

# **LLTAF Update: March 2026**

## **STRATEGIC UPDATES**

### **Budgets**

Further to a reasonable level of committed grant in aid from the Scottish Government, the proposed budget for access capital works in the 2026-7 financial year is the same as the current year - £100k, with a small revenue budget of £5k. As ever, this budget will be targeted towards major priority projects and urgent work – likely to include completion of the Rob Roy Way resurfacing project and a number of critical large bridge replacements.

### **Access Team**

The Team continues to benefit from the presence of a temporary third member in the form of Mick Foran, on secondment from the Ranger Team, who's primary role is to progress upgrade works on the West Highland Way (WHW) Low Path – i.e. the 'Ptarmigan Project' on behalf of FLS (more details below). However, Mick's contract finishes at the end of April, and he is working closely with Guy and Dave to pave the way for a smooth handover when he leaves the Team. This will be his final Access Forum meeting.

### **Sustainable Travel**

Consultants are currently working on a feasibility study of sustainable travel options for the East Loch Lomond corridor as the latest in a series of studies for the National Park Mobility Partnership. The first draft of the Mobility Partnership Route Map will be presented at Partnership meeting on 26 February for comment by members. The Stakeholder Insights Forum also met on 17 February (Calum will be able to update the Forum).

Work continues to secure external funding for a third year of the Trossachs Explorer shuttle bus or, alternatively, a West Loch Lomond shuttle bus pilot, depending on partner buy-in and support.

### **Camping Management Byelaw Review**

A small team of officers from both Visitor Operations and the Ranger Service is working on the review process, which is at the stage of discussions with invited external bodies and representatives. A number of Forum member have taken part in the meetings, and their enthusiastic input has been welcomed by the team. Information gathered through these discussions will inform the full public consultation later in the year.

### **The Mountains and The People (TMTP)**

The Access Team has commenced with a conditions audit on paths built as part of this landmark project in 2015, which long-standing members of the Forum may remember. Over the past few years FLS have been monitoring and undertaking light-touch work on TMTP paths on their land, and the NPA is now starting similar work on the remaining routes. Many of these routes ascend into the high mountain environment (often to

remote peaks and Monros). The NPA is looking at the viability of future light-touch maintenance work, etc. being supported by NPA Volunteer Rangers.

## **AREA REPORTS**

### **West Loch Lomond, Breadalbane and Cowal**

#### Work by other bodies affecting access:

##### **Dunoon – Loch Long overhead power line**

A significant project will commence in the SW part of the National Park towards the end of April, with SSE starting upgrade work on the power transmission infrastructure. The work coincides with many core paths, recreational routes, harvesting sites, local businesses and the popular Ardentinny visitor site. The NPA has undertaken preparatory scoping work with FLS and SSE to ensure recreational disturbance is kept to a minimum for the duration of the project (c.2 years) and helped develop an access management plan for the scheme. A short press release and advance notices, etc, will be distributed through the NPA's communication channels.

##### **West Loch Lomond cyclepath**

The Carrick Golf Club intends to replace the aging boardwalk at the southern end of the course, near Burnfoot. The boardwalk has ongoing maintenance issues, and the club intends to replace this item with a raised aggregate path.

#### Upholding Access Rights:

##### **Gouk Hill / Three Lochs Way**

The Forum will recall that a short section of core path (approx.. 100m) from Darleith Moor to Ben Bowie/Bannachra has been obstructed/destroyed first by major windblow and then harvesting operations. The diversion was lifted and the route re-opened on 12/11/25, although it was very muddy and disturbed but passable with care.

The access team has continued to apply pressure to the forestry managers (Scottish Woodlands) to reinstate approximately 100m of core path which has been destroyed. This section of path is subject to a National Park Path Agreement with the landholder, agreed in 2014 and which remains in place until 2033.

