

## **COWAL WAY MULTI-USE ACCESS NOTES**

The Cowal Way is a 57 mile long distance path. Starting at Portavadie, it winds its way up through the Cowal peninsula via Tighnabruich, Glendaruel, Strachur, Lochgoilhead and Arrochar to finish at Inveruglas on Loch Lomond. The Cowal Way connects to the Kintyre Way via ferry to Tarbert, with the Three Lochs Way at Arrochar, and with the West Highland Way north from Inveruglas. Further information on the route is available from [www.cowalway.co.uk](http://www.cowalway.co.uk).

Although originally developed for walkers, the route managers have invested considerable time, effort and money replicating stiles and reducing other restrictions on multi-use. As a result, most of the Cowal Way is now suitable for multi-use, following forest and farm tracks, quiet roads and picturesque paths along lochshores and over the hills, but there are still a few sections which aren't designed for or capable of sustainably supporting multi-use.



These notes have been produced by British Horse Society Scotland to help those interested in using part or all of the Cowal Way to identify location and brief details of features which may restrict multi-use of the waymarked route. Only those which may present an issue for experienced riders are noted below. Shallow fords, bridges wide enough for a horse (but not necessarily to BHS specs), cross drains, gates which can only be opened or closed if dismounted, rough ground, sheep and cattle are all part of riding off-road and so are not included here. It's up to you to make sure you and your horse are capable of coping with such features before venturing forth. Photos have been included where appropriate to help you assess for yourself whether a feature such as steps, a narrow footbridge, gate or gap less than 1.5m wide may present an obstruction to you.




These notes are intended to supplement detailed route guides and other information already available from the route website. Although the notes will be updated as and when notification of subsequent changes is received, neither BHS or the relevant access authorities can guarantee accessibility or the accuracy of information provided.




Suggestions for parking and alternative routes to avoid restrictions on multi-use are included where information has been provided by volunteers, but do not constitute a recommendation. You are responsible for deciding for yourself which parts of this route are suitable for your intended use, taking account of your own abilities, skills, fitness and experience, as well as season, weather conditions etc. Event organisers, groups or commercial operators considering using the Cowal Way should contact the route managers.



Remember that whether on foot, cycle or horseback, rights of access in Scotland depend on access takers and land managers accepting individual responsibility for their actions. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code defines what this means on the ground <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/>. Specific guidance for horse riders can be downloaded from <http://www.bhsscotland.org.uk/responsible-riding.html>.



Courtesy, consideration of others' needs and good communication are the key to sharing paths. Always pass others you meet along the trail at a walk, and elsewhere limit your pace to ground conditions and visibility. On surfaced paths and other well used sections of the route, riders need to be particularly careful to respect other users and clear dung off the path. Although the Cowal Way is well waymarked throughout, you should always take a map with you - and know how to read it.

Location / OS Grid Ref.	Issue	Alternative option
Track along west side of Asgog Loch	<p>Previous boardwalks along this section have been removed wherever possible, and the remaining boardwalks covered with a non-slip surface so this section is now passable with care with a horse in dry weather but horse riders need to take particular care to avoid damage during wet weather, or by repeated use by groups of riders.</p> 	
NR948709 March boundary between forest and farmland, NW corner Asgog Loch	<p>A new 1.5m gate has recently been installed to replace the previous stile, with a short section of boardwalk to the east. Riders need to take particular care to avoid damaging soft ground by avoiding use of this section in wet weather.</p> 	
Glen Caladh Farm to Ormidale Lodge	<p>Extensive improvements have been made to this section including rhododendron clearance and new steps but it still remains probably the most challenging for walkers, even more so for cyclists (particularly with panniers) and impassable by horses because of narrow aerial boardwalks, steep sided burn crossings and steps</p>	<p>At OSGR NR997748 (north of West Glen) cycle route signed up track linking to A8003 which is also accessible with a horse but involves several miles on main road. Only obvious alternative is B8000 and potentially some forest and farm tracks.</p>
NR995830 Bridge over Bealachdrain Burn at junction of	<p>Wooden footbridge over collapsed old stone bridge over burn, 6 steps eastern end, 3 steps western end. Impassable with horse, cyclists can lift</p>	<p>New gate just before the bridge allows riders to circumnavigate the bridge through the field and over the weir, out the gate at the top of the field and then rejoining the Cowal Way. Alternatively use A886, track</p>

