

LLTAF Update: April 2022

West Loch Lomond, Breadalbane and Cowal

Upholding Access Rights

Port Nellan Estate – s14 non-compliant signage

The NPA has received a complaint concerning new signage installed near Loch Dochart. Following contact with the landowner, it transpires the signs were placed in response to increasing antisocial / non-compliant camping activity during the Covid lockdowns. The NPA are working with the landowner on revised signage for 2 popular sites on the A85.



Loch Lomond Golf Course

In Autumn 2021, the NPA received 2 new complaints about security staff not allowing public access through the North Lodge site, the NPA also observed a new padlock on the South Lodge/Yew Cottage pedestrian access gate. These issues were promptly raised with the club and the padlock has now been removed. If LAF members / public experience any further issues with access through the course, please report to the NPA.

Lodge on the Loch / Luss beach

Following several reports concerning a periodically locked gate and non-compliant signage, the NPA contacted the business operator and new signage has been installed. Following monitoring by the NPA, the gate is locked during private functions (weddings etc. using the loch shore) and open at other times. The NPA will continue to monitor the situation.

Core paths blocked

Following a number of storms in Feb. & March, sections of the West Highland Way at Ewich (Crianlarich) were blocked by fallen trees – many thanks to NPA Rangers and to Tilhill Forestry for re-opening the route at short notice.

The Rob Roy Way between Aberfoyle & Callander also experienced similar issues - the NPA are working with forest managers to clear a large number of mature trees from the route. Please follow any site signage and the short, temporary diversion.

Glenoglehead case

The NPA is defending a position within the courts process in relation to protecting the integrity of NCN/RRW/core path at the Glenoglehead site which it owns. This is a complex issue relating to a potential route for timber extraction from privately owned woodland. The case is still at an early stage.

Access Infrastructure Projects

Lochgoilhead Core Path Restoration

Supported by the NPA 2021 Green Recovery Fund – Phase 3 of an inspirational project to restore a historical Goil valley core path and connect Lochgoilhead to the wider recreational network has been completed. Using local contractors and materials, the final Type 1 surface dressing has been installed to complete the new 1.2km, all abilities path.

Phase 4 of this work aims to reinstate a substantial bridge over the River Goil at Pole Farm – to facilitate bankside conservation work and enhance/connect several key recreational routes & circuits. This project will be progressed when funding becomes available.



Completed path - Drimsynie approach

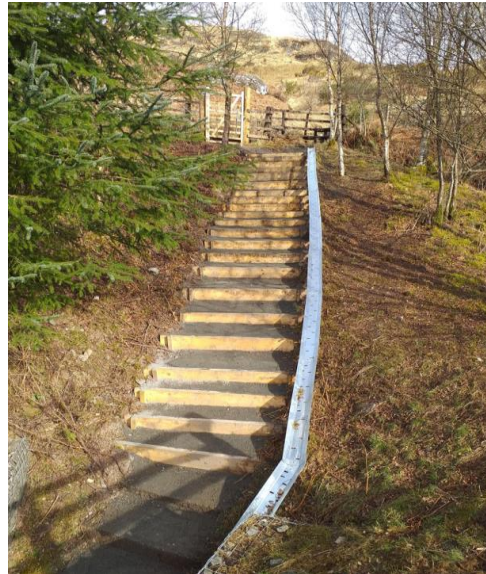
West Highland Way – Glen Falloch

Directly funded and project-managed by the NPA, two new infrastructure projects have been completed at South Keilator and Blackcroft areas. Using recycled materials, sustainably-sourced timber and local contractors, both projects were completed before the end of the financial year and on-budget.

A) South Keilator – a flight of hazardous wooden steps replaced at the A82 underpass.



Before



After

B) Blackcroft bridge – flooding in 2019 destroyed a key footbridge in the upper part of Glen Falloch. Utilising the original high-quality abutments, the site has been retrofitted with a new steel-galvanised structural frame, rock armouring, and high-quality oak timberwork. Additional path work and improved stock fencing complement the new crossing.



Other matters

Transmission undergrounding & access

As previously reported, the 2 major investment projects in Glen Falloch and through Killin are continuing. Corridor tree-clearance, trench excavations and site construction is all underway, with no reported issues affecting recreational access.

