

Why Campers are Welcome on the Sunshine Isle

Since 2010, the Isle of Tiree has adopted a pro-active position in response to the growing popularity of Freedom Camping with vehicles. Our camping guests are welcomed and appreciated for their vital role in island tourism.

As a community, we recognise the appeal of Freedom Camping around the Hebrides, and value the contribution that such visitors make to our rural economy.

Under our current model for managing Freedom Camping visitors support - directly - the traditional crofting environment and way of life that prevails here.

The fact that Tiree regulates Freedom Camping has been a source of consternation to some.

However, in so doing, the island has successfully addressed a burgeoning conflict of land-use interests between the tourism industry, our agricultural sector and national conservation bodies.

The number of vehicle campers continues to rise annually; dispelling concerns that the management of Freedom Camping would act to reduce tourist revenue.

Indeed, many of our guests choose to visit again and are rightly proud of their positive impact on our island home.

At a time when local authorities are keen to boost tourism to the Isles - but indisposed to finance infrastructure in support of this growth, the Isle of Tiree has made strides toward a sustainable and progressive solution.

Different Types of Camping:

Freedom Camping or Informal Camping: The practice of going 'off-grid' to camp with a motorised vehicle, away from a formal campsite with facilities and without prior permission from the land manager and/or land owner.

If challenged, those wishing to camp with a motorised vehicle often cite the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 or Scottish Outdoor Access Code 2005; mistakenly believing that Scottish Access Rights extend to camping alongside or within a vehicle. They do not.

Wild Camping: The practice of traveling to camp on foot, by bicycle or by kayak away from a formal campsite with facilities and without prior permission from the land manager and/or land owner. Wild Camping is lightweight, carried out in small numbers and done for a maximum of three nights per pitch site (see the Scottish Outdoor Access Code guidance and recommendations).

Responsible Wild Camping under this definition is permitted on Tiree, in line with Scottish Access Rights.

How Does Tiree Manage Vehicle Camping?

On Tiree, the interface between guests; land owners and/or managers; the Tiree Community and Scottish Natural Heritage is the **Tiree Ranger Service**. The island is still under private ownership.

Tiree Ranger Service manages the Croft Camping Scheme, on behalf of the Tiree Community Development Trust.

The Scheme operates as follows:

- Daytime off-road driving and/or parking is not permitted away from clearly marked Day Parking areas. These sites are intended to give good access to scenic areas and beaches where possible.
- Guests are asked to book an authorised overnight pitch prior to their arrival, unless they have been granted specific landowner permission.
- Overnight Freedom Camping is not permitted away from authorised pitches.
- Visitors wishing to camp alongside or within a vehicle must use either:
- The privately owned Wild Diamond Campsite at Balinoe (and/or other such facilities

as they arise)

- One of the 9 Tiree Ranger Service Croft Camping Sites
- Each participating croft hosts a maximum of three pitches. These are located throughout the island in quiet areas with spectacular scenery.
- Pitches on Croft Camping Sites are charged at £12/pitch/night. £9 of this payment goes directly to the crofter, with the remaining £3 being used to cover administrative costs for the scheme.
- Croft Sites are 'green field' pitches. They do not offer water, power or toilet facilities. Fresh drinking water, public toilet facilities and a brand new chemical waste disposal point are provided free of charge in the main township of Scarinish.

Why Does Tiree Manage Vehicle Camping? Our Croft Camping Scheme is designed to reduce the cumulative erosion damage caused by unregulated vehicle access to fragile Machair and Dune Systems. These expanses of unfenced land (which are the areas of ground most frequently accessed by cars, campervans and motorhomes) are known collectively as 'Common Grazings'. In Scotland, Common Grazings are not for 'common' use by all. Instead, a syndicate of crofters pay an annual fee to graze their livestock. These areas are therefore of considerable monetary value to our community.

Damage to Common Grazings impacts negatively on the yield of our crofts and farms: It threatens our way of life.

Crofting is the lynchpin for Tiree's remarkable biodiversity. Without it, the island's character would change beyond recognition.

Common Grazings are vital habitat for nationally important numbers of ground-nesting birds, insects and wildflowers. These are all vulnerable to disturbance by unregulated vehicle access.

Large portions of Tiree hold National Conservation Designations, and many species and habitats occurring on the island are specially protected by law.

Though areas of Tiree may appear to be 'wild' or 'unused', every portion of the island is owned or rented - primarily for the agricultural and/or conservation purposes outlined above.

Small-scale agriculture is challenging in such a remote location. Income generated for crofters by our Croft Camping Scheme has been a timely addition to revenue and diversification within this sector.

What is the Legal Basis for this scheme?

As a community, we ask that camping guests comply with Tiree's environmental initiative.

If all reasonable discussions fail between guests and the Tiree Ranger Service, persons parked without prior permission place themselves at risk of prosecution by the land manager and/or land owner.

The legal basis for this request is outlined below.

Note that these laws apply across Scotland - despite the common misconception that Land Reform (Scotland) Act and Scottish Outdoor Access Code rights extend to motorised vehicles.

Section 34 of The Road Traffic Act 1988 states that:

Subject to the provisions of this section, if without lawful authority a person drives a mechanically propelled vehicle—

(a) on to or upon any common land, moorland or land of any other description, not being land forming part of a road, or

(b) on any road being a footpath, bridleway or restricted byway, he is guilty of an offence. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 states that:

9. Conduct excluded from access rights The conduct which is within this section is—

(f) being on or crossing land in or with a motorised vehicle or vessel (other than a vehicle or vessel which

has been constructed or adapted for use by a person who has a disability and which is being used by such a person)

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code 2005 states that:

7. Access rights do not extend to:

- any form of motorised recreation or passage (except by people with a disability using a vehicle or vessel adapted for their use)