<p>old road and minor road</p>	<p>bike up steps or use ford.</p> 	<p>which runs parallel to main road and river may reduce length on busy main road.</p>
<p>NS105968 Footbridge over Allt Robuic on link path via waterfalls between forest road and Glenbranter</p>	<p>Narrow wooden footbridge with steps either end, impassable with a horse, tricky with a bike</p> 	<p>Follow original Cowal Way (as shown on current OS maps) south along forest road (NB Take particular care to follow your map carefully, forking off towards Glenbranter rather than continuing south up Glen Shellish). Alternative options following forest tracks on north side of Glen Branter clearly waymarked.</p>
<p>NS105969 Glen Branter, north of burn</p>	<p>Several flights of stone steps with handrail, restricted width particularly around corners, plus sections of boardwalk with handrail either side, impassable with a horse</p> 	<p>As above</p>

		
North of Curra Lochain	Path on Beinn Lochain side of loch very boggy with numerous deep, peaty ditches.	New path planned with multi-use alternative rejoining Cowal Way on the Goil side (check with route managers for current position)
NS162997 Sruth Burn crossing east of Curra Lochain	New wooden bridge installed spring 2016	Ford 20m upstream of bridge
NN202014 Pole Farm	Beware metal spike in line of former waymarked path alongside fence 	Follow new waymarking, continuing straight ahead on stone track, over broad wooden burn crossing. Cross straight over next junction, staying on hill side of fence, following track round to left to rejoin waymarked Cowal Way above kissing gate 
Path over Cnoc Coinnich	Good forest road to the bridge over Allt Airigh na Creige, beyond which the path becomes narrower, rockier and in places boggy climbing steeply up to the forest boundary onto the open hill. This section is passable in dry weather with an experienced horse but most riders would find it extremely challenging, and use by any horse other than in dry weather would be irresponsible because of the damage	None – new upgraded path planned

	likely to result. 	
NN223016 March fence between forest and Cnoc Coinnich	The path over Cnoc Coinnich has recently been clearly re-waymarked and is passable with care with a sure-footed horse in dry weather but is over open moorland, which can be soft in places, particularly in wet weather. Horse riders would also need to be particularly careful in using this section of path not to cause damage to the fragile ecosystem.  There is a bridlegate in the dyke on the east side of the hill, beyond which a steep but firm stony path links down to the forest road.	None – for the time being it has been agreed not to upgrade this section of path. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park are worried that creating a surfaced stone path would create a scar on the landscape and detract from the appeal of this section of route, which is mainly used by walkers.
Off-road link between Drimsynie House Hotel and Lochgoilhead	Narrow footbridge over River Goil unsuitable for multi-use	Continue along the quiet road to the T-junction, then turn right (south) on the B839 to rejoin the Cowal Way past the police station
Off-road path between Succoth and Arrochar	Waymarked route runs through the car park and then climbs up stone steps to cross the A83, linking via Stronafyne to the path to Inveruglas. The steps are too narrow and steep for a horse. The footbridge over the River Loin which runs parallel to the road is 1.2m wide, which is passable with a horse with care, but leads onto the car park on the east side of the loch, which	Follow the A83 towards Arrochar, ignoring the turn up to Succoth, to rejoin the Cowal Way at the Loin Water.

	<p>means doubling back along the A83 to rejoin the Cowal Way.</p> 	
<p>Arrochar to Inveruglas</p>	<p>All of the gates on this section have recently been replaced and are multi-use accessible, other than the gate back onto the main road at the eastern end (see below)</p>	
<p>NN318092 Junction of hydro road with A82 south of Inveruglas</p>	<p>New self-closing gates in boxed enclosure installed 2017 replacing previous kissing gate, passable with a horse with care, likely to require dismounting. (Note that north from here the final section is along very busy A82)</p> 	

VWG  
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