

LLTAF Update: May 2024

Strategic Updates

Core Paths Budget

We were in an unprecedented position of being able to spend a record £170k on core paths projects, in addition to the separate Conic Hill project spend, during the 2023-24 financial year, including the replacement of the two dilapidated bridges on the West Highland Way which were completed in March. Project details are updated below. Unfortunately, as expected, we have next to no budget allocated for the current financial year, although there's a chance there may be a modest underspend available by Quarter 2.

National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP)

A project team is continuing to work up plans for the public launch of the [NPPP](#) which has now received ministerial approval. However, recent events in the Scottish Government may be a potential delay whilst ministerial portfolios are reallocated.

Sustainable Travel

At the time of 'going to press' we are as close to achieving a Summer shuttle bus service in the Trossachs as we have ever been. Contracts are drafted and final arrangements are being agreed. Assuming it goes ahead, the Trossachs Explorer will run between Callander and Aberfoyle from 1st July to end of September.

LLTAF Recruitment

The recruitment process 'went live' on Friday 26th April and will run until Monday 20th May 2024. No applications received at time of going to press.

Area Reports

Loch Lomond, Breadalbane and Cowal

Upholding Access Rights:

Glen Dochart – s14 non-compliant signage

Further to a previous update on this case:- the non-compliant sign has been removed, the NPA will continue to monitor the site. Enforcement case closed.

Glen Falloch

Several locked gates and aging items of wooden access infrastructure have been reported by the public. The NPA are working with Glen Falloch Estate to remedy these issues.

Glenoglehead

Discussions on site design and the management of harvesting with the forest operator are on-going.

Strone - Rights of Way

The situation remains unchanged for the time being – residents continue to use two 'through-routes' to access woodland and the informal paths between Strone Shore Rd. and the Back Rd. Core path. The investigation into potential right of way status is ongoing, but more information is required.

Arrochar / Succoth transmission line upgrade

SSE have now started work on the Tighness / Arrochar / Glen Loin lattice tower upgrade work. The Tighness diversion is signed and proving effective, and large-scale improvements are taking place in Succoth and Glen Loin including access road / path improvements and the installation of new bridges.

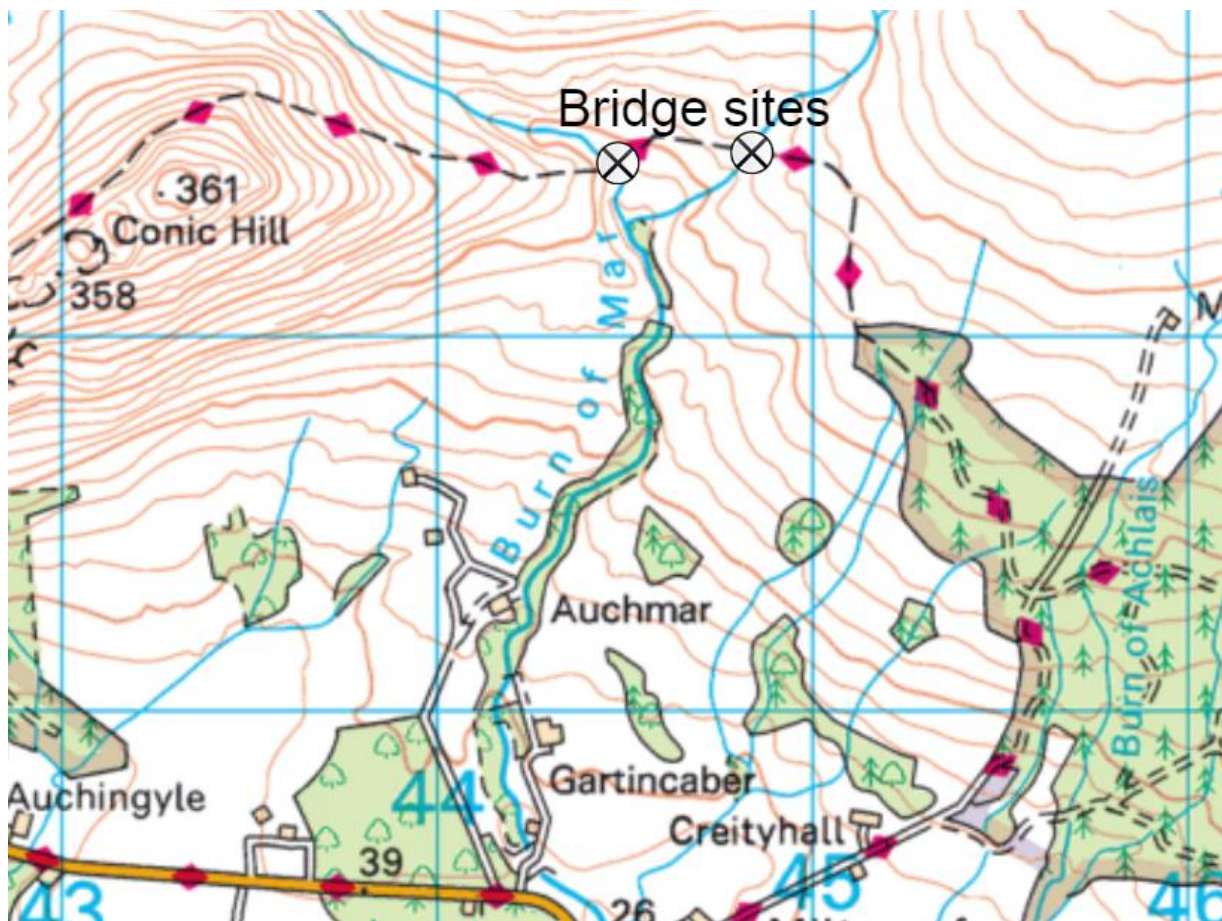
Forest Planning

The NPA are currently being consulted on several large-scale harvesting / restocking proposals designed to address the spread of *phytophthora ramorum* in the National Forest Estate's Larch population. This work will affect Loch Eck (east and west), Benmore, and Lochgoilhead / River Goil areas. The NPA's position is to maintain recreational access wherever possible, if paths or core paths need to be closed due to overriding H&S concerns, then public access must be carefully managed by using signed alternatives or short-term diversions.

