

LLTAF Update: November 2025

STRATEGIC UPDATES

Planned Capital Works

Tenders have been let for upgrading work on the West Highland Way between Mar Bridge and the summit of Conic Hill, and for further barrier reduction work on NCN7. The NPA has also contributed funding to the Loch Earn Railway Path project this year, in partnership with the local community development trusts. More detail below.

Sustainable Travel

The Trossachs Explorer shuttle bus had another successful year with new operator, McColls, providing a great service with smaller vehicles but more frequent runs. Again, lots of great testimonials from passengers and businesses. Whether the service runs next year will depend again on external funding.

A draft version of the emerging Mobility Partnership 'Route Map' was discussed at the recent National Park Mobility Partnership meeting and continues to evolve. An invitation to tender for a feasibility study of sustainable travel options for the East Loch Lomond corridor received a significant number of responses from an interesting range of consultants, indicating the interest the overall Mobility Partnership initiative is generating in the sector.

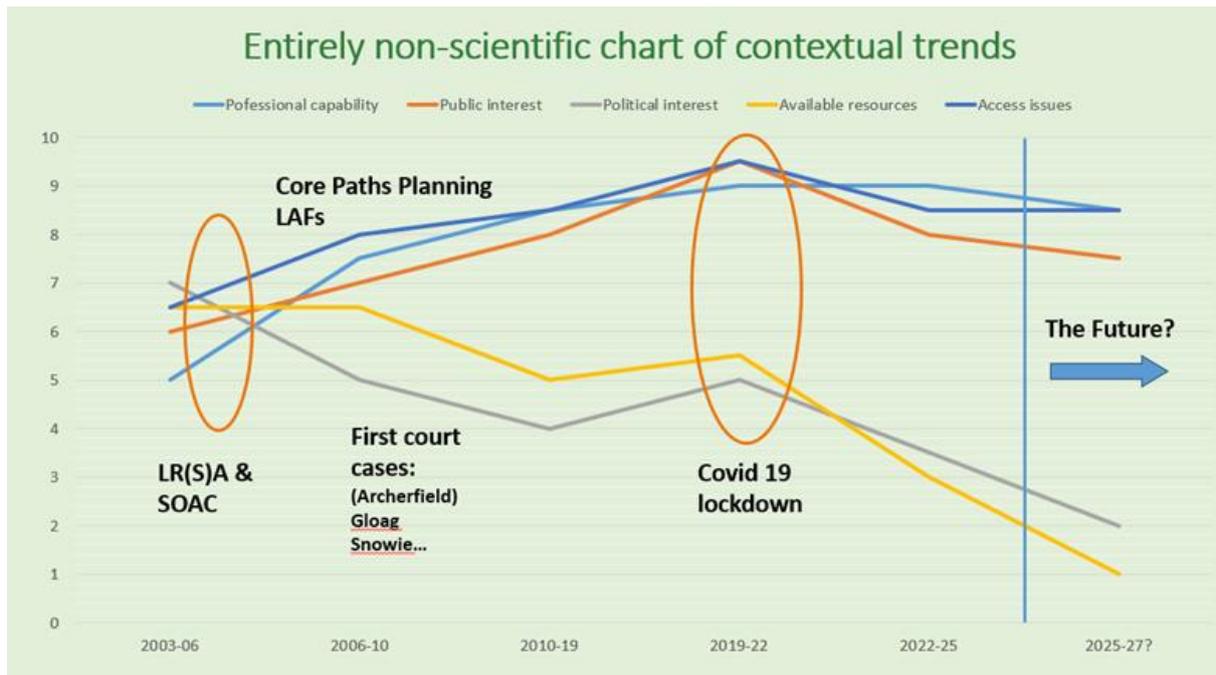
National engagement work

The National Access Forums' (NAF)' Public Access and Private Level Crossings working group, chaired by Sue, reported back to the September NAF during the summer, presenting a draft memorandum of understanding between Network Rail and the Access Authorities which sets out a pragmatic approach to ensure there is consultation with access 'interests' whenever NR is considering the future of a private level-crossing .

In early October, the Access Team attended a gathering in the Lake District National Park of Access Officers from all the UK National Parks to share good practice and discuss matters of mutual interest. The 2-day event feature a number of site visits which allowed attendees to discuss different approaches and methodologies on the ground.

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The full Access Team also attended the SOAN Conference on Thursday 13th November, celebrating 20 years of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. A range of speakers from within and outwith Scotland gave perspectives, notable amongst which were Jon Moses from the English 'Right to Roam' campaign group, and Anna Grunden from the Swedish Environment Agency talking about Allemansrätten (the Swedish right of public access). It was interesting to hear that despite the right being so well embedded in Swedish culture, they still have issues with anti-social or inappropriate behaviour! Sue joined a colleague from The Highland Council to present on the Access Authorities' experience of delivering the legislation. A slide from the talk is pasted below for interest:



In addition to the above, since the last LLTAF meeting, Sue and Dave have given a presentation to the NPA's Planning & Access Committee on the Authority's access duties and powers (attended by Davy Fettes); and Sue has attended meetings and events with the National Cycling Development Forum, Walking Scotland (formerly Paths for All Partnership), National Trails UK (helping to develop their manifesto 'asks' for Scotland's Long Distance Routes ahead of the 2026 elections), and (with Guy) the John Muir Trust (on the future of the John Muir Way).

