

TECH MATTERS

There has been much talk of wild camping in the press this summer. **Iain Geddes** looks at some of the problems it's highlighted

Wild camping from a self-contained tourer is generally not permitted in the UK



It's fair to say 2021 has been an abnormal year for UK holidays. The sheer number of people not going abroad and the so-called staycation have created levels of demand on the UK's travel and wider camping industry not seen before.

Sales of caravans, motorhomes and a number of non-proprietary van conversions have been high. This has created problems for some of the camping essentials, such as gas supply or getting an appointment with a workshop for service and repair as necessary.

Many people have stayed on traditional campsites, like our Club Sites, or the network of Certificated Sites on offer to Club members or Temporary Holiday Sites and meets put on by our Regions, District Associations and Sections. However, a number of motorhome or campervan users wanted to undertake a little wild (or informal) camping.

One of the great things about these types of unit is the freedom to get up and go at the drop of a hat, and while Club Sites take off-roaders – and you can book a pitch online early on the

day of arrival – some would welcome even greater flexibility.

It is well documented that in Scotland and on Dartmoor (in England) you may camp informally as long as you arrive under your own steam. That could mean by walking, pedal or paddle power. In addition, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park has a small number of bookable wild camping spots for campervans in its designated Camping Management Zones.

However, camping from a self-powered touring unit (such as a campervan or motorhome) is generally not permitted. A self-contained tourer may use a layby or similar for a break in the journey if they have the landowner's permission, this is usually via signage. This is no different to a HGV driver using one for a rest stop. It's possible law enforcement may still require you to move on under these circumstances.

If you do this, the standard rules of the Highways Act still apply, so you must not be under the influence of alcohol, for example.

You must also not drop water into a drain, have a barbecue or sit on a chair outside your unit as this would be considered camping.

As summer 2021 rolled on we started to see tabloid-like headlines using the phrase 'dirty camping'. Complaints from seaside town residents appeared about motorhomes cluttering the promenade, with one Welsh seaside town seeing motorhome users drying laundry on the seafront. We can only hope this is a small and ill-informed minority and they just need a steer on a little etiquette. My fear is that if such behaviour persists, attitudes towards motorhomes will harden and more restrictions may come in, rather than fewer.

I'm well aware not everyone likes big structured campsites. One of the Club's great strengths is in the diversity of what we offer. For those who would like to see the UK have something more akin the French Aires de Service system, there's an organisation that's campaigning to get this type of camping ground here.

[campra.org.uk](https://www.campra.org.uk)