

## APPENDIX 12.1: DRAFT OUTDOOR ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Figure 12.1.1: Outdoor Access Management Plan

# 1. DRAFT OUTDOOR ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

## 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan has been prepared to detail how existing public access would be managed during the construction and operation of the Melgarve Cluster Project, referred to in this EIA Report as ‘the Proposed Development’.

1.1.2 The Proposed Development comprises a new 132 kV overhead line (OHL) to connect the consented Cloiche Wind Farm<sup>1</sup> and the proposed Dell Wind Farm<sup>2</sup> to the electricity transmission network at Melgarve substation. The Proposed Development also includes ancillary development, consisting of the installation of underground cable (UGC) and cable sealing end (CSE) compounds, temporary and permanent access tracks, vegetation clearance, temporary working measures/areas and upgrades to existing access tracks and existing access points. SSEN Transmission and “the Applicant” are used interchangeably in this plan.

## 1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 This plan has been prepared in line with the requirements set out in the NatureScot (NS) guidance document ‘A Brief Guide to Preparing an Outdoor Access plan (2010)<sup>3</sup>’.

## 1.3 Outdoor Access Baseline

1.3.1 The Proposed Development comprises the construction and operation of approximately 7 km of new 132 kV OHL, and the installation of approximately 9.9 km of underground cable, as well as the other ancillary development mentioned in Paragraph 1.1.2 above. The Proposed Development is within a remote area where existing outdoor access routes are established.

1.3.2 Access to the Proposed Development would be via two access routes. The northern section would be accessed from the operational Stronelairg Wind Farm access track by extending the existing access tracks to the OHL alignment. The Stronelairg track connects to the A82 trunk road at Fort Augustus via the B862.

1.3.3 The southern section would be accessed from the existing Melgarve Substation access track. This connects to the A86 trunk road near the Wolfrax Centre. This track is also used by walkers accessing the Corbett Meall na h-Aisre.

1.3.4 A review of recreational routes and paths in the area has been undertaken to help establish where potential interactions may occur in relation to the Proposed Development. Recreational routes are shown on **Figure 12.1.1**.

1.3.5 The only formal recreational route that the Proposed Development would directly cross would be the main spine road of the Stronelairg Wind Farm which is promoted by the South Loch Ness Access Group as part of the Monadhliath Trail between Fort Augustus and Whitebridge.

1.3.6 There are also a number of walking and cycling routes throughout the surrounding area, many of which are noted as Core Paths by THC or identified as Rights of Way and Wider Path Network paths. These include:

- Scottish Hill Tracks:

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<sup>1</sup> Received consent from the Scottish Government in November 2023.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that in August 2019, an application to build and operate Dell Wind Farm was consented following an appeal to the Scottish Ministers. The wind farm is now however being re-designed at the same location to increase capacity and energy capture with fewer wind turbines. The EIA Scoping Report was submitted by the Dell Wind Farm developer in March 2022 and a Scoping Opinion was received from the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit on behalf of the Scottish Ministers in May 2022. It is this proposed re-design of Dell Wind Farm that this EIA Report refers to throughout, rather than the consented design.

<sup>3</sup> A Brief Guide to Preparing an Outdoor Access Plan, Scottish Natural heritage (2010). Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2017-06/B639282%20-%20A%20Brief%20Guide%20to%20Preparing%20Outdoor%20Access%20Plans%20-%20Feb%202010.pdf> [access 24th January 2024]

- Scottish Hill Track 236 (Laggan to Fort Augustus) which passes along the glen to the south of the Proposed Development at a distance of approximately 100 m at the point of connection into Melgarve substation;
- Scottish Hill Track 235 (Laggan to Whitebridge) which passes approximately 3.2 km to the east of the Proposed Development;
- Scottish Hill Track 231 (Tomatin to Whitebridge) which passes approximately 3.2 km to the north-east of the Proposed Development; and
- Scottish Hill Track 237 (Laggan to Roybridge or Glenfintaig Lodge (Spean Bridge)), which passes along the glen approximately 3.8 km to the south of the Proposed Development.
- Core Paths:
  - Core Path LBS 1a: Spey Dam – Creagdubh Lodge which is approximately 7.8 km to the southeast of the Proposed Development;;
  - Core Path UBS 23: Achduchil – Spey Dam which is approximately 7.8 km to the southeast of the Proposed Development.
  - Core Path UBS 30: Spey Dam – Gorestean, via General Wade’s Military Road which is approximately 8 km to the southeast of the Proposed Development;
  - Core Path UBS 22: Feagour – Dun-da-lamh (parallel to the A86) which is approximately 9 km to the southeast of the Proposed Development; and
  - Core Path UBS 19: Achduchil – Gorstean (parallel to the A86) which is approximately 9 km to the southeast of the Proposed Development.

