

## The Highland Council

### West Highlands & Islands Core Path Plan Review 2015/16– Wester Ross

## Consultative Report

### Introduction

The development of the existing core path plan was part of The Highland Councils duties given in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 (LR(S)A 2003). The existing plan was adopted by the full council in September 2011 after the plan had been through the statutory consultation process and also a Public Local Inquiry (PLI).

This core path review is for the area of Wester Ross in the Highland Council Core Paths Plan. The review will take place alongside the consultation process for the new West Highland and Island Development Plan. A single plan, West Highlands and Islands Core Paths Plan will be produced by combining with Skye & Lochalsh and Lochaber, then, where appropriate, the Core Paths will be shown on the Local Development Plan.

This Consultative Report has been produced as part of a review process, it is not a DRAFT Core Paths Plan as set out in Section 17 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Correspondingly the promotion of this Consultative Report is not the public notice of a Core Paths Plan as set out in Section 18 of the same act.

Public comments are welcome but the council is not seeking formal objections to the proposals at this stage. Any objections will be treated the same as other comments and should any proposal be put forward in a Draft Core Paths Plans the council will give notice, as set out in section 18, at a future date.

### Aims

The review aims to;

1. Improve connectivity of the current plan by utilising existing routes.
2. Check that existing routes remain at an acceptable minimum standard for public use.
3. Review mapping of existing plan to identify change of line of routes or identify where upgraded/new routes have been constructed or used differently by the public.
4. Consider the recommendations of the Public Local Inquiry report on The Highland Councils first core paths plan.

### Proposed Changes to Core Paths

A Call for Core Path Changes was issued to all community councils, ward members, organisations and identified landowners. Any comments relating to specific paths have been included within this report. These may include a change in route, the addition of a path or the removal of a path from the Core Paths Plan.

A desk top survey has been carried out by officers, based on local knowledge and experiences from carrying out core path surveys. The proposed new routes and modifications detailed in this report come from this desk top survey and also suggestions made to The Highland Council since the adoption of the first core path plan. Only preliminary ground survey work may have been carried out directly related to this core path plan review at the current time.

In November 2015 the proposed core path changes at this stage were considered by the Ross & Cromarty Local Access Forum and their support, opposition or comments have been included in this report.

## What is a core path?

There is no strict definition of what a core path should be from the LR(S)A 2003, the act does however define a core path plan as a system of paths sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area. With this in mind it should be understood that the existing plan was designed to fulfil this sufficiency of path network.

Proposed core paths not currently in use by the public, say requiring works or upgrades, should have a reasonable likelihood of being delivered within 3 years of the reviewed plan being adopted. The adoption of a path or route as a core path places no duty on The Highland Council to carry out new path construction, upgrading works or maintenance of the route. The Highland Council does have powers to carry out works on a core path but these are discretionary and are aimed as ensuring routes remain free from obstruction and are not intended to be used for new path construction.

As well as the sufficiency of network the council shall have a statutory regard to the following points when reviewing the core path plan.

- the likelihood that persons exercising rights of way and access rights will do so by using core paths;
- the desirability of encouraging such persons to use core paths; and
- the need to balance the exercise of those rights and the interests of the owner of the land in respect of which those rights are exercisable.

## Inclusion of minor public roads, footways, Long Distance Routes (LDRs), other long distance trails and public rights of way (PRoW).

The lack of inclusion of minor roads in the core path plan was something that raised objections in the consultation stage of the existing core path plan. The objections were not resolved and the matter was taken up at the Public Local Inquiry (PLI). The reporter for the PLI did not propose the objected to routes to be included in the core path plan but did recommended that the council establish if there was a justification for inclusion of minor roads when the plan is reviewed.

Another objection raised during the consultations for the existing core path was the lack of routes and connectivity of proposed routes within the wider area. This objection was again not resolved and the matter was addressed during the PLI by the reporter. The reporter recommended the council considers a range of strategic routes in the review of the core path plan.

The Highland Council considers the inclusion of more routes, as described above, may be a benefit but with the concern that the inclusion of too many routes would render the path plan meaningless in terms of its statutory objective to provide a "basic" network. Also it should be considered that roads are already managed on a statutory basis under numerous road acts. The council, indeed any person, can promote the use of a road as parts of a path network without the requirement for the road to be a core path. Within an urban or large village settlement the council considers the public are reasonably expected to be aware of the extent of the public road network for them to exercise their right of access along the road without a requirement for the road or footway to be adopted as a core path. As for longer distance Public Rights of Way many of these are very variable in character and condition thus may not provide the minimum standard for the entire length.

## Proposals In This Consultative Report

There are two levels of proposals set out in this Consultative Report.

Firstly there are proposals which clearly meet the aims of the core paths plan review set out above and are known to be in an appropriate condition. These are the routes intended to be proposed as candidate core paths.

- Proposals that clearly meet the aims of the core path plan review are highlighted in a purple hue text box.

Secondly there are proposals that may meet the aims of the review but either further onsite investigation is required and/or further consultation with the various stakeholders is required be that landowners, land managers or local community groups. This Consultative Report seeks to assess public comment on these routes as potential core paths but the council is not proposing them at the present time.

- Proposals to further investigate a route and/or, seek further consultation on their use for land management & recreational purposes, are highlighted in an orange hue text box.

This Consultative Report has been produced as part of a review process, it is not a DRAFT Core Paths Plan as set out in Section 17 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Correspondingly the promotion of this Consultative Report is not the public notice of a Core Paths Plan as set out in Section 18 of the same act.

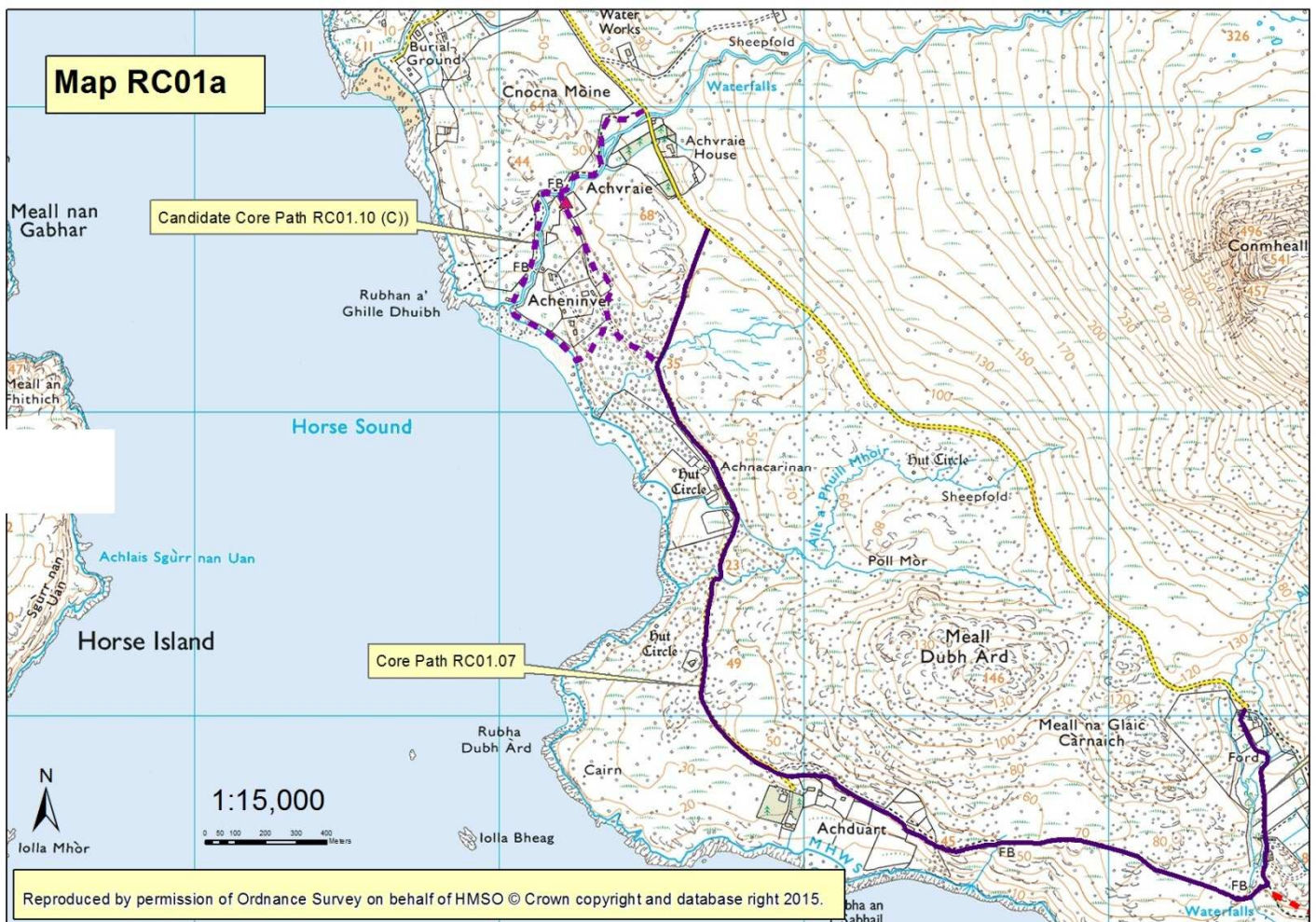
Public comments are welcome but the council is not seeking formal objections to the proposals at this stage. Any objections will be treated the same as other comments and should any proposal be put forward in a Draft Core Paths Plans the council will give notice, as set out in section 18, at a future date.

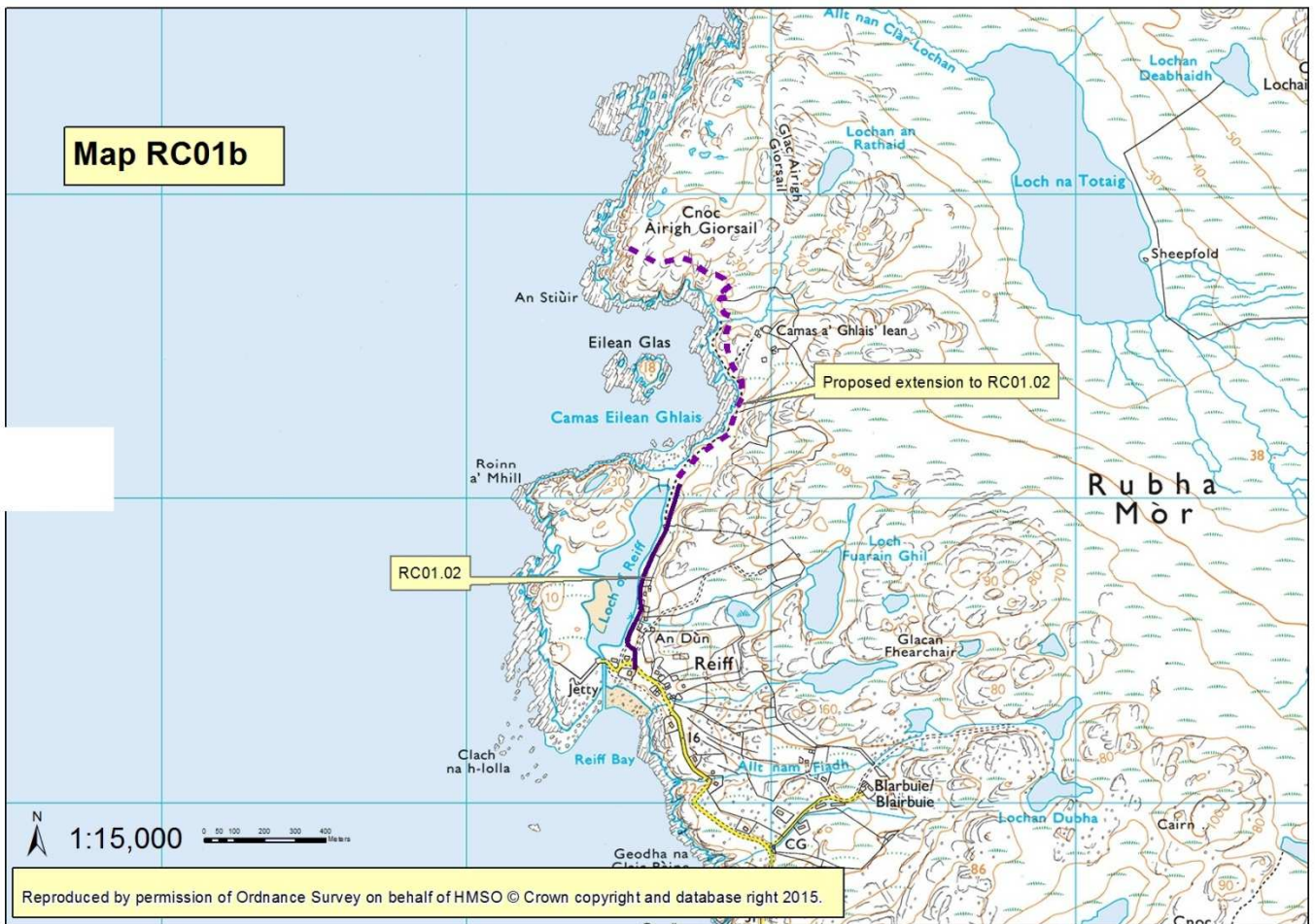
## Path Changes by Settlement Zone

### Achiltibuie ( Settlement ref- RC01)

The Achiltibuie settlement zone covers all the smaller townships within Coigach. Whilst no new paths have been constructed since the first Core Path Plan a number of proposals have been received from the Community Council, the Coigach Community Development Company, and the the Local Tourist Association. This is due to the Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape (CALL) Partnership being in the final stages of submitting a funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which includes a number of path projects. These include

