

THREE LOCHS WAY MULTI-USE NOTES

The Three Lochs Way is a 34.5 mile long distance route “which makes for a fascinating journey through place and time as it links an attractive necklace of communities around the Clyde Sea Lochs” (Loch Lomond, the Gareloch and Loch Long). Although developed and promoted primarily with walkers in mind, much of the route follows broad tracks and paths which are equally accessible on a bike or horse.

These notes have been produced by British Horse Society Scotland to identify which sections of the route are best suited to multi-use, and the location of restrictions. Only features which may present an issue for experienced riders are noted below – shallow fords, bridges, 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 documented. Inclusion of a particular feature does not necessarily mean that it is impassable with a horse. 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 1.2m wide may present an obstruction to you.

The notes are intended to supplement route descriptions and other information already available from <http://threelochsway.co.uk/> and other sources. All route users are responsible for deciding for themselves whether any particular section is suitable for their intended use, taking account of their own abilities, skills, fitness and experience, as well as season, weather conditions etc. Event organisers, groups or commercial operators considering using the Three Lochs Way are urged to 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 <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/> offers guidance on what this means on the ground. 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. Riders need to be particularly careful to ensure they respect other users and clear up dung on more urban and narrow sections of path. Although waymarked throughout and easy to follow, it is still worth having a map with you – and making sure you know how to read it!

Balloch to Helensburgh

The barriers either end of the foot/cycle bridge over the A82 west of Balloch have now been removed so that horses can now use this bridge rather than the busy roundabout on the main road. The shallow steps leading up to the bridge either end are passable with care with a horse or bike.



A new path has been created south of Ben Bowie linking Gouk Hill and Craigendoran. Horse riders should take care not to cause any damage by restricting speed to a walk.

The waymarked path through Red Glen east of Quarry Wood has recently been improved, but the section through the wood is soft and muddy as a result of increased use. Horse riders are asked to continue along the farm track/forest road to avoid churning up the fragile woodland path.

Helensburgh to Glen Fruin

The return sections of the former kissing gates on the path through Blackhill Plantation (between Hill House and Drumfad Wood) have been removed to convert these into one-way gates with maximum passable width of 1.2 m, although difficult to negotiate with a horse where the original posts having been left in place.



There are numerous sleeper burn crossings through this wood, which are easily passable with a horse or bike, but take particular care during wet or frosty weather when the sleepers become treacherously slippery.



Glen Fruin to Garelochhead

At the time of survey, the gate alongside the cattle grid on the public road immediately south of the Fruin Water OSGR NS306865 was obstructed by a large boulder, seriously limiting the opening width of the gate. The boulder is too large to move and there is no alternative way around for horses or anyone else unable to cross the cattle grid.



There are bypass gates or gaps alongside further cattle grids along the quiet public road through Glen Fruin, and new self-closing bridlegates have recently been installed at the entrance to Garelochhead ranges.

The link path down to Garelochhead is impassable with a horse due to fences and stiles.

Garelochhead to Arrochar

North from Garelochhead, the main route continues without further restriction along hard, broad track with unlocked gates alongside a series of cattle grids. At the southern end of Glen Mallan, the route passes under the railway, with ample headroom for horses.



The path north of the railway has recently been upgraded – please take particular care to avoid damaging the lovely new surface. At OSGR NS259967 there is a 90 cm wide wooden footbridge over the burn. At the time of survey, some of the decking appeared rotten, and the weldmesh reinforcement laid on top could present a hazard. The route managers are investigating replacement.



The path between the footbridge and the multi-use bridge over the Mallan Burn is narrow but easily passable with a horse or bike. North of Mallan Burn, the Three Lochs Way rejoins the forest road leading north through Glen Culanach to the public road east of Craggan. A new locked barrier with no unauthorised access sign has recently been installed across the western end of this track in Glen Douglas at OSGR NN283001. At present there is no alternative way around this. Discussions are underway to install a self-closing bridlegate adjacent – check with Argyll and Bute Council or the managers of the Three Lochs Way.



The track between Craggan and Arrochar is broad and stony, with easily passable gates throughout, but the ford at OSGR NN283023 is very difficult to negotiate with a horse even when not in spate because of sheer rocks restricting access and steep entry/exit. The pipe “bridge” alongside is impassable other than with great care on foot. The burn is deeply incised into the hillside with no obvious alternative way across.



Arrochar to Inveruglas

A clearly waymarked forest path links from Tarbet, under the railway (with ample height clearance for horses) onto a farm track through Glen Loin, from where a track/firm path leads through to the hydro road at Coiregrogain which links down to the A82 at Inveruglas. Fords provide alternatives to footbridges, and the previous kissing gates have all been replaced with self-closing bridlegates. There is a narrow path parallel to the road alongside the A82.

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