In addition, the NPA is working with Killin CDT and SSE in an exciting development on the viability of the Killin Trails project to improve local cycling and walking routes as part of the scheme – more updates to come.

East Loch Lomond and the Trossachs

Upholding Access Rights

Core Path Plan Review and Gartmore House

As reported previously, the owners of Gartmore House successfully petitioned for a Judicial Review of the decision to adopt Lady's Walk and Butler's Walk as core paths. This was on two grounds – that the Scottish Ministers' Reporter had misapplied the statutory test under the LRA 2003 and that the NPA and the Reporter failed to comply with their duties under the Equalities Act 2010. The judicial review hearing took place on 10 December 2021. The judgement was published on 4 March 2022 and Lord Clark found in our favour on both counts. Gartmore House has decided to appeal the decision and we are advised this process could take another 12 months. We are seeking already accrued costs from Gartmore House in the meantime. The full judgement can be made available on request.

Knockour, Balloch

Local runners told by landowner (unknown) there was no access through the estate to Lorn and they had to turn back. There are also no entry signs at junction with road and access gate into woodland. No-one was in on site visit and three new owners of Knockour all live in London according to a land registry search. Letters have been sent to these postal addresses.

Loch Lomond Waterfront, Balmaha

The owner of Lomond Bank has erected a sign saying no access to shore of Loch Lomond. Access rights definitely apply and this goes against a condition regarding access in a recent planning application. I spoke to the landowner in late 2021 and he was going to speak to his solicitors and get back to me. He has not done so as yet and I will be following up.

Borland Farm

The track from Borland Farm over Borland Hill is obstructed by locked gates and the landowner refuses to open them as he alleges irresponsible behaviour and issues with dogs. This was proposed as a core path as part of the CPP review in 2019-20 and has been on hold because of Covid and the Gartmore House judicial review. The route is also blocked at the western end by an old gate wrapped in barbed wire. We will now begin proceedings to open up this new core path.

Ballimore Farm, Balquhidder

Potential for future LAF site visit to look at this long standing access issue.

Access to Loch Voil, Balquhidder

We have had a complaint about paddle boarders and canoeists being intimidated and told they cannot access Loch Voil at Stronvar. This is a complicated issue which includes joint ownership of land following planning permission for the development of 10 houses, conservation issues relating to the Stronvar Marshes SSSI and unauthorised vehicular use from a commercial outdoor activity provider using Loch Voil for paddle boarding and canoe trips. The local community is divided on the issue and I am working with Nature Scot on management solutions.

Loch Voil west, Balquhidder

There is a long standing issue of no access and no camping signs between Craigruiie and Monachyle Mhor which pre-date camping management byelaws. There has not been a public complaint about them so this has not been actively pursued as yet but we will do as part of the emerging Balquhidder, Lochearnhead and Strathyre Visitor Management Group.

Ross Priory

We have had a complaint about misleading signs stating no swimming in Loch Lomond from the shoreline immediately adjacent to the jetty at Ross Priory. The new jetty is private and boat store also private. They argue that access rights don't apply to the area between the two as it is busy with boats coming in and out. I agree with this assessment but the signs need to explain this and provide alternative places to swim. I am working with them on signage.

Projects

Drymen to Balmaha Cycleway

Planning permission for the final section into Balmaha village was approved in December 2021. Ahead of this we submitted a funding bid to Sustrans for £325K for the previous section of the cycleway, from Shalloch to Auchingyle. This already has planning permission and has a revised cost of £421,000. The bid to Sustrans was for 70% of construction costs plus a 20% uplift for contingencies. Unfortunately we received notification on 18 November 2021 that our application had been unsuccessful. They stated that "the project's designs were not considered to meet the Places for Everyone design principles, as the limited width of shared use path, with a limited buffer to the carriageway, creates a risk of conflict between pedestrians and cyclists."

We are obviously very disappointed with this outcome. Sustrans has funded two previous sections of this cycleway which were within the carriageway of the B837 and both had sections that did not meet design standards in terms of width and buffer zones. We had worked with our Sustrans case officer for 18 months and had revised designs with his approval and submitted a funding application with his encouragement.