- Core Path RC01.05, to remain in the Core Path Plan. This path had not been constructed as planned as funding was not achieved as expected previously.
- Candidate Core Path RC01.10(C) the path to Acheninver beach and will link to RC01.07. See Map RC01a below.
- Extend Core Path RC01.02- towards a popular climbing area, see Map RC01a





There are also two further paths for consideration, the first the Posties Path (partly in Ullapool settlement zone) will be improved by the CALL project but remains a very rough path with burn crossings only recommended for experienced hill walkers

There is also suggestion to include the Cul Mor path, The path was well constructed by The Footpath Trust in the 1990's, to approx. 2/3s of the distance to the summit. The final third is the steeper & rockier section that would require map reading skills in poor weather. No improvements are proposed as part of the CALL project.

- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC01.11(C) Posties Path. See Map RC01c below
- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC01.12(C). Cul Mor Path. See Map 01d



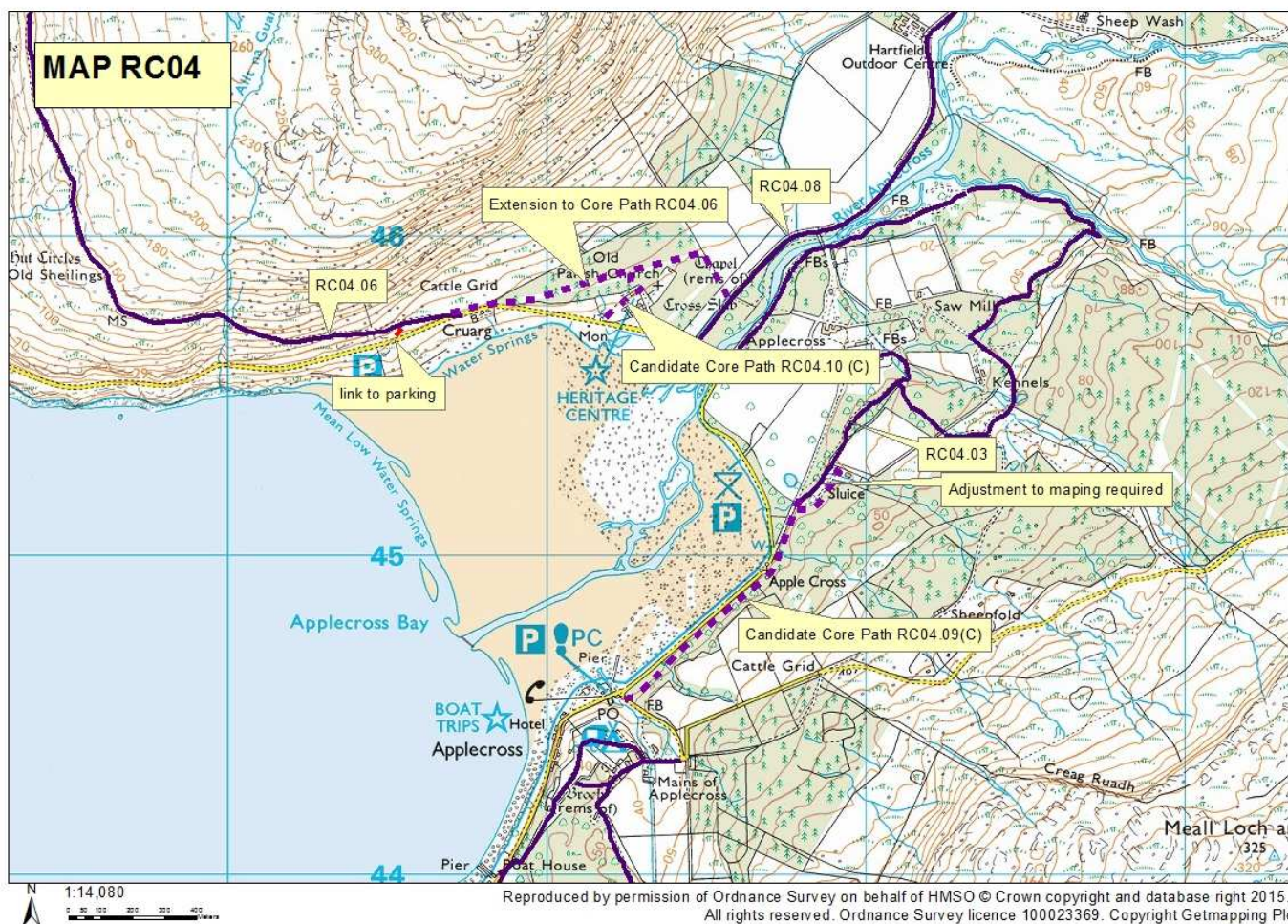
## Achnasheen (RC02)

Whilst no paths have been built in this area there are a number of new tracks to hydro schemes and for other land management purposes. There was a suggestion to include the hill track at Ledgowan, although this is often locked, has very little demand and given recent experience it is unlikely to be accepted by the landowner. There is a PRoW crossing the railway line at Inver that could be considered a Candidate Core Path to assist in safeguarding the right to cross.

## Applecross (RC04)

This area had a Living Landscape project, known as ALP with Heritage Lottery Funding between 2010 and 2015. During this project a number of path projects were completed that would now be considered suitable as Core Paths, in addition to paths that are already included within the Plan. These are;

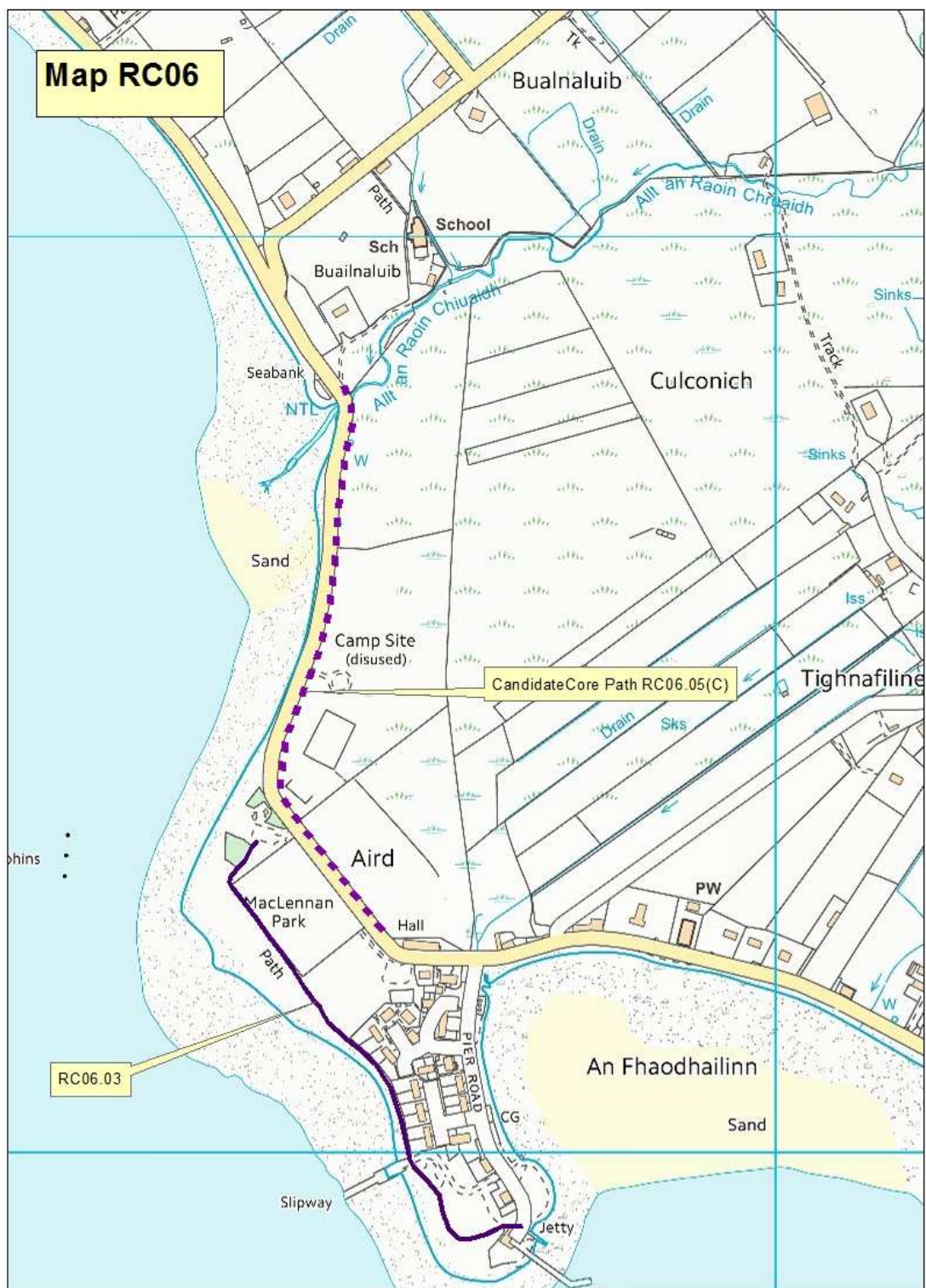
- Candidate Core Path RC04.09(C)- The Beechwood Path linking the village to RC04.03. See Map RC04 below.
- Candidate Core Path RC04.10(C) Clachan Path
- Extension to Sand Path RC04.06 to Clachan.



## Aultbea (RC06)

In this area, the community negotiated new path to the school from the village hall. By using Scottish Water contractors, a path of crushed stone and dust construction was made parallel to the road and a bridge over the burn using old fish farm walkway.

