

ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL

OBAN LORN & THE ISLES LOCAL AREA COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP;
8TH SEPTEMBER 2010

MULTI-USE PATH FROM OBAN TO BALLACHULISH

PAPER PRESENTED BY SUSTRANS SCOTLAND

1. Background

A route for the National Cycle Network between Oban and Fort William has been an aspiration of Sustrans and the Scottish Government since 1995.

In 2005 Transport Scotland agreed to transfer to Sustrans its land holding associated with the disused Connel to Ballachulish railway. Sustrans and the Scottish Government reached an agreement to design and construct a multi-use path in 2006 and a partnership was formed with various stakeholders including both local authorities, Transport Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland, Highland & Islands Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage.

It was agreed to build a path to high standards and to use, wherever possible, the land of the now disused Oban to Ballachulish railway in order to create a traffic free path, linking communities and providing an alternative for locals and visitors alike to the busy A828 road. In 2007 construction began following agreements with land owners. Work is now about to enter its fourth year with continued and enthusiastic support from the Transport Minister and the Scottish Government.

Assuming continued financial backing and subject to land negotiations and with valued support from stakeholders, Sustrans aims to complete the Oban to Ballachulish route by the close of the next spending review (2011-14).

The section from Ballachulish to Fort William will be subject to a study by Transport Scotland.

The maps on the screen show the sections of route that have been constructed or are in progress at present.

2. Management

Sustrans is the lead body for the project working closely with the wider partnership.

The partnership also meets as a steering group on a quarterly basis to review progress and discuss future developments: this group has representatives from all the partners and elected members. The steering group is the conduit for information on the project.

Each of the partners is taking forward different sections of the path as land and funding become available.

3. Sustrans Scotland

Sustrans is the charity that's enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. Our work makes it possible for people to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

Sustrans has been active in Scotland for the past twenty years and we are the body behind the National Cycle Network, which is a 12,600 mile network of traffic-free paths, quiet rural roads and traffic-calmed urban streets across the UK. 1,980 of those miles are in Scotland.

The network runs within two miles of 70% of the population and is used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

4. Construction

4.1. Work to date: overview map, South to North.

Work began in 2007. To date, sections of the route have been completed as follows:

Argyll & Bute (14 miles)

1. Oban to Ganavan – public road. Argyll & Bute Council.
2. Ganavan to Dunbeg – path. Argyll & Bute Council.
3. Dunbeg village – public road. Argyll & Bute Council.
4. North Connel – public road. Argyll & Bute Council.
5. Benderloch Village – path. Sustrans and Argyll & Bute Council.
6. Sea Life Centre to Creagan, via Barcaldine – path. Sustrans & Transport Scotland.
7. Inverfolla to Dallens layby, via Appin – path. Sustrans.

Highland (6 miles)

1. Kentallan to Ballachulish Ferry – path. Sustrans.
2. North Ballachulish to Glencoe village – path. Transport Scotland.

4.2. Work remaining:

Argyll & Bute, maps 1, 2 and 3. (11 miles)

1. Dunbeg to Connel: options appraisal. Argyll & Bute Council & Transport Scotland.
2. North Connel to Ledaig: proposed construction 2010/11. Transport Scotland.
3. North and South Benderloch: proposed construction 2010/11. Sustrans.
4. Barcaldine Castle to Sea Life Centre. Early stage land negotiations. Sustrans
5. Creagan to Inverfolla: proposed construction 2010/11. Transport Scotland.
6. Dallens layby to Salachan Burn: proposed construction 2010/11. Transport Scotland.

Highland, maps 4 and 5. (4.5 miles)

1. Highland boundary to Cuil road end: route to be developed.
2. Cuil road end to Holly Tree Inn: land negotiations commenced.
3. North Ballachulish to Fort William: the direct route alongside the existing A82 and the alternative route using the Connel Ferry onto the peninsula and then North to Fort William using the small ferry is the subject of an options appraisal. Transport Scotland.

5. Promotion

5.1 Mapping

Sustrans produces high quality maps of its routes, which are sold online and in shops. A detailed map of the route will be produced when the path is completed.