This decision has major implications for the rest of the route. The final section into Balmaha is also within the carriageway and also has pinch points where a design standard width of 2.5 metres cannot be achieved without land take from private land or by narrowing the carriageway even further. Stirling Council has already said this is not possible because of the type of vehicles that use the B837, for example coaches and timber haulage. We are seeking discussions with Sustrans on how best to proceed.

Gravelfoyle

This is the branding for a series of promoted circular forest road rides starting and finishing in Aberfoyle. There are three routes of 10km, 17km and 27km and they will be administered and co-ordinated by a partnership of Bike Trossachs, the NPA, FLS and the Strathard Community Trust. A Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed and signed. FLS will install the waymark posts in April and early May and a mid-May 2022 date has been earmarked for a press launch.

Invertrossachs off-road path

This is a much delayed project for an off-road shared use path along a 700 metre stretch of the Invertrossachs Road from the Callander Holiday Park entrance to the mini roundabout at the junction with the A81. Detailed design work is now complete after months of waiting for comments from BT Openreach and Stirling Council. The construction cost is an eye-watering £300,000 plus VAT so we are currently taking stock and discussing options on how best to proceed.

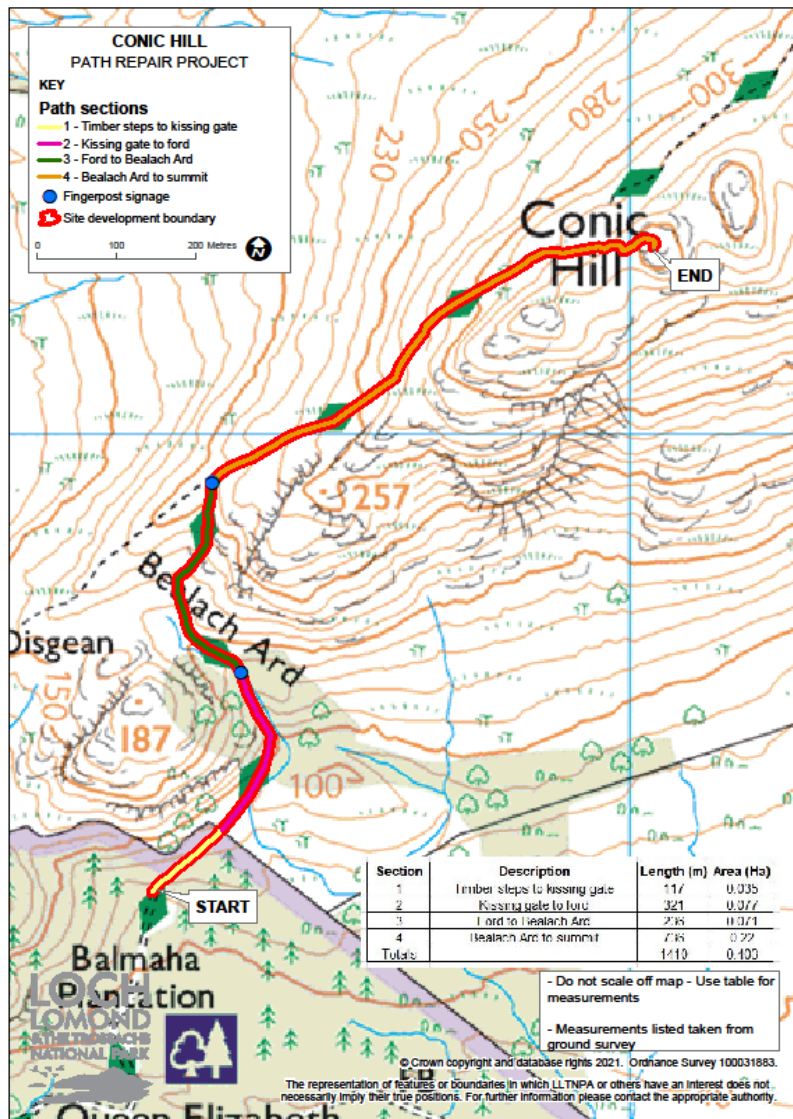
Aber Bridge, Gartocharn

Kilmarnock Community Trust had secured £37K from the NPA Green Recovery Grant Scheme to replace the entire bridge over the Aber Burn to the north of Gartocharn. Unfortunately concerns over the Trust taking on third party liability for the bridge and a landowner refusing permission for the Trust to enter his land has meant the funding has been returned and the bridge remains partially dismantled and the path closed. We are looking at funding options to replace the bridge in 2022-23.