- Candidate Core Path RC06.05(C) Village Hall to Buailnaluib



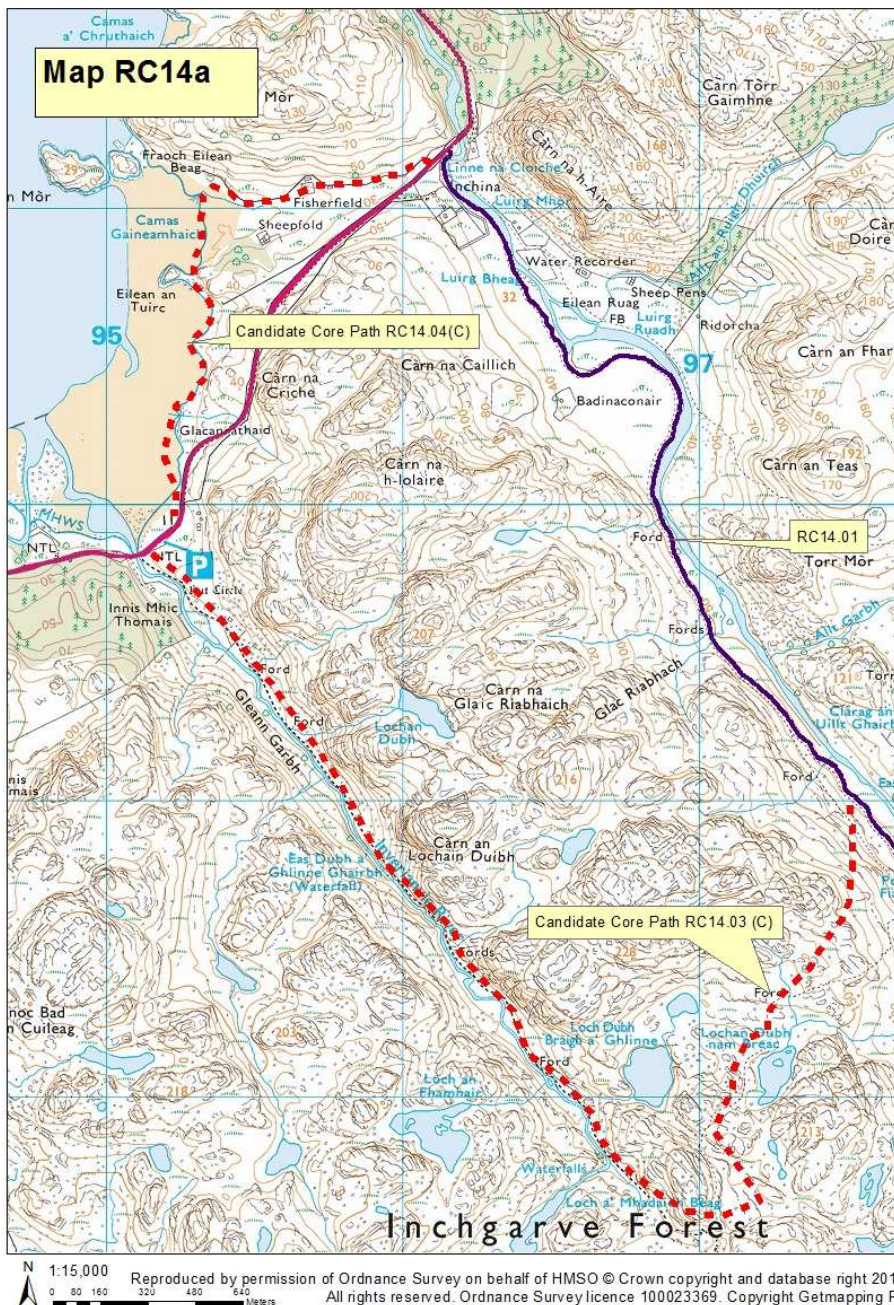
N 1:5,000  
0 25 50 100 150 200 Meters  
Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO © Crown copyright and database right 2015.  
All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey licence 100023369. Copyright Getmapping Plc



## Dundonnell (RC14)

This settlement zone covers a large sparsely populated area and has only two existing core paths. In the west of the zone there is a suggestion to link the path up the Inverianvie River in Gleann Garbh to the track along the Gruinard River which is already a core path (RC14.01) and then a section at Fisherfield to the beach and back to the car park. Whilst this would create an attractive circular route the Inverianvie path is quite boggy in places, includes some minor scrambling and is often indistinct between the two glens. The path to the beach can be quite overgrown and very wet in places, there is a rocky section that would be difficult at high tide.

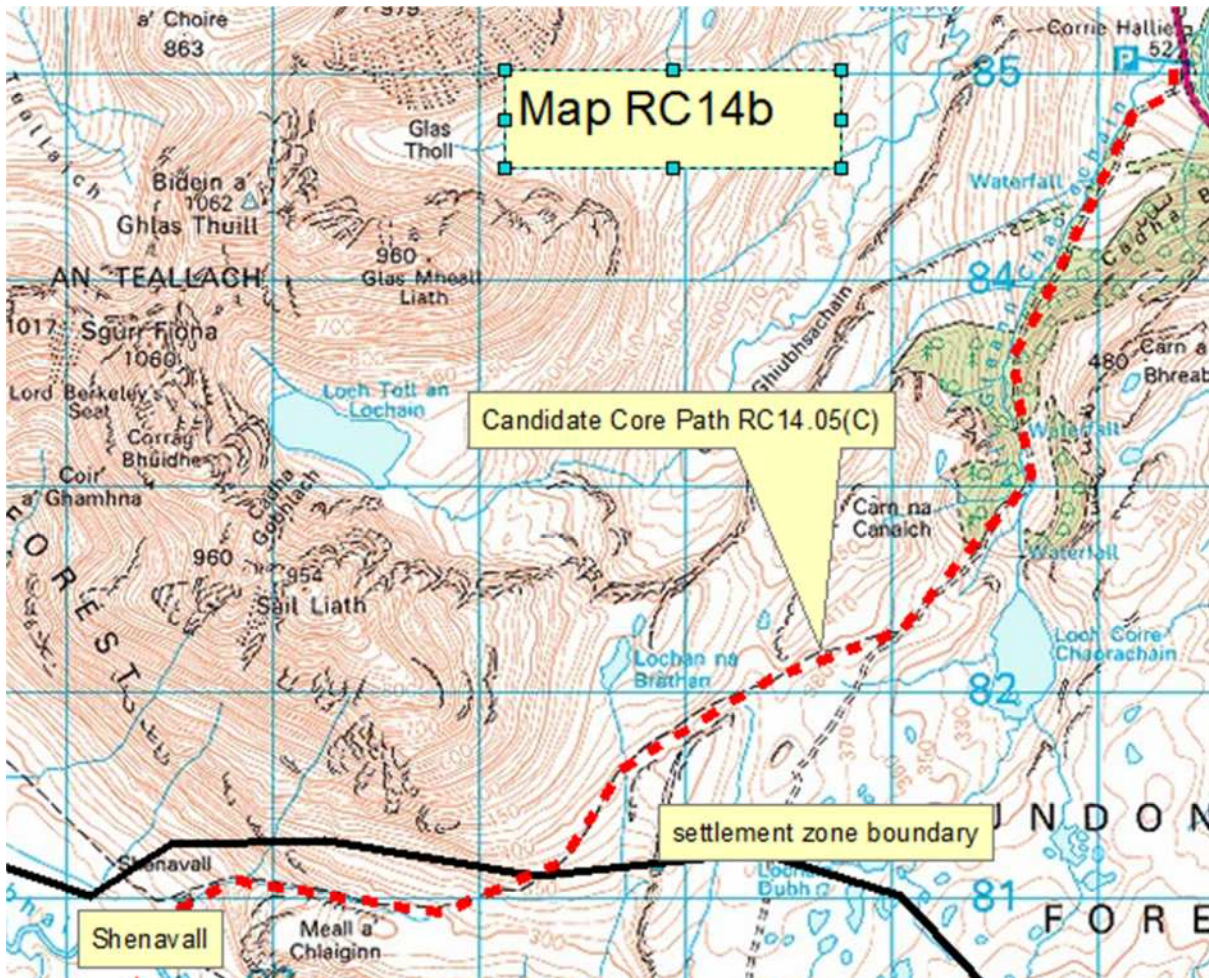
- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC14.03(C) Gleann Garbh and hill path. See Map RC14 a below
- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC14.04 (C) Gruinard Beach route



## Dundonnell continued

To the east of this zone, the parking area at Corrie Hallie is a very popular starting point for many mountain and long routes into what is known as the Great Wilderness. A wide track goes for 3.5km before splitting west towards Poolewe and south to Kinlochewe. Further along, this route splits again to the east to Loch a' Bhraoin. As this settlement zone only contains the first 5 Km of these routes, I propose to include only the path to Shenavall, a popular bothy, at this time. The discussion on the longer routes will be included later.

- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC14.05 (C) Corrie Haille to Shenavall Bothy . See Map RC14b below.



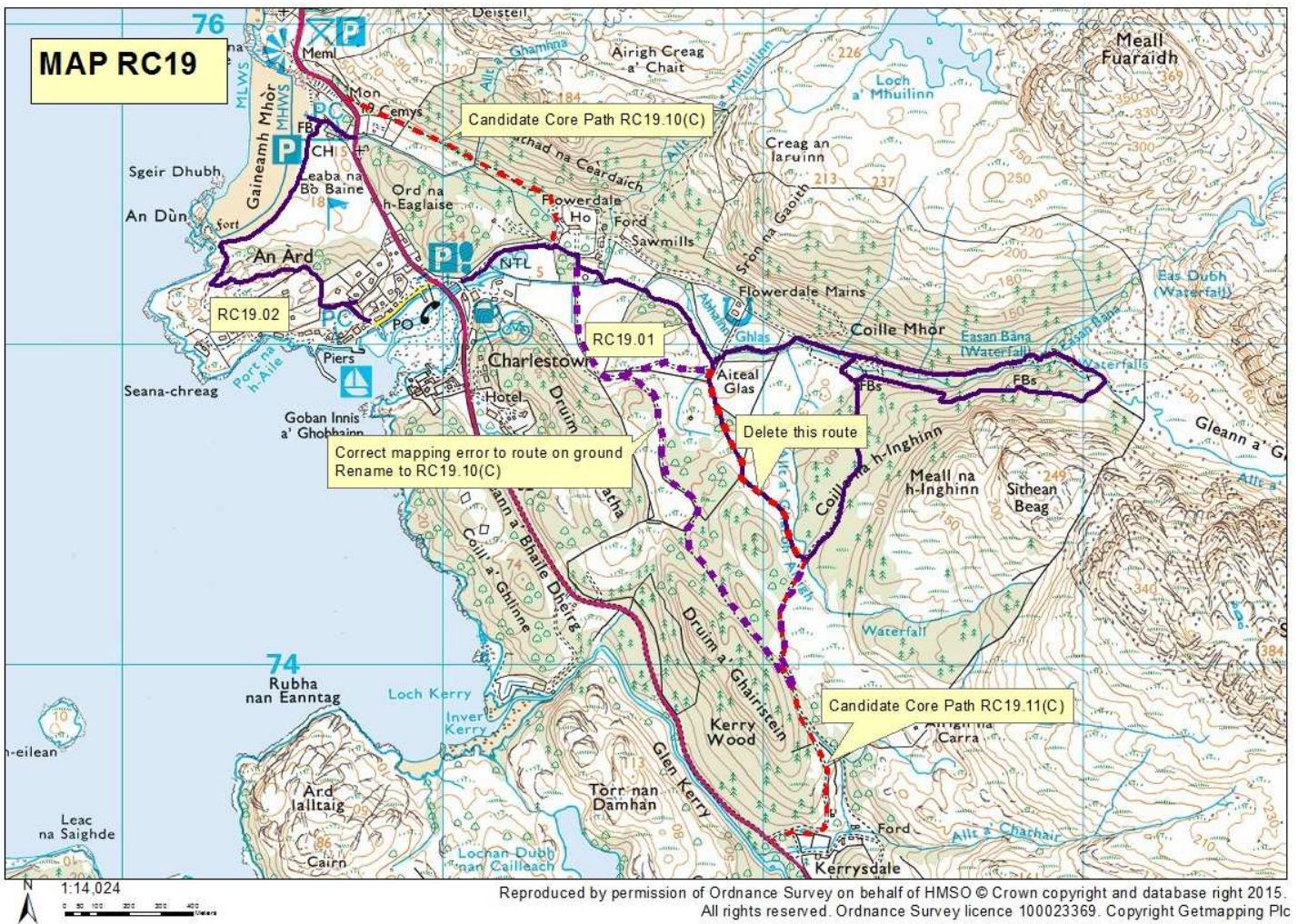
## Gairloch (RC19)

Gairloch has a reasonable core path network including one of the most popular paths in Wester Ross at Flowerdale. Whilst no new paths have been constructed there have been suggestions to extend the network in the Flowerdale area along two existing routes. These are;

- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC19.11(C) Cemetery to Flowerdale House See Map RC19 below
- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC19.12(C) Kerrysdale track

There is also a mapping error to correct on the Flowerdale paths. As this can be identified as a separate path from the waterfall path it is proposed as the Kerry Wood path, Candidate Core Path RC19.10(C)

- Candidate Core Path RC19.10 (C)- Kerry Wood



Two longer distance Candidate Core Paths are cross within this settlement zone but are mentioned in the Kinlochewe and Poolewe areas below.

