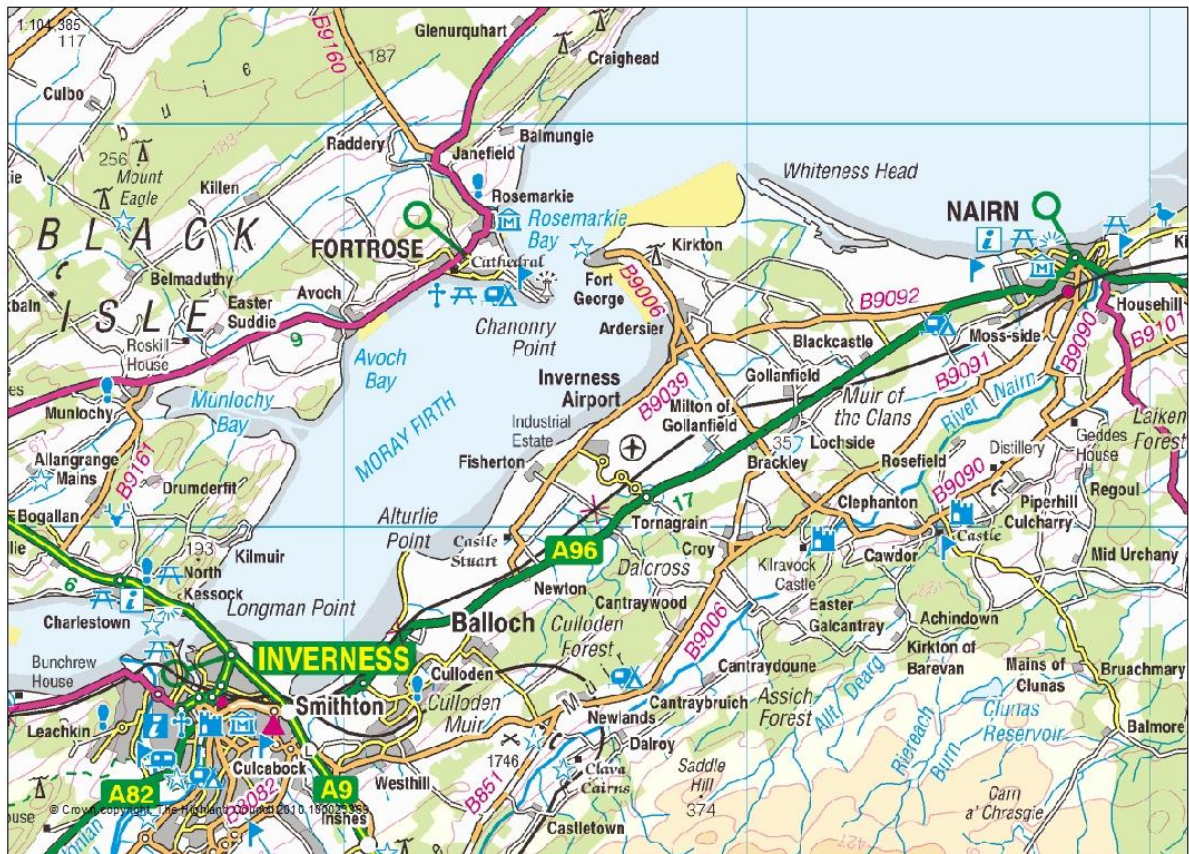


Draft Paths and Trails in the A96 Corridor

1. What are we talking about?
2. Where will they go?
3. Why create paths and trails?
4. How much will they cost?
5. Who will pay for this?

