

LLTAF Update: October 2023

Strategic Updates

Core Paths Plan

The website has been updated with the revised [Core Paths Plan](#). Action is underway on the ground to implemented the previously disputed core path in Gartmore that was the subject of the judicial review (more info on the Gartmore works in the area report below).

Core Paths Budget

We are pleased to report that our projected spend on core path upgrading projects in the current financial year is on track to be the highest we've ever spent. This includes the replacement of two dilapidated bridges on the West Highland Way which should be underway at the time of the LLTAF meeting and is due to be completed by the end of March. Project details are updated below. However, due to an extremely tight budget forecast, it's unlikely there will be a capital budget for core paths in coming financial year, other than for the completion of the Conic Hill project. 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.

National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP)

The [NPPP](#) was approved at the December Board meeting. There are some key 'hooks in the plan for access, recreation, active travel and sustainable transport (ringed in green below).

National Park Partnership Plan on a Page

National Park Partnership Plan on a Page										
Vision for 2045	By 2045 Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park is a thriving place that is nature positive and carbon negative									
Chapter	RESTORING NATURE			CREATING A LOW-CARBON PLACE			DESIGNING A GREENER WAY OF LIVING			
Chapter sections	Restoring Nature for Climate	Restoring Nature for Healthy Ecosystems	Restoring Nature through Sustainable, Regenerative Land Use	Connecting Everyone with Nature and Climate	Improving popular Places and Routes	Low Carbon Travel for Everyone	Transitioning to a Greener Economy	Supporting Thriving Rural Communities	Developing and Investing in the National Park	
OUTCOMES BY 2045 By 2045 the National Park is/ has...	A natural carbon sink	A restored landscape for nature	An exemplar of regenerative land use	A place for all to enjoy safely and responsibly	High quality visitor infrastructure and facilities	An inclusive, low carbon travel network	A greener, more diverse rural economy	More resilient rural communities	A responsive approach to new development	By 2045
OBJECTIVES FOR 2024-2029 What we need to do now to be on track to achieving the 2045 outcomes	Reduce peatland emissions	Connecting nature at landscape scale	Support more regenerative land use	Inspiring action for nature and climate	Deliver a multi-year place programme	Develop a new strategic transport partnership approach	Increase sustainable tourism	Enable more local living and working	Deliver strategic development needs	By 2029
	Increase tree cover	More land managed for nature	Invest in nature restoration	Support diversity and inclusion	Improve travel infrastructure	Make sustainable travel choices more attractive	Support low carbon businesses	Meet housing needs	Help adapt to climate change and restore nature	
	Restore the water environment	Reduce key pressures on nature	Encourage land use that benefits everyone	Support safe responsible access	Provide a high-quality recreational path network	Improve travel routes and services	Grow green & nature-based jobs and skills	Build community wealth	Make the best use of land and assets	

Sustainable Travel

At the time of 'going to press' we are considering draft timetables submitted by an operator for a pilot Trossachs shuttle bus to run from June to September 2024. Some of the funding package is secured and we are closer that we have ever been to making this a reality; however, budgetary constraints may still prove a barrier.

Furthermore, the 'funding landscape' for both active travel and sustainable transport more broadly is currently undergoing a seismic shift. Transport Scotland is in the process of bringing the majority of

the funding schemes previously administered on their behalf by Sustrans, Paths for All Partnership and other third sector bodies, in-house. This looks likely to make it more difficult for National Park Authorities to access such funding.

Area Reports

Loch Lomond, Breadalbane and Cowal

Upholding Access Rights:

Port Nellan Estate – s14 non-compliant signage

Further to a previous update on this case: - the NPA escalated the issue of non-compliant signage on land where public LRA access rights exist, the landowner has now agreed to remove the sign.

The Faerie Trail – Glen Luss

Luss Estates Company have now revised non-compliant signage in an area of woodland with LRA access rights.



Non-compliant sign



Replacement

Glenoglehead case

The NPA and forest operators' have agreed a safe timber extraction route through the site, and a new visitor carpark / section of cycle path linking into the NCN7. Site designs will be available in due course.