### Garve (RC20)

Like most Wester Ross settlement zones this covers a large area although the West Highland & Islands Development Plan does not cover the village of Garve it does include the rest of the zone. There are four longer routes that are possible for consideration as core paths these are;

Grudie (Lochluichart) to Fain via Loch Fannich. This is a Public Right of Way and on well surfaced track almost to the end of Loch Fannich, a clear path to Loch a Bhroain and a track to the road.

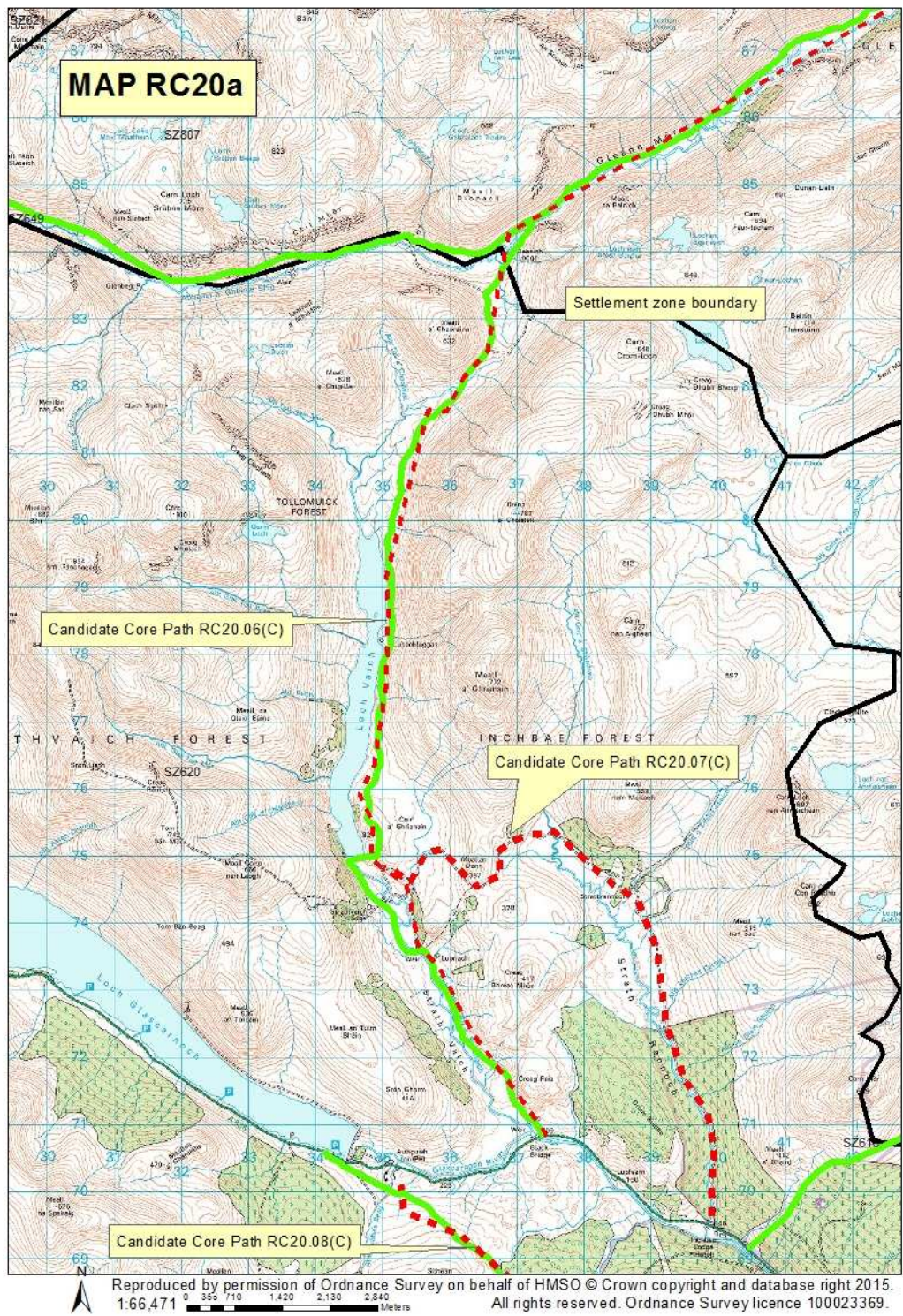
Black Bridge to Deanich Lodge ( on to Ardgay in the Caithness & Sutherland LDP). This route is on a good 4wd track suitable for most users and is a Public Right of Way.

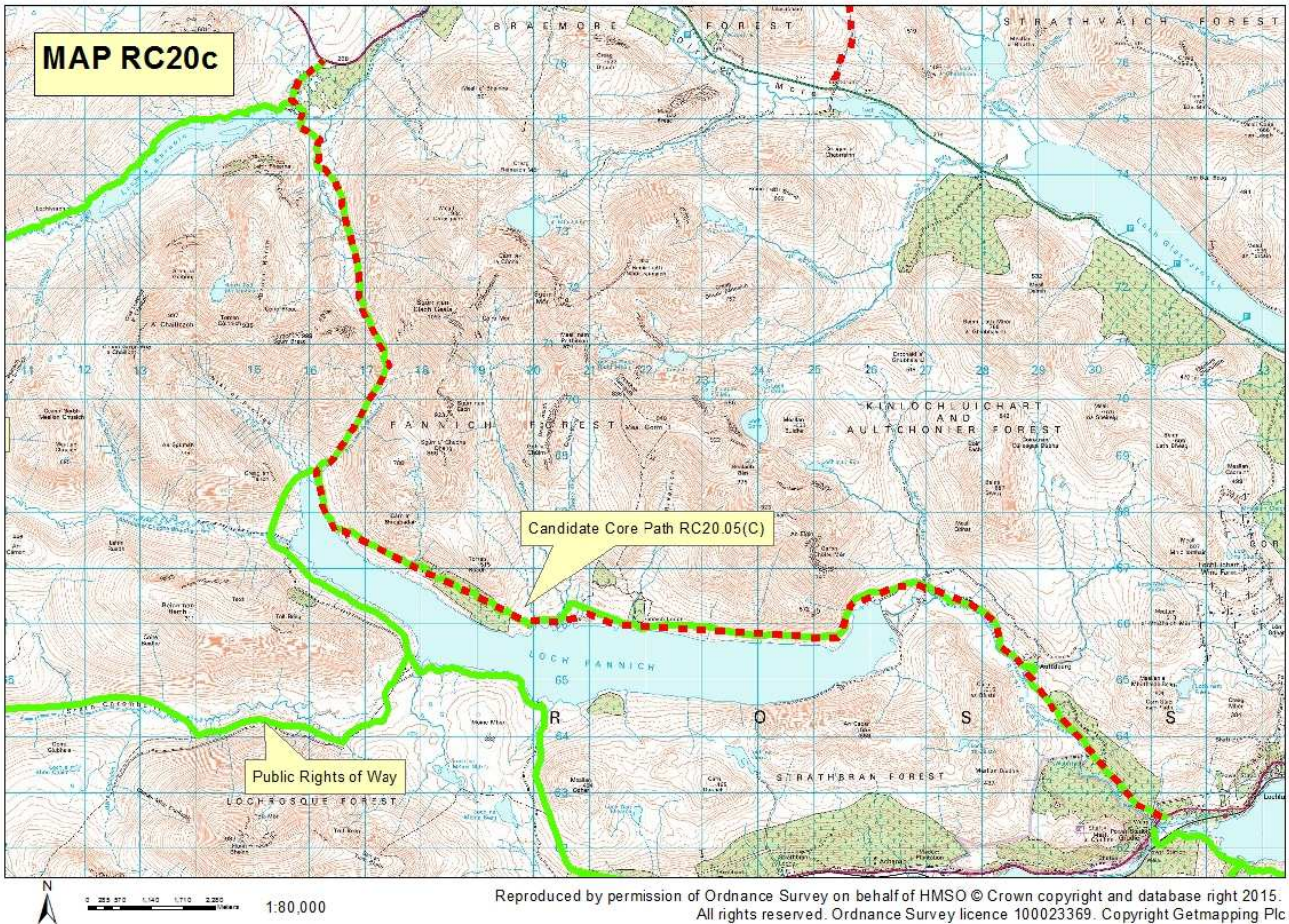
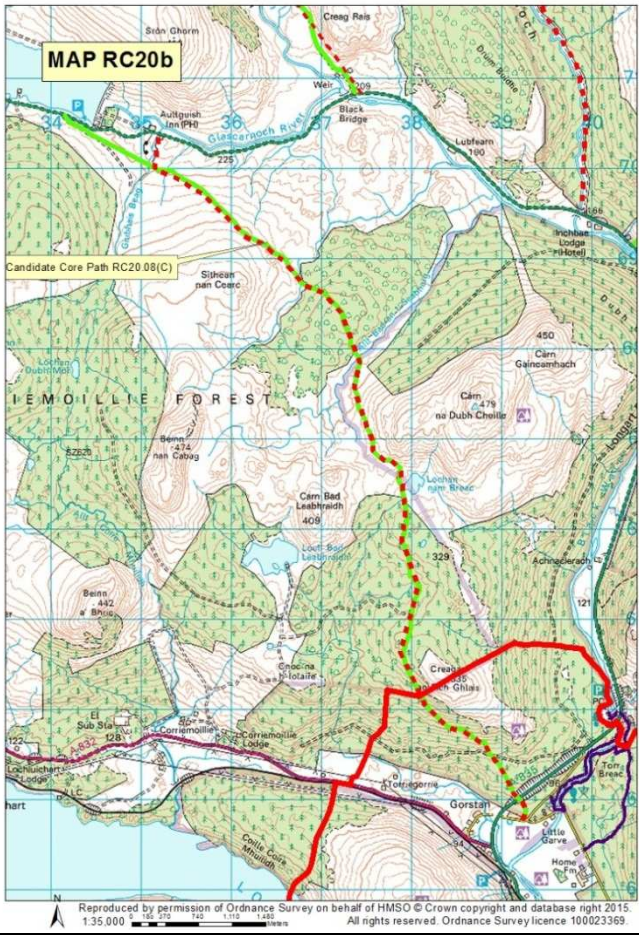
Inchbae Lodge to Strathvaich via StrathRannoch. This route appears to be on well surfaced tracks suitable for most users

Little Garve to Aultguish Inn. This route is a Public Right of Way but is in very variable condition, from a good surfaced track to a very wet bog, especially at the Aultguish end which is also less well defined.

There are two PROWs crossing the railway line in the Garve settlement zone. These may be required to be considered as Candidate Core Paths to safeguard a public right to cross the line.

- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC20.06(C) Black Bridge to Deanich Lodge ( on to Ardgay in the Caithness & Sutherland LDP) See Map RC20a below
- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC20.07(C) Inchbae Lodge to Strathvaich via StrathRannoch. See Map RC20a below
- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC20.08(C) Little Garve to Aultguish Inn See Map RC20b
- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC20.05(C) Grudie (Lochluichart) to Fain via Loch Fannich ( see Map RC20c below.)





