

LLTAF Update: 25 November 2024

Strategic Updates

Core Paths Budget

No change at this point in the year. We have a small capital budget of £5,000 which is likely to be used for signage and small-scale infrastructure such as replacement gates. Scottish Government has indicated likely further cuts in NPA Grant in Aid allocation for 2025/6.

Core Paths and Private Level Crossings

As mentioned in the previous update, the Scottish Government has ruled that, in light of current legal advice, it is illegitimate for a core path to cross a private level crossing. The National Access Forum has set up a short-term working group comprising representatives from Network Rail, Scottish Government, two access authorities, Ramblers Scotland and Scotways to try agree some practical options for addressing the issues caused by the directive. LLTNPA is chairing the group which is expected to report to the NAF in February. In the meantime, the core paths plan has not been amended.

Sustainable Travel

In August we were successful in appointing Emily Davy as our new National Park Mobility Manager. This is an (initial) 8-month contract funded by SPT through its People and Place grants programme, and the role is focused on developing the strategic partnership that will help deliver the long-term sustainable transport aims set out in the National Park Partnership Plan.

The Trossachs Explorer shuttle bus service finished its run as planned at the end of September. A [report](#) about it and the opportunities it provided for passengers is available on the NPA website. Any repeat of the service in future years will be funding dependent.

A83/Rest-and-be-Thankful

The Access Team has contributed comments to Transport Scotland's consultants on early drafts of the Environmental Impact Assessment Reports on the so-called Medium- and Long-Term Solutions to address the ongoing problem of landslides in Glen Croe, together with upgrading of the existing viewpoint and car park (see details below). We understand that a public consultation on the draft reports will follow in the coming months.

Area Reports

Loch Lomond, Breadalbane and Cowal – N.B. The majority of work in this area is on hold due to ongoing staff secondment to Scottish Government.

Upholding Access Rights:

Gouk Hill / Three Lochs Way

The short section of path from Darleith Moor to Ben Bowie / Bannachra is still blocked by windblown trees 10 months later.

Bolted climbing, Beinn an Lochain

Beinn an Lochain is a Corbett (mountain between 2,500 and 3,000 feet) to the west of the Rest and Be Thankful. It is a steep and craggy mountain with the one ascent path on its south-west ridge weaving between many small crags. The bulk of the mountain is a SSSI for vegetated boulder fields and for certain types of grasses and tall herb vegetation growing on crag ledges and steep other ground where grazing pressures are reduced.

In September we received reports from Nature Scot of unauthorised bolting of some of these crags and that 'cleaning' of the crags (vegetation and lichen removal) was potentially damaging the SSSI habitats and species. An online search found five small crags have been cleaned and bolted and over 30 'sport' climbs recorded. This activity is clearly against Mountaineering Scotland's bolting policy:

- Mountain and sea cliffs with a wild, remote character (also reflected in their surrounding environment) and adventurous nature **are not suitable locations for bolts**, either for the

development of routes or their limited use in order to facilitate easy retreat: self-rescue and descent without fixed equipment are all part of the adventurous nature of traditional climbs.

- Crags with good or adequate quality protection within strong natural lines (obvious routes) would be regarded as traditional venues. Crags where an overall lack of natural cracks for protection together with a lack of strong natural lines may be suitable venues for sport climb development as long as they could not be classed as wild mountain or sea cliff venues.

(Highlighting added by Access Team.)

Following discussions with the landowner, ourselves and Mountaineering Scotland, Nature Scot had a site visit with climbers earlier this month. They were told further activity was unlikely and they were satisfied that recent bolting had not affected any vegetation because they were on very steep and overhanging ground where no vegetation was present.

A83 upgrade Rest and Be Thankful

Consultations on the draft Environmental Impact Reports on the design of a debris flow shelter on the A83 approach to the Rest and Be Thankful (R&BT), and the re-design of the car park and viewpoint itself, are underway. This is to increase resilience of the road to landslides and closures and is obviously a huge infrastructure project that requires input from many teams and specialities across the NPA and other organisations.

Our areas of focus have been on impacts of access routes during and after construction, active travel considerations for the road itself and development of a non-motorised cycling and walking route on the Old Military Road. The main impact for hillwalkers and climbers is the closure during construction of the small car park used for ascents of Beinn Ime, The Cobbler and Beinn Luibhean. We have made a strong recommendation that the Old Military Road (which is currently used as the diversion route for motor traffic during landslide closure events) becomes a cycling and walking route once the debris flow shelter is constructed, and that good connections and non-motorised user provision is made at the R&BT car park, the forest road network and the B828 Lochgoilhead road.