Strone - Rights of Way

The Rec. & Access team are in discussion with ScotWays and assessing the evidence collected by the community. The NPA will support and advise the community over the coming weeks.

Arrochar / Succoth transmission line upgrade

As previously reported, the Rec. & Access Team and local communities continue to work with SSE / Morgan Sindal on the preparatory stage of another large-scale power transmission project.

The 1-week core path / Three Lochs Way closure in January passed without any issues with site staff reporting the short Tighness diversion was effective for recreational users.

Access Infrastructure Projects:

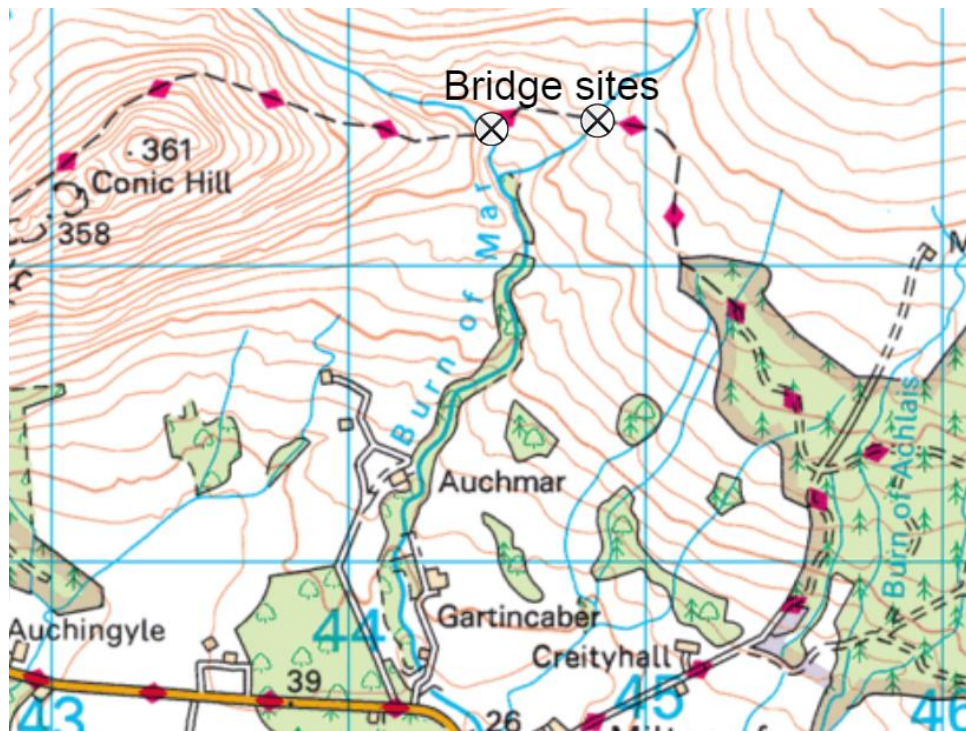
Arrochar / Succoth Community Link

The NPA has completed the upgrade of an important community link between the 2 villages. The degraded tarmac path has been replaced with a free draining aggregate path featuring a new dropped curb at the Glen Loin Crescent access point.



WHW – The 2 Bridges Project (Burn of Mar & Kilanden)

Site work commenced on 4th March, with an estimated 3-week completion schedule. Both bridges and a short section of the WHW will be closed for this period for Health & Safety purposes with diversion signs at Balmaha and the Crietyhall Lane path junction. (Bridge locations shown below.)



Killin / Acharn Forest – recreational waymarking

The Killin Sports & Recreational Hub are leading a project to improve recreational opportunities around Killin and the Acharn forest. The forest features many forest roads and paths that are great for walking and cycling – the project has been supported financially by the NPA, and through agreement with the forest operators' a network of way markers and interpretation mapping / information will be installed in the next 2-weeks.

