- Patrolling protocols
- Communication protocols and practices to deal with parties in breach and allowing reasonable time to move on
- Reporting and recording of Byelaw breaches
- Establishing information requirements for police reporting to Procurator Fiscal, (rangers note taking and recording of evidence).
- Establishing co-ordinated patrolling plans for police and rangers; and
- Co-ordinating Operation Ironworks activities for peak weekends

Training was developed and provided for National Park Rangers, including seasonal staff, to clarify the legal context, patrolling protocols, use of note books and dealing with offences.

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3.3 Communications

A two part communications plan was developed to raise awareness; initially of the impending introduction of the byelaw during April and May and then that the Byelaws were in force from 1 June.

Pre-Byelaws April and May:

- Face to face contact with campers using ELL
- WHW walkers via websites
- PR and media coverage
- Public notice and residents notification

Byelaws in force phase:

- Booklet of full Byelaws (appendix 1)
- Easy read leaflet (appendix 2) and distribution plan
- On site signage at key sites, zone boundaries and on WHW (appendix 3)
- Information panels on buildings, key points and visitor centre
- Websites including NP and WHW
- Promotional activity, press releases, media campaign, articles locally and nationally and public notices; and
- Face to face contact via NPA Rangers, FCS, Police and others.

3.4 Administration

Systems were put in place to administer the designation of formal or informal camping sites under Byelaw 12 and exemption applications under Byelaw 13. The latter allowed for applications to be made for special permission to camp at a particular time or location in the area. These applications tend to be for well managed outdoor activities and events which have historically taken place in the area. The preparations were all completed on target for the commencement date of 1 June 2011.

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4. Implementation

The first season of operating the Camping Byelaws was characterised by poor weather and lower visitor numbers. The lower than normal visitor and camping pressure allowed the new processes and procedures to bed in and gave rangers time to get used to the new operational context and gain confidence in managing the Byelaws and communicating with visitors.

4.1 Practical Operation 2011-2013

4.1.1 Patrol plans

The National Park rangers initially established a high presence with a 2 shifts a day rota during all of the 2011 season, this was adjusted to a single shift pattern in 2012 which was repeated in 2013 as a result of the reduction of incidents encountered and high levels of compliance with the Byelaw. The focus of ranger patrolling still remains focussed on key times such as evenings and early mornings during holiday periods and weekends across the season. The overall reduction in incidents and inappropriate behaviour has meant that less ranger time has been tied up dealing with these situations and has led to less ranger hours being required.

The police resource is targeted on the designated Operation Ironworks weekends as agreed prior to each summer season; outside of this requests for assistance are responded to in the usual manner through 999 or the non-emergency 101 number.

4.1.2 Byelaw breaches and incident reporting

Since implementation most people who attempt to set up camp outwith the designated sites are visited by rangers who advise them of Byelaws. The majority tend to then pack up and go to a designated site. It has only been necessary for police to attend to reinforce this message on a few occasions. This preventative advisory approach helps to ensure a high level of compliance without the need to resort to formal breaches being reported. Indeed, over the first 3 years of implementation only one report to the Procurator Fiscal (for a group of 8 individuals in 2013) has been necessary. The high number of patrols completed in 2012 was as a result of the poor weather and reduced number of visitors leading to patrols taking less time to complete.

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4.2 Exemptions

The following table illustrates the number of Byelaw 13 exemption requests received. Balforn Girl Guides and the Worldwide Church of God have had exemptions approved for larger scale events involving camping that have been taking place in the area for a number of years.

Exemption requests were rejected for individuals or smaller groups looking to camp where provision was available at existing sites such as Salloch.

Year	Exemption requests	Approved
2011	2	2
2012	3	2
2013	3	1

The processes of application and consideration have run smoothly, with information about exemptions being available on the NPA website or in the Byelaws booklet.

4.3 Designated camping areas

The two existing commercial sites and the new site at Salloch were contacted to inform them that their site would be exempt from the Byelaws with no effect on their current operations and site management.

No applications for the designation of any new or extended camping areas within the Byelaw zone have been received.

In partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland a new campsite was created at Salloch providing for 22 pitches with composting toilets, water supply and new parking facilities.

5. **Impacts on East Loch Lomond**

In order to gain a full understanding of visitor usage and the effects of the East Loch Lomond Visitor Management Plan a range of information has been collated. The NPA Ranger Service collects data from patrolled sites, notebook reports and fixed photography. The police record their activity during Operation Ironworks, including any crime reports and the NPA carried out a short visitor survey to attain visitor feedback on the area. A summary of these findings including photos of site recovery is included in Appendix 4, 5, 6 and 7.