AREA REPORTS

West Loch Lomond, Breadalbane and Cowal

Upholding Access Rights:

Gouk Hill / Three Lochs Way

The Forum will recall that a short section of core path from Darleith Moor to Ben Bowie/Bannachra, which forms part of the Three Lochs Way and John Muir Way, was completely blocked by windblown trees for over a year, with a very long diversion in place created by HADAT (Helensburgh & District Access Trust). The path was re-opened around April by persons unknown, however soon after, Scottish Woodlands informed us that they were intending to commence harvesting in the area.

Felling was completed in October with log forwarding and haulage ongoing. There are delays to completing haulage due to timber mill capacity. We have liaised with the forestry managers and as the work onsite has now reduced to smaller scale forwarding and haulage, the diversion was removed on 12/11/25. Around 100m of the route through the site is very muddy and disturbed but is passable with care. Scottish Woodlands have agreed they will reinstate the path as part

of the post-harvesting clean up and we are pushing for this to be completed by mid-January 2026.

Glen Fruin, Luss Estates

We received a complaint from a member of the public in May 2025 regarding locked vehicle gates in deer fencing on the A817 Glen Fruin Haul Road (West Loch Lomond). These obstruct access rights to the open hillside. These gates have been discussed with the CEO of Luss Estates and he has indicated that the gates are required to be locked for stock management purposes. Verbal agreement has been made by Luss Estates to install pedestrian gates; however, no timeframe has been given. Two follow up requests have been made for an update with no replies received. Luss Estates have now been informed that if alternate access is not provided by 4/12/25, the case will be escalated to our Legal team.

Auchreoch Estate

NPA Executive members became aware at the end of June 2025 of some signs on Auchreoch Estate (near Tyndrum) which were non-compliant with SOAC and forwarded the issue to the Access team. Issues identified were

- Stated that camping not permitted where access rights apply
- Direction to remain on paths where access rights apply
- CCTV in use and generally not welcoming

Engagement was undertaken with the landholder and recommendations on alternate wording provided. After several follow up requests, the three non-compliant signs were replaced on 4/11/2025 and this access case closed.



Original non-compliant sign



Replacement sign

Strone High Road core path

The route was closed by the landowner in October due to an Argyll & Bute Council dangerous building Notice being served on the adjacent Dunselma Castle stables (listed building). This action prevents cars and pedestrians/cyclists from using the unadopted road/core path and has caused local consternation, community council involvement and questions from the local MSP. Fortunately, a short local path diversion exists via woodland and the closed Strone Primary School – this has been temporarily waymarked by the NPA and is being used by residents to bypass the closure. Meanwhile A&B Council and NPA Planning colleagues are working with the landowner to resolve the H&S issues associated with the stables building.

East Loch Lomond and the Trossachs

Upholding Access Rights:

Borland Hill path, Gartmore

As reported at the last meeting, we have been trying to arrange a meeting with the landowner (at his request) since late August but despite various dates being put forward, correspondence has not been forthcoming and no meeting has taken. On 21 October we wrote to the landowner to note that the situation had by then been dragging on for a number of weeks with no meeting forthcoming, and that therefore the next communication he would receive from us would be a notification of the date when our Estates Team would enter his land and carry out the work as previously described.

We had agreed with the Estates Team a date of 10 November for this work but before we could communicate this with the landowner, he contacted us again on 3 November citing ill health and once again requesting a meeting:

On legal advice, we have paused the site works planned for 10 November and will attempt to meet with the landowner again. This correspondence will set a timeframe for this meeting and stress that if it is not met then we will proceed to do the work without any further delay.

Ardchullarie, Loch Lubnaig

We met on site with the landowner's land agent and site manager on 7 October to discuss removing the obstructions that prevent access to the loch shore. As well as a padlocked gate, there are misleading signs to the north and south of the area that state, "Bull in field. No Camping. No Fishing. No Dogs. No Fires."

The agent and site manager raised issues of anti-social behaviour by weekend campers despite this area being in a Camping Management Zone and claimed that advice given to them by an NPA Ranger was to keep the gate locked. They also said one of their cows had to be put down after ingesting plastic-based litter. They want to keep the existing (and only) access gate padlocked but offered to install a pedestrian gate at the northern end of the area. This would entail a 250m walk on the verge of the A84 trunk road rather than just crossing the road from a large layby. I raised these concerns on site but in the first instance agreed that they would probably be fulfilling their obligations as landowners by providing an access point into the area.

