

**For Immediate Release – Monday, 23 May 2022, 16:00**

## **Access charity steps up efforts to resolve level crossing closure at Dalwhinnie**

ScotWays (The Scottish Rights of Way & Access Society) is appealing for information from people who have used the Ben Alder level crossing to access long-distance routes west of Dalwhinnie in the Highlands.

This is part of continuing efforts to resolve the problems created by Network Rail's closure of the level crossing.

Previous actions have included a public petition signed by over 9000 people, meetings with Network Rail and an open letter from multiple organisations to the Transport Minister.

The Ben Alder level crossing is immediately south of Dalwhinnie station in the Cairngorms National Park and is recorded as part of a public right of way, shown on maps and included in guidebook route descriptions dating back decades.

Network Rail now disputes the level crossing's status as part of a longstanding right of way and in July 2021 locked the pedestrian gate on safety grounds without any consultation with the local community, the access authorities or recreational interests, and only minimal consultation with the landowner.

Richard Barron, Chief Operating Officer at ScotWays, said, "This disappointing move by Network Rail flies in the face of Scotland's access rights.

"There was inadequate consultation with the community before the closure and the suggested diversion half a mile down the track was poorly thought out, inadequately signed, and makes the safety situation worse rather than better.

"In addition to deterring visitors, which is impacting on local businesses, the closure means that local people have lost access to the countryside yards from their homes.

"ScotWays and others are calling on Network Rail to find a safe way of reopening the crossing.

"We have launched a questionnaire to gather information on public use of the rights of way heading west from Dalwhinnie to help in the campaign to get Network Rail to reopen the crossing.

"We've much historical documentation and now we're turning our attention to how the rights of way have been used within living memory.

"Through the questionnaire we hope to gather additional information regarding long-standing public use and its value to the local community and visitors alike."

### **Taking action**

ScotWays is asking members of the public who have used the level crossing at Dalwhinnie as part of a long-distance through route to help by completing the questionnaire.

Further information and the questionnaire can be found at [www.scotways.com/dalwhinnie](http://www.scotways.com/dalwhinnie).

You can also email [dalwhinnie@scotways.com](mailto:dalwhinnie@scotways.com) with any queries and to request a hard copy of the questionnaire.

**ENDS**



# Press Release

## Background Information

The Ben Alder level crossing is part of an historic route from Loch Rannoch and along Loch Ericht to Dalwhinnie. It is shown on the Roy Military Survey (1747-55), which is testament to its importance and long-standing use.

A right of way is defined as a more or less defined route from one public place to another which has been in use, openly and peaceably, by the general public as a matter of right, without substantial interruption for at least 20 years.

For more detail, see <https://scotways.com/ken/how-does-a-route-become-a-right-of-way/>

## Notes to Editors

Founded in 1845, ScotWays (The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society) is the independent charity which upholds and promotes public access rights in Scotland. We are widely recognised as experts in the law and practice of access and advise on access problems, provide information and training, and maintain a vast database about routes in Scotland including the Heritage Paths Project a unique archive of Scotland's old paths and roads. You can see our recognisable green and white signs on routes across Scotland. Find out more about outdoor access in Scotland on our website <https://scotways.com>. Follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ScotWays> and Twitter <https://twitter.com/scotways>.

## For further information

For further information, or to request interviews, please contact Richard Barron on 0131 510 9323 (direct), 0131 558 1222 (ScotWays Office) or [media@scotways.com](mailto:media@scotways.com)