

LLTAF Update: October 2023

Strategic Updates

Core Paths Plan

GIS colleagues are making final mapping amendments to the revised Plan that was approved by the Board in 2021. Once the map is finalised, we will share a copy with the Scottish Government, notify the public via adverts in local newspapers and update the website. As soon as that statutory process is complete we can start to take action on the ground to ensure any disputed core paths are implemented.

Core Paths Budget

The urgent pipeline projects mentioned in the previous update are being timetabled over the coming months, and some are already underway. Further detail is provided in the area reports below. At the 2nd Quarter budget reforecast we have noted that we expect to spend the full £100k of capital and £10k of revenue.

National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP)

Responses to the most recent round of consultation have been collated and the team working on the Plan are engaged in considering those responses and making necessary amendments. A number of respondees expressed concern that 'recreation' is not visible enough in the current draft and this is being addressed. The intention is to have a finalised Plan approved by the Board by the end of December.

Sustainable Travel

Following a 'Futures Group' meeting, which allowed Board members to grapple with some of the ideas, proposals and challenges raised by the **Ansons study**, the full report has now been presented to the Board and is therefore in the public domain. For anyone interested, a covering paper as well as the full report can be found at item 7 in the September Board papers here: <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/11-september-2023-national-park-authority-board-meeting/>.

For a second year running we were unable to run the proposed **shuttle bus** pilot, essentially due to lack of capacity (drivers) within the market. Preparations were made in two locations, the first being the same route as we'd looked at last year (Trossachs); the second around Arrochar and Tarbet, building on initial groundwork by the local business community. However, despite bringing on board expertise from Stirling Council's public transport team, and adjusting and simplifying the proposed service, we were unable to attract an operator with the capacity to provide it. Nevertheless, we have gathered significant learning from the abortive project so far and with funding still available we may revisit the opportunity again in future.

Funding has been found to continue running the pilot **Journey Planner App** and webpage with Tactran and other partners for the current year - <https://nationalparkjourneyplanner.co.uk/>.

Area Reports

Loch Lomond, Breadalbane and Cowal

Upholding Access Rights:

Port Nellan Estate – s14 non-compliant signage

Further to the previous update on this case:- unfortunately, new non-compliant signage has been reported in an A83 layby next to land where access rights exist. The NPA are in the process of following-up with the landowner.

The Faerie Trail – Glen Luss

The NPA are currently working with Luss Estates Company to revise non-compliant signage in an area of woodland with LRA access rights.

Glenoglehead case

The NPA and forest operators' have engaged in a mediation process to try and reconcile competing issues at this constrained and popular recreational site. Recent communication between the NPA and the forestry company is now focussing on the design of a new visitor carpark (away from the main haulage road) and a short, new cycle path link into NCN7 / Rob Roy Way.

Strone - Rights of Way

The local community has now completed the process of collecting evidence to support Right of Way status for two well-used links in the village. The Rec. & Access team will be assessing the evidence in the coming weeks.

Arrochar / Succoth transmission line upgrade

As previously reported, the Access Team and local communities continue to work with SSE / Morgan Sindal on the preparatory stage of another large-scale power transmission project. SSE / Morgan Sindal have prepared a comprehensive visitor / access management plan detailing the phases and utilising the least-restrictive option wherever possible. The movement of large items of plant will mean closing a short section of the Three Lochs Way (south of Arrochar) for 1 week in January 2024, and directing walkers & cyclists on the Tighness diversion. The remainder of the route through Succoth and Glen Loin is largely unaffected and path resurfacing work will improve the route once the project has been completed.

WHW - Ewich Forest, Crianlarich

As previously reported a large-scale harvesting project is taking place for the next 12 months – no issues affecting enjoyment of the WHW have been reported.

Access Infrastructure Projects:

Arrochar / Succoth Community Link

The NPA has now advertised a tender for capital work to improve the quality of the well-used and important link between the 2 villages. The degraded tarmac path will be replaced with a new, free draining aggregate surface and kerbing, the work will also feature the installation of a new dropped-curb at the access point on Glen Loin Crescent – to facilitate easy access for cyclists, elderly residents and pushchairs / wheelchairs.

WHW – The 2 bridges project (Burn of Mar & Kilanden)

The NPA are currently undertaking the preparatory work to replace 2 aging wooden bridges on the WHW, just south of Conic Hill. The Kilanden site will feature a new 6m span bridge, and the Gorge of Mar is a larger project featuring a 10m span bridge. Both bridges will have

new abutments, a galvanized steel sub-structure and high-quality timber work, with an expected lifespan of c.50+ years.

East Loch Lomond and the Trossachs

Upholding Access Rights:

Ballimore Farm, Balquhidder

We had another complaint about the locked gates blocking access to Gleann Dubh and the Allt Fathan Glinne in Glen Buckie. This case has been ongoing for years and despite various attempts to resolve the situation, access is still blocked. At a meeting with the landowner in April he repeated that he would not unlock the gates and that the public should use the right of way which crosses over to Glen Finglas. We have previously considered a LAF site visit to inspect this site and for formal advice from the LAF to be provided. However in a discussion of this case with the NPA's legal Team on 4 October, they proposed that we start enforcement proceedings instead. According to our enforcement procedures, we will send out an informal officer letter outlining the issue, how it could be resolved and the legal options we have if they are not.