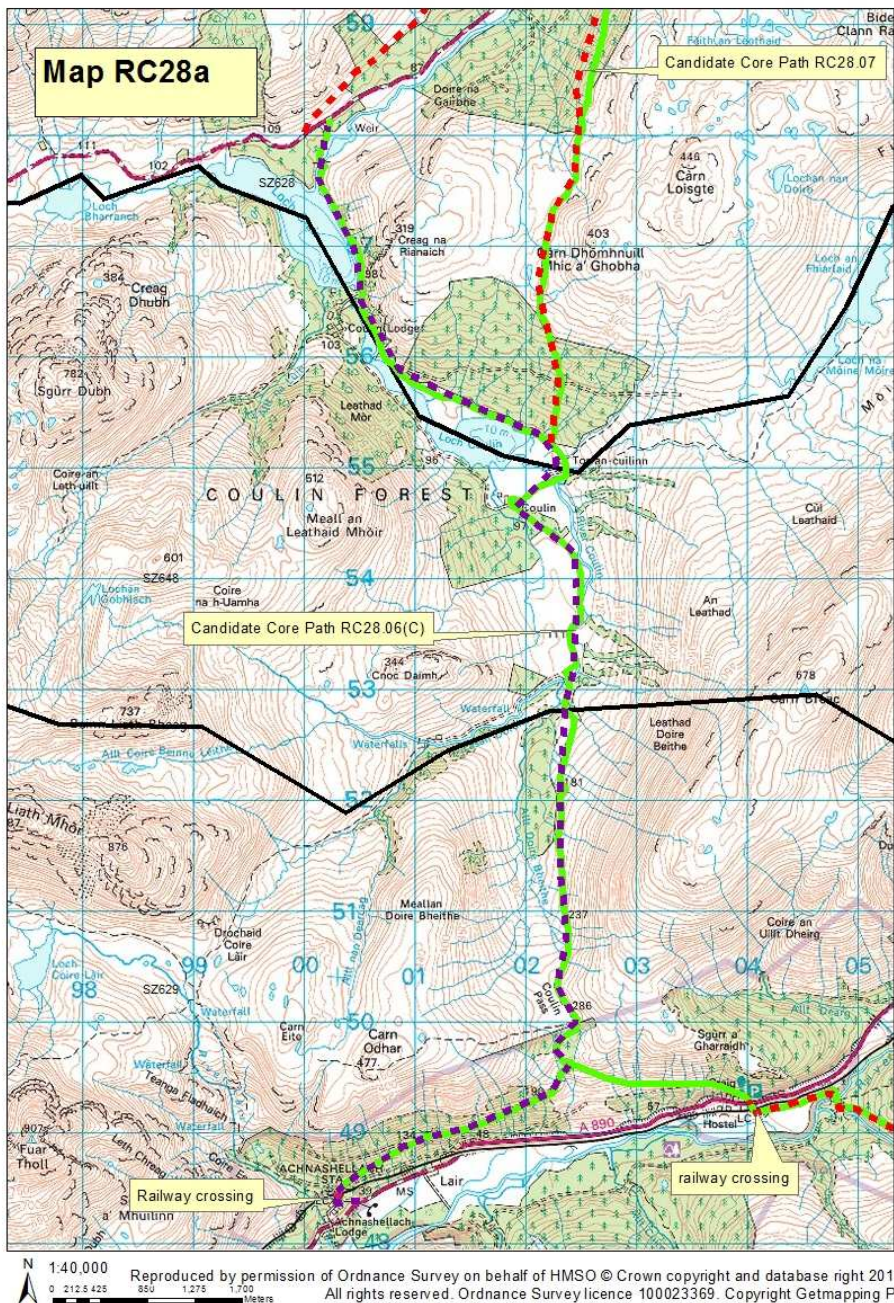
## Inverasdale (RC22)

This is a smaller settlement zone with a very sparse and scattered population. There are no core paths in this zone and none have been proposed.

## Kinlochewe (RC28)

The existing core paths in this area are generally close to the village and mostly in the Scottish Natural Heritage managed National Nature Reserve. There is a slight adjustment and extension of one of these paths proposed on RC28.05 (see Map RC28b below))

However, a strong proposal is for The Glen Torridon to Glen Carron path via Coulin Pass. This was proposed as a core path in the first Core Path Plan but received two objections. One by Coulin Estate was dismissed by the Reporter and the other by Network Rail, on which a decision by the Scottish Government is still awaited. (see Map RC28a below)



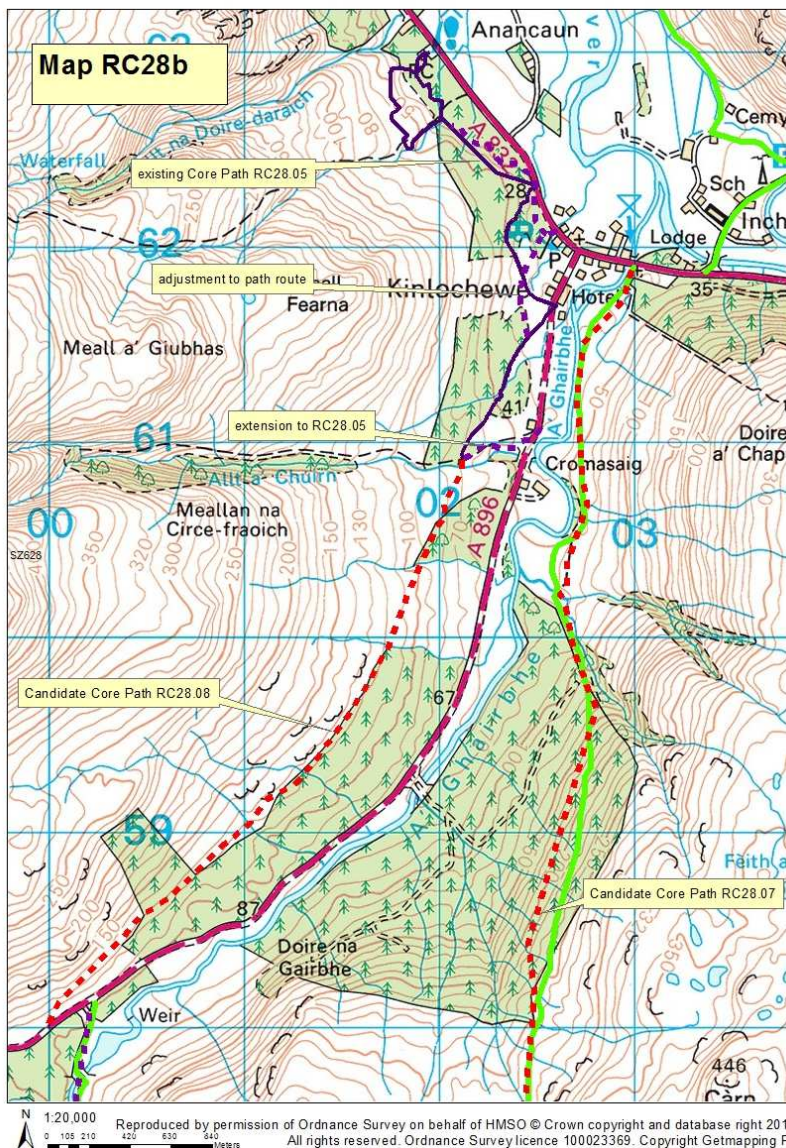
- Candidate Core Path RC28.06(C) Glen Torridon to Glen Carron via Coulin Pass. See Map RC28a and Map 29b below
- Extend and correct route on Core Path RC28.05. See Map 28b below.
- Extend Core Path RC28.04 to Lochan Fada. See Map 28c below

Two other longer routes are also suggested;

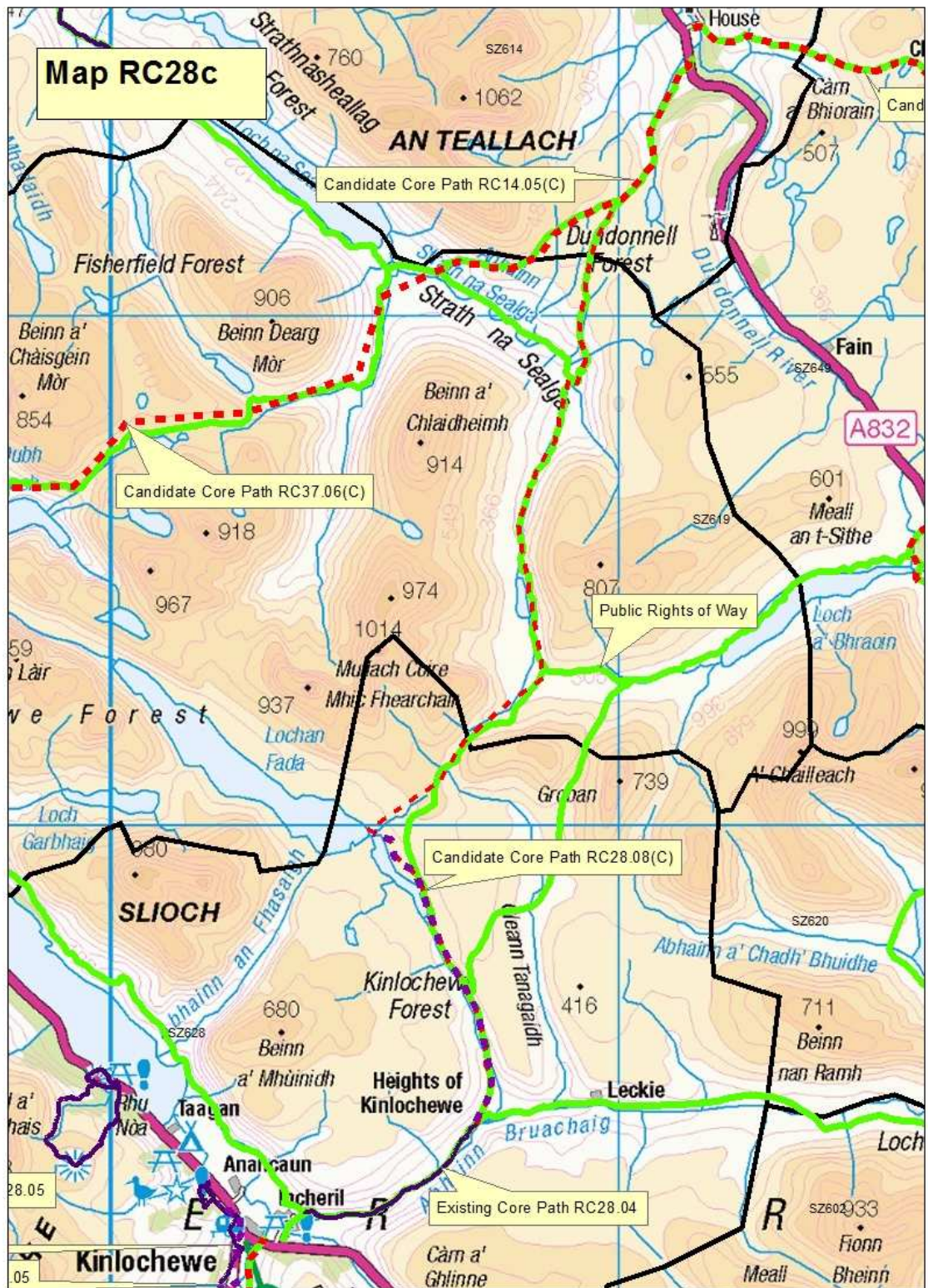
Coulin to Kinlochewe, a Public Right of Way but of variable surface, from good track to wet bog and indistinct in places, particularly the area west of Cromasaig.

The old track, Glen Torridon, whilst visible on the ground it is very wet and boggy along most of its length.

- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC28.07(C) Coulin to Kinlochewe. See Map RC28b below
- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC28.08(C) Old track, Glen Torridon. See Map 28b below



The existing core path (RC28.04) from Incheril to the Heights of Kinlochewe is proposed to be extended to Loch an Fada, and possibly onto Corrie Haille. The section up to Lochan Fada is well defined and mostly constructed, first as a 4wd track, then quad track then path. The section from Lochan Fada to Loch an Nid can be less well defined and boggy. Reports suggest some navigation difficulty until reaching Bealach na Croise. ( see Map RC28c below)



1:90,000  
 0 475 950 1,900 2,850 3,800 Meters  
 Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO © Crown copyright and database right 2015. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey licence 100023369. Copyright Getmapping Plc

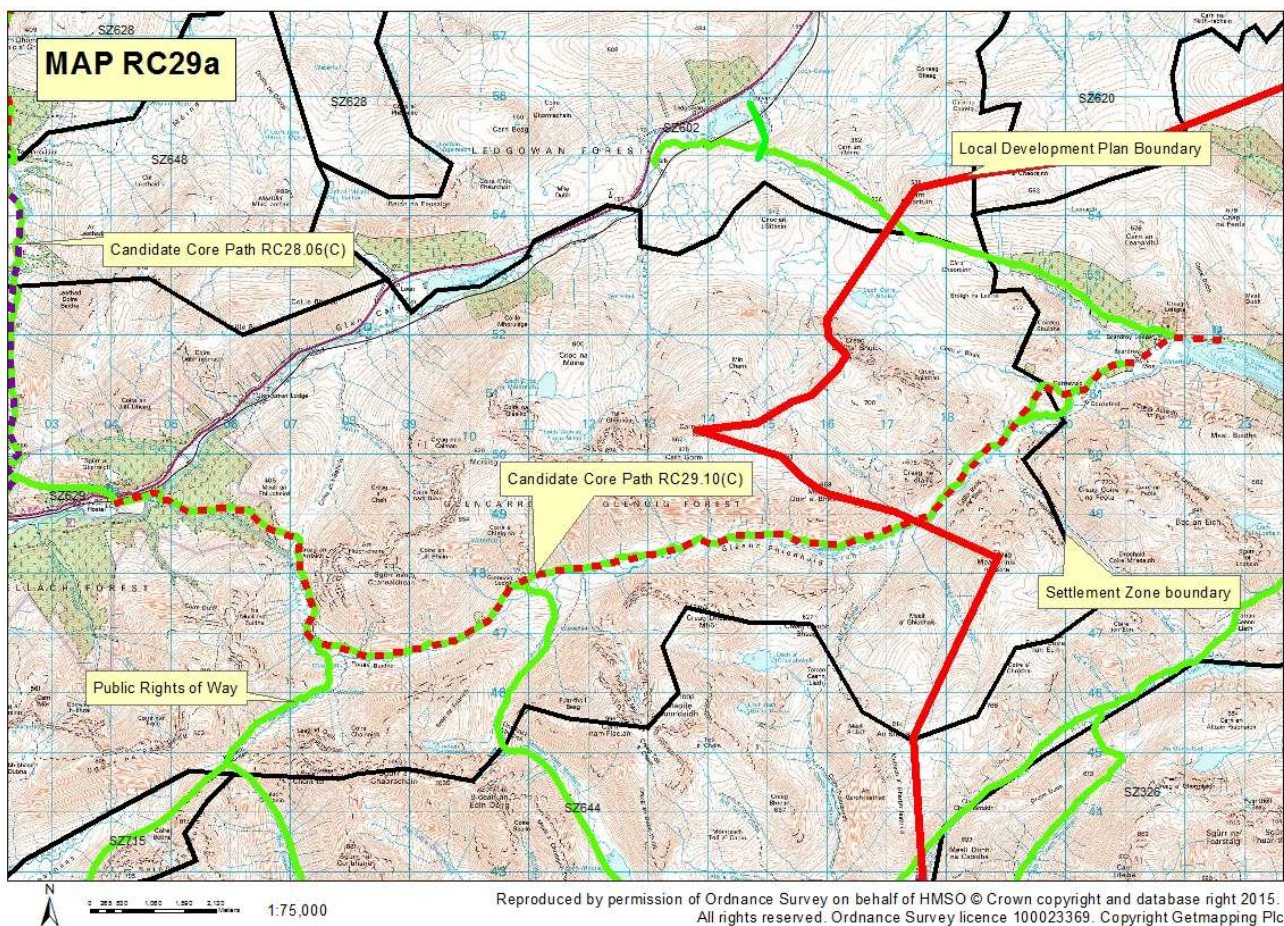


## Lochcarron

This settlement zone covers a large area with the existing core path network close to the main village and foot of the Loch. New Core Paths have been suggested at;

Craig to Scardroy- This route, a Public Right of Way would provide a mainstay of a coast to coast route and is often used by adventure groups. Whilst both ends start on good wide estate tracks, these deteriorate and the middle section is barely defined on the ground and boggy in places. The Craig end is used to access several Munros and Corbetts. There is a good car park at both ends.

- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC29.10(C) Craig to Scardroy. See Map RC29a below

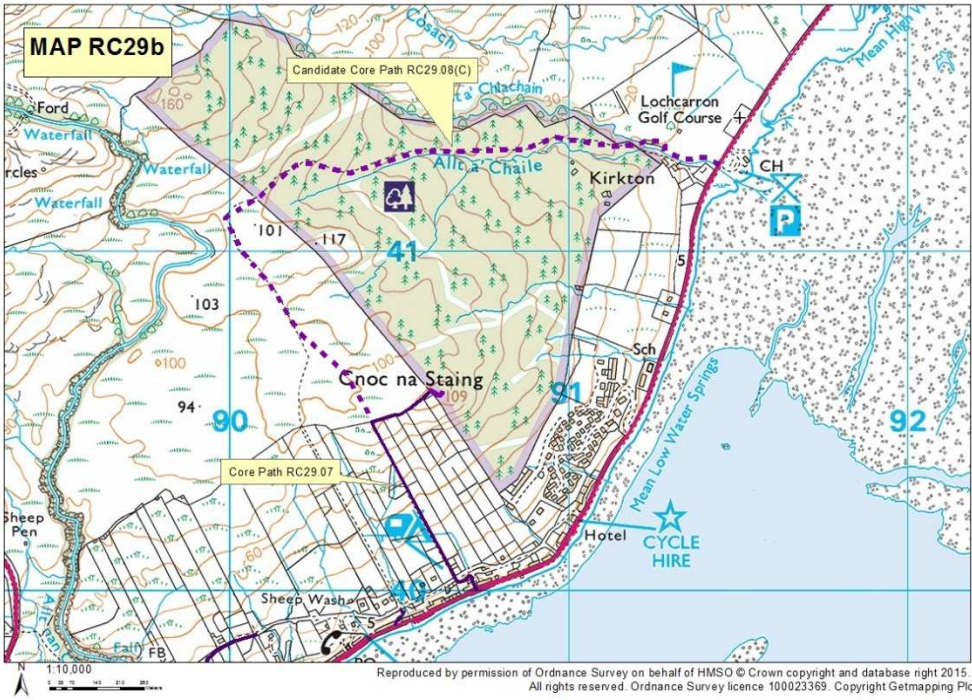


At Kirkton Wood, a community group has taken over the wood from the Forestry Commission and is planning to upgrade the path dependant upon funding. At present it is very rough and boggy and only waymarked at the start. This would link to Core Path RC29.07.

The Coulags to Annat path was mostly upgraded by The Footpath Trust in the 1990's. It has been popular with hill walkers and longer distance walkers for many years. Now mountain bike use is increasing and is promoted on it. There may be some changes due to a proposed hydro scheme at the Coulags end.

Achnashellach to Glen Torridon via Coulin Pass was mentioned in the Kinlochewe section and is Candidate Core Path RC28.06 and is shown on Map 29b above.

- Candidate Core Path RC29.08(C) Kirkton Wood see Map RC29b below
- Candidate Core Path RC29.09(C) Coulags to Annat. See Map RC29c below



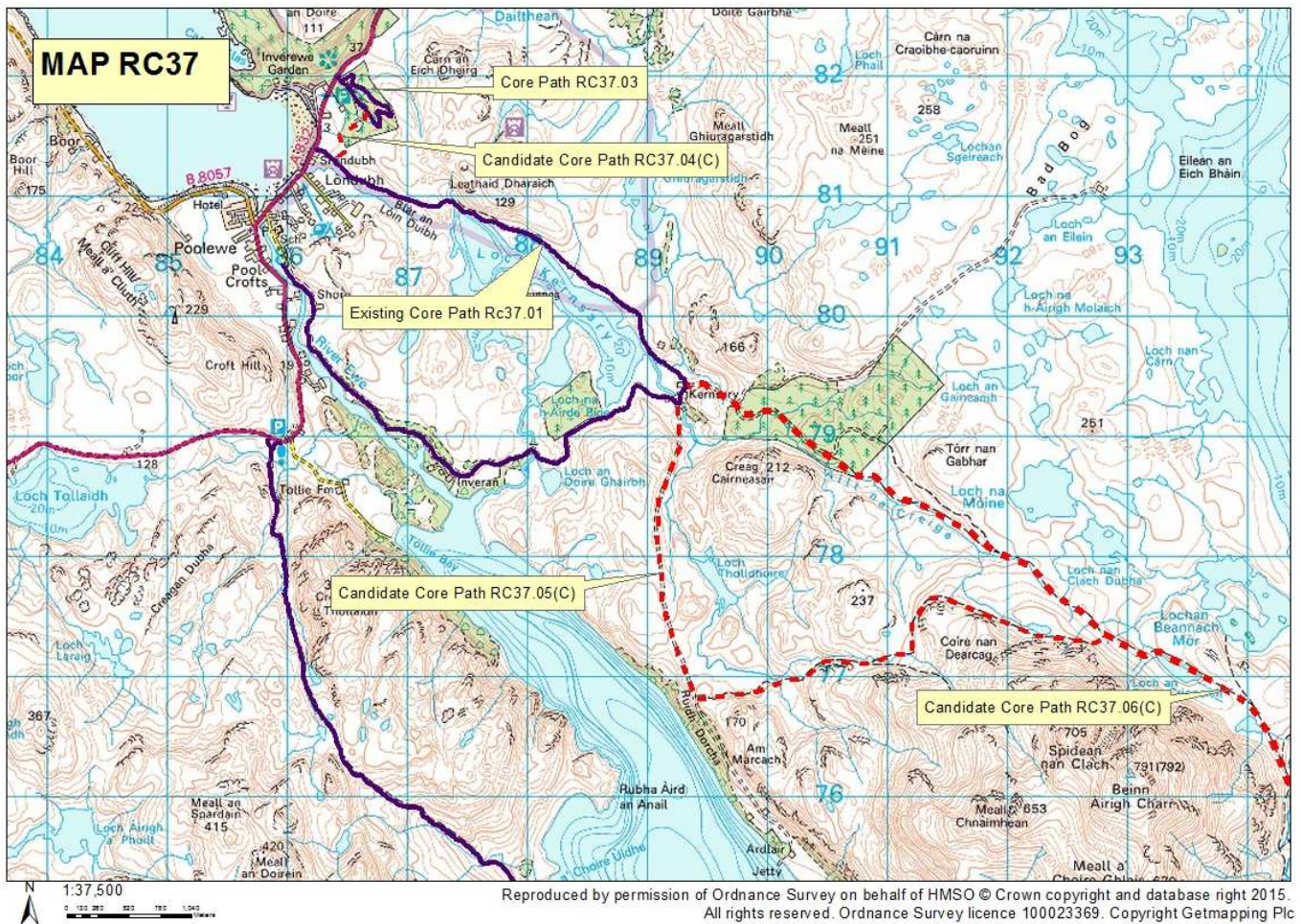
Poolwe (RC37)

This is one of the slightly larger settlements but with a large outlying zone around it. There are 3 well used core paths in the zone and 3 more have been suggested.

The first is a linking path between two existing core paths on National Trust for Scotland property, between the Pinewood Trail (RC37.03) and the Kernsary Path (RC37.01).