However, as more sections of the path are completed, we are aware from inquiries to our office and from feedback from local Visitor Information Centres that the level of interest in the route is growing. People particularly want to know where they can cycle *now*. We have provided the Visitor Centres in Oban and in Ballachulish with information and a map and have also made this available on our website. The route from Kentallan to Glencoe is also shown in the Glencoe Activities leaflet.

Over the winter we will prepare a more detailed map which will be printed and available to download from our website. Any suggestions as to what should be included in this map and who should be involved in developing it are welcome. For example, we already have contact

with the Argyll and Isles Strategic Tourism Partnership and with a tourism group for Oban and Lorn. Are there other groups in the Argyll & Bute area?

5.2 Signs

To date, temporary signs have been erected on those sections of the route that have been constructed. More signs will be erected as sections are opened. Additional signs are being introduced to encourage cyclists off the trunk road and onto the path.

5.3 Artworks & Interpretation

A number of interpretation items and artworks have been introduced on the route. This has been funded by Scottish Natural Heritage and it is hoped that more art will be installed in due course. Several seats will also be installed which are being sponsored by the Argyll Beats Cardiovascular Disease Trust - called Heartbeat Seats.

An interpretation pillar and poetry rocks have been installed at Kentallen, a 'sheep fank' seat is being constructed at Portnacraish which will include a mosaic designed using input from pupils from the local primary school and we are awaiting planning permission for an interpretation pillar and seating at Ganavan. Signs will also be installed at both ends of the Ganavan to Dunbeg path.

5.4 Gateways

Artistic and interpretive gateways have been designed for the Sea Life Centre to Creagan Bridge section and fabrication will commence soon; installation will probably be in late summer. The existing chicanes will be better designed to allow wheelchairs and other users.

Sustrans is ensuring that all new access controls can be opened. Local carriage driving groups / stables with interest shall be given a key to the gates, with certain conditions put on use.

5.5 Web site

Sustrans will be promoting the route through its web site at www.sustrans.org.uk. Other members of the partnership will also promote the path through their own sites.

5.6 Caledonia Way

The path between Oban and Fort William will be part of Route 78 of the National Cycle Network. When complete, Route 78 will run for 230 miles from Campbeltown to Inverness and will be called the Caledonia Way.

Campbeltown to Oban = 120 miles

Oban to Fort William = 45 miles

Fort William to Inverness = 65 miles

5.7 Red Fox Trail

There is scope for local branding of sections of the route and as such Highland Council has commenced work on proposals for interpretation of the route between Oban and Fort William based on local history around the shooting of Colin Campbell, the Red Fox.

6. Community Links

Community links are part of the scheme. Sustrans intends to construct links from the path to

- Portnacroish (Rose Bank)
- Appin Village Hall
- South Shian Road.

Suggestions have been made by communities for investigation of potential links to the following:

- Barcaldine School
- Cuil School
- Castle Stalker Café

Proposals from the community for other links to the path are welcome and should be communicated to Sustrans via elected members where they can be discussed at the quarterly Steering Group meetings.

7. Maintenance

A plan is currently being developed for the long-term maintenance of the path. All partners in the project will be involved with each playing their part in ensuring the path is maintained to a high standard.

8. Conclusion

The partnership behind the project believe that the development of the path will benefit local people by giving them an option to make short, local journeys under their own steam. In addition, we are confident that like other routes of its type, the path will be an income generator for local businesses, linking as it does Oban to Fort William by a cycling and walking path.

The path is now more than halfway to being built and there is evidence that the path is being well used where it is available.

The partnership behind the project is confident that with continued support and funding the route from Oban to Ballachulish can be completed within the planned timescale of 2007-2014.

The route North from Ballachulish to Fort William is, however, subject to a major upgrade of the A82 and this element of the project remains subject to an options appraisal by Transport Scotland. However, we see the use of the Corran and Camusnagaul Ferries as providing an interim solution for cyclists up the west side of Loch Linnhe and promoting an alternative route for cyclists heading to Mallaig and Skye.

Sustrans Scotland

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