It is fair to say that Scottish Woodlands have been unresponsive to repeated requests for updates on their intentions, but the team were recently able to prompt some action. A 10-tonne earthmover was brought in on 4/2/26 to 'rough in' a new line for the path and this work has now been completed.

The Authority has been very clear that the path needs to be to be re-instated to at least the equivalent standard of what was in place prior to the major windblow event. Photo evidence of the path standard as it was has been provided and the team is still pushing for this work to be undertaken as soon as possible.



Feb 2026 – approximate old line of path prior to ‘rough in’ - pre-existing path has been completely destroyed first by major windblow event and then harvesting operations



Feb 2026 – Large earthmover ‘roughing in’ new path line  
Further work to be done to re-instate aggregate, drainage, water bars, etc.

### **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 obstructed access rights to the open hillside. The issue of the gates was raised with the CEO of Luss Estates prompting verbal agreement by the Estate to install pedestrian gates; however, no timeframe had been given.

Due to a continued failure to respond to requests for updates, Luss Estates were informed that if alternate access was not provided by 4/12/25, the case would be escalated to our Legal team.

This prompted communication to be restarted with further discussion about stock management and health & safety concerns on the A817. Action was agreed and a commitment received from Luss Estates to resolve by mid-January 2026. We are pleased to report that the agreed work was completed by Luss Estates to a good standard at the end of January 2026 and this case has now been closed.



Before: Deer fence gate locked  
Obstruction to open hillside



After: New ladder stile installed



Before: access to vehicle track obstructed  
by locked stock gate



After: new pedestrian gate installed



Before: Deer fencing and stock gate locked



After: New stile installed – fence height  
lowered to stock fence height

### **Strone High Road core path**

The NPA continues to monitor the core path closure (see previous update). Local reports indicate the short diversion is being used successfully to bypass the closure by local walkers and residents.

### **Luss – Glebe core path**

The aging wooden bridge linking Luss with the Glebe area and core path was recently removed by Luss Estates Company. The structure was damaged during flooding and closed in 2024 following a structural engineers report which condemned it as ‘unsafe for use’. The NPA will now work with local representatives to try and find a solution to restoring access, though it should be noted that a replacement bridge is likely to be prohibitively expensive in the current climate.



Current conditions at the Luss / Glebe site

### **East Loch Lomond and the Trossachs**

#### Upholding Access Rights:

#### **Borland Hill path, Gartmore**

Following further unsuccessful attempts to engage with the landowner, the NPA gave notice of its intent to enter his land on 22 January 2026 to carry out a schedule of works to replace padlocked and obstructed gates at two locations on the core path. Despite last minute requests by the landowner to delay, the work was carried out over a number of days and the gates shown below have been installed.

In August 2025, when the NPA installed a new gate at the Corrie Farm end of the core path (see September 2025 LAF update), the landowner tied up gates on a further three gateways that had, on all previous site visits, been open. These gates are not in a workable condition and are tied with twine at either end. They would fall to the ground if opened and are not safe to climb over, thus access along the core path is still obstructed. A photo of one of the tied gates is shown below. With this in mind, The Authority has written to the landowner again asking for a meeting with him to find a solution that not only allows the public to use the route unhindered, but also addresses

his land management needs. In order to ensure the core path is useable by the public there will need to be either open gateways, or operable, unlocked gates.



New handgate installed on the route in January 2026.



New 2-part gate installed January 2026.



One of the remaining tied-up gates.

### **Ardchullarie, Loch Lubnaig**

The team requested that a new access gate should be installed and the misleading signs removed by the end of November 2025. No response to the requests for updates were received before Christmas so at that point the landowner's agent was informed that that this issue would be escalated to the NPA Legal Team for further action. An assurance has now been received indicating that a pedestrian gate will be installed 75m to the north of the locked gate. This is the previous location of a second gate that was removed when the new deer fence was installed in 2023 and is close to and visible from the A84 layby. This will be checked and a report brought to the next Forum meeting.

