

**Condition survey
and outline assessment for
The Corrieyairack Pass**



at Culachy, Fort Augustus

January 2003

Condition Report on lower section of Corrieyairack Pass at Culachy.

1. Background

There has been a long history of erosion on this short section of this route, much of which has been a result of failed drains and heavy rainfall. In 1993 a detailed condition survey was commissioned with a view to repairing a washout of the route between the Ardachy Road and Culachy House Estate entrance. Whilst the work at this time was costed at around £14,000, the work did not receive funding and therefore was not completed. Current costs will depend on intended usage.

During the intervening 10 years some patching work and further deterioration has occurred. However the original descriptive plan has changed little and has therefore been included along with a current photo record.

2. General condition

The section of route considered in this report extends for some 470m. Of this total length, work will be required on all of the water course to remedy the principal cause of deterioration of the path. The details of condition can be seen on the attached plan from the 1993 survey, although there have been minor changes to extents.

The 2m high dry stone wall on the left of the path as it rises is in good condition along the majority of this section. In two places the wall has suffered collapse into the route, and in another the wall is crumbling and in a dangerous condition. A decision will be required as to repair or demolition in the areas where the wall footing has been undermined. Material from the wall could be used in the surface reinstatement work.

Over half the length of the route will require some patching after the drainage issues have been resolved. These are 3 main sections that have suffered considerable damage and would need major remedial work. About a third of the total length requires no remedial work. Overall, the current condition at the start of this route is a deterrent.

3. Current risks to users

There are at present unacceptable risks on this section and the route which will require remedial work before it could be promoted as a safe route. The risks are as follows:

1. High risk of wall collapse. The wall footings in short sections have been undermined and there is a high risk of the wall collapsing into the path.
2. High risk of Slips and Falls. The surface of the route in sections consists of boulders which when wet present a risk of slips and falls. The uneven surface presents a hazard to walkers and in its present condition presents a high risk.
3. Low risk of flood. At times of heavy rain the stream will flow in spate with considerable speed down the lower section of this path, immersing the walking surface, which is uneven in many places. There is a high risk at times of heavy rain that the route would become unsafe in flood conditions.

Until remedial work on the path surface and wall has been completed this section of the route should be considered as unsafe and therefore unsuitable for promoted use.

4. Issues to consider.

Historic route. As this section is unscheduled, there appear to be limited restrictions to methods of reconstructed. This will mean that a machine build option would be available. The introduction of plant may damage the good sections of the route and this may limit the benefits of using heavy plant on the acceptable sections dependant on intended use. The gradient will contribute to potential damage vehicles and subsequent use may introduce, and should be considered in the specification.

Path or Road. The quality and specification to which this section is rebuilt will be influenced by the intended use. A decision will need to be made as to whether the route is to be reinstated to a specification suitable for vehicular use, or specifically designed to restrict use to pedestrian, cyclist and horse riders. The cost of rebuilding will be considerably higher for vehicular use, and due to width, may raise further safety issues. The access point onto the Ardachy road may need to be upgraded if usage is to include vehicles. Planning gain from commercial users could be an option.

Future maintenance. Should the route be reinstated, it would be wise to consider the future maintenance requirements before the specifications are agreed, particularly relating to drainage. A high quality build initially will make the route more sustainable, and reduce the burden of annual maintenance.

The lowest cost option may be to abandon this section and negotiate access through the Culachy Estate road directly opposite the Cill Chuimein path, avoiding the walk along the Ardachy Road. Permission from the estate would be a pre-requisite.

5. Recommendations

There are four main work areas to address.

Drainage. The drainage on this section should be redefined, upgraded or replaced.

Surface works. Following the remedial work on drainage, where specifically identified, the route should be refilled and a new surface laid to a specification reflecting intended use. The physical barriers currently in place will need review.

Wall repair. Where the wall has been undermined or is in a state of near collapse, these sections should either be demolished with the material used for infill and replaced by fencing, or structurally repaired in conjunction with the resurfacing work.

Vegetation clearance. The lower section has seen a gradual encroachment of scrub reducing the width of the route to between 1.5 –2m in places. The scrub on the wall side should be removed, and trees that are influencing the drainage system should be removed.

Highland Access Project, Path Survey

Location:

Weather:

Path:

Date:

Dist. (m)	Grad (deg)	Existing Condition	Proposed Works	Description