

## Forest and Land Scotland's mismanagement of access and access rights in Strathyre

### Description



Locked gate on forest road which leads to the path up Stank Glen (there is a separate access road to the holiday lodges by Loch Lubnaig). The older sign on the left of the gate is completely illegible

I spotted this sign on my return from walking over Ben Ledi last week ([see here](#)). While we walked round the locked gate easily enough and most cyclists could too, it would be a different matter for anyone in a wheelchair or riding a horse who wants to enjoy the extensive network of forest tracks in Strathyre. As a consequence the locked gate constitutes an unlawful obstruction to access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. That needs to be addressed by the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA), as the authority responsible for protecting access rights.

The wording on the sign itself is very concerning:





Why put this message in such large letters if its not aimed at the general public?



Ostensibly this message is directed at those who have keys to the lock, a limited number of people who should all know which gates FLS wishes to be kept locked – presumably they will have had to sign for the keys.. If FLS was concerned they might forget to do so a simple sign saying “Please remember to lock the gate” would be all that was needed.

Instead, there is this message which implies that the Strathyre forest would cease to be safe and secure if the gate was left open and the public were able to access the forest by vehicles (which are not covered by access rights) or by wheelchair or on horseback. Just what those threats to safety and security are which require the gate to be locked is not clear:

- motor-racing – perhaps;
- timber theft – unlikely;
- other crime – taking in a vehicle increases the chances of getting caught;
- tree disease – its the forestry industry not the public which is responsible for that;

As the world has become ever less “safe and secure” to most people, government messaging about keeping people “safe and secure” has spread into all areas of public life. It has now apparently been extended to trees and forests – except of course where they are threatened by development as at Flamingo Land ([see here](#)). The “safe and secure” spin is meaningless but the mindset is revealing. FLS’ managers would be far better thinking and planning for how they could enable more people access to the National Forest Estate.

As an aside, this should not only be about enjoying access rights but also making use of all the timber that is currently wasted by FLS through tree harvesting and windthrow:



Wasted wood from harvesting (and consequent windthrow of trees along the new forest edge).



Strathyre April 2025.



Windthrow – small local saw mills could use timber like this if they had not been driven out of existence by industrial forestry.

Added to this waste will be all the timber which will be wasted if Scottish Forestry allows FLS to fell larch trees to waste (i.e not for use) in a vain attempt to stop the spread of the disease phytophthora ramorum through Strathyre ([see here](#)).





I had taken a photo of the large culvert under the forest road in 2018 because it was such an eyesore

Back to access rights, half an hour earlier, descending one of the forest tracks in Stank Glen and shortly after passing the community hydro scheme we had stepped over some fallen heras fencing before I realised the monstrous culvert had collapsed and part of the road had been swept away.





will be interesting to see whether or how quickly FLS repairs this crossing which is clearly their responsibility

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Part of the culvert, flattened like a tin can, visible centre. A self-seeded larch – one of the hundreds

With the water level low we crossed the burn easily enough and carried along the track and another path a short way until we reached some more temporary fencing, this time upright, which we stepped around onto another forest road:

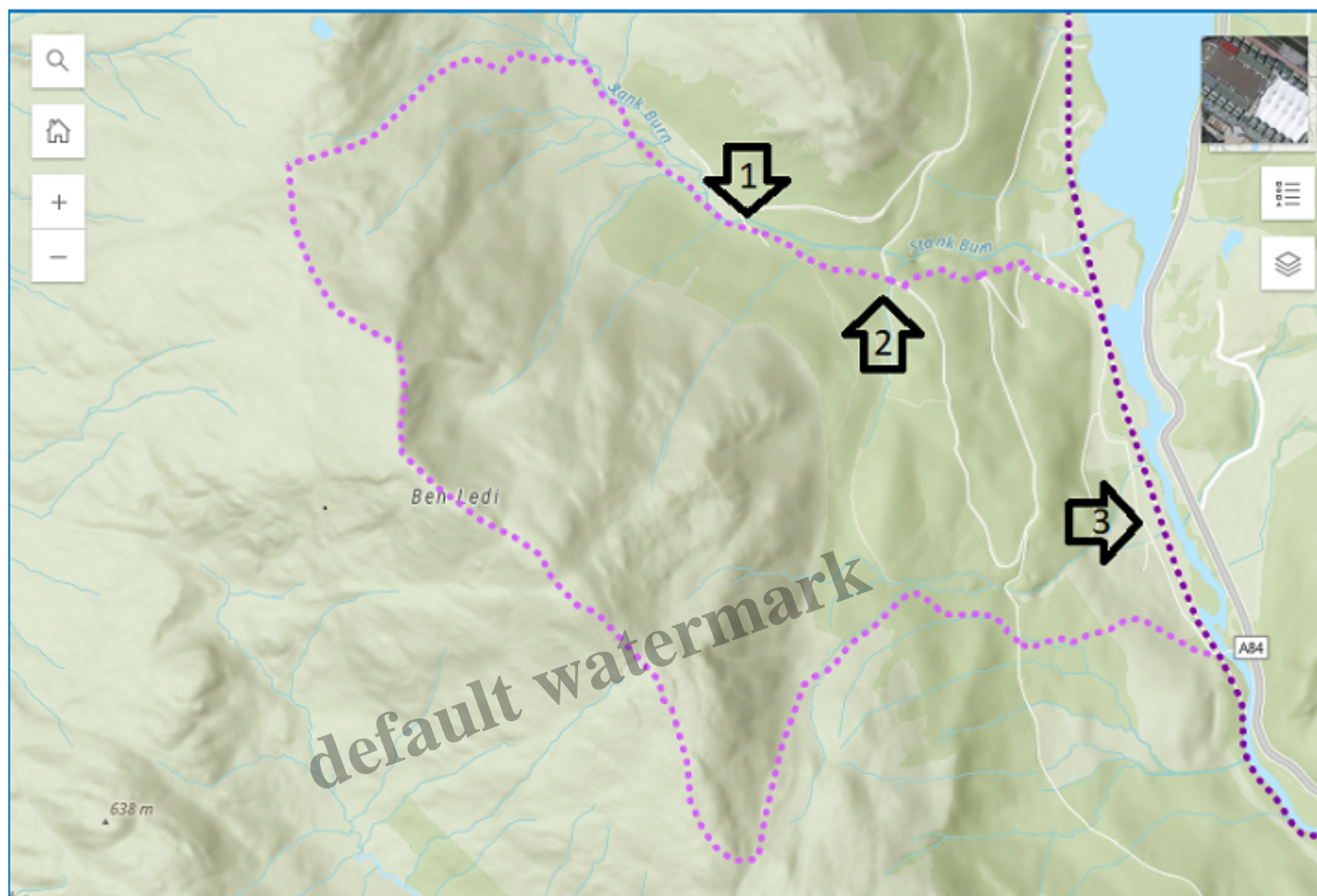


The sign and the fencing constitute an order, not a request, and a deliberate obstruction, not just to the core path but to other access routes. There is no attempt to explain the reason FLS has tried to close this path or the location or nature of the damage to the track above. That would allow people, who wanted to walk in that direction up Stank Glen, to make up their own minds and decide where they wished to exercise their access rights.

This section of path/track, which FLS' management have tried to close to the public, forms part of the core path network around Ben Ledi:



## LLTNP Core Paths Plan 2023



Esri, Intermap, NASA, NGA, USGS | Esri UK, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS | LLTNP Contai... Powered by Esri  
1) = position of collapsed culvert 2) = position of Diversion sign 3) = approx position locked gate (not on the core path but on an access track running parallel to it).

Approaching from the east up Stank Glen (2 on map), the core path leaves the forest track just BEFORE it crosses the Stank Burn (1 on map). The collapsed culvert therefore does not justify the “Diversion” sign below – maybe the flood which appears to have destroyed it also damaged a section of the core path above? But if so, why not just explain the nature of the damage and let people take their own decisions? The fence also, however, forms an obstruction to people whose intention is not to use the track to walk to the top of Stank Glen but to follow it the other way south and is therefore clearly not justifiable on any grounds.

## Core paths, the FLS, LLTNP and Ben Ledi



Core paths were originally intended under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to provide a network of routes similar to the Rights of Way Network in England which were to be delivered through access authorities developing core paths plans. The LLTNPA has interpreted this to mean [\(see here\)](#):

*“Core Paths should be the most important paths (of any width or surface) within the path network which provides the public with reasonable access throughout the National Park.”*

Unfortunately, the LLTNPA have failed to plan for “reasonable access” following their initial core path plan [\(see here\)](#) and [\(here\)](#).

Despite the popularity of hillwalking, for example, only hills popular with tourists have core paths up them: the Cobbler, Ben Lomond, Conic Hill, Ben An, Ben Venue. And ONLY Ben Ledi has a circular core path route, with all the other hills having up and down core paths. Now, that one circular path has been blocked by FLS who are trying to divert the public onto other forest roads without any explanation or justification of the reasons they want to do this.

Under the Land Reform Act access authorities have the power to maintain core paths, although there is no duty on anyone in Scotland to do so, but also to make “single amendments” to core path plans [\(see here\)](#). It is not clear whether FLS has consulted the LLTNPA on the “diversion” to the core path up Stank Glen or whether the LLTNPA has agreed to it on either a temporary or permanent basis. Whatever the case the LLTNPA either needs to require FLS to remove the obstruction or, if it believes the core path is too dangerous to use, either get it repaired or start a public consultation about amending the route.

What is happening on Ben Ledi provides another example of how FLS and the LLTNPA are failing to work together for the public good, either in Strathgryre or more widely [\(see here\)](#) for example). On Ben Ledi the FLS is ignoring the law on access rights and core paths while the LLTNPA is failing to uphold it. After my last post on the disintegrating path up Ben Ledi, I have been informed that it may have been the LLTNPA rather than FLS who agreed with the Nature Lottery to maintain the paths that had been funded through the Mountains and the People programme for ten years. That may or may not turn out to be the case (I have submitted another FOI to FLS asking for this information). While our public authorities squabble about who pays in private the more fundamental issue is that neither FLS or the LLTNPA are serving the public interest and both have ceased trying to promote public enjoyment of the countryside across the National Park.

## Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

## Tags

1. access rights
2. Forestry and Land Scotland
3. LLTNPA
4. outdoor recreation

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