

Petitioner submission of 19 May 2023

PE1962/D: Stop motorhomes parking overnight out with formal campsites, caravan parks and Aires

Adding new aires will not be effective unless you enforce restrictions on “wild camping”. There is a certain sub-section of camper van owners and people renting campervans who want to tour Scotland without paying for pitches or facilities. Until this behaviour is legally prohibited and enforcement carried out against it then these people will continue to “wild camp” no matter how many facilities are provided for them even if they are low cost. It is not more facilities that we requested in our petition, it is a stop to the illusion that you can “park for the night” wherever you wish in Scotland.

We run a caravan park and campervan users can empty their grey and chemical waste at our park for a fee. Last year one lady pulled up to empty and fill her water who was very annoyed at the rental company that she had rented the campervan from as they had promoted the rental as fully self-contained and hence not needing campsites or aires. They said she would have enough water to do the whole trip. It is this mentality we wish to stem.

The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTF) cannot be accessed by commercial campsites like ourselves and there is little or no funding for us to expand or enhance our facilities. In the meantime, we are having to compete with government subsidised not for profit community run establishments at the same time being expected to provide facilities for people staying off our park to come in and use. We have upgraded our existing water service point and added another one at our own expense (we spent over £5,000) while the Scottish Government give money to not-for-profit organisations to create such facilities for free...we cannot compete!

The “responsible” motorhomers wild camp or use rest stops for 2-3 nights and then come to a campsite and use our facilities to excess to last them for the next 2-3 nights wild camping. This means more water, electricity and rubbish in our bins. They cost us more to host and therefore drive our prices up. The more we charge, the more people choose to “wild camp” and it becomes a vicious circle.

Just last week there was a motorhome “wild camping” in the turning circle outside our gates. This happens several times a year and has already happened twice this year. There seems to be an inability or unwillingness for the authorities to stop this from happening (we asked a passing police car to move them on once from this location and they refused to do this). There is currently no “turning circle” sign in this location and we have been promised one for the last 2 years and it has not yet materialised (although we ask on at least a monthly basis and always get told that they will get it done soon).

The highland council have now erected a passing place (no Parking) sign at this location.

We have tried asking some of the motorhomers who have parked here in the past to move on and have not had a very pleasant response so we have stopped trying to do this. Most campsites in the North of Scotland experience behaviour like this on a regular basis. We all experience theft of services. We all have motorhomers coming in to use our services without paying for it on a weekly basis throughout the season. Last year we ended up installing code locks on our toilet blocks at a cost of £4,000 in an attempt to stem this abuse.

We believe that the only effective way to deal with such behaviour is to ensure that motorhomes park overnight in authorised and regulated spaces only. Otherwise, the behaviour that we are witnessing is only going to get worse.

On a side note we have concerns about the idea of a Transient Visitor Levy (tourist tax). This will make the cost of using a formal campsite even more (unless you have an effective strategy to collect this from “wild campers”) which again will encourage more people not to use campsites like ours.