# NatureScot considers overnight Burleigh Sands car park closures to protect Loch Leven from unsustainable camping



The picturesque Loch Leven, a vital ecological treasure boasting a National Nature Reserve status, is facing increasing pressures from an influx of campers and campervans. In response to the rising number of visitors and the accompanying issues of environmental degradation and antisocial behaviour, NatureScot is examining the possibility of implementing overnight closures at the Burleigh Sands car park during peak seasons. This potential strategy aims to mitigate the "unsustainable" levels of camping that have recently plagued the area.

Loch Leven is not merely a scenic destination; it holds the distinguished titles of a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protection Area, and a Ramsar site. These classifications reflect its ecological significance. The ongoing challenges at Burleigh Sands have raised alarm among local authorities, prompting calls for effective management measures. NatureScot has noted that the increasing presence of campers has led to littering, inappropriate toileting, fires, and damage to delicate vegetation, all of which threaten both local wildlife and the overall visitor experience.

A spokesperson for NatureScot commented on the importance of balancing visitor access with wildlife protection, stating: "Loch Leven National Nature Reserve is first and foremost a nature reserve... Unfortunately, in recent years there have been unsustainable levels of campervan and car camping taking place." The agency is contemplating various strategies, including the aforementioned overnight car park closures and the installation of physical barriers to control access. However, it emphasised that no final decisions have been made, indicating ongoing discussions and evaluations.

Councillor Willie Robertson, representing the Kinross-shire ward, has expressed concern over the situation, likening it to the "wild west" due to the lack of regulation and the resultant ecological disruption. In a bid to forge a collaborative plan, Robertson is assembling a multi-agency meeting that will include police representatives, council officials, and NatureScot wardens. The prospect of introducing local by-laws could empower law enforcement to address the disturbances that have marred the natural beauty of Loch Leven.

Calls for a more structured approach to camping have also gained momentum. Residents and local officials alike have echoed the need for a camping permit system, similar to one already in place at Loch Lomond. Such measures, according to proponents, could help manage the environmental impact while allowing visitors to enjoy the reserve responsibly. This aligns with NatureScot’s broader mission to promote sustainable outdoor access and instil a culture of environmental stewardship among visitors.

The challenges posed by over-visitation extend beyond camping issues. Recent reports indicate deteriorating water quality in Loch Leven, with increasing instances of toxic blue-green algae, exacerbated by agricultural runoff and climate change. Councillor Robertson has called for more stringent controls over phosphorus discharges to protect aquatic life and public health, illustrating the broader context of environmental threats facing this vital ecosystem.

As discussions continue, the focus remains on securing the future of Loch Leven as a haven of biodiversity while ensuring that it remains accessible for responsible enjoyment. The collaborative efforts among local authorities, conservation groups, and the community are crucial in striving for a balance that protects this irreplaceable natural landscape for future generations.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/loch-leven-car-park-could-35273190), [[5]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/camping-permit-system-call-after-24567870)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/loch-leven-car-park-could-35273190), [[2]](https://www.nature.scot/enjoying-outdoors/visit-our-nature-reserves/loch-leven-nnr/loch-leven-nnr-visiting-reserve), [[6]](https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-board-meeting-25-august-2021)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-board-meeting-25-august-2021), [[7]](https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/business-environment/environment/3992560/loch-leven-toxic-algae-problems-clearly-getting-worse-says-councillor/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/camping-permit-system-call-after-24567870), [[2]](https://www.nature.scot/enjoying-outdoors/visit-our-nature-reserves/loch-leven-nnr/loch-leven-nnr-visiting-reserve)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/business-environment/environment/3992560/loch-leven-toxic-algae-problems-clearly-getting-worse-says-councillor/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/loch-leven-car-park-could-35273190> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.nature.scot/enjoying-outdoors/visit-our-nature-reserves/loch-leven-nnr/loch-leven-nnr-visiting-reserve> - NatureScot's official page for Loch Leven National Nature Reserve provides detailed information for visitors, including guidelines on wild camping, water sports, and the Heritage Trail. It emphasizes responsible behavior to protect wildlife and the environment, advising visitors to follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and leave no trace. The page also highlights seasonal restrictions, such as avoiding water sports from September to March to protect birdlife, and provides practical details like toilet facilities and access notes.
3. <https://www.nature.scot/nnr-faq> - NatureScot's National Nature Reserves (NNRs) FAQ page addresses common questions about camping, fires, and overnight stays in NNR car parks. It outlines the 'Stay the Night' initiative, allowing self-contained motorhomes and campervans to park overnight at designated sites, including Burleigh Sands at Loch Leven. The page provides guidelines on vehicle requirements, time limits, parking arrangements, and terms and conditions to ensure a pleasant experience for all visitors while protecting the natural environment.
4. <https://www.nature.scot/visitors-asked-avoid-water-sports-loch-leven-protect-birds> - NatureScot's announcement urges visitors to refrain from water sports at Loch Leven National Nature Reserve from September 1 to March 31 to protect over 40,000 water birds present during this period. The advisory highlights the sensitivity of these birds to disturbances, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a peaceful environment for their rest and feeding. The page also notes that motorized or sail craft are prohibited year-round to safeguard the loch's wildlife.
5. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/camping-permit-system-call-after-24567870> - An article from the Daily Record reports on calls for a camping permit system at Loch Leven after residents expressed concerns over litter and waste left by campers at Burleigh Sands. Kinross-shire councillor Willie Robertson advocates for a system similar to Loch Lomond's to manage the impact of wild camping and campervanning, aiming to preserve the area's natural beauty and prevent environmental degradation.
6. <https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-board-meeting-25-august-2021> - NatureScot's Board Meeting minutes from August 25, 2021, discuss increased visitor numbers to National Nature Reserves, including Loch Leven, leading to pressures such as littering, fires, and overuse of facilities. The document highlights the need for measures to manage these challenges, including encouraging campers to use stoves instead of open fires and implementing overnight parking arrangements at various reserves to accommodate campervans and motorhomes.
7. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/business-environment/environment/3992560/loch-leven-toxic-algae-problems-clearly-getting-worse-says-councillor/> - An article from The Courier reports on concerns raised by councillor Willie Robertson regarding worsening toxic blue-green algae problems in Loch Leven. The councillor attributes the issue to high phosphorus levels caused by fertilizer runoff and sewage overflows, exacerbated by climate change. He calls for stricter controls on phosphorus deposits and tighter regulations on sewage discharges to protect the loch's water quality and prevent harm to wildlife and public health.