



30 November 2023

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND TO BUILD GLENCOE 'GREENWAY' FOR WALKERS AND CYCLISTS

- **Conservation charity to improve safe and sustainable access to the glen on foot and by bike**
- **Greenway will support wider activity to manage visitor impacts and promote responsible tourism in Glencoe National Nature Reserve**

Work is starting on the Glencoe 'Greenway', a shared-use path enabling local people and visitors to walk, cycle or wheel into the heart of the glen from the west without having to make a hazardous journey on the narrow verge of the busy A82 trunk road.

The Glencoe Greenway project will see the National Trust for Scotland, which cares for Glencoe National Nature Reserve (NNR), construct 2km of new 'all-ability' pathway from its popular Glencoe Visitor Centre to the An Torr and Signal Rock car park, where it will connect with existing paths into the glen. The conservation charity will also upgrade 2km of the existing pathway from the Visitor Centre towards Glencoe village, through National Trust for Scotland and Forest & Land Scotland woodlands, opening up access to a wider range of users.

The £1m Greenway project supports the National Trust for Scotland's focus on reducing Glencoe visitors' reliance on car travel and offering attractive alternatives to driving into the glen. It is made possible thanks to funding from the Scottish Government, administered through Sustrans Scotland's Network Development Fund; the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) which was established by the Scottish Government and managed by VisitScotland on its behalf; and funding raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery. Initial survey work was funded by the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership, HITRANS, in 2022.

The Greenway will complete the circular traffic-free 'Glencoe Orbital Recreation Trail' between Glencoe village, the National Trust for Scotland's Glencoe Visitor Centre and the old road to Glencoe village via the Clachaig Inn, a long-held aspiration of the community, the National Trust for Scotland and other local stakeholders.

It will also provide a direct traffic-free connection with the popular 'Caledonia Way' National Cycle Network Route 78, which travels from Oban to Fort William, via Ballachulish Bridge.

This is the first step towards a long-term ambition to create a continuous traffic-free path the entire length of the glen, and Transport Scotland has commissioned a feasibility study to review the potential for achieving this.

The work is part of a wider programme to create sensitive and sustainable improvements to visitor facilities in Glencoe, one of Scotland's most internationally renowned and busy National Nature Reserves (NNRs).

Emily Bryce, the National Trust for Scotland's Operations Manager at Glencoe, commented: "Glencoe's natural beauty and cultural history attract visitors from across the globe and over 2 million vehicles a year drive this 10-mile stretch through the glen. Such a volume of traffic inevitably places pressure on the landscape, as well as the locals who live here year-round.

"In 2020, the National Trust for Scotland conducted a public survey, which was completed by over 3,000 respondents. We asked for views on how to reduce challenges with parking capacity in Glencoe NNR and there was resounding support (over nine out of ten people) for the suggestion to 'enable people to walk or bike into the heart of glen with improved footpaths'. So, that's exactly what we are aiming to do with the Glencoe Greenway.

"For the first time, we're making it possible for people to walk, cycle, push a buggy or take a wheelchair on a traffic-free path into Glencoe from the east. This will enable locals and visitors alike to immerse themselves in the sights, sounds, nature, beauty and heritage of this part of the glen, knowing they are also helping to care for it by enjoying it more sustainably."

The new path has been designed to minimise its visual impact on Glencoe's scenic landscape. It will follow the route of the A82, separated from the road by hedging and other vegetation, with a bound gravel surface in the same material as the glen's existing low-level path network. There will be rest benches along the route and interpretation at the archaeological site of the long-lost historic settlement of Achnacon, one of the townships which gave inspiration for the 17th century turf and creel house reconstruction at the Trust's Glencoe Visitor Centre.

Stuart Brooks, Director of Conservation and Policy at the National Trust for Scotland, added: "As a conservation charity and custodian of 14,000 acres in Glencoe, we work hard to balance a range of priorities in this busy National Nature Reserve. We want visitors and local people to have a positive experience here, providing sensitively designed facilities to empower people to enjoy this special place responsibly while minimising the pressure popularity places on this precious landscape. Our ranger team works hard to help nature flourish in Glencoe and we're excited for the public to witness the regeneration of the glen's protected habitats in the years ahead.

"The construction of the Glencoe Greenway directly supports all these aspirations, and the wider conservation, engagement and sustainability objectives of the National Trust for Scotland's 2022 Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone strategy. As well as

providing a low-carbon alternative to vehicle travel into the glen, we hope the Greenway will encourage a more diverse audience to discover the stories and sights of this special place, as well as learn about the work our charity is doing to help nature to flourish across the NNR."

Chris Brace, Principal Network Development Manager, Sustrans Scotland

explained: "We are delighted to see the commencement of the Glencoe project, marking a significant stride towards providing safe, accessible and traffic-free access to the Glencoe National Nature Reserve. When complete, the newly created 2km shared-use path will connect to existing paths, allowing residents and visitors to avoid the busy A82 trunk road and connect to the National Cycle Network Route 78.

"The improvements will reduce car dependence by providing a safe and alternative way to travel. We hope this will give more people, regardless of age or ability, the confidence to make healthier and more sustainable choices for their everyday journeys."

Councillor Ken Gowans, The Highland Council's, Economy and Infrastructure

Committee Chair, said: "The Highland Council are pleased to be part of the project team behind the exciting Glencoe Greenway. The collaborative approach to delivering RTIF projects enables communities to make meaningful changes that offer health and wellbeing benefits for both residents and the thousands of visitors that enjoy the Glencoe area each year."

Local Oban-based contractor, McLarens will be carrying out the works on the Glencoe Greenway route in stages from now until the end of March, with final surface finishing taking place in late spring 2024. To enable construction to take place safely, from 20 November, the existing path from Glencoe Visitor Centre towards Glencoe village will be closed for approximately eight weeks at the point where it leaves the A82 pavement and enters woodland. The project has been programmed outside the busy tourist season to minimise disruption to visitors and local people.

The Greenway project complements other visitor infrastructure improvement activities already underway in Glencoe NNR. This includes a project to address safety and capacity pressure at the busy 'Coire Gabhail' and 'Coire nan Lochan' parking areas overlooking the Three Sisters, plus various sensitive parking improvements in Glen Etive, including an expanded layby at the famous 'Skyfall' viewpoint. This separate programme of work has been funded by the Scottish Government's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF), the Coastal Communities Fund, the National Trust for Scotland and other generous local supporters.

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Editor's Notes:

Images: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/114ozE3NnU>

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland's largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland's magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022 the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland's heritage which doesn't have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work. For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.

About Sustrans

Sustrans work for and with communities, helping them come to life by walking, wheeling and cycling to create healthier places and happier lives for everyone.

Across the UK they involve communities in shaping towns and cities. Sustrans campaign for and create spaces where everyone can move around safely and give people the tools and confidence to get out of their cars. They inspire people to change the way we all travel every day, forging closer connections with our neighbours and reducing traffic to create a better environment and more sustainable society for everyone. Join them on our journey. www.sustrans.org.uk

Sustrans is a registered charity in England and Wales (number 326550) and Scotland (SC039263).

About the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF)

The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) was established by the Scottish Government and the Fund is managed by VisitScotland on its behalf. To date, £18 million of grant funding has been awarded to 74 projects across rural Scotland, since the start of the Fund in 2018.