

The local community, Forest and Land Scotland and access at Arrochar



Welcome to the first edition of **3V1C**, the *Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust* monthly newsletter.

The newsletter is intended as a platform to promote all local news and activities that will be of interest to both Trust members and the wider community alike. Please feel free to pass it along to anyone you think might be interested.

Access

issues created by the Forestry Commission – now Forest and Land Scotland – feature prominently in the first edition of the new Arrochar-Succoth-Tarbet community newsletter.

ARROCHAR-TARBET PATH

With felling activities having recommenced on Cruach Tairbeirt and the continued closure of the path for safety reasons, some questions and concerns have been raised regarding Forestry Commission Scotland's decision to no longer support this popular route.

The notice (pictured, right) can be seen at the Arrochar and Tarbet station underpass: "The Cruaich [sic] Tairbeirt Loop is no longer one of our promoted routes".

This is all very disappointing given that the path forms part of the hugely popular Three Lochs Way to Arrochar, not to mention the investment from the Friends of Loch Lomond & Trossachs in forming the track and, more recently, the Paths leaflet printed by the Trust.

A similar announcement is to be found on the Forestry and Land Scotland website (<https://forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/forest-parks/argyll-forest-park/cruach-tairbeirt>), noting that the Cruach Tairbeirt Loop Trail has been 'recently decommissioned'.



Arrochar Forest Notice

Due to ongoing works, there is no access to the former Cruach Tairbeirt Loop Trail (recently decommissioned).

Please help us to keep the forest a safe place by following all on site safety signage and instructions. Thank you.

Location	Description	Facilities and activities	Distance from Arrochar
Arrochar	Start your hillwalk up The Arrochar Alps	Walking, Parking (charge), Mountain access	-
Cruach Tairbeirt	Follow the path of 13th century Viking raiders	Walking	0.76 miles
Ardgartan	Endless trails through an area of vast natural beauty	Walking, Toilets, Parking, Cycling	1.20 miles

It has also been noted that, although Arrochar, Tarbet and Ardgartan walks continue to be promoted on the Forestry and Land Scotland website (see screenshot, above), they remain curiously absent from recent Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) printed promotional material (pictured below).

Parkswatch first blogged about the longstanding access problems at Cruach Tairbeirt, which forms a fine viewpoint between the head of Loch Long, a year ago ([see here](#)). A friend of mine visited recently to find a barrier sitting across the underpass at Arrochar Station – most off-putting and almost certainly an unlawful obstruction to access. On this occasion tree felling was taking place around the Cruach Tairbeirt path, unlike other times when no entry signs have been in place here, and there could have been no objections to helpful signs in the right place. The felling, however, did not affect ALL

paths accessible from the station and there was no indication of what paths could still be used safely or of recommended alternative routes. People were, as a consequence, still walking there.

The forest felling has been taking place here intermittently over a couple of years. It should have been an ideal opportunity for Forest and Land Scotland to create and or waymark alternative routes to the summit of Cruach Tairbeart, a small hill which enables people to experience fine views of Loch Lomond without the effort required to ascend the higher peaks round about. That would have enabled people to continue to enjoy the hill during the felling. Instead they have shut the main path (others have become overgrown), closing off a tourism opportunity



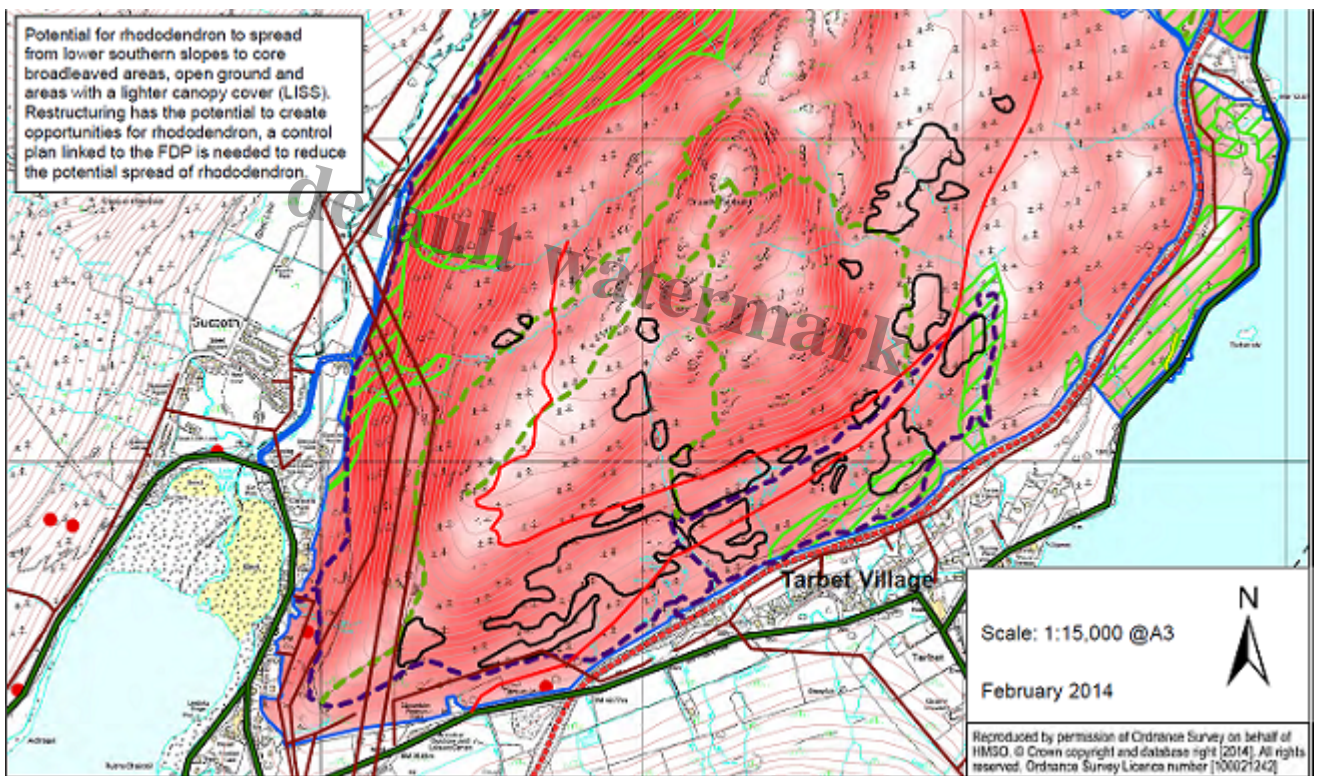
As a visitor area which is dependent on a variety of promoted paths and outdoor activities, to see FCS apparently 'dropping' Arrochar and Tarbet in favour of other centres is something that needs to be highlighted and addressed. More to follow.