### **Trial diversion, Glen Buckie**

At the November meeting the access team requested to work with the LLTAF on the review of the 12-month trial of a diversion route at Ballimore, Glen Buckie, to provide an independent assessment of the route and to recommend the most appropriate way forward. A meeting was held a meeting on 8 December to plan and agree the scope and timeframe of the review. It was agreed that a small working group of 4-5 Forum members would be convened to assist with the review and that it should have a mix of land management and user representation.

There are three questions for the Forum to consider:

1. Is the alternate route acceptable? For example, is it usable by all and is it as easy to use as the obstructed route?
2. If not acceptable, what are the other options?
3. How valid are the reasons for closing the original route to public access?

The correspondence with the landowner since 2019 has been provided to the Forum, along with associated photos and maps. The below actions have been planned to consider the three questions above:

1. A site visit to assess the route and other options (subject to landowner agreement).
2. A meeting with the landowners for their views.
3. Consultation with the most recent complainants (four from 2024 to 2025) on their views on the diversion route and what their preferred route would be.

Since December, the Authority has contacted the landowner three times to arrange a site visit and a meeting but has had no response. The complainants have also been contacted and one response has been received so far.

### Access Infrastructure Projects:

#### **NCN7 Barrier Reduction Project**

MacLaren Plant Hire has been appointed for the work to replace the bridge and cycle grids on NCN7. Work is now planned to start in early March 2026 due to long lead-in times for steel work and recycled plastic decking. This work is fully funded by the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans) from their Barrier Reduction fund.

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

Stone transport and bagging took place before Christmas and all materials were successfully flown to site on 15-16 January 2026. The priority was to excavate and re-profile the side ditches all the way from the Burn of Mar to the high point of the West Highland Way to get water off the track and improve site working conditions. This is now complete although 100m had to be hand dug as ground conditions were not suitable to allow digger access.

Path re-profiling and re-surfacing will take place between late February and the end of March. The contract will continue into 2026-27 with the completion of the re-profiling of the washed-out section and the replacement of timber steps at the Burn of Mar with a longer section of stone pitching.

### **Rowardennan to Rowchoish (Low Path)**

FLS have provided the NPA with a £150k contribution to fund the planning and delivery of path improvements on the West Highland Way 'Low Path'. Planning approval including Habitat Regulation Appraisal was received mid-Jan 2026 subject to approval of the finalised designs and materials.

Tenders closed mid-January 2026 with only two bids being received, neither of which could undertake the work in the preferred period February-April due to their existing workloads. The preferred bidder is Arran Footpaths and Forestry (AFF), a small but well-established business based on Arran. The team is currently working with AFF to refine and finalise their design proposals and get the contract signed off. Work is planned to commence on 30 March and programmed to be completed by early June.

### **Loch Earn Railway Path**

The NPA is contributing £99K 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 total cost of this section is £285,793 and the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (WWWT, previously Sustrans) is funding the remainder of this. The WWWT has also agreed to fund a further section of the route this year at a cost of approx. £151K. 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. Work started on 26 January 2026 and is expected to be complete by the end of March.

### **Aber Bridge**

The new footbridge is now in place (see photos below). The Friends of Loch Lomond (FoLL) has also submitted a planning application to construct two new aggregate surfaced sections of the Aber Path (right of way) where it runs through two fields, one of which is very wet and the other seasonally wet.



The newly installed Aber Bridge carried out via a contribution to Friends of Loch Lomond.

### **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.

### **West Highland Way Infrastructure Audit**

The Recreation and Access Team have been working over the past few months to audit of all built infrastructure (bridges, gates, etc.) on the West Highland Way between Inversnaid and Derrydarroch to the north. There are many footbridges along this section that were originally installed when the West Highland Way was first constructed around 1980. We now have a complete and up to date record of all infrastructure and general condition surveys to help inform future planning for bridge replacements and support the new West Highland Way Trust with a pipeline of projects for fundraising.

***Recreation & Access Team, February 2026***