Nevertheless, after further discussion and with advice from our Legal Team, we have gone back to the land agent with the following:

- the padlocked gate obstructs the route and placing a new gate at the north end of the land does not address this obstruction. If your intention is that this gate remains padlocked, an additional pedestrian gate must be installed immediately adjacent to it. To be clear, the installation of a pedestrian gate at the location you have suggested is not an acceptable alternative to restoring access at the original access point.
- Section 14(1)a of the LRSA states that "the owner of land in respect of which access rights are exercisable shall not, for the purpose or for the main purpose of preventing or deterring any person entitled to exercise these rights from doing so.....put up any sign or notice;". Therefore, the signs at either end of the area should be removed as soon as possible. We can assist you with the wording of replacement signs that advise on appropriate behaviour around livestock and land management, but that are compliant with the legislation.

We have asked that these actions be completed by the end of November. (N.B. location maps will be shared at the meeting.)

Trial diversion, Glen Buckie

We reported at the LAF meetings throughout 2024 of the requirements of the landowner at XXXXX Farm to open up a previously agreed diversion route to allow access to the upper reaches of Gleann Dubh and the Allt Feathan Glinne*, and that it had also previously been agreed that the diversion would be for a trial period of 12 months. (* location maps will be shared at the meeting).

The diversion signs were installed in October 2024 and 31 October 2025 was set as the end date of the trial period. The landowner was informed of this and that a review of the trial period would then take place, and that this review would take into account any complaints received during that time (there have been four). I have since informed the landowner of the end of this trial period and that we will begin this review process.

We would like to involve the LAF in this process, to plan and agree the scope and timeframe of the review, provide an independent assessment of the diversion route and to recommend the most appropriate way forward. We would like to convene a small working group of 4-5 to assist with this. We suggest it would be beneficial to have land management representation on the group.

Access Infrastructure Projects:

NCN7 Barrier Reduction Project

We have appointed MacLaren Plant Hire for the replacement of the bridge and cycle grids on NCN7. The designers Raeburn, Farquhar & Bowen will oversee and manage the construction contract this year. Work is planned to start in January 2026 when recreational use of the NCN7 will be at its lowest. This work is fully funded by Sustrans from their Barrier Reduction fund.

West Highland Way Improvements: Burn of Mar to Conic Hill East

We received two tender submissions for this contract and it has been awarded to Hamiltons Environmental Ltd, the contractors from the previous work on the main Conic Hill path. Due to tight timescales for the rest of this financial year, we have decided to split the contract over this year and 2026-27. The intention is to complete all the side ditching work and reinstatement of the washed-out section this financial year (approx. cost £90,000) and the replacement of pitching and timber steps on the steep slope out of the Burn of Mar in the first quarter of 2026-27 (approx. cost of £40,000).

We held an inception meeting with the contractor on 10 November. Preparatory work such as stone transport and bagging and side ditch excavation will take place before Christmas, but path restoration work will not start until after 15-16 January 2026 when the stone and aggregate will be flown onto site.

Rowardennan to Rowchoish (Low Path)

FLS have provided the NPA with a £150k contribution to fund the planning and delivery of some path improvements on this section of the West Highland Way 'Low Path'. This includes funds to cover NPA staff time. Ecology surveys have been undertaken and the planning application has now been submitted. We expect the works to go out to tender in November with work

programmed for the first half of 2026 - subject to all planning and Habitat Regulation Appraisal/Appropriate Assessment approvals being received.

Loch Earn Railway Path

The NPA is contributing £200k of capital funding to St Fillans Community Trust to enable construction of a 185m section of the route to take place this financial year. The overall cost is £293K and the remainder of the funding is being provided by Sustrans (recently re-branded as the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust - [About us - Walk Wheel Cycle Trust](#))

The section to be improved is just outside of Lochearnhead and is in a very poor condition. It is in a cutting with no working drainage so has been waterlogged for some time. The only access is by scrambling up onto the embankment from the old track bed and negotiating a way around trees and through vegetation. There is also a disused agricultural shed on the track bed which will be removed, all drainage issues resolved and a sealed surface of 2.5m width installed.

We have just found out that the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust has agreed to fund a further section of the route this year at a cost of approx. £165K. This is for a 535m section at Derry Woods east of Glen Tarken and will be for vegetation clearance, drainage works and a whin dust surface, hence the lower per metre cost.

Aber Bridge

The footbridge here has been closed for 5 years due to rotten wooden structural beams and replacement has been stalled by a lack of landholder consent. Friends of Loch Lomond and Trossachs (FOLLAT) made an offer to project manage the repair of the bridge, employing one of the landowners to undertake the bridge reconstruction. The NPA agreed to make a contribution to FOLLAT of £11k to enable the project to go ahead with FOLLAT providing the remaining £8k. The landowner who is building the bridge has agreed to retain liability in perpetuity and work started at the beginning of the month.

Glenoglehead car park

Protracted negotiations have been ongoing between the NPA's Legal Team and agents of the private forestry company seeking to extract timber via the NPA car park at Glenoglehead, which is also on the route of the NCN7/The Rob Roy Way. The specification and alignment of the new cycle path (linking the new visitor car park with NCN7/The Rob Roy Way), has now been agreed and encapsulated in the NPA/Forest Partnership contract.

Recreation & Access Team, November 2025