# NatureScot considers overnight car park closure to curb camping damage at Loch Leven



NatureScot is weighing the prospect of closing a car park at Loch Leven overnight during the peak season as a measure to mitigate the disruptive impact of increasing campervan and camping activities in the area. This decision is part of a broader strategy aimed at addressing the "unsustainable" levels of camping that have led to considerable ecological and community concerns at the Burleigh Sands car park, situated within the Loch Leven National Nature Reserve.

Loch Leven is a distinguished site, recognised not only as a national nature reserve but also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protected Area, and a Ramsar site, thus highlighting its international importance in terms of biodiversity and conservation. NatureScot has stated its commitment to protect this delicate ecosystem while also promoting responsible visitor access. A spokesperson for the agency noted that camping in the area has resulted in significant issues, including littering, improper toileting, and fire damage to local vegetation. This situation has detrimentally affected both the wildlife and the overall enjoyment of the reserve by its visitors.

The management at NatureScot is currently exploring several potential interventions, including the idea of partial overnight closures of the car park during high-demand periods and the possibility of installing a height barrier or gate to prevent larger vehicles from entering. As this proposal is still under consideration, no final decisions have been made, and consultations with the public will follow any planned changes.

Concerns have also been voiced by local officials. Kinross-shire councillor Willie Robertson described the camping situation around Loch Leven as reminiscent of the "wild west," indicating a lack of regulation and oversight leading to the aforementioned problems. He plans to convene a multi-agency meeting with local police, council officials, and NatureScot wardens to explore potential solutions, including the potential introduction of new by-laws that could empower authorities to manage the issues more effectively.

The growing debate around camping regulations has been echoed by local residents, who have called for a permit system similar to the one implemented in Loch Lomond, which has been viewed as an effective means to manage camping and mitigate environmental impacts. Previous reports have emphasised that wild camping, while a cherished tradition for many outdoor enthusiasts, can have alarming consequences for local ecosystems, particularly in sensitive areas like Loch Leven. Advocates for responsible camping highlight the need for improved guideline enforcement and public education regarding proper etiquette in natural spaces.

In recent years, NatureScot has undertaken various initiatives aimed at balancing recreational opportunities with ecological preservation at Loch Leven. For instance, restrictions on water sports during specific times of the year have been implemented to safeguard important bird populations that utilise the loch for feeding and nesting. These ongoing efforts mirror a broader commitment to ensuring that Scotland’s natural beauty is protected while still accessible to the public.

As discussions surrounding the future management of camping at Loch Leven unfold, the challenge remains to find a harmonious balance between enjoying Scotland's remarkable natural landscapes and preserving the fragile ecosystems that define them.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/loch-leven-car-park-could-35273190), [[4]](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), [[5]](https://www.nature.scot/enjoying-outdoors/visit-our-nature-reserves/loch-leven-nnr/loch-leven-nnr-about-reserve)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.nature.scot/enjoying-outdoors/visit-our-nature-reserves/loch-leven-nnr/loch-leven-nnr-visiting-reserve), [[6]](https://www.nature.scot/enjoying-outdoors/visit-our-nature-reserves/loch-leven-nnr/loch-leven-nnr-reserve-leaflet)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.nature.scot/visitors-asked-avoid-water-sports-loch-leven-protect-birds), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-61356841)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## 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 on visiting the reserve, including guidelines for wild camping, water sports, and facilities available. It emphasizes the importance of responsible access to protect wildlife and the environment, highlighting the reserve's status as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protected Area, and Ramsar site. The page also offers guidance on activities such as canoeing, kayaking, and paddleboarding, and provides information on visitor amenities like toilets and wildlife hides.
3. <https://www.nature.scot/visitors-asked-avoid-water-sports-loch-leven-protect-birds> - This NatureScot announcement urges visitors to refrain from water sports at Loch Leven National Nature Reserve from 1 September to 31 March to protect internationally important water birds. The advisory highlights that during this period, the loch hosts over 40,000 birds, and disturbances can negatively impact their rest and feeding. The guidance is part of ongoing efforts to balance recreational activities with conservation priorities at the reserve.
4. <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. The piece highlights the negative impact of wild camping on the environment and local wildlife, with Kinross-shire councillor Willie Robertson advocating for a system similar to that in Loch Lomond to address the issues.
5. <https://www.nature.scot/enjoying-outdoors/visit-our-nature-reserves/loch-leven-nnr/loch-leven-nnr-about-reserve> - This NatureScot page provides an overview of Loch Leven National Nature Reserve, detailing its management, habitats, and species. It emphasizes the reserve's significance as a wetland site supporting internationally important populations of wintering and breeding waterbirds. The page also discusses the reserve's diverse habitats, including wetland and woodland areas, and outlines NatureScot's efforts in habitat management and visitor engagement to protect the reserve's natural heritage.
6. <https://www.nature.scot/enjoying-outdoors/visit-our-nature-reserves/loch-leven-nnr/loch-leven-nnr-reserve-leaflet> - The Loch Leven National Nature Reserve leaflet offers comprehensive information about the reserve, including its history, wildlife, and visitor facilities. It highlights the reserve's importance as a habitat for breeding ducks and migratory geese, and its rich historical significance, including connections to Mary Queen of Scots. The leaflet also provides details on the Heritage Trail, visitor amenities, and guidelines for responsible access to ensure the protection of the reserve's natural and cultural heritage.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-61356841> - A BBC News article reports on the rebuilding of the Mill Hide at Loch Leven National Nature Reserve, which was destroyed by fire in February 2021. The new hide, named the Phoenix Hide, was funded through a £30,000 crowdfunding appeal and aims to discourage anti-social behaviour with its open design. The article highlights the community's support and the importance of the hide for birdwatching and connecting with nature.