**Cromarty Tourist Improvement Project**

**2019**

**Response from locals and business**

**Evidence file**

LETTER OF COMPLAINT

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| *Personal details redacted by Highland Council* |

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Hello.

A copy of the official NC500 map has just come my way; it’s a lovely clear map even with all the information contained thereon.  However, I was somewhat surprised to see that Cromarty apparently has a campsite. It certainly doesn’t! Visitors park on the Links, but it is private ground used by the primary school and local residents, with no facilities for campers or caravans. At the moment a limited number of motor homes are permitted provided they are completely self-sufficient, stay within the designated parking area and respect other users. Most do and are very appreciative.  However, with steadily increasing numbers, we have had some trouble this year with litter, waste being emptied (and worse from campers) and abuse from some, in addition to locals’ loss of amenity and privacy, so there is considerable debate as to whether the area will remain accessible to tourists next season, which in many ways would be a pity.

Obviously the information on the map indicates that this an official campsite, so that when visitors arrive to be told that it isn’t, they can be understandably confused and even irritated.  Perhaps this could be removed from the map before next season?

I have copied our community council chair into this message, as she has done more work than anyone to smooth ruffled feathers whilst providing a Highland welcome to considerate visitors!

With thanks,

Fran Sadler

LETTER OF COMPLAINT TO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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 | Mon, 16 Jul 2018, 17:59 |  | https://lh5.googleusercontent.com/fC5dVeCU40xVhpn703V-nrKZ9QRWpiRGTXTljSlAmK8ByrOkXTCcjiKBobo768sQiR7r0kjIxnnsbCHnSd89krppZyiEJ7QH4quqtv8Mj_CtU3o2g8YoAt_maeAJop9H3OspPXg6https://lh6.googleusercontent.com/3OsFd991j4U-QrI0miBmPF61yNJp1VK9ZZ97veDdNnXYJYnxbeR-JfvTsDV-HFvF7yACPPlvBp9rcNa_uLR8DAwCxe0A7yWeOXvygYFKYRVTUnZBHDlTz3wK7FRJLlXoc5EGtJp0 |
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Jacquie - it is with some regret that I feel I need to write to you in your capacity of chair of CDCC with regard to the ongoing issue of camping on the links. As you will be aware I have been accepting of the policy of turning a blind eye to the ongoing use however I feel the situation is now reaching breaking point  - not just for me but for a number of local people who use the links regularly who may not be as forthright at expressing their views. Here's a brief synopsis from my experience over the last 2 weeks:

* my dog has been poisoned by whatever she licked up from a campervan discharging onto the links.
* same dog got cut paw from broken wineglass on links
* dog also ate cooked chicken bones left by a camper - potentially fatal
* bins overflowing with rubbish - I've watched the campers going with their bin bags and filling the bins and when they can't cram any more in -they try the dog bins.
* 2 lots of human excrement on the beach - one was organised to bring toilet paper which would point towards a camper - yes there are nice new toilet signposts but for some, it is simply too far.
* abusive behaviour from a camper - "get your f$%\*ing dog of my campsite"
* general invasion of privacy as they are all now camped outside my windows.
* campers parking in the middle of the links which inevitably leads to fights with their dogs or local dogs mooching around the vans - have a look out this evening.

I could go on -  that said, 95% of the campers are great - it is the ignorant few that are spoiling things & the sheer numbers. It used to be the odd van or tent for the odd night - however, we are not even in the English school holidays yet and with between 8-15 vans/tents a night, pretty much ever night since May, it is no longer sustainable. They undoubtedly do bring some business to the town and I wouldn't want to deter them - closing the links will simply scatter them off round the town - the town desperately needs a campsite and this issue cannot be ignored any longer. I'll stop short of complaining to the planning authority for the moment but enough is enough - if it's not something CDCC can take forward, is it something that the development trust could try and progress? If nothing else, the town is missing a trick here - the Rosemarkie site charges £12-£14 per person per night - an average of 20 people per night in 10 vans is £560 per night  - extrapolates over just the months of May to August equates to £68,320! That's enough to pay a full time wage and generate a surplus. Whatever happened to the potential site at the end of the links?

Regards



Greg

LETTER OF COMPLAINT

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Hi Jacquie- another lot of human excrement on the beach today - no coincidence that there were 3 campervans - parked at my end last night, none of which would have had toilets and as it lashed with rain all day yesterday it’s very unlikely to have been from people using the beach. There was a group of tourists looking at it just now who were horrified - what kind of message does that send to visitors? Bins are full again at this end of links after being emptied on Wednesday. The general consensus is that residents have had enough - I believe Fran is getting pretty hacked off with them all at her end, who can blame her.

