
17th February 2021

Informal Camping

Summary

The pandemic has driven increased appeal in outdoor activity, while simultaneously government imposed travel restrictions have cut consumer travel choice/ options. Increasing the prevalence of informal camping activity in both motorhomes and tents, something which is expected to continue in 2021, as and when restrictions ease. This report provides CPP Area Community Planning Group members the latest position following the setting up of a short life working group with a wide range of partners drawn from the public, third and private sectors.

1. Purpose

- A report was submitted to the CPP Management Committee before Christmas looking at how to respond to the rise of staycation activity. This report provides CPP Area Community Planning Group members with the latest position following the setting up of a short life working group, with a wide range of partners drawn from the public, third and private sectors.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the partnership group note the content of this paper and progress to date,

2.2 That partners continue to collaborate to try and address the challenges faced due to increased informal camping activity.

2.3 We progress with work on the actions identified from the short life working group.

3. Background

Over recent years people have been holidaying differently. Most notably, we have seen that there has been a steady increase in the number of people camping informally (in tents and

campervans) in many parts of Argyll and Bute. This situation was exacerbated last summer following the easing of lockdown restrictions in July across the UK, with many places and local communities experiencing an increase in visitors informally camping. The primary drivers for this increase was the inability to travel out with the UK and many tourism businesses not opening for business.

Tourism is exceptionally important to Argyll and Bute's local economy and also our way of life. The council wishes to welcome as many visitors as sustainably possible, to enjoy the local places we are fortunate to call home. This custom supports many services and facilities we currently rely on as our population on its own cannot sustain them. Some useful information on the economic value of holiday park and campsite visitors can be found at the following [link](#).

The situation across 2020 due to COVID-19 and the initial level of restrictions, which visitors and businesses had to work through, was in many ways unique, however it is very much likely to continue in to 2021 (and perhaps beyond this date subject to the success of the vaccine being rolled across the globe), as some elements of travel are predicted to continue to be severely restricted. It is also recognised that motorhome usage/rental and ownership continues to rise, whilst some areas have also seen an increase in camping activity. It is expected, and reasonable to assume, that some of these visitor trends/patterns will continue in 2021 and beyond. Some further high level information can be found in **Appendix 1**.

The vast majority of visitors to Argyll and Bute respect the people and places they visit. However, in certain circumstances, challenges can occur and will sometimes result in complaints to various public agencies (Littering, inappropriate disposal of toilet waste, inconsiderate parking, antisocial behaviour, etc.). Sometimes the main issue can simply be the volume and frequency of people using a particular area, week after week.

Visitors and prospective visitors are also more readily sharing locations in a variety of ways on where to camp informally. Some Facebook groups have tens of thousands of users. Even if only a very small number of these actually visit certain locations it could present unintended cumulative effects and issues. The following is not an exhaustive list but examples include - [Google Map of locations created by users](#) , [Park4night](#) , [User generated](#)

[motorhome map](#), [User generated Wild Camping map](#) and [Searchforsites](#). Certain locations are also shared widely on activity forums for specific user groups such as fishing, sea kayaking, etc.

4. Detail

The council, working with a wide range of partners/stakeholders (public, third and private sector) has been considering how best we can respond to some of the challenges presented by the surge of demand brought on by the pandemic (within the significant resource constraints faced).

Some of the actions identified by the council in collaboration with partners, which we are trying to progress at the moment, and are at various stages of development, are -

- We are finalising a reporting form/consultation questionnaire which will be promoted shortly to communities, landowners, etc. Which will help document community experience of informal camping. Which in turn should help inform improved collaborative working.
- It has also been identified that clearer guidance and collated resources for businesses/landowners/community organisations could help them better consider increasing overnight motorhome parking provision. Where they are interested in doing so. We are trying to pull together better provision of information on the regulatory aspects and the installation of facilities, which should hopefully help interested parties respond to the opportunity that the increase in motorhomes presents. With the hope this in time will help encourage greater provision of overnight parking for motorhomes and in turn reduce irresponsible parking of vehicles.
- We are currently investigating the practicalities and regulatory aspects to see if it might be appropriate for motorhomes to stay overnight in some suitably identified council car parks, similar to the Forestry and Land Scotland's "Stay the Night Scheme" which took place in 2020. With input and detailed feedback being sourced from the Council's Roads and Infrastructure Service, Planning Service, Fire Scotland and Environmental Health Service of the Council. If we are able to develop a suitable proposal

this would need to go to elected members for consideration and approval as appropriate.

- Creation of new dedicated infrastructure has longer lead in times. Upkeep, management and ongoing running costs of anything created needs to be sustainable. For the past three years we have been working with community organisations across Argyll and Bute, where possible, to access funding from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, to help in the creation and improvement of parking and motorhome facilities where visitor pressures can be demonstrated (e.g. Ulva Ferry). Further work on a greater number of facilities (further waste disposal sites , etc.) is needed and we hope to make further progress on this, however this will very much depend on available resources and where there is an agreed solution amongst stakeholders locally for an area.
- Review of the promotion of locations and existing facilities in Argyll and Bute. Ambition to better promote the network of existing facilities, for example, encourage existing motorhome waste disposal points to promote their facilities through CaMPA's (Campervan and Motorhome Professional Association) new guide.
- Better promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code more generally, which is a national priority, to encourage responsible behaviour, more information on this can be found here [NatureScot \(outdooraccess-scotland.scot\)](https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot).
- This list is not exhaustive and the council is also aware of National interventions led by Visitscotland, SNH and others. A key area being the education of people to undertake tourism responsibly.