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5.1 Anti-social behaviour

The police reports for the period 2011 to 2013 give a clear indication that crime figures are significantly down for the East Loch Lomond area.

In 2011 reports of vandalism fell by 61% and there were no reports of tree damage or serious assaults as have been experienced regularly in previous years. In 2012 the trend continued with a 81% reduction (2009 – 2012) in anti-social behaviour crimes during April to September. 2013 has again seen the pattern sustained with no recurring instances of violence or significant disorder occurring on East Loch Lomond. One exception was an isolated incident at Sallochy campsite where a member of FCS staff was assaulted in 2013. The person responsible has been prosecuted. (see Appendix 4)

5.2 Litter

A significant decrease in litter was experienced once Byelaws were introduced in June 2011 which also coincided with poor summer conditions that year.

Records suggest that there does still remain a litter problem associated with day visitors, many now using sites previously used for camping. There is a shift in the type of litter left behind with fewer abandoned tents, camping equipment and camping waste. The data collected reflects clear peaks in the problem when visitor numbers increase as a result of good weather. The hot sunny weeks during July 2013 are a clear example.

5.3 Fires and fire sites

The recorded fires and fire sites dropped considerably on introduction of the Byelaws with figures remaining low except for one unusual peak in June 2013 that coincided with the a prolonged period of very good weather. Ranger reports indicate that the majority of people having fires are doing so responsibly and generally bringing their own wood. Provision was made at Sallochy in 2012 for the hire of fire pits and purchase of wood to accommodate responsible use. (see Appendix 6)

5.4 Tents and camping

The number of tents or camping activity found in the Byelaw zone but outside the formally designated camp sites has reduced to a small number. The campers encountered during patrols will all have been briefed on the Byelaws and asked to leave the zone or take down their tents. The variation in recorded numbers

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corresponds with periods of improved weather when campers are attracted to the area. During the first two seasons West Highland Way walkers also contributed to the numbers with camping taking place just inside the Byelaw zone to the north end.

The resulting data indicates an overall improvement in the condition of East Loch Lomond with areas no longer under heavy pressure from repeated camping activity now showing significant vegetation recovery. Visitors are experiencing low or no impact from the behaviours and impacts which were typically and historically associated with some camping. (see Appendix 6)

5.5 Visitor perception

A 'snap card' survey was carried out in the East Loch Lomond area in late summer 2013 to gather some snap shot information on visitors experience of the area post the introduction of the camping byelaws.

The survey cards had three simple questions asking visitors to rate their experience of East Loch Lomond, indicate if anything had impacted on their enjoyment and if Byelaws had improved the visit. 224 responses were recorded, with 51% being first time visitors to the National Park. (see Appendix 7)

Visitors were asked to rate the level of impact on their visit of:

- Litter 93% said no or a low impact
- Irresponsible camping 98% said no or a low impact
- Noise 99% said no or a low impact
- Antisocial behaviour 98% said no or a low impact
- Fires 99% said no or a low impact

Visitors asked to rate their overall experience of East Loch Lomond:

- 70% excellent
- 27% good
- 3% not sure

Visitors were asked if byelaws have improved their visit, this result reflected the fact that 51% were first time visitors with:

- 62% not knowing
- 35% yes
- 3% no

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5.6 Community feedback

The community response during the Byelaws has been very positive. Initially all residents were contacted and many visited by rangers to ensure a good understanding of what the Byelaws consisted of. Ranger contact has been retained over the three year period as well as feedback via the East Loch Lomond Visitor Management Group and attendance at Community Council meetings. The Community Council remain strongly supportive of the Byelaws and the positive impact they have had on both visitors and residents enjoyment of the area.

6. **Displacement**

- 6.1 During the development of Byelaws concerns were raised about the potential impacts that camping Byelaws may have in displacing the problem to other areas of the National Park or beyond.
- 6.2 At this stage we have no indication of any significant new problem areas arising as a result of displacement. The National Park has for many years, in fact decades, experienced problems with car based camping and anti-social behaviour particularly on loch shores accessible by road. These locations still remain problematic the only displacement is in relation to the people rather than the problem, i.e. no new problem areas. It is possible that some of those who used to camp on East Loch Lomond may camp in the other popular areas of the park such as Loch Earn or Loch Venetchar, however neither area has experienced the emergence of any additional problems to those already experienced. The main contributor to the levels of pressure is the weather, i.e. sunny days result in high numbers of campers generally on the NPs loch shores.
- 6.3 A minor displacement occurs at the north end of the Byelaw zone where some WHW walkers looking to camp do so just over the zone boundary. The NPA is keen to explore further informal provision at Ardess to help support and broaden the positive camping experiences on East Loch Lomond.

