



## Access and Recreation

The mountains of Scotland have for generations served as a playground for outdoor enthusiasts. From shooting and fishing to the early years of mountaineering when, areas such as the Arrochar Alps became well known for their challenging yet accessible climbing and walking routes. Over the years since then much has changed with walking, climbing and adventure sports in general becoming less elite and more main stream: our mountains have never been so busy. This was boosted again with the

introduction of the Land Reform Act in 2003, which amongst other things strengthened people's right to access the countryside in a responsible manner.

Today the health and social benefits of getting out in to the countryside are well documented and our mountain paths play host to school groups, health walks, extreme sports events and much more. All of which can, if not well managed have an impact on the landscapes these visitors come to enjoy.



Further information on what visitors do when they visit the national Parks can be found here:



[Cairngorms National Park visitor survey](#)



[Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park visitor survey](#)

### Enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly

Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water providing they act responsibly. Your access rights and responsibilities are explained fully in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Whether you're in the outdoors or managing the outdoors, the key things are to:

- **take responsibility for your own actions**
- **respect the interests of other people**
- **care for the environment.**

Visit [outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://outdooraccess-scotland.com) or contact your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.



**KNOW THE CODE  
BEFORE YOU GO**

[outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://outdooraccess-scotland.com)

## Land Management

Much of Scotland's upland habitats continue to be managed for a combination of forestry, farming and estate activities. The management requirements of each of these land uses does not always match the demands of the recreational users or the requirements of the conservation regulators. As a result, managing these pressures on a landscape scale can be challenging.

Follow the links to learn about some landuse conflict case studies in the National Parks:



[Cairngorms National Park](#)



[Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park](#)



## Conservation through Path Construction

Upland path construction and management has developed over the past 40 years in response to recreational and land management challenges. Reducing and reversing the impacts of erosion and associated habitat destruction through path construction is now a primary management technique in our uplands.

A well-managed path should keep people on and water off whilst aiming to achieve the following:

- ▶ Meet the needs of the path user
- ▶ Reduce users' impact on the surroundings
- ▶ Be in keeping with its surrounds
- ▶ Be built using locally-sourced materials
- ▶ Support the effective land management of the surrounding area
- ▶ Meet the requirements of protected environment areas

Mountain path construction is undertaken by highly skilled, specialist contractors, often working in remote and challenging conditions, whilst the routine repair and maintenance can be delivered by landowners, volunteers and even school groups.



Little and often is the path maintenance motto, with routine basic maintenance being the key to protecting the investment made in constructing paths, particularly in the mountains. Un-maintained paths or paths which have never been formally constructed will deteriorate quickly due to the effects of high levels of recreational use and our Scottish weather.





## Impact of path erosion on upland habitats

Ben A'an, at 454m, isn't the tallest of mountains but is certainly one of the most popular in the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. Loved and conquered by many, the 'wee hill' is easily accessible from anywhere in the central belt and can offer a range of recreational experiences.



It provides an easy to moderate walk with something for people of all ages but the final ascent to the summit is steep and more physically demanding. The popularity of this walk makes it a jewel in the crown of hill paths within the Trossachs - and with spectacular views from the summit of Ben Venue to the Arrochar Alps, it is thoroughly worth the effort.

Ben A'an is managed by Forestry Enterprise Scotland. Works began in October 2014 to improve the habitat on the hill. These works are part of The Great Trossachs Forest Project, which is restoring a large scale area of Scotland's native woodland. During these works all the non-native trees were felled and part of the area has been re-planted with native trees.

### The Problem

The path, having previous works dating from around the 1980's, has over the years suffered badly from drainage and erosion issues.

Erosion on the Ben A'an hill path was caused by a combination of factors, both human and physical. Hikers boots, mountain bikes, and livestock grazing have all played a part in damaging the path. These factors, combined with natural forces, such as wind strength and direction, rainfall, frost, type of rock and vegetation, as well as, the angle of the slope affect the amount of erosion that takes place.

This erosion along with drainage problems, had resulted in a boggy and rough path. A lot of hill walkers in Scotland feel safer sticking to the paths. However, all of this erosion - along with drainage problems - made sections of the path boggy and rough, which resulted in walkers veering round the edges or avoiding the path altogether. In turn, this caused the path to widen, more routes began to appear and braids began to form; the average width of the path on Ben A'an was 3 metres, 2 metres wider than it should be. This widening of the path has reduced the quality of the surrounding habitat and visitor experience.



## The Solution

Due to the severity of the erosion problem on Ben A'an and the high volume of people using the path, it was identified as a priority for upgrading as part of The Mountains & The People project. This is a flagship project of the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Scotland's two National Park Authorities, Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.

Following a detailed survey, it was decided to build a 'high and dry' type path, using on-site materials, whilst following the old path the line and incorporate any suitable existing path features. The solution to use this method of path construction effectively lifts users out of the boggy sections and create a much more discernible, usable and long-lasting path.

Because of topography and access issues, the path building includes machine and hand-build sections and, with insufficient material available on-site, 120 tonnes of stone from local quarries was flown in by helicopter.

The repaired Ben A'an hill path has greatly improved the route, making it easier and more enjoyable for people of all ages.

The new path reduces the maintenance requirement, which means this popular path will be open to all long into the future.



This will have long term benefits, not just for the local area and habitats, but the wider communities and users who can enjoy this hill experience well into the future.



## Questions

**Describe the main causes of mountain path erosion.**

**Explain the problems caused by mountain path erosion.**

**Explain the factors that should be considered when importing stone to build a path.**

**Give advantages and disadvantages of the well-constructed path at Ben A'an.**