



**Mountaineering
Scotland**

The Granary
West Mill Street
Perth PH1 5QP
Tel: 01738 493 942

By email to NAFSEC@snh.gov.uk

David Henderson Howat
Convener
National Access Forum
c/o Scottish National Heritage
Battleby House
Redgorton
Perth
PH1 3EW

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Dear David

NAF 42/3: Traffic and Parking

Following an opportunity to consult with a sample of our members, I summarise below some examples of concerns relating to traffic and parking. These incorporate the comments made by our Access Officer, James Orpwood, which he sent to the NAF Secretary by email on 18 June 2017.

Policy position

In the context of mountaineering interests, our position is that we recognise that limited parking facilities or restrictive measures can result in road safety hazards, indiscriminate parking and damage to the land. We therefore encourage the provision of appropriately screened parking in areas of high public usage.

General comment

We understand that the provision of car parking facilities incurs a cost, and appreciate that reasonable charging for car parking is an appropriate mechanism to recoup some of the money invested in the provision of these facilities whilst also contributing to their upkeep.

However, we believe that where land is owned by the Scottish Government, local authority or government agency that car parking for outdoor activities should be provided at no charge or a small, affordable charge. Our rationale is that we believe that the government should be contributing to, and supporting, local economies, especially tourism as the main industry in Scotland. Low or no cost parking also supports government strategies relating to inclusivity, encouraging healthy living and preventative spend.

Forest Enterprise Scotland provision

We welcome provision of parking facilities by FES but we are concerned that charges could escalate towards the levels now seen in the Lake District. Parking charges which are too high simply encourage visitors to avoid designated parking areas, increasing verge parking with resultant safety risks to road users, and may even deter participation in outdoor activities. Relevant examples include FES parking at Loch Morlich and Glenmore.

Another concern with FES parking facilities is that car parks where charging is imposed, e.g. in the Northern Cairngorms, do not officially permit overnight stays, which puts even greater pressure on other overcrowded parking locations such as the forest road access adjacent to Glenmore Lodge.

We believe this issue needs to be addressed. Such restrictions deter hill walkers, long-distance walkers and wild campers who wish to access the hills for multi-day trips or bothy visits. A solution would be to provide more specific signage which permits overnight parking by vehicles which are unoccupied.

Campervans and motorhomes

Local authorities and government agencies have widely different approaches to campervans and motorhomes which are used increasingly by many who pursue a range of outdoor activities.

Some positively encourage visitors with these vehicles, such as Shetland and the Outer Hebrides which offer parking places for a very reasonable £10 per night. These facilities have been organised by local communities with some funding support to encourage tourism spend.

The tactics adopted by other local authorities and some government agencies, for example FES, contrasts with the welcoming approach seen on the islands, and in France and some other European countries. In the latter, there are free or low cost 'aires' offering free parking and facilities, such as taps, waste disposal and electric hook up. We believe that it would be reasonable for FES car parks, which are in public ownership and a national resource, to be available for people to park overnight. These car parks are often well away from houses and well screened, and therefore in ideal locations.

Risks to health & safety associated with popular informal parking locations

From our survey, we believe that the majority of popular Munros have adequate parking. Exceptions which are a risk to those parking and other road users, due to their location on trunk routes with fast moving traffic include Ben Cruachan at the falls of Cruachan railway station, and the access to Auch estate off the A82 near Bridge of Orchy, where people park on the verge. A solution would be for the local authorities to provide a simple layby to offer safe parking.

The worst location in Scotland for overcrowded parking, inconvenience to locals and safety risks to all road users is the Fairy Pools on Skye below the Cuillin; Neist Point and the Quiraing on Skye are also dangerous and disorganised.

Exorbitant parking charges

Argyll and Bute Council operate the park at Luss with a policy of pre-charging £1 per hour. Some hill walks in the area are totally dependent upon being able to park at Luss. Parking for an 8-hour hill walk costs £8, with the risk of further costs or sanctions if a walker is delayed and this time is exceeded. We consider this to be exorbitant as there is no alternative parking available.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the NAF discussion paper.

Yours sincerely

**David Gibson
CEO, Mountaineering Scotland**