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7. Stirling Council Alcohol Byelaws

- 7.1 The Byelaws prohibiting the drinking of alcohol in public places were applied by Stirling Council to East Loch Lomond at the same time as the Camping Byelaws. The request for East Loch Lomond to become a designated place under the alcohol byelaws was initiated by Buchanan Community Council. The Byelaws are enforced by the police; the NPA does not have a role in enforcement, but does ensure that visitors to the area are made aware of them.
- 7.2 Signage informing the public about the Alcohol Byelaws was not installed in the first year, which limited the opportunity to enforce based on the public not knowing that restrictions apply.
- 7.3 In the last three seasons, there has only been 1 report to the Procurator Fiscal relating to alcohol consumption. The effective enforcement of camping byelaws by rangers and police has meant there have been far fewer issues arising from problems of drinking outdoors. It is evident that the Camping Byelaws have contributed most to the improvements on East Loch Lomond alongside the work on education, service and infrastructure improvements. The Alcohol Byelaws alone would potentially discourage some problems but ultimately Alcohol Byelaws do not restrict the consumption of alcohol in a tent or the possession of alcohol either outdoors or indoors.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The first three seasons of the Byelaws have gone very smoothly from an operational perspective with no issues arising. We have seen significant reductions in anti-social behaviour reported to the police, abuse of facilities and damage to the environment. Visitor survey feedback points to a very positive visitor experience of the area. At the same time there have not been complaints about the existence of the Byelaw and there has been little difficulty in ensuring visitors comply with the Byelaw by camping in the designated sites. The NPA is now very keen to explore extending camping provision in the area at locations such as Rowardennan.
- 8.2 Patrolling from Police Scotland has been scaled back and NPA ranger patrols are now much less resource intensive meaning resources can now be focussed on other problem areas in the National Park. The reduction in reported incidents to the police and individuals being processed through the justice system is also a direct saving in public resources.

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- 8.3 Taken together all of these objective measures have contributed towards delivering a radically improved visitor experience in the area, with local businesses reporting excellent trading. Local business confidence has been raised as evidenced by planning applications submitted to the NPA for holiday lodges, a tearoom, a smokery and restaurant.
- Scheduled waterbus services to Balmaha have become a popular way of accessing the area. Local community representatives are extremely positive about the effects on the area. The National Park Authority intends to capitalise on this success and transformation by supporting more business activity that supports the sustainable growth of the visitor economy in a way that protects the beautiful lochside areas that people come to visit and provides the quality of visitor experience that is expected in a National Park.

9. List of appendices

- Appendix 1 Byelaws booklet attached
- Appendix 2 Byelaws leaflet attached
- Appendix 3 Signage images
- Appendix 4 Extracts from Operation Ironworks reports
- Appendix 5 Extracts environmental impact recordings
- Appendix 6 Ranger patrol records
- Appendix 7 Visitor survey

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Appendix 3 East Loch Lomond Byelaw signage



Milarrochy Bay



Ptarmigan Lodge, north of Rowardennen

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Appendix 4

Extracts from Annual Operation Ironworks reports

Ironworks 2011

It was apparent as the season progressed that the Byelaws were having a positive effect on the area with a reduction in litter, fire damage and general disorder. Crime figures show that pro-active offences detected by the Ironworks patrols fell 50% from 52 in 2010 to 26 in 2011, the majority of the 2011 cases being for minor road traffic offences. There were no littering or vandalism (damage to trees) offences encountered by the patrols in the East Loch Lomond area, nor were there any Attempted Murders or Serious Assaults as experienced in the area in previous years. In addition, reported Vandalism in the East Loch Lomond area (including Drymen and Balmaha) showed a significant reduction of 61.1% from the previous year. As can be seen, the Byelaws have had a positive effect on the local area as a whole and it is essential to ensure that this continues in future years.