Appendix A: Map

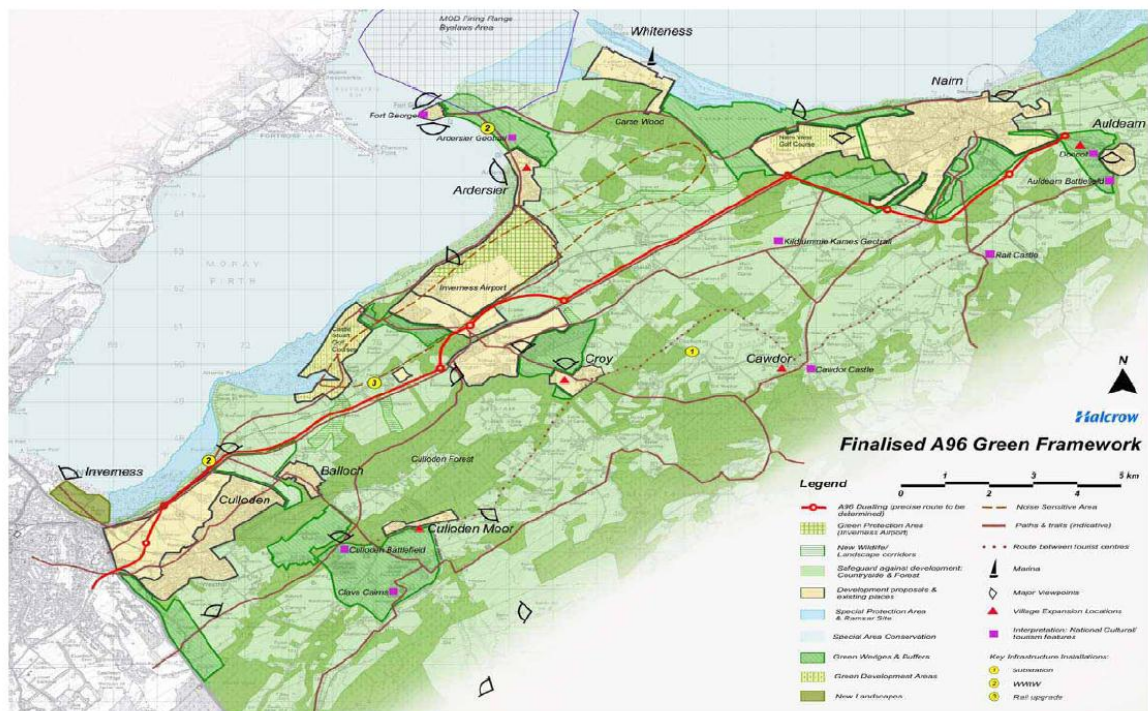


1. What are we talking about?

The Council's long term aim for paths and trails between Inverness and Nairn is for:

- a **coastal path** and **landward trail** that link Inverness to Nairn with **north-south links** between them serving new and existing communities along with a **tourist route** linking some historic sites inland.

There are Core Paths, rights of way and other routes throughout this area already but there are gaps. By filling in these gaps we will create a network that will be good enough for an increasing population to use as a means of making short local trips for fun or longer functional journeys as an alternative to using the car.



The A96 Green Framework

It is important to say that this is a very early stage in the process. The support of land managers will be critical and it is important not to alienate them; their involvement above and before the general public's is crucial if we want their support.

The A96 Corridor is a very important place for wildlife and has some nationally important landforms too, so important that the Council will likely have to carry out an environmental assessment of this plan's impact on the natural heritage interests of the area.

2. Where will they go?

It is important to state at this stage that we do not know exactly where the paths might go. We do know that there are gaps between existing paths and where others have been secured through the planning process but are not yet finished.

Roughly the **Coastal Trail** will follow the line of the coast between Inverness and Nairn and connect with the paths through Culbin Forest to link up with the Moray Coast Trail in Forres.

The **Landward Trail** will take you out of Inverness onto National Cycle Route 1 and 7 and onto forest tracks in Culloden Wood. From there more forest tracks will lead east emerging at Croy. From there it will cross the River Nairn and into Cawdor, picking up the river again to head north-east and into Nairn.

The **north-south links** would help link the two and contribute to the development of a true network. Here a selection of rights of way, core paths, quiet roads and a range of other paths and tracks could contribute too. There is also the process of identifying the green network to consider. The overlap between habitats and access will

The **tourist route