Conic Hill Path

Planning permission for the path upgrade was granted in January 2022. The specification is for a 2 metre-wide, stone-pitched path from the forest boundary to the summit, with associated drainage and

landscaping. The contract went out to tender in December 2021 and we appointed ACT Heritage Ltd as preferred contractors in late January 2022. The path is split into four sections (see map below) and we were hoping to undertake some work this financial year but a combination of factors meant this did not happen.



The overall cost of the project is £860,000. Funding permitting, work will start on sections 2 and 3 at the end of October 2022 until 31 March 2023 at a cost of £327,000. Section 4 will be upgraded in the winter of 2023 to 2024 at a cost of £453,000. For both of these sections, the path will have to be closed to the public and we will be working over the summer to communicate this and put all appropriate signs and diversions (if applicable) in place. Section 1, the timber steps within the forest, can be completed at other times and the path should not need to be fully closed.

St Fillans to Lochearnhead Railway Path

A further 250 metres of disused railway line has been upgraded to a shared use cycleway. This is above the Fortrenn area to the west of St Fillans and was delayed from 2020-21 because of the Covid pandemic. The work cost £138,000. Design work has started on sections to the west of Glen Tarken Bridge and we will be looking to submit funding applications for construction to Sustrans in the summer.

Bracklinn Bridge

The replacement of the bridge is being led by our colleagues in the Place Team. The dilapidated bridge has been removed and the design of the replacement bridge is underway.

Strategic Updates

John Muir Way / Green Action Trust handover

Following several years of coordination, the Green Action Trust will be handing-over responsibility for ongoing monitoring of the trail to respective Access Authorities in summer 2022.

In the National Park the route mostly aligns to minor roads and forest tracks, with one short section of built path at Gouk Hill, Auchendennan – this section will be monitored by the NPA and maintained when funding allows. The NPA will continue to work in partnership with Stirling and West Dumbarton Council's on the remaining sections within the Park.

People counter network

After c.8 years of monitoring strategic core paths and long distance routes, the NPA's people counter equipment has come to the end of its operational lifespan and we are rationalising how this data will be collected in the future, especially with regard to emerging technologies.

In the meantime, the NPA will continue to collect data from 2 monitoring sites on Ben Lomond (main path) and on the West Highland Way (Keilator).

Active Park Healthy People

In light of shifting timelines which were necessary to allow us to focus on other priorities through the pandemic, we have had a fresh look at the policy context that's in front of us now. With the new National Park Partnership Plan and Local Development Plan work coming on-stream now and offering a new strategic context it is felt that all of the excellent stakeholder engagement and writing created through APHP should be fed into the creation of those strategic documents and that APHP does not need to be developed to publication. Once those strategies are published we can reconsider and see if there is the need for any additional document but the hope is that everything that emerged within APHP and CV19 can be covered by NPPP, LDP, emerging 5 Year Place Programme and individual action plans. Please be assured that that the work that went into the APHP will not be wasted and will be absorbed within the fresh statutory plans.

Sustainable Travel

The NPA has secured £100k funding to run a pilot Shuttle Bus service during the summer months of 2022. The invitation to tender was released last week with bus companies offered a choice between a Trossachs route (Callander to Aberfoyle) and an East Loch Lomond route (Balmaha to Rowardennan). We await the tender submissions to see what frequency of service can be delivered. It is likely the successful contract will start in early June.

We also have funding to commission a strategic transport and modal shift report for the Park area. Tactran has launched a new pilot National Park Journey Planning App with Mobility as a Service (MaaS) funding. This allows users of the app to compare the sustainability of different modes of travel to and within the Park, and, in the near future, to book tickets. This pilot will run to the end of the 2022 season.

Emerging Cycling Destination

The team has provided content and support to a business producing marketing materials that VisitScotland and Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland will be using to promote the National Park as an "emerging destination" for cycle tourism.

<https://dmbins.com/blog/bike-trossachs-gravelfoyle/>

<https://dmbins.com/ride-guide/loch-lomond-trossachs/>

Water Safety

National Park staff have been working with partners (local and national) on measures which will help reduce fatalities associated with water. A new national group led by Ash Denham MSP has made good progress.