In the meantime, we also await an update on the continued Arrochar-Tarbet path closure, which FCS have recently stated as being 're-opened', despite clear evidence to the contrary, per the photo below, taken at the Arrochar end of the path on 29th April 2019.



Even more worrying is the revelation from the Arrochar and Tarbet Community Development Trust that Forestry and Land Scotland appear to have decided to decommission the Cruach Tairbear route entirely and its no longer appearing on publicity materials.

Had the Cruach Tairbear loop all been designated as a core path, Forest and Land Scotland would have been unable to decommission it and would have had to seek approval from the National Park Authority for any temporary closure. This is the very reason why the revised Core Paths Plan consulted on by the LLTNPA should have included proposals to add far more forestry tracks/paths. Its also probably explains why this did not happen. Some local managers appear to want to be free to close paths permanently, as if our access legislation had never existed, without having to think about the wider implications.



Extract from Design Plan Dotted purple = core paths; dotted green = informal paths; red line = new forest road. Summit of Cruach Tairbear top centre near where green dotted lines converge.

This decommissioning, however, also appears to be contrary to the Cruach Tairbear Design Plan 2015 - 2024 (see here). While that plan contained no specific proposals for paths that I can see - a failing that needs to be put right - it did make this commitment:

Recreation: Informal recreation use will be maintained and the setting of paths enhanced. In addition, scope for a cycle route through the forest to provide an alternative route to the A82 along Loch Lomond will be explored.

So why is Forest and Land Scotland ignoring its own plan, who decided to do this and who did they consult?



Forestry Commission Scotland
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba



Forestry and
Land Scotland

Coilltearachd agus
Fèrann Alba

09.05.19

Sorry for the delay
with getting this route
reopened.

We are waiting for the
timber to be moved
from roadside to make
access safe before we
can open the trail.

Apologies for any
inconvenience.

Tel: 0131 370 5676

forestryandland.gov.scot



THINK SAFE
STAY SAFE

0300 067 6600

forestry.gov.uk/scotland

Footer Tagline

When I contacted the local community about all this, they did send me a recent photo of a new sign that has gone up explaining why the Arrochar-Tarbet path has not been re-opened as promised in April (above). A small step in the right direction.

What needs to happen

Forest and Land Scotland needs a far more robust plan for access and outdoor recreation for the extensive landholdings it manages in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park to prevent situations like that at Cruach Tairbeart recurring. The starting point for this should be the standards that have been agreed for the management of access as part of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (there is no need to reinvent all the good work that has been done). The LLTNPA's draft Trees and Woodland Strategy for the National Park, which is out for consultation until Friday 2nd June ([see here](#)), refers to the SOAC and says access will be promoted in forests. The problem is this is not always happening at present and the Strategy should indicate how this will be addressed.

The wider problem, however, is that too many forests in the National Park are being managed or designed without access and outdoor recreational being held sufficiently in mind. Hence, I suspect, the position at Cruach Tairbeart. The Woodland Strategy should commit Forest and Land Scotland to work with the National Park and other recreation interests to produce a much more comprehensive path network over the next five years. As a start all new Forest Plans should contain clear proposals for outdoor recreation that meet the standards we should expect in our National Parks

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. access rights
2. Forestry Commission Scotland
3. LLTNPA
4. paths
5. Tourism

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