Access Infrastructure Projects:

WHW – The 2 Bridges Project (Kilandan & Gorge of Mar)

The replacement project was completed in March, on time and on budget. The WHW through this area has been re-opened and favourable comments have been received by the NPA. The new bridges feature concrete abutments, a zinc-galvanised sub-structure, recycled non-slip decking, treated Oak timberwork, stainless steel fixtures and fittings and should serve WHW users for many years to come. Images of previous conditions and the new bridges are included below.



Kilandan Burn



Gorge of Mar



Killin / Acharn Forest – recreational waymarking

Supported by the NPA, the Killin Sports & Recreational Hub have completed an excellent project to improve recreational waymarking around the town and Acharn Forest. A more detailed update will be included at the next LAF meeting.

East Loch Lomond and the Trossachs

Upholding Access Rights:

Ballimore, Balquhidder

On 7 December 2023 we sent out an informal officer letter to the landowner 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

We have developed advisory signs for either end of the diversion and the landowner has agreed with these. We will get them manufactured as soon as possible and the Land Operations Team has agreed to install them with some additional waymark posts to keep people on route.

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 can update on the following proposals:

- The Craigrue layby/ passing place - the passing place sign has still not been installed by Stirling Council. We have drafted several iterations of an access advisory sign and are still discussing these with the landowner.
- Camping Management Zone (CMZ) signs and 'no access' signs - the three additional CMZ signs are ready to be installed but as these are on the basis that the various non-compliant signs stating private, no access or no camping are removed, and we are still discussing these with landowners, they are not yet out on the ground. These signs will be between Dhanakosa and Rhuveag.
- We have drafted three separate access advisory signs with messages tailored for specific locations and issues. Again, we are still in discussion with landowners about wording before they are put out on site. The NPA's Land Operations Team has agreed to undertake this work and we are just waiting for landowner approval.

Lady's Walk, Gartmore House

The two gates and two fingerposts were installed at the end of March and the path is now fully open.

Borland Hill path, Gartmore

We are still waiting for a response from one of the landowners despite attempts to contact him through email, telephone and a visit to the farm with a hard copy of all previous correspondence posted through the letterbox. We have discussed the work required with the Land Operations Team and we have agreed to install gates already purchased and in stock at our depot and stores to open up the route.

We have drafted a letter to the landowner explaining the current situation and that if he doesn't contact us by the end of May, we will use the powers available to us to enter his land and replace all the padlocked and broken gates.



Previous gate in 2019, blocked with barbed wire



Gate replaced by fence, 2023

Loch Ard shoreline, Kinlochard

We are working with both our Legal and Planning Teams to deal with and potentially enforce against a breach of a planning condition which has blocked access to a section of the Loch Ard shoreline. We enforced against this in 2019 but part of the access obstruction remains and the view of the new property and landowner is that access will infringe on his and his family's privacy. We met with the landowner in late January and legal discussions are still ongoing.

Access Infrastructure Projects

Conic Hill Path

Work started on the second phase of the Conic Hill path repair on 30 October 2023. The current status for the overall project is:

- 312 metres of main stone pitching on path section 4 was installed by 31 March 2024. This was not completed with only a short section of 20 metres at the start fully packed and pointed with cobbles and spoil won from site excavations. The contractors stated that this would all be complete before

the helicopter flights on 22 April, but this did not happen and by 25 April only 165 metres had been packed and pointed with spoil. In addition, 12 cross drains were incomplete which resulted in large gaps between the stones which made it awkward to walk on.

- Remaining stone delivered to stone storage site early April 2024.
- 15 to 22 April stone bagged ready for flying.
- Helicopter flights week 22 April 2024 – all remaining stone for path section 4 and stone for path section 5 is now on the hill. In ideal flying weather 450 bags were flown in three days (see photos below).
- We have instructed the contractors to complete the first 312 metres of pitching and the timber steps within the forest boundary before moving onto the upper path sections. This requires:
 - 12 cross drains completed.
 - Packing and pointing of remaining 147 metres of pitching. This will be done using a combination of spoil won from site and aggregate brought in during the helicopter flights.
 - Extend and deepen the side ditches.
 - All landscaping of path edges including resetting of loose stone and formation of spoil mounds to revet the path
- For the timber steps this requires:
 - Repairing the undercutting of the first step on the 2nd flight of steps.
 - Finishing packing the step treads with aggregate and dust already on site.
 - Replace kissing gate with self-closing gate.
 - Improve landscaping and use of any spare aggregate to create bunds to the side of the path.
- September to October 2024 – path section 5 to be completed.



Photo 1: Packed and pointed pitching. Spoil to be reformed to revet downslope side of the path (yellow line).



Photo 2: Large gaps between stones, April 2024



Photo 3: Stone bags on the upper path, 25 April 2024



Photo 4: Stone bags on upper path and aggregate for packing already pitched path, 25 April 2024

Recreation & Access Team, May 2024