1.3.7 The Core Paths comprise a combination of constructed paths (roadside footway), tar tracks or grass / earth tracks. Of these, UBS23 and LBS1a form part of the construction access route.

1.3.8 In terms of Hill Walking, the closest Munro is Geal Charn, which is approximately 21 km to the south of the Proposed Development. Two Corbetts (a mountain over 2,500 feet, but under 3,000 feet) are within the vicinity of the Proposed Development. These are Meall na h’Aisre approximately 1.5 km to the east and Gairbeinn, approximately 4.5 km to the west. During construction, there could be interaction with walkers using these routes.

1.3.9 Sustrans’ National Cycle Route (NCR) 78 forming The Caledonia Way and comprising a combination of traffic-free and on-road cycle route is approximately over 10 km to the west of the Proposed Development.

1.3.10 The Estates within the vicinity of the Proposed Development are managed for sporting activities (mainly grouse shooting and deer stalking), as well as some trout fishing has also been noted.

## 1.4 Potential Access Impacts

### *Construction Phase*

1.4.1 The primary access impact associated with the Proposed Development would arise during the construction phase of the project. The core construction period for the Proposed Development is anticipated to be approximately two years.

1.4.2 The two access routes for the Proposed Development identified in Section 1.3 would both be used by construction traffic for access during the construction of the Proposed Development. Neither routes would need to be diverted or upgraded to accommodate the Proposed Development. This is as, in relation to the northern route, the B862 has been extensively rebuilt between the A82 and the Stronelairg Wind Farm access junction to accommodate the Stronelairg Wind Farm and Glendoe Hydro project. In relation to the southern route, the access was previously used for the construction of Melgarve Substation, Stronelairg Grid Connection and Beauly to Denny construction works, so no upgrades are necessary.

- 1.4.3 While recreational access could be disrupted by construction activity, any restrictions would be short-term and temporary, taking account of the mitigation measures discussed in Section 1.5 of this Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan.

*Operational Phase*

- 1.4.4 Potential access impacts during the operational phase would be limited to occasional access for maintenance purposes. It is unlikely that there would be any restrictions to outdoor access during this phase. Should any major maintenance activities be scheduled, consideration and planning for outdoor access management would be reviewed prior to works commencing.

## **1.5 General Access Arrangements**

- 1.5.1 The Applicant is committed to enabling day to day access where the safety of the general public or construction staff is not compromised. During the construction phase, every effort would be made to ensure access to existing routes and trails would be maintained. Furthermore, any construction effects are expected to be short-term and temporary. However, to ensure the safety of the public, some additional measures may be required.
- 1.5.2 Prior to commencement of the construction works, access arrangements and appropriate warnings would be communicated to the local community via the community liaison group, project website and local mailing list.
- 1.5.3 From time to time, short term restrictions to access may be required where there is no safe alternative. These restrictions would be communicated via the same method.
- 1.5.4 The Applicant would liaise with the landowners as required to minimise any disruption to forestry or estate run activities where possible.

*Access Arrangements – Existing Routes*

- 1.5.5 Where there is potential for interaction along existing recreational routes with construction activities, it is proposed that these interactions will be managed through:
- Warning signage indicating the likelihood of construction traffic will be placed at regular intervals along the walking routes / trails;
  - A site information leaflet will be posted at regular intervals along the track, informing members of the public 'what to do' if site traffic is encountered;
  - Speed limit of construction traffic on tracks to be set to 15 mph with appropriate signage highlighted;
  - Site rules will dictate flashing / hazard lights are to be switched on by all construction traffic vehicles while using site tracks;
  - Warning signage for construction staff highlighting that members of the public may be utilising routes (see Plate 1);
  - On Core Paths UBS23 and LBS1a, pedestrian refuges will be provided at regular intervals to provide a safe passing place for construction traffic and path users. This will take the form of a mills barrier (or similar) placed at regular locations in the verge or edge of track where pedestrians can wait for traffic to pass and vice versa; and
  - Training / briefing of all drivers to be aware of path users.
- 1.5.6 The above arrangements will be implemented to ensure both that those wishing to make access are informed of construction hazards, and that construction workers are trained to anticipate and take measures to avoid other access users.