The initial response from Transport Scotland has been that:

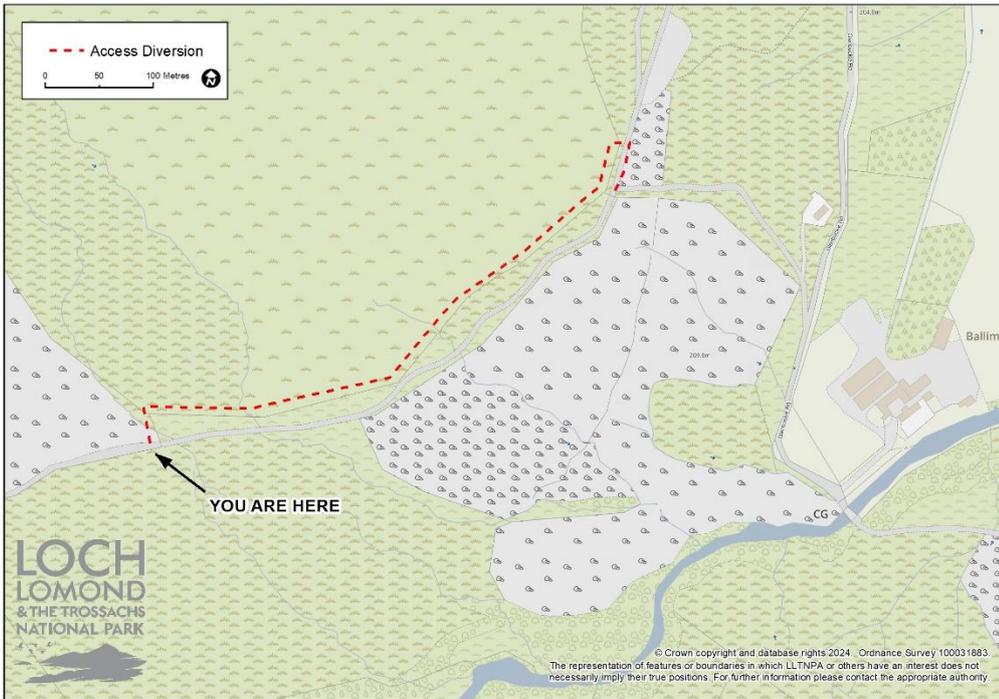
- Cyclists will still be able to use the A83 through the debris flow shelter in the same way they use the road now.
- They are aware of the paths to the east of the A83 which access the Arrochar Alps and the proposed scheme will 'aim to' ensure no barriers are put in place which inhibit access to existing routes.
- They are currently considering opportunities for an active travel link from the R&BT car park and viewpoint to the forestry tracks on the lower slopes of Ben Donich, to the west of the Old Military Road.

East Loch Lomond and the Trossachs

Upholding Access Rights:

Ballimore, Balquhidder

The path diversion signs and waymarking have finally been installed (see below). The landowner said he was looking to replace fencing in the near future. We would prefer the fence to be moved to the south of the track which would mean it no longer needs to be gated and locked.



Loch Voil, Balquhidder

All signs are now out on site (see examples below). These are:

- The Craigrue layby/ passing place – installed by Stirling Council
- Three Camping Management Zone (CMZ) signs – one at Rhuveag and two at Craigrue
- Two access advisory signs on the lochshore at Rhuveag, four signs on the Craigrue-owned lochshore (approx. 1 mile) and two signs on Dhanakosa-owned land

Three non-compliant signs were removed from Rhuveag-owned land and two removed from access gates on Dhanakosa-owned land. We have requested that two non-compliant signs are removed on Craigrue land, and four others are painted over to leave the signs saying 'no parking' and 'no fishing'. Compliance with this request will be checked by the Ranger Team in the coming weeks.





Borland Hill path, Gartmore

A further letter regarding the locked gates was sent to the landowner on 9th October outlining our intention to escalate to legal action if we received no response. The deadline for this passed on 6th November, and an 'intention to serve notice' letter, to be signed by a member of our Executive, is in preparation. The letter will explain that we will use the powers available to us to enter the land and replace all the padlocked and broken gates.

As with any situation where legal action is under consideration, we must ensure that the landowner has been given every opportunity to put forward his views and to work with us to resolve the matter practically and amicably. The option to engage with the LLTAF has already been explained to him in

an earlier letter and will be reiterated in the forthcoming letter, which will ask for his consent to a formal Forum site visit with the opportunity to address Forum members at a meeting afterwards.

Proposed next steps in the process:

- 'Intention to serve notice' letter sent – 28 day deadline to respond
- NPA formally requests the advice of the LLTAF*
- In the event of no response from the landowner, paper prepared for the Planning and Access Committee (next meeting February), noting any advice from the Forum, seeking authorisation to serve notice
- Notice issued on receipt of authorisation
- In the event of no response, NPA enters the land and carries out works to remove the obstructions, having given notice of date/time in advance, and recording all work carried out
- In the event of an appeal, the matter will go forward for a hearing in the Sheriff Court.

It should be noted that the landowner may engage in the process at any time and we will be pleased to work with him directly to resolve the matter.

*In order to allow the Forum to provide formal advice on the matter we will seek, through the Convenor, to arrange a special meeting of the Forum in January to enable Forum members to consider the matter. A site visit will also be arranged, subject to the landowner's consent. If consent is withheld, we will provide the Forum with background information, photographs and maps detailing the obstructions, together with copies of correspondence concerning the matter.