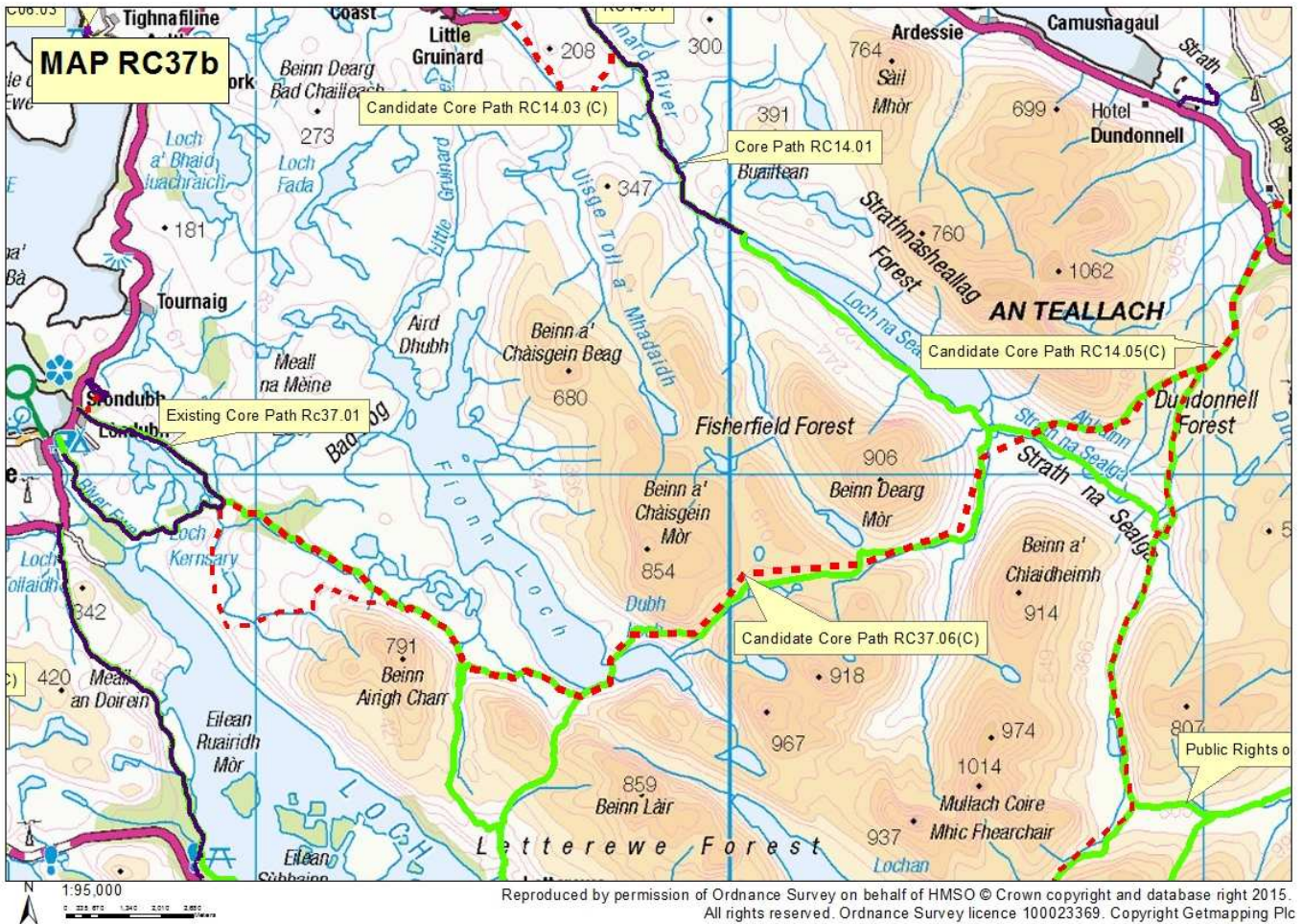
A circular route extending from Kernsary has also been suggested. This is mostly on surfaced path.

Extending from the circuit above the path continues to Carnmore and potentially on to Corrie Haille via Sheneval



- Candidate Core Path RC37.04(C) Pinewood trail link see Map RC37

- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC37.05(C) Letterewe circuit . See map RC37b
- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC37.06(C) Kernsary to Carnmore & Corrie Haille via Sheneval, see Map RC 37b below



Scoraig (RC40)

This is a very isolated settlement with no road access. The only land based access route is a core path. There are no new core paths proposed in this settlement zone.

Shieldaig (RC43)

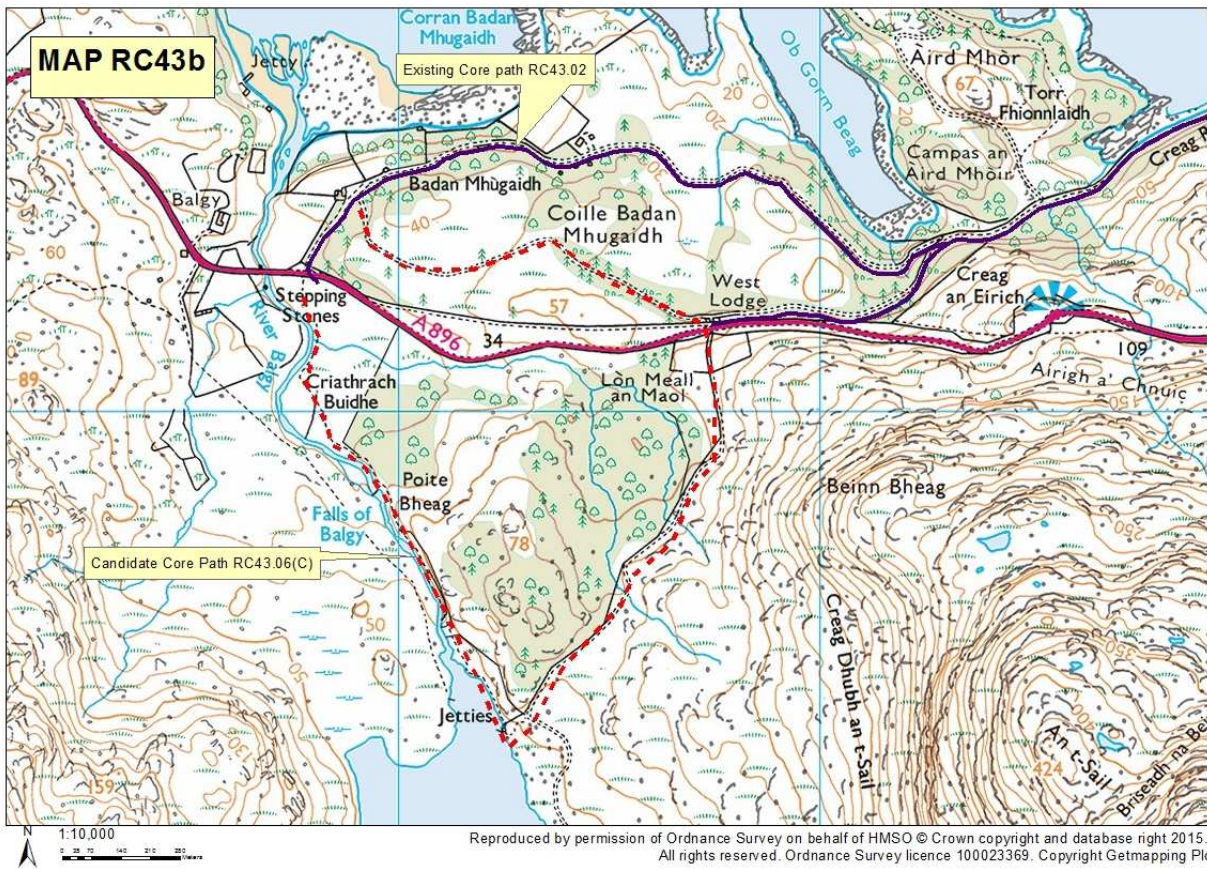
Within this settlement zone one new core path is proposed , a circular route around Balgy Falls. Most of the proposals though are adjustments to existing routes. The Aird path (RC43.01) has had a 4wd track built and so a section of this would provide easier access although most of the original route still provides the more interesting circular route. The route to the north was incorrectly mapped.

The Campsite path (RC43.03) would be a better reflection of what exists if adjusted to reflect the path built to the school.

The Balgy Falls path is popular although variable in condition, with boggy sections and narrow and rough by the loch, before becoming a wide estate track. Part of the circuit extends the existing path RC43.02, which should then create a Candidate Core Path RC43.06(C).

- Adjustments to Candidate Core Path RC43.01 Aird Path see Map RC43a below
- Adjustments to Candidate Core Path RC43.03 Campsite Path change to School path see Map RC43a below

- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC43.06(C) Falls of Balgy. See map RC43b below

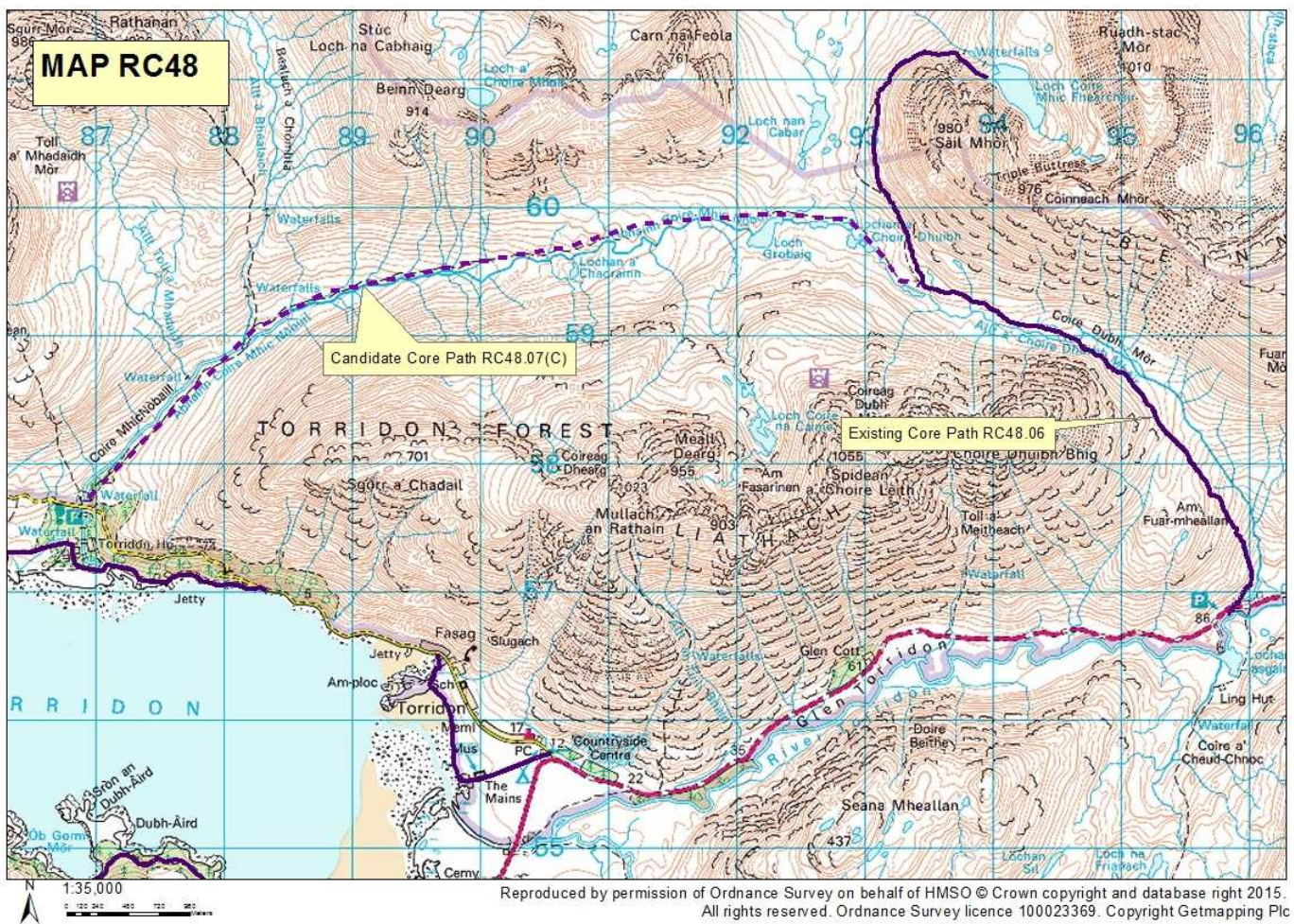


## Torrordon (RC48)

This area has a number of core paths around the north shore of Loch Torrordon. Two candidate Core Paths are proposed here. The path in Coire Mhic Nobuil is soon to be worked on and improved by the National Trust for Scotland and would link to the existing Core Path RC48.06.

The start of the Annat to Coulags path the bulk of which is in the Lochcarron settlement zone and so is highlighted there.

- Candidate Core Path RC48.07(C) Coire Mhic Nobaill see Map RC48 below



## Ullapool (RC49)

This settlement zone has the highest population in Wester Ross but again is very large. As can be expected most existing Core Paths are within or close to Ullapool and thus the majority of the possible changes to the network are in the north and south of the zone. These are

Cuileig Gorge, Inverbroom – This path was recently improved by the Estate with funding from the SRDP. It is still very variable path surface but is a very clear and enjoyable circular walk taking in good views and a spectacular waterfall.

The Ben Dearg Path at Inverlael is an existing core path (RC49.07). However, as a result of a hydro scheme, a pipe bridge and link path was installed permitting a good circular route suitable for disability scooter access. This would provide a much better Core Path.

- Candidate Core Path RC49.09(C) Cuileig Gorge, Inverbroom . See map RC49a below
- Change route of Core Path RC49.07 from Beinn Dearg path to Inverlael Circuit see Map RC49b below

Dundonnell to Croftown- This longer route is a PRoW and often used on the Cape Wrath Trail. Some improvements have been carried out by the Estate but sections of the route are undefined and in bad condition. Bein Eniglair Path- It has been suggested that the route from Braemore junction to Home Loch and around to Loch Droma be a 'candidate Core path'. If using the estate track most of this route is likely to be in suitable condition. However, the level of use is fairly low and the previous owners preferred hill walkers to take a hill route which would not be suitable as core path. The opinion of the new owners is unknown at this time.

- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC49.11(C) Braemore to Loch Droma See Map 49a below
- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC49.10(C ) Dundonnell to Croftown. See map 49b

Posties Path- This is a well known path that offers a challenging walk over rough ground but spectacular sea views. Some improvements were done in the early 2000's and some are planned as part of the CALL project (see Achiltibuie above). Even so much of the route will be hard going with two tricky burn crossings and much bog.

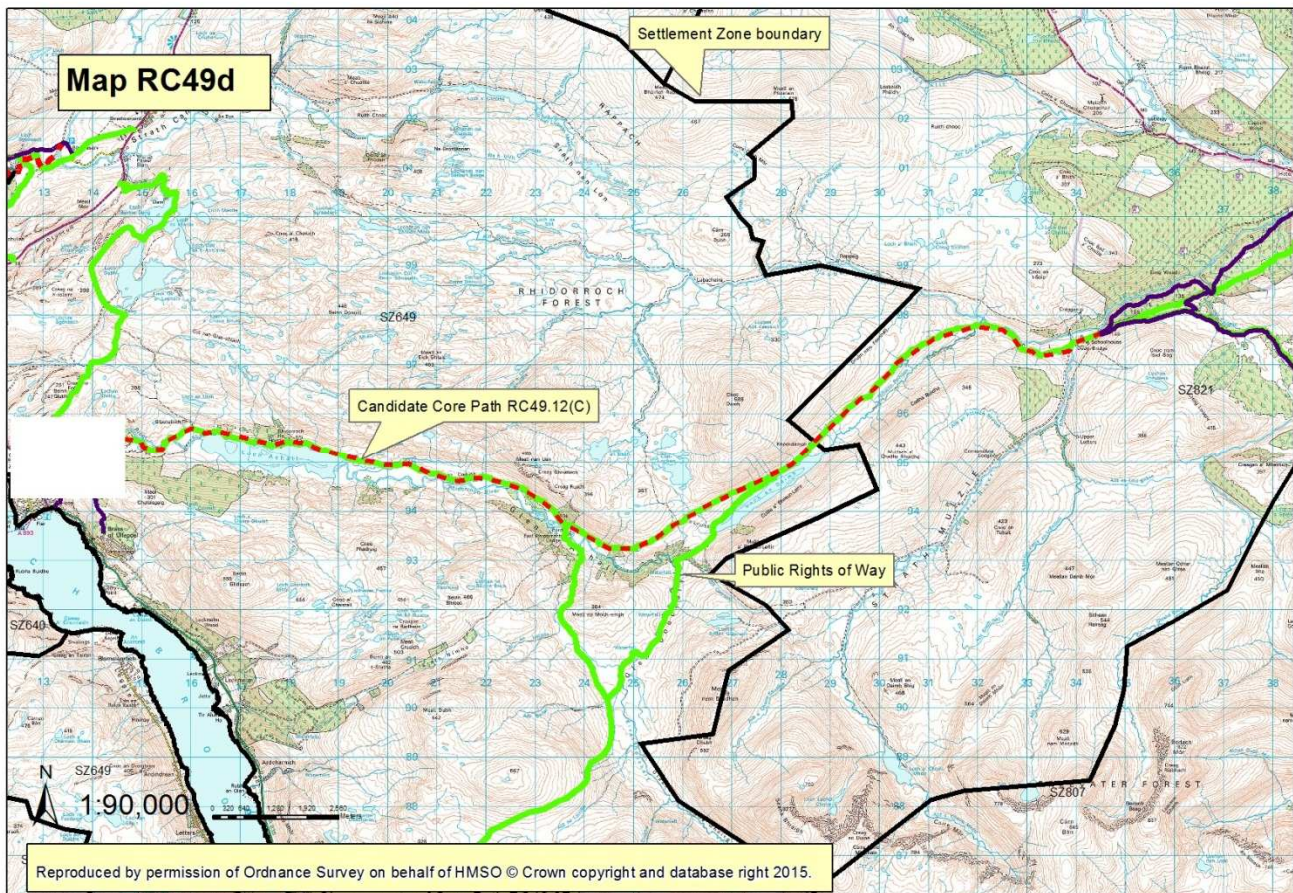
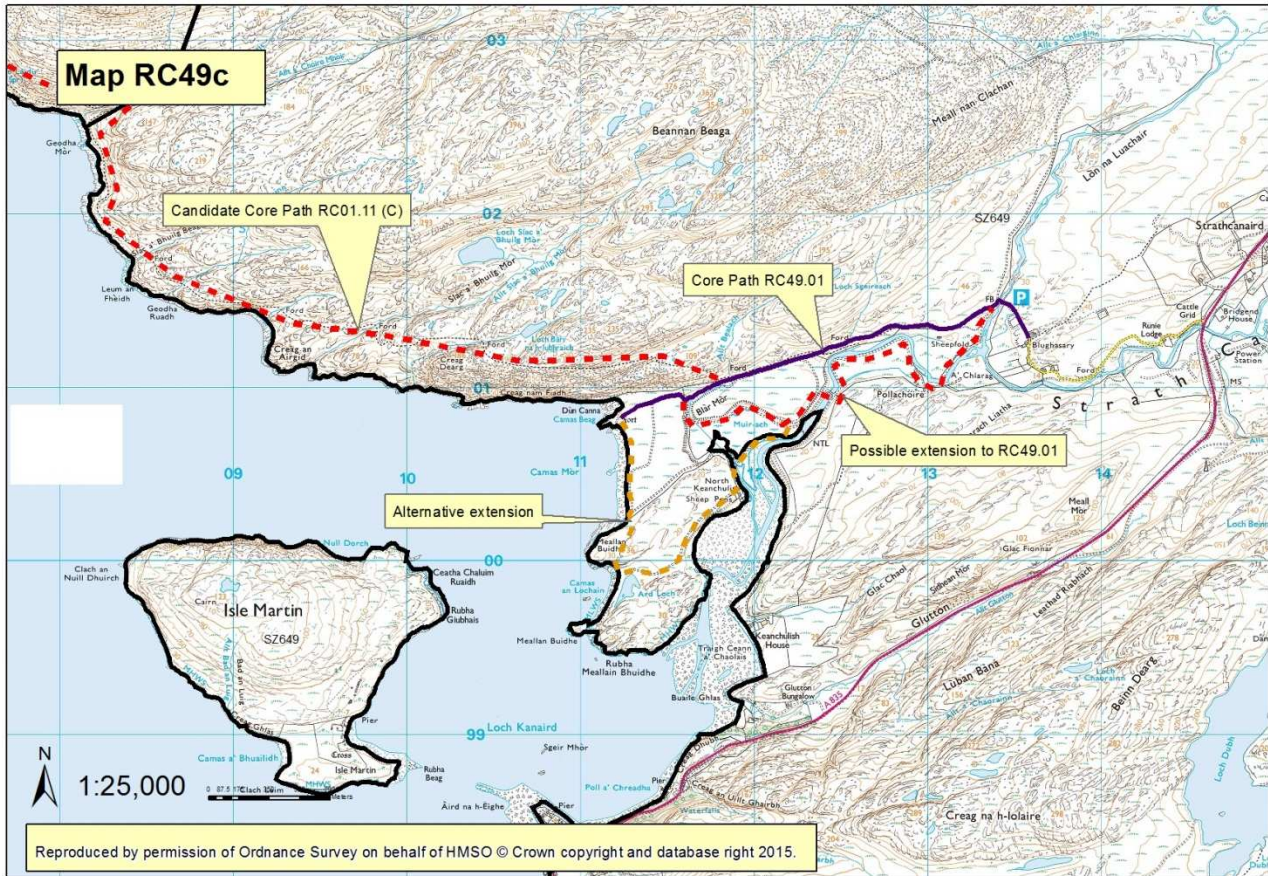
Dun Canna Circuit – A direct route to Dun Canna is an existing Core Path (RC49.01 ) and is very popular. There is an alternative route to return to the parking area on a mostly suitable track, although a section was washed away in floods over a year ago.

Ullapool to Oykel Bridge(Sutherland) is a long Public Right of Way, offering most of a coast to coast route. This is mostly on estate track but very rough in places and a difficult ford to cross in Sutherland.

- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC01.11 Posties Path See Map 49c below
- Investigate & consult on extension to Core Path RC49.01 to create a circular route to Dun Canna. See Map RC49c below.
- Investigate & consult on Candidate Core Path RC49.12(C) Ullapool to Oykel Bridge. See Map 49d below.







## **A Summary of the Candidate Core Paths and changes proposed are listed by type below.**

### Constructed Paths since 2010

Applecross – Candidate Core Path RC04.09(C) Beechwood Path.  
Applecross –Extension of Sand Path RC04.06 to Clachan  
Applecross – Candidate Core Path RC04.10(C) Clachan Path  
Aultbea – Candidate Core Path RC06.05(C) Village Hall to Buailnaluib  
Poolewe – Candidate Core Path RC37.04(C) Pinewood trail link path  
Shieldaig – adjust route on Core Path RC43.01 Aird Path  
Shieldaig – Adjust route on Core Path RC43.03 School Path  
Ullapool – Candidate Core Path RC49. Cuileag Gorge, Inverbroom  
Ullapool – Change Core Path RC49.07 from Ben Dearg to Inverlael Circuit.

### Paths due to be constructed or improved within the next 3 years

Achiltibuie – Retain Polbain Shore Path RC01.05  
Achiltibuie – Candidate Core Path RC01.10(C) Achininver Beach circuit  
Lochcarron – Candidate Core Path RC29.08(C) Kirkton Wood  
Torridon – Candidate Core Path RC48.07(C) Coire Mhic Nobhail

### Short Routes of Suitable Standard

Achiltibuie – Extend Core Path RC01.02 Rieff.  
Gairloch – Candidate Core Path RC19.10(C) change to Flowerdale paths mapping  
Kinlochewe – Extend Core Path RC28.04 to Lochan Fada.  
Kinlochewe – Correct and extend route on Core Path RC28.05

Gairloch – Candidate Core Path RC19.10(C) Cemetery to Flowerdale House  
Gairloch – Candidate Core Path RC19.11(C) Kerrysdale  
Ullapool – Extend route of Core Path RC49.01 Dun Canna

### Shorter Routes of partly Suitable Standard

Dundonnell – Candidate Core Path RC14.03(C) Glean Garbh  
Dundonnell – Candidate Core Path RC14.04(C) Gruinard Beach  
Dundonnell – Candidate Core Path RC14.05(C) Shenavall Bothy  
Shieldaig – Candidate Core Path RC43.06(C) Falls of Balgy

### Longer Distance Paths of suitable Standard

Garve – Candidate Core Path RC20.05(C) Grudie to Fain via Loch Fannich  
Garve – Candidate Core Path RC20.06(C) Black Bridge to Deanich Lodge (on to Ardgay)  
Garve – Candidate Core Path RC20.07(C) Inchbae to Strathvaich  
Kinlochewe – Candidate Core Path RC28.06(C) Coulin Pass  
Lochcarron – Candidate Core Path RC29.09(C) Coulags to Annat  
Poolewe – Candidate Core Path RC37.05(C) Letterewe circuit

### Longer Distance Routes of Partly Suitable Standard

Achiltibuie - Candidate Core Path RC01.11 (C) Posties Path.  
Achiltibuie- Candidate Core Path RC01.12(C) Cul Mor  
Garve – Candidate Core Path RC20.08(C) Little Garve to Aultguish  
Kinlochewe – Candidate Core Path RC28.07(C) Coulin to Kinlochewe  
Kinlochewe – Candidate Core Path RC28(C) Old track, Glen Torridon  
Lochcarron - Candidate Core Path RC29.10(C) Craig to Scardroy  
Poolewe – Candidate Core Path RC37.06(C) Kernsary to Carnmore  
Ullapool – Candidate Core Path RC49.10(C) Dundonnell to Croftown  
Ullapool – Candidate Core Path RC49.11(C) Braemore to Loch Droma  
Ullapool – Candidate Core Path RC49.12(C) Ullapool to Oykel Bridge