**Plate 1: Example Construction Staff Warning Sign**

*New Permanent and Temporary Access Tracks*

- 1.5.7 As part of the Proposed Development, new permanent and new temporary access tracks would be constructed.
- 1.5.8 During construction of these tracks, access would be restricted to the general public on safety grounds. Access gates would be installed to limit unauthorised vehicles from entering the site and pass gates would be installed where the site entrances meet existing roads to accommodate walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- 1.5.9 Signage would be put in place where the site entrances meet the existing tracks and where the existing rights of way intersect the new access tracks with a purpose to highlight to the public the risk of entering the site.
- 1.5.10 Once the Proposed Development became operational, the public would be able to fully access the permanent tracks, in line with current access legislation and the temporary access tracks would be removed and the areas restored.

*Equestrians*

- 1.5.11 The British Horse Society has made recommendations on the interactions between Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) traffic and horses. Horses are normally nervous of large vehicles, particularly when they do not often meet them. Horses are flighty animals and will run away in panic if really frightened. Riders will do all they can to prevent this but, should it happen, it could cause a serious accident for other road users, as well as for the horse and rider.
- 1.5.12 The main factors causing fear in horses in this situation are:
- Something approaching them, which is unfamiliar and intimidating;
  - A large moving object, especially if it is noisy;
  - Lack of space between the horse and the vehicle;

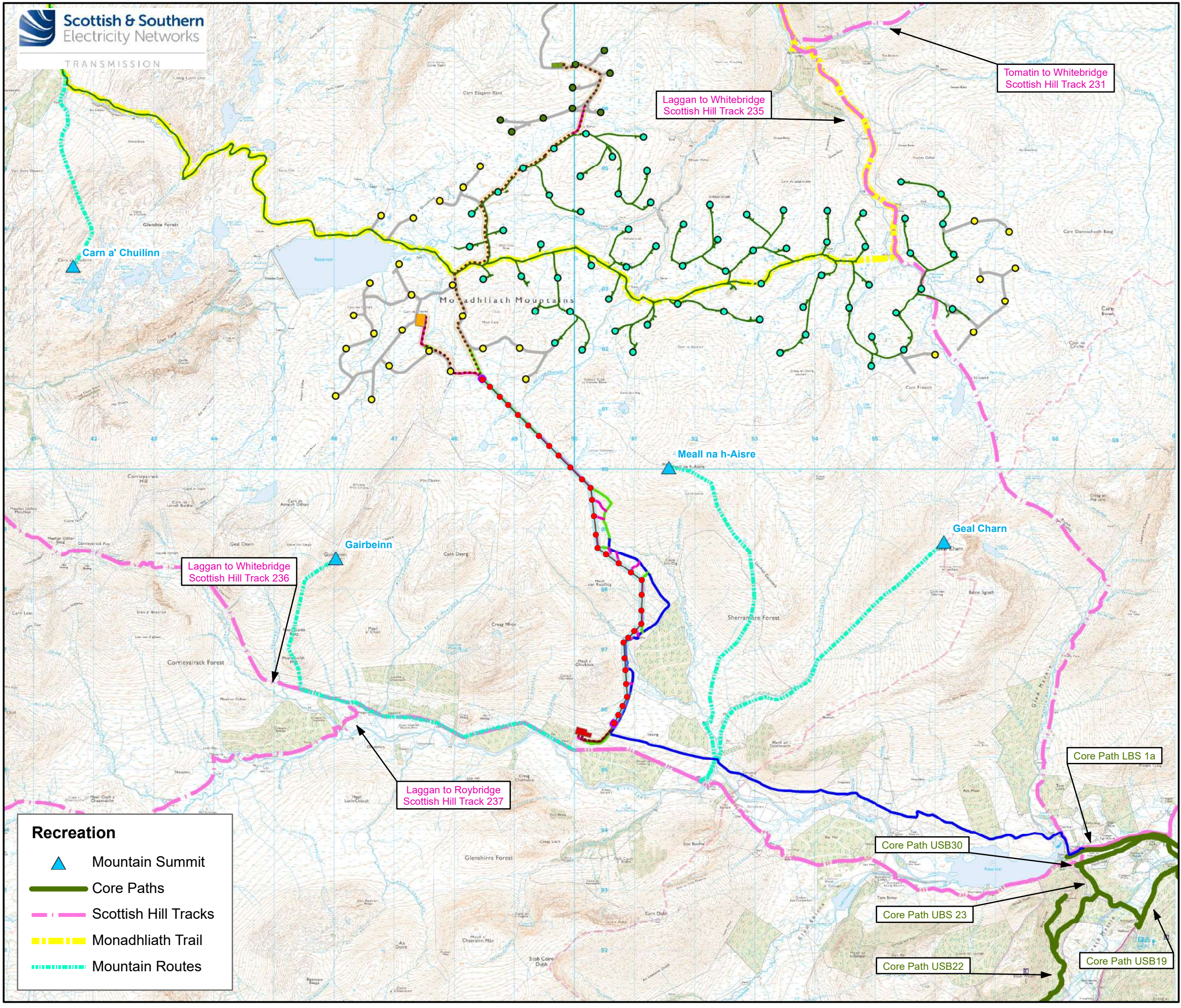
- The sound of air brakes; and
- Anxiety on the part of the rider.