Loch Ard shoreline, Kinlochard

We have worked with both our Legal and Planning Teams to deal with and potentially enforce against a breach of a planning condition which blocked access to a section of the Loch Ard shoreline. Discussions took place with proposals set out by us that would satisfy both the planning and access issues and, following a site visit on 16 August, the landowner agreed to reinstate access. This has now been done.

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:

- All of the main path to the top of the West Highland Way is now complete, albeit with minor landscaping works still to be completed and other items recorded on a snagging list. The contractors worked through the summer because there was sufficient space for the public to pass and for diversions to be in place. Plastic mesh fencing and metal stakes and rope/twine has cordoned off parts of the path and this, along with diversion and advisory signage, has worked well both in keeping people on the new path surface where appropriate, and on diversions where necessary. The wet and mild weather this summer has helped with site restoration and the upland grass seed mix used on previously eroded areas has taken well. *See photos from early October below.*



Galaxy A52s 5G



Galaxy A52s 5G



Preparatory work started on the summit path in October and the team are currently breaking up sections of bedrock outcrops prior to the pitching being laid. Unfortunately, due to a combination of half term leave, vehicle breakdowns and illness, 2 weeks were lost in mid-October, and it is now anticipated that the primary path work will be complete in mid-January rather than the end of the calendar year.

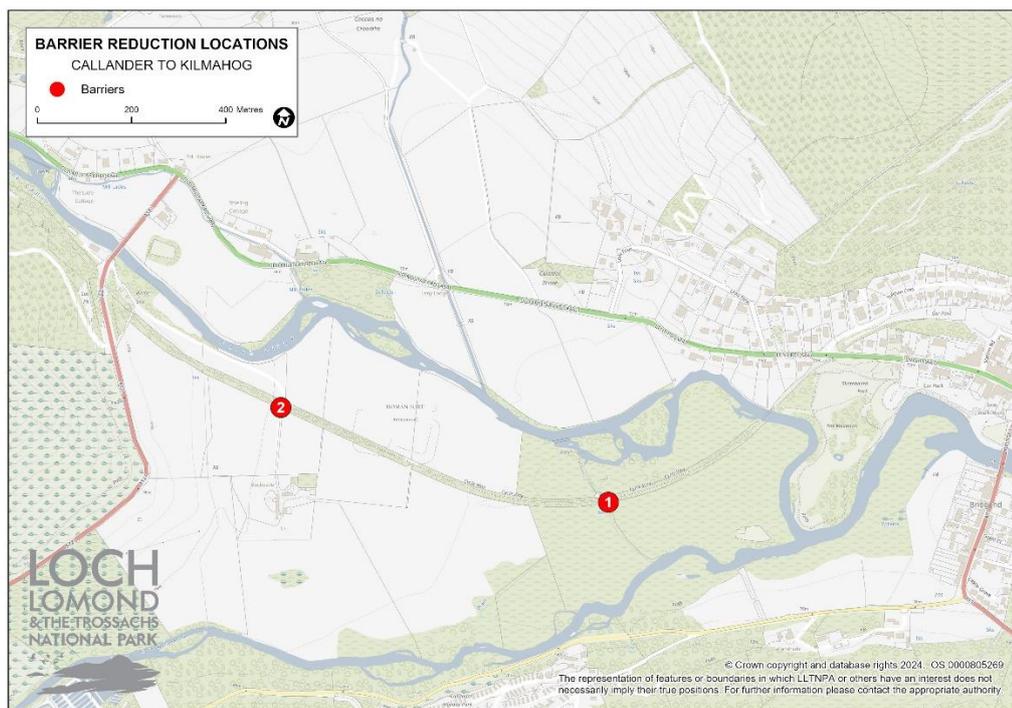
The project runs until 31 March 2025 and is on schedule to complete by then. The current programme is as follows:

- Summit path complete by 20 January 2025
- Mid-January 2025 onwards – snagging work on path sections 1, 4 and 5 (timber steps, Bealach Ard to WHW high point and summit path)
- Early February 2025 – additional landscaping on path sections 2 and 3 to keep people on the path
- Mid-February to early March 2025 – restoration of stone storage site at Millrowan
- To 31 March 2025 – final snagging work, site sweep and leave site

In terms of future work, the maintenance plan will be updated to include the upper path sections. Path inspections and maintenance will take place four times a year with a mix of Volunteers, Rangers and Land Operations staff. A full photographic record will be taken once a year.

NCN7 Barrier Reduction Project

We have just let a contract to local consultants Raeburn, Farquhar & Bowen (RF&B) to replace an ageing bridge and cattle grids on NCN7 between Callander and Kilmahog (see map below). Neither meet current Cycling by Design standards and are narrow and difficult to use for normal bikes and are not passable by certain types of adaptive bikes or larger motorised wheelchairs. This is funded 100% by Sustrans with design work carried out in this financial year and construction in 2025-26. RF&B will also oversee and manage the construction contract next year.



Recreation & Access Team, November 2024