



Forestry and
Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba

Motorhome and Campervan Trial

Review Report

January 2021



Executive Summary

- i The number of overnighting motorhomes and campervans at Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) sites has grown significantly in recent years. Current FLS policy is not to permit overnight parking, but there are very limited resources to enforce it, undermining the credibility of the policy with users and staff.
- ii At the beginning of 2020, FLS was planning a small permit-based campervan trial across Scotland, which was cancelled due to COVID-19.
- iii To help support the rural tourism sector and to manage the predicted surge in campervan activity after lockdown restrictions were lifted, FLS agreed to trial one night stays by self-contained campervans and motorhomes. A trial with **30** sites was launched across Scotland in mid-July. Most sites had no facilities, some had toilets and one (Clatteringshaws) had a Rural Tourism Infrastructure Funded (RTIF) chemical toilet disposal provision.
- iv Information and data for this review of the trial was gathered from a number of sources: an on-line user survey; emails from users and stakeholders to a dedicated trial email address and feedback sessions with regional Land Management staff impacted by the trial.
- v User satisfaction was one trial objective and **66%** of users rated the trial experience as **good, very good** or **excellent** with almost **90%** stating they would visit another trial site and **95%** feeling their expectations had been **met** or **exceeded**. User expectations varied, some felt a basic offer with no facilities was what the experience was about, while others felt additional services such as access to fresh water and chemical and waste water disposal points would improve the experience.
- vi The original trial intended to charge **£5** for a one night stop-over, however due to time constraints a charging mechanism was not put in place for the reworked trial and it was implemented with no charge. Whilst all regions would have preferred to charge for the trial, it was not always the deciding factor when choosing which or how many sites were in the trial.
- vii Users were asked to indicate their 'willingness to pay', with **52%** stating they would pay more than the proposed **£5**, including **20%** who were willing to pay **£10**.
- viii Most regions reported more campervan activity this summer than in previous years, although it is unclear what proportion was related to COVID-19. Visitor numbers in general were much higher than in previous years, with some sites reporting double the usual footfall in August.
- ix Most regions reported campervan demand outweighed capacity, generally at weekends in July and August. There were only a few reports of changed patterns of use, mainly less locals visiting some sites when campervan numbers were high.



- x Overnight campervan activity, in most regions, was generally higher at 'non-trial' sites than at trial sites. The main reason given was 'location' - campervanners knew where they wanted to go and knew there was limited or no FLS enforcement at sites. There was also visitor confusion reported as some third party apps and forums stated all FLS car parks were included in the trial.
- xi Regional Visitor Services and Delivery staff provided feedback on the operational aspects of the trial. Almost **50%** of responses stated the trial helped manage overnight stays in their area, with **40%** saying it did not help.
- xii Trial **pros** focused on having a positive story when engaging with visitors, being able to inform them about the legitimate stop-over sites and asking them to move on. Being able to offer visitors a legitimate alternative site led to a more positive response from visitors and potentially reduced the safety risk of staff engaging with the public.
- xiii Trial **cons** focused mainly on lack of resources to manage and monitor the trial effectively, a limited number of sites, not being able to include some preferred sites in the trial and no income from the trial to offset operational costs.
- xiv Most regional staff said that less than **50%** of anti-social behaviour at trial sites was linked to campervan or motorhome users. Most anti-social behaviour at trial sites was attributed to tent/vehicle campers and used more regional resource to manage than self-contained motorhome or campervan activity.
- xv The timeframe between agreeing and starting the trial was very short. Implementation of the trial would have benefitted from more planning time prior to launch.
- xvi Fifty sites were removed from the initial trial list supplied by regions due to a combination of environmental impact concerns and potential confusion caused by two schemes operating in LLTNP, resulting in Central region having no trial sites. West Region hosted more than a third of all the trial sites.
- xvii Potential planning issues and licencing requirements for sites allowing overnight stays remain unclear.