I know you looked up the Scottish Outdoor Access code - on further research, the Land Reform Act (2003) which enshrines the right to “wild camping” does not apply to motorised transport. The evidence left also implies that the code is not being followed by some.

The issue is getting out of hand - I’ve seen one local just about getting in a fight with some guys in a tent (& a car). People just disregard the signs anyway - I know you have been shifting vans on but others take their place just as quick - you shouldn’t need to be doing that.

As a community, we need to have a think about how we can cater for visitors. When I bought my house 15 years ago we used to get the very very odd van - but it is now a constant stream - I’ve already outlined some of the many issues in previous email. I’ve come to the conclusion that the links is not appropriate as a campsite - the rest of the town may feel differently, but from speaking to folk, a lot don’t & most don’t have to live with it. There must be alternatives - could the Albyn housing land be used? Let’s face it, despite the talk, they are never going to build on it! I think at the very least it needs raised at the CCDT AGM to see what can be done for the future.

Cheers

Greg

HISTORY OF ISSUES DATING BACK TO 2015 – COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The Links, 2015 and beyond

It would be useful to clarify the situation about The Links and its closure to motorhomes and caravans.

It’s important to point out that the land is privately owned. The majority is owned by Cromarty Estate and two small areas of the bank by adjacent house owners. Thus, the decision to close off the area has not been taken by Cromarty and District Community Council (CDCC) which has no jurisdiction over it.

Over the past few years, the numbers of motorhomes, camper vans, caravans and tents using the land has been increasing beyond anyone’s expectation. At times last year there were between 30 and 40 vehicles at any one time parked there for long periods and one particular caravan stayed there for 3 weeks, not occupied for some of the time. Because it’s ‘free’, some of the long-stayers are clearly avoiding paying to stay at licensed sites at Rosemarkie and Fortrose.

The incidence of humans fouling the banks has been extraordinary. Without going into too much detail, it has been quite upsetting and distressing to think that people cannot be bothered to walk some 100m to the public toilets. The primary school uses the Links for sports and recreation and this adds another dimension to this particular issue. The majority of this was probably from campers in tents but undoubtedly there has been waste emptying from caravans and motorhomes both on the banks and in the long grassed area by the beach as well as in the sea. Coupled with this, there has been an increase of littering despite there being bins provided and old camping equipment including tents and parasol umbrellas left on the grass.

In short, the amenity of the area has been spoiled during the 2014 season, both for locals and other visitors and which has caused a large number of complaints. In fact, at least two local dog walkers have been asked by ‘campers’ to leave the area as they thought it was a caravan/camp site!

And on this point, the fundamental issue rests. Highland Council has contacted Cromarty Estate and advised it that because the area is used for more than 28 days a year for motorhomes and caravans, it requires to be licensed. With this licence would come all the legal requirements such as spacing between vehicles, fire safety, sanitary arrangements and all the usual amenities of a camp site. The same council also said that there would be no likelihood whatsoever of it being granted a license. This, essentially, is the reason why the Links has had to be closed to motorhomes and caravans - because it would be breaking the law to allow the camping to continue.

Nobody wants to dissuade people from coming to Cromarty and supporting the local community and businesses. The CDCC has debated this issue at length, including a suggestion made about charging a fee (which would ironically effectively turn it into more of an official campsite and thus need licensing) and this would in fact be extraordinarily difficult to manage 24hrs a day, 7 days a week for six months of the year, even with honesty boxes or using local businesses to collect charges.

There are two large well-established camp sites at Rosemarkie and Fortrose and there are other areas in and around Cromarty where the odd motorhome could be parked for shorter periods of time and that would not cause the same problems that we have been experiencing on the Links.

In the meantime, it is genuinely hoped that this will actually make Cromarty a more attractive place to visit, with the Links restored to an amenity for locals and visitors alike. Nobody is trying to stop anyone from visiting the town - there have been several new businesses that have opened recently which rely on visitors and actively encourage people to come here to share this unique place.

I hope you can see that the issues involved in this decision have been considerable and that the legal restrictions have effectively created a situation that left the landowners little choice.

If anyone complains about this, at least the full facts are available here to bring to their attention.

Jeremy Price

Chair

Cromarty and District Community Council