Loch Voil, Balquhidder

This is a long-standing issue of no access and no camping signs between Craigrue and Monachyle Mhor which pre-date camping management byelaws. We have met and discussed these issues with all landowners. One landowner does not want to remove them because of their concerns with what they claim to be anti-social behaviour and what they perceive as our inability to deal with camping management and the permit areas as well as associated traffic problems. We have explained to all landowners why these signs are non-compliant, have offered other advisory signage to influence behaviour and we will provide examples of these signs to them. There are wider visitor management issues that also need to be discussed with the NPA's camping management team about permit areas and Stirling Council as roads authority for traffic issues and this broader practical solution will be explored first before enforcement is considered.

Ardchullarie

This is adjacent to the A84 at Loch Lubnaig. The landowner has fenced off the lochshore area with a new deer fence. One gate has been removed and another padlocked, so the area is now obstructed. We have spoken to landowner's agent and he agreed to remove the padlock off the remaining gate but it was still locked on a site visit of 30 August so we have contacted the agent again.

Primrose Hill, Loch Katrine

The padlock on the deer gate on this FLS trail has been unlocked and the complainant informed.

Lochearnhead Scout Station

The line of the core path between the station and the back of Cameron Court has been cleared and advisory signage has gone up asking the public to use this route when the old railway line is in use by residential groups. The local community is satisfied with this resolution.

Lake of Menteith

We have received a complaint this year about a misleading 'no boating' sign at the Millennium car park by the lakeside. The previous case history on the Lake is that the Lake of Menteith

Fisheries Board insists that the Lake of Menteith Fisheries Order Confirmation Act 1970 is the dominant legislation applicable to the Lake, and they reject the notion that public access rights exist. They have consistently argued that this Act means they can prevent access. We disagree with this, but it has never been taken through to conclusion. The Fisheries Manager accepts that stand-up paddle boarding, canoeing and open water swimming takes place and was prepared to remove the sign, but the Board has refused this and once again reiterated that access rights don't apply. We are discussing next steps with our Legal Team.

Access Infrastructure Projects

Conic Hill Path

The 2022-23 phase of work on the ground was completed in early June 2023. A total of 443 metres of stone pitching has now been built since work on the ground started in the first week of November 2022. This, along with a further 99m of aggregate path improvement, all associated drainage, revetment wall building and landscaping, therefore took seven months to construct.

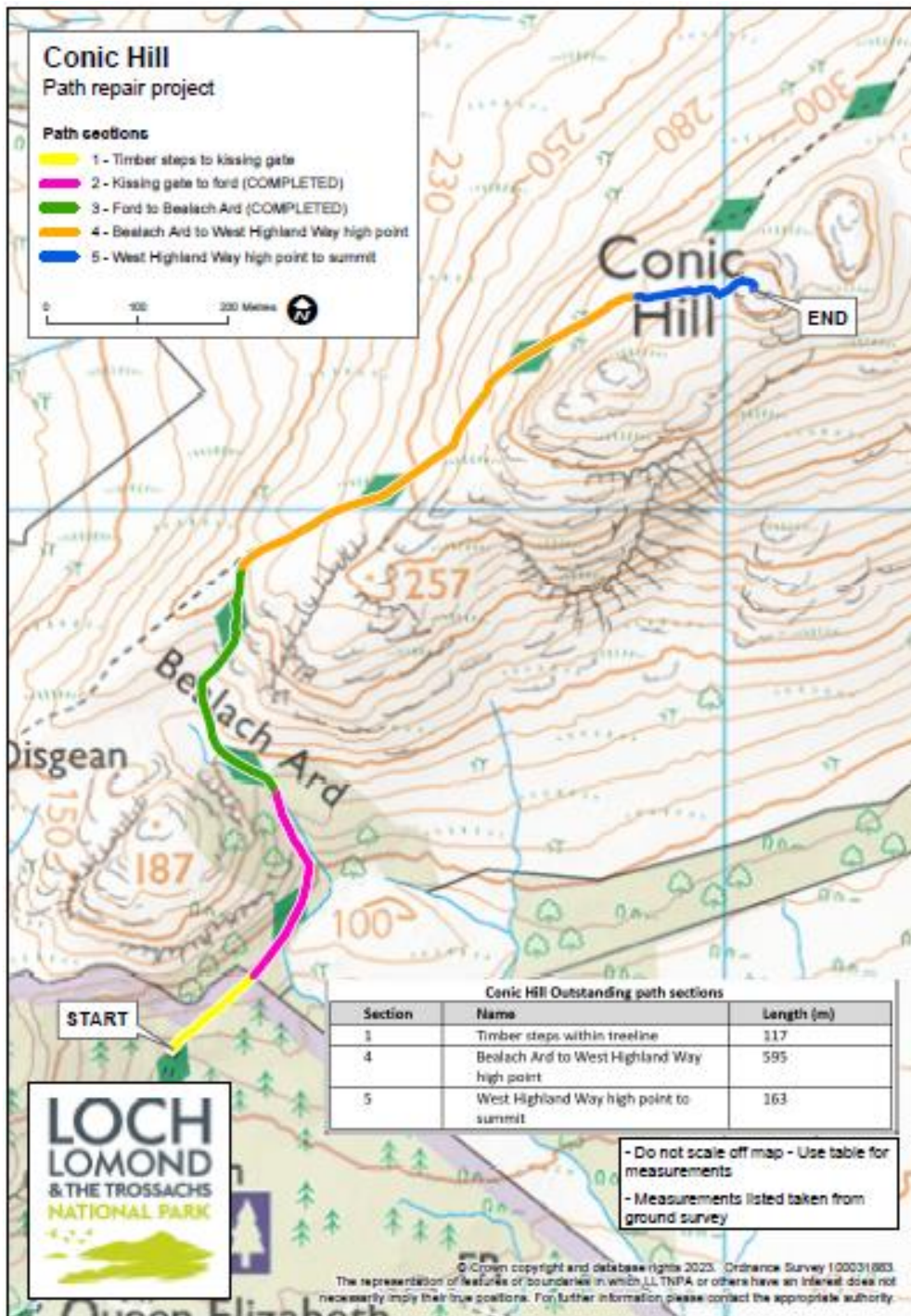
Because of projected cost increases going above the National Park Authority's procurement thresholds, we had to re-tender the path improvement contract over the summer. The successful bidder is Hamiltons Environmental Ltd. The company owner came through the Mountains and the People training project and the company was set up in 2018. They have worked on upland path contracts on Ben Vane, Ben Nevis, Dreish and Mayar in the Cairngorms and in the Mourne Mountains, Northern Ireland – see <https://www.hamiltons.ltd/>

We have agreed a start date of 30 October with Hamiltons Environmental which is when helicopter uplift of stone will take place. This means that the path up Conic Hill from Balmaha will be closed from 30th October – 3rd November. The flights should be complete in 4-5 days (depending on good flying weather) and we expect to re-open the path in time for the weekend (Saturday 4th November). This is outside both the Scottish and English half term holidays so the necessary path closure for the helicopter flights should have less impact on both users of the hill path and local businesses. Stone from Dumbarton Quarry will be delivered to the stone storage site between Balmaha and Milton of Buchanan from 16th October and the stone will be bagged and readied for flight in these interim two weeks. National Park Rangers will put out 'path closed' signs no later than the morning of 30 October and remove these once the helicopter flights are complete.

We intend to complete 450 metres of path section 4 from October 2023 to March 2024. As there is sufficient space on path section 4 for the public to walk around the work site, there is no over-riding health and safety reason or topographical constraint which means this section has to be closed to the public while the work takes place. The path sections are:

Section	Name	Length (m)
1	Timber steps within treeline	117
2	Forest boundary to ford - COMPLETED	247
3	Ford to Bealach Ard – COMPLETED*	294
4	Bealach Ard to West Highland Way high point	595
5	West Highland Way high point to summit	163

The current plan for 2024-25 is 308 metres of pitching (145m remaining of section 4 and 163m of section 5) plus 117 metres of new 2m wide timber steps of Section 1 to be constructed from September 2024 to 31 March 2025. However, we are also looking at the option of continuing working throughout the spring and summer of 2024 and to complete the work on all three remaining path sections in one continuous push. A decision on this will be made by the Project Board at the end of this month.



We will undertake four maintenance runs a year (roughly February, May, August and late October/ early November) to clear out all drains and ditches and keep the path free of surface debris. This will also help us identify any defects that may require contractors coming back to fix e.g., pitching breaking up or aggregate being washed out, or areas where we might need to do some more work to stop things getting worse in the future e.g., short cuts appearing that might need blocking, further ditch digging to prevent water getting on the path, etc. The first maintenance runs are on 14th and 24th October 2023.

St Fillans to Lochearnhead Railway Path

We have secured funding from Sustrans' Network Development Team for technical design through to planning applications for a further two phases of the route, from Lochearnhead to Glen Beich and through Ardveich and Derry Woods. These will be throughout 2023-24 with a view to construct in 2024-25.

NCN7 Barrier Removal, Kilmahog and Ben Ledi car park

We worked with Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) and Sustrans to reduce barriers and pinch points at Kilmahog and the Ben Ledi car park on the National Cycle Network Route 7 (NCN7). The crossings on either side of the A821 did not meet current design standards and were not accessible for some adapted and recumbent bikes as well as being awkward to use for all cyclists, horse-riders and wheelchair and pushchair users. This work was completed in July this year.