

## Access Issues

### i. Milton Bridge, Kildary

This bridge suffered damage in 2007 and since then attempts have been made to dissuade people from using it with barriers and signs. These have largely been ignored by the public. Although The Council do not own the bridge, it is owned Meddat Estate, a report was commissioned in September 2007 with estimates for repair at £30,000 and replacement at £40,000. Some attempts have been made by the Milton Community Woodland Trust to find funding to replace the bridge but so far unsuccessfully.

Recently there has been a change in Estate ownership and the new owners have approached the Community Council regarding removal of the bridge. The new owners are not only concerned about the condition and safety of the bridge but also that it is being used by motorcycles to access the woodland on the east side. The Community Council have agreed that it may be wise to redirect the Core Path along the roadside footway and across the road bridge, upstream. This is hoped to be temporary with a review of the crossing made sometime in the future. The community council have asked the Council & the Access Forum to consider a core path diversion.

The bridge is part of Core Path RC25.01 and links the Milton Wood circular with Meddat Circular, both Core Paths, either side of the Balnagowan River. It is also the shortest and more pleasant route between Milton and Kildary. Removal of the bridge is a reduction in the Core Path Network in terms of desirability and convenience. The west bank is managed by the Community Woodland Trust whilst the east bank is retained by Meddat Estate.

The 2007 report by Scott Wilson did state that the bridge was in poor condition. Having recently visited the bridge and compared the photographs, I found that the condition generally appears to remain unchanged in the intervening 7 years, possibly slightly improved as rocks had been placed under the scoured abutment to support it. However a structural engineer would be required to accurately comment upon the abutments, metalwork and stress points. There appears to have been no further movement of the abutments. The hole in the decking is easily seen and avoided, to my knowledge no accidents have been reported. Regarding motorcycles I did find evidence of them entering the wood from another route, but would comment that the paths did not appear to be suffering damage from them. The paths on the eastern bank are well worn and thus much used by the public. The steps and angle of approach leading onto the bridge from the west would make it difficult for a motorcycle, although not impossible for a skilled rider.

Question for the forum:

Should the bridge be removed on safety grounds and the core path diverted or changed?

## **ii. Ledgowan Estate**

Following the last Forum, an email was received from the Estate confirming that they would not be changing any gates or signs. A letter was then sent to Mr Simpson on 9<sup>th</sup> May 20014, outlining the view of the Council and the Forum with an offer to take the matter to mediation. No response was received and a follow up email sent on 30<sup>th</sup> June to Mr Stephenson. A reply to this was received, a copy is enclosed with this report.

An officers meeting was held with the Council's solicitor, Mrs Lyons, and an acknowledgement response sent afterwards (enclosed). Mrs Lyons agreed to write to the Estate outlining the final situation before the Council undertakes legal proceedings.

## **iii. Flowerdale Estate**

Mr MacKenzie has been informed that a planning application would be required and that the Access Forum would have no objection to the diversion and comments would be submitted at that point.

The Flowerdale paths did suffer damage in the August storm and other sections have been deteriorating for some time. It is planned that works would happen upon completion of installing the hydro scheme. Unfortunately I have been unable to get more details at present.

## **iv. Brahan Estate**

Following the last forum a meeting was held with Brahan regarding the damage to the Core path in Tallysow Wood. It was pointed out that further timber extraction is likely in the wood and so it would be best to move the route of the path to avoid the stacking area and also increase the safety of the public. After discussion it was agreed that the Estate would clear the new route of around 80m and the Council would arrange contractors to finish off the surfacing.

## **v. Mountain Biking in Torridon**

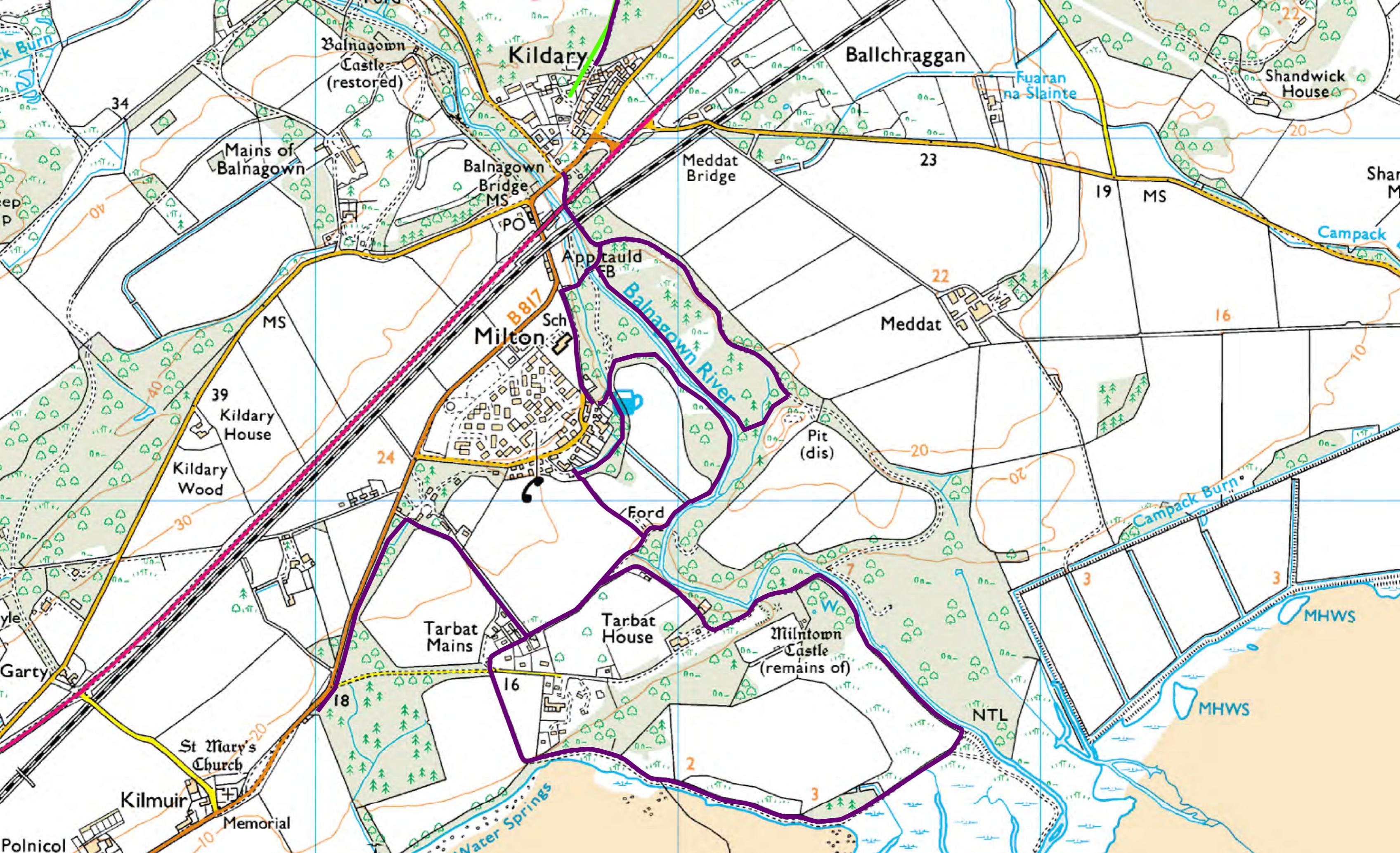
This activity is increasing in popularity in this area. I have had contact from the Estate Manager at Ben Damph, and activity provider at Torridon Inn and the Mountain Biking Development Officer(MBDO) in regard to the issue.

The provider at Torrison is keen to grow the business and provide more routes with variety around the area and recent promotion of routes by Mountain Bike Development in Scotland(MBDinS) is likely to assist with this. There will also be an increase in the numbers of individual bikers coming to the area to experience the 'wild rugged countryside'.

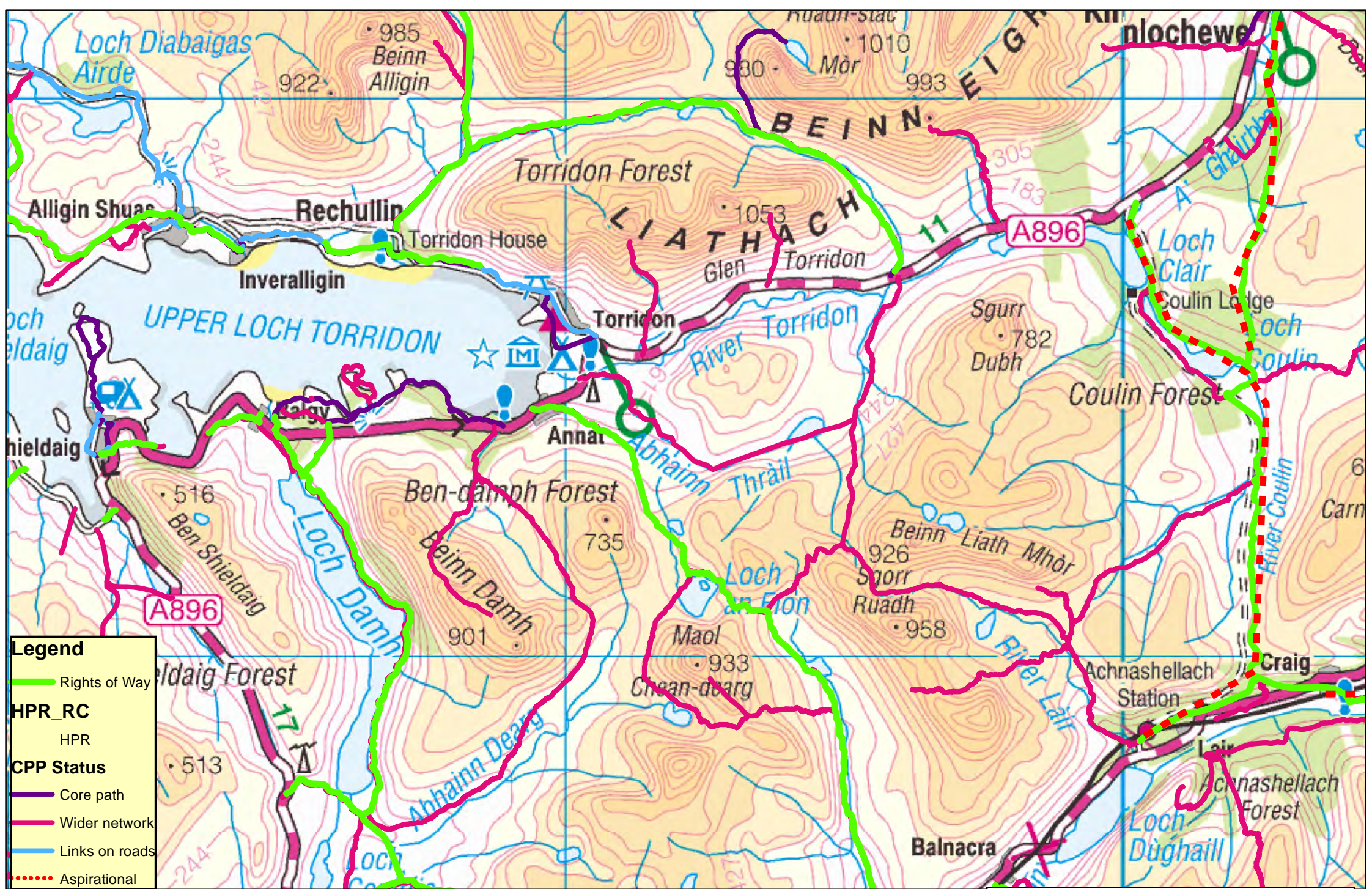
The Estate is naturally concerned about the condition of the paths and the likely resulting erosion from increased bike use. The Estate have been asking about potential funding for maintenance and or improvements and have approached Forum member, Archie MacLellan to raise the matter at the Local Access Forum. The users are keen to stress that they will do all they can to ensure responsible riding and do not want to create damage but are looking to work with the Estate on finding the best way forward.

MBDinS is keen to try to help get funding to maintain and adapt the paths to withstand bike use and is to convene a meeting of the interested parties in late November to work out who can do what.

The Forum is invited to discuss the matter and make any recommendations regarding involvement or resources.


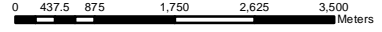






# Torridon

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