Some other useful links on managing informal camping can be found here -

- [Guidance - Managing informal camping under the Land Reform Act 2003.pdf \(outdooraccess-scotland.scot\)](#)
- [memorandum of understanding - re informal camping.pdf \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Home - Campa](#)

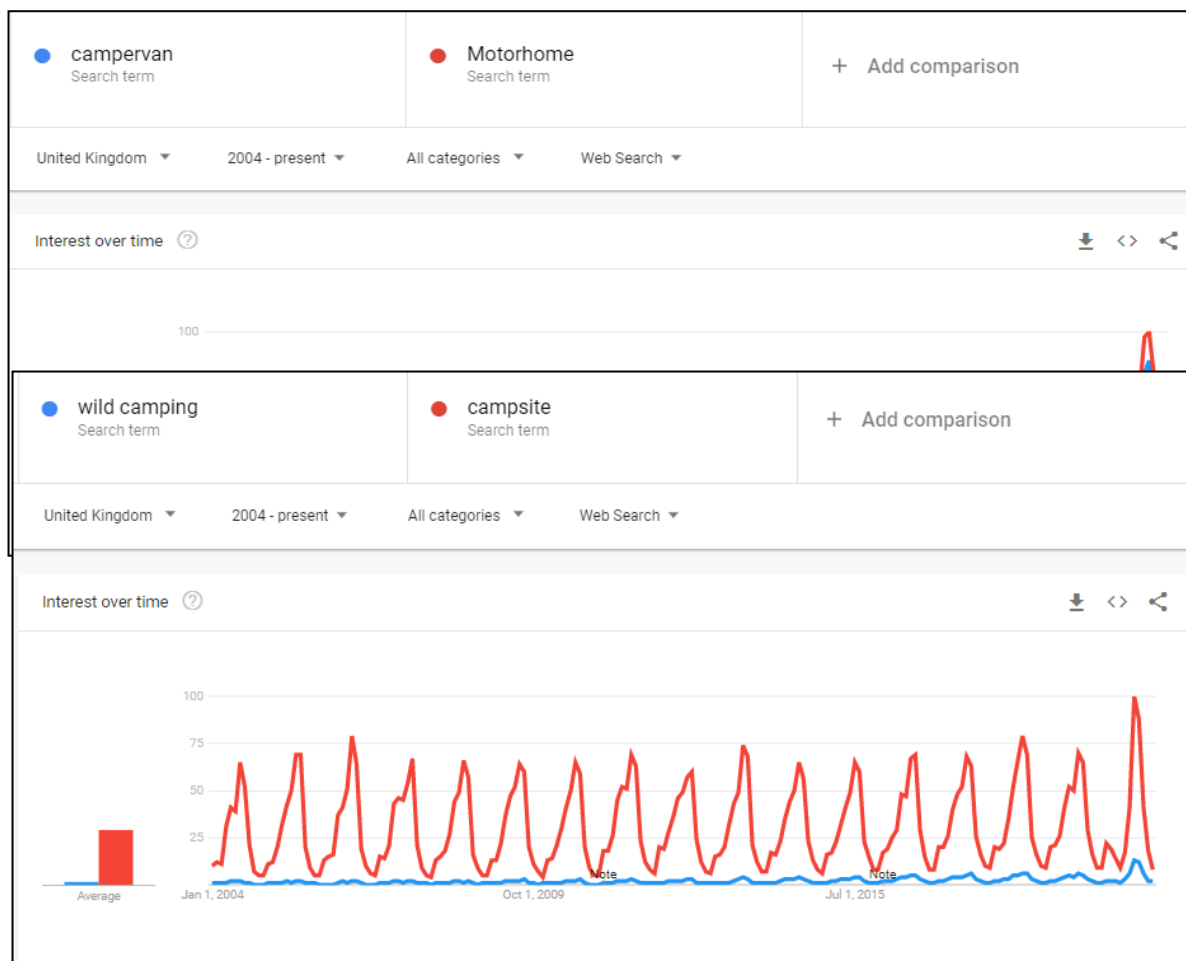
5. Conclusions

Argyll and Bute Council continues to work with partners to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented, seeking solutions that will benefit our communities and reduce negative impacts where possible.

6. SOA Outcomes

- **Outcome 1 - In Argyll and Bute the economy is diverse and thriving** – tourism is an important part of Argyll and Bute's rural economy and we are required to adapt to help support the growth of the sector.
- **Outcome 2 - We have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth** – Infrastructure investment is bid for in a targeted approach, working with industry and communities.

Appendix 1 - Google Trend graphs below illustrate interest in relevant online search terms over time, within the UK as a whole.



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