1.5.13 The British Horse Society recommends the following actions that will be included in the Site training for all HGV staff:

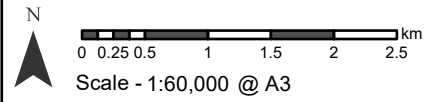
- On seeing riders approaching, drivers must slow down and stop, minimising the sound of air brakes, if possible;
- If the horse still shows signs of nervousness while approaching the vehicle, the engine should be shut down (if it is safe to do so);
- The vehicle should not move off until the riders are well clear of the back of the HGV;
- If drivers are wishing to overtake riders, please approach slowly or even stop in order to give riders time to find a gateway or lay by where they can take refuge and create sufficient space between the horse and the vehicle. Because of the position of their eyes, horses are very aware of things coming up behind them; and
- All drivers delivering to the Site must be patient. Riders will be doing their best to reassure their horses while often feeling a high degree of anxiety themselves.

## 1.6 Conclusions

1.6.1 The Applicant aims to maintain access during construction of the Proposed Development and by implementing the management strategies set out in this Plan, it is believed that this can be achieved while ensuring the safety of the public and construction staff.



- ### Legend
- Overhead Line (OHL) Works**
- Proposed Tower Location
  - Proposed Overhead Line (OHL)
  - Limit of Deviation (LoD) for Proposed OHL (50m either side of OHL alignment)
- Ancillary Development**
- Indicative Cable Sealing End Compound Outline
  - Indicative Underground Cable (UGC) Alignment
  - LoD for Proposed UGC (50m either side of UGC alignment)
  - New - Temporary Access
  - New - Permanent Access Tracks
- Existing Infrastructure**
- Stronelaig Wind Farm Turbines
  - Stronelaig Wind Farm Access Tracks
  - Existing Access Tracks
  - Melgarve Substation
- Consented Wind Farm Infrastructure**
- Cloiche Turbines
  - Cloiche Access Tracks
  - Cloiche Substation
- Proposed Wind Farm Infrastructure**
- Dell Turbines
  - Dell Access
  - Dell Substation



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Project: Melgarve Cluster Project: Environmental Impact Assessment

Title: Figure 12.1.1 - Outdoor Access Management Plan

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Drawing: 121010-D12.1-EIA-12.1-1.0.0

- ### Recreation
- Mountain Summit
  - Core Paths
  - Scottish Hill Tracks
  - Monadhliath Trail
  - Mountain Routes

Laggan to Whitebridge  
Scottish Hill Track 236

Laggan to Roybridge  
Scottish Hill Track 237

Laggan to Whitebridge  
Scottish Hill Track 235

Tomatin to Whitebridge  
Scottish Hill Track 231

Core Path LBS 1a

Core Path USB30

Core Path UBS 23

Core Path USB22

Core Path USB19

Carn a' Chuilinn

Meall na h-Aisre

Gairbeinn

Geal Charn