Ironworks 2012

In 2012, it was clear that the Byelaws were having a continued positive effect on the area with a reduction in litter, fire damage and general disorder. There was only 1 littering offence detected in the area with no reported vandalism (damage to trees) offences encountered by the patrols in the East Loch Lomond area, nor were there any Attempted Murders or Serious Assaults as experienced in the area in previous years. Analysis of data held by Central Scotland Police relating to Drymen beat which includes ELL has seen a 50% reduction in ASB Calls and a staggering 81.5% reduction in ASB Crimes for the months of April-September between 2009-2012. It is not possible to isolate Ironworks incidents and these figures includes calls/crimes outwith Ironworks not wholly attributable to the operation but it is a significant contribution to the reductions and shows the added benefit of the targetted patrols. One of the main beneficial consequences of the success of the Byelaws on East Loch Lomond was to allow Central Scotland Police to divert valuable resources and patrols to other areas such as those covered by the Five Lochs project.

Ironworks 2013

2013 saw the second full season of the East Loch Lomond Camping Byelaws 2011 and also a Byelaw prohibiting the public consumption of alcohol within the same area. As in previous years, education was the main approach taken whereby if persons were traced they were given advice on the Byelaw and were afforded the opportunity to find an approved site or leave. This approach was successful on all but one occasion whereby eight persons were reported for a contravention of the Byelaw in May. Many persons still cited ignorance of the Byelaws as a reason for camping despite the presence of signage.

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Appendix 5 Environmental impact recordings Habitat recovery

Ten locations were selected within the Byelaw zone that physically showed the impacts of high levels of camping activity i.e. bare ground, damage to trees and old fire sites prior to the Byelaws being implemented. Fixed photography was used to visually capture any changes to the sites over the following years. The example below shows the changes at Rowardennan one of the busiest locations on East Loch Lomond.



2011 Rowardennan north



2012 Rowardennan north



2013 Rowardennan north

All sites selected show a reduction in the amount of bare ground year on year with vegetation cover improving, and no signs of camping activity.

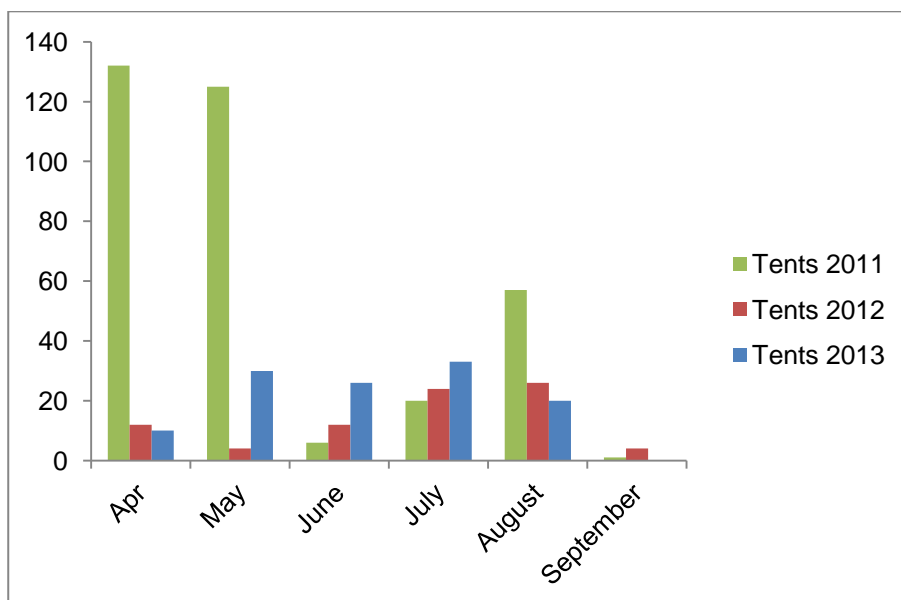
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Appendix 6 Ranger patrol records

The following data was collected during ranger patrols in 2011, 2012 and 2013 and gives an indication of the patterns for tents, litter and fires:



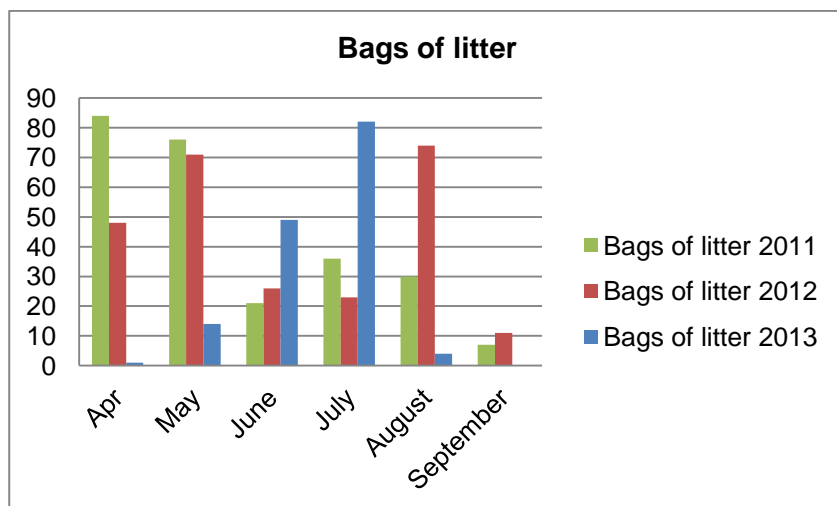
Camping activity

The ranger patrol data gathered over 2011, 2012 and 2013 has shown a decline in the number of tents found outside designated camp sites since byelaw implementation, the introduction on 1 June 2011 is clearly visible in tent count for 2011. The data includes tents or camping activity taking place often recorded before they camper is asked to move on. Fluctuations in numbers correspond with periods of improved weather. During the first two seasons West Highland Way walkers often mis-interpreted the northern boundary to the Byelaws zone resulting in a higher than normal tent count in the Ptarmigan Lodge area. This was rectified with improved signage for 2012/13.

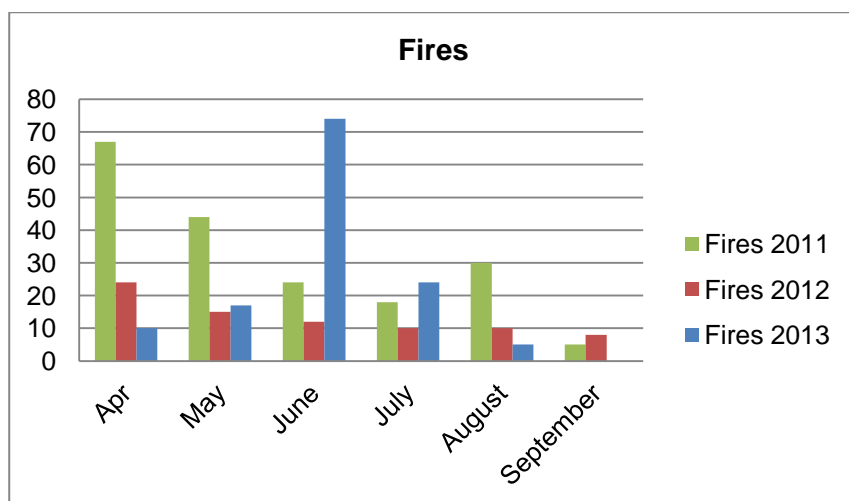
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Quantities of litter observed by rangers are lower than before the introduction of the Byelaws, there have been two occasions when levels have spiked to similar numbers to 2011. This can be attributed to good weather and increased visitor numbers predominantly day visitors.



Fires and fire site numbers were markedly lower in 2012 than in 2011 but saw a spike to a 3 year high in June 2013 most taking place at Rowardennan, however rangers report that almost all visitors having fires were doing so with wood they have brought with them and generally adhering to advice to keep them small in size and remove traces of them.

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Appendix 7 Visitor survey

A short 'snap card' survey was trialled in the East Loch Lomond area in late summer 2013 to gather some specific information on visitors experience of the area post the introduction of the camping Byelaws . 224 responses were recorded, with 51% being first time visitors to the National Park.

Visitors surveyed came from:

- 15% local area
- 30% elsewhere in Scotland
- 31% elsewhere in the UK
- 24% from overseas

Visitors were asked to rate the level of impact on their visit of:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Litter | 93% said no or a low impact |
| • Irresponsible camping | 98% said no or a low impact |
| • Noise | 99% said no or a low impact |
| • Antisocial behaviour | 98% said no or a low impact |
| • Fires | 99% said no or a low impact |

Visitors were asked to rate their overall experience of East Loch Lomond:

70% excellent
27% good
3% not sure

Visitors were asked if they thought byelaws had improved their visit:

62% didn't know
35% yes
3% no

The survey sample was small but results clearly indicate that the visitor management measures taken forward are having a positive effect on the visitor's enjoyment of the area.