East Loch Lomond and the Trossachs

Upholding Access Rights:

Ballimore Farm, Balquhiddier

On 7 December 2023 we sent out an informal officer letter outlining the ongoing access issues, how they could be resolved and the legal options we have if they are not. We requested that either the padlocks were removed from the relevant gates or the diversion route agreed in 2016-17 opened up by replacing a broken gate and providing access in a deer fence. The landowner contacted us on 14 January 2024 to say he had opened the diversion route, and a site visit on 1 February confirmed this (see photos).



Before: broken gate and deer fence



After: 5m wide gap in deer fence



Before: half height deer fence obstruction



After: 5m wide gap in deer fence

The diversion agreed in 2016-17 was for an unspecified trial period. It is 550m across an open and boggy hillside and is substantially less convenient to use than the access track, especially for cyclists and equestrians. We have written back to the landowner saying we will put up direction signs and waymarkers and monitor for a trial period of 12 months.

Loch Voil, Balquhiddier

This is a long-standing issue of no access and no camping signs between Craigrue and Monachyle Mhor which pre-date camping management byelaws and are linked to wider visitor management issues. The location of the signs are shown by red 'lollipop' markers on the map below. The red pins show the location of the camping permit area signs and the red circle is the location of a camping management zone sign.



We met and discussed these issues with all landowners, explained to them why these signs are non-compliant and have offered other advisory signage to influence behaviour. We have discussed broader issues with the NPA's camping management team about permit areas and Stirling Council as roads authority for traffic issues and have proposed the following:

- The Craigrue layby/ passing place - this is the passing place immediately after Craigrue where parking and camping outwith the camping permit area takes place. Stirling Council has agreed to erect a passing place sign in this layby and hopefully this will deter people from parking here. They are hoping to install it before Easter.
- Camping Management Zone (CMZ) signs and 'no access' signs - one of the landowner criticisms of the camping management byelaws is that after the large 'You are now entering a Camping Management Zone' sign at the entrance to the Glen there are insufficient repeater signs in the Glen to reinforce this message. The next sign is before Dhanakosa, and there are three others but these are all beyond Craigrue. We are prepared to install three additional CMZ signs to remedy this but on the basis that the various non-compliant signs stating private, no access or no camping are removed. These signs will be between Dhanakosa and Rhuveag.

- We will also provide access advisory signs if required. These are smaller with messages tailored for specific locations and issues.

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 1 February so we have contacted the agent again.

Lady’s Walk, Gartmore House

This was the proposed core path at the centre of the judicial review into the Authority’s core path plan review in 2019-20. With all the statutory procedures relating to the Core Path Plan now complete, we wrote to Gartmore House in January this year outlining our intentions and work schedule to open up Lady’s Walk. The fallen trees and encroaching vegetation have been cleared and two gates and two fingerposts are to be installed later this month.



Before: October 2020



After: February 2024



After: February 2024



Before: October 2020

Borland Hill path, Gartmore

This is also a new core path but has been blocked at either end for some time now. We have approached both landowners requesting that gates are unlocked and that one gate (previously obstructed but since removed and replaced by a fence) is reinstated. We have met on site with one landowner to discuss access arrangements but are still waiting for a response from the other landowner.



Previous gate in 2019, blocked with barbed wire



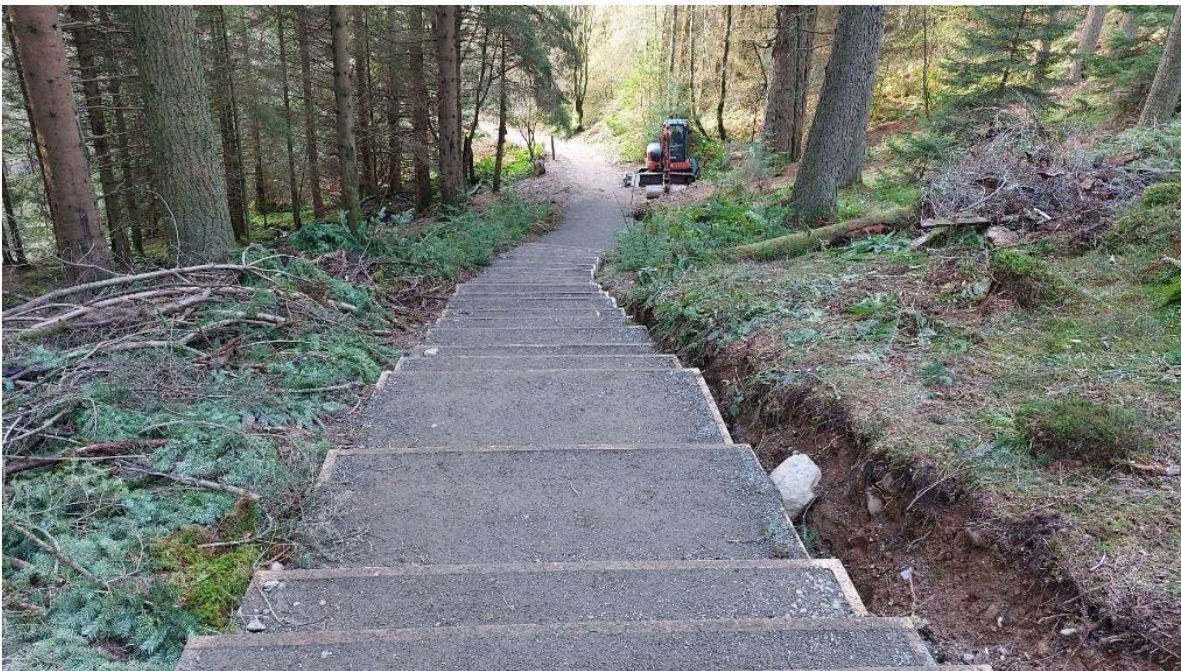
Gate replaced by fence, 2023

Access Infrastructure Projects

Conic Hill Path

Work started on the second phase of the Conic Hill path repair on 30 October 2023. The schedule was revised from that reported at the last LAF meeting as helicopter flights were delayed until 11 December 2023 because of unscheduled fleet maintenance. Stone from Dumbarton Quarry was still delivered to the stone storage site between Balmaha and Milton of Buchanan from 16 October 2023 and was bagged and readied for flight in December.

The contractors, Hamiltons Environmental Ltd, then focussed on the 2m wide timber steps of Section 1 (see map and photos below). This section was substantially completed (all three flights of steps were constructed) but there are some outstanding works still to be addressed. These include additional aggregate and dust for the step treads, further drainage and landscaping works and the replacement of the kissing gate at the end of the path section with a self-closing gate. Work has been delayed on this section because of sub-zero temperatures and storm damage.





Timber steps, path section 1

A combination of poor weather conditions and delayed start times resulted in not all stone being flown onto the hill in December. Contractors started on path section 4 in early January 2024 and as of 28 February had completed 175 metres. The work is outside the Conic Hill SSSI and an excavator is being used to dig out the path tray which has sped up the rate of pitching considerably.



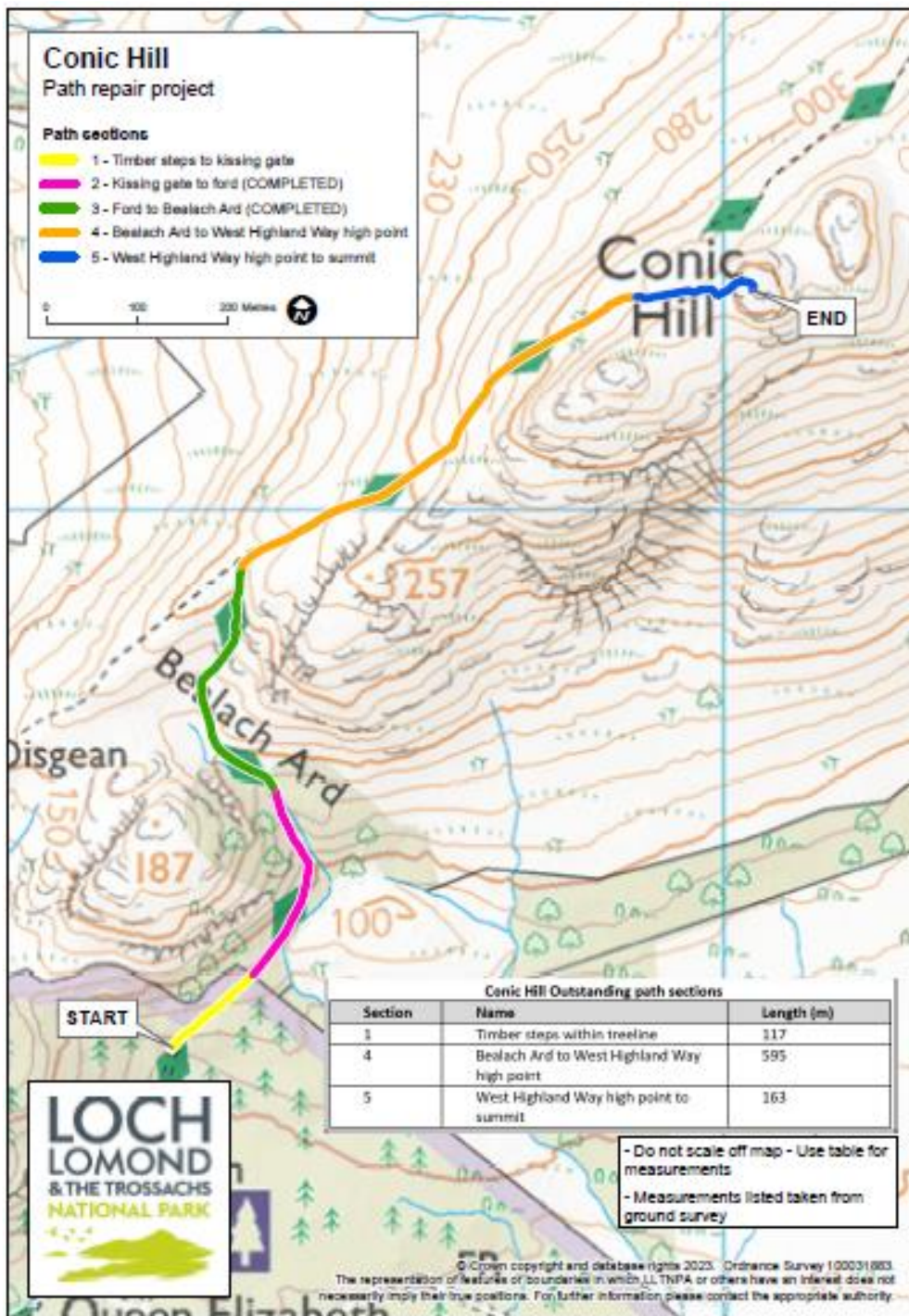


Stone pitching, path section 4 above Bealach Ard

The revised aim is to complete 300 metres by 31 March 2024 on the section of the path from Bealach Ard to the top of the West Highland Way. The path will not be closed while the work takes place but the public are to be made ware this is still a work site with large quantities of heavy stone, hand tools and a mechanical excavator. They will be asked to follow all on-site safety and diversion signs.

The current schedule for the overall project is:

- 300 metres of pitching on path section 4 complete by 31 March 2024
- Remaining stone delivered to stone storage site early April 2024
- 8 to 22 April stone bagged ready for flying
- Helicopter flights week beginning 22 April 2024 – all remaining stone for path section 4 and stone for path section 5 to be flown onto the hill. The path will be closed for this week and mechanical breaking up of bedrock on path section 5 will also take place.
- May to August 2024 – 300 metres of pitching on path section 4 completed
- September to October 2024 – path section 5 completed
- Remainder of works on path section 1 completed during this time period.



St Fillans to Lochearnhead Railway Path

Funding from Sustrans' Network Development Team has enabled technical design and planning applications for a further two phases of the route, from Lochearnhead to Glen Beich and through Ardveich and Derry Woods. Unfortunately, the 2024-25 construction funding from Sustrans for the Lochearnhead to Glen Beich section has been withdrawn because of cuts and changes to the active travel budget. It is going to be extremely difficult to find alternative sources of funding for these sections with cost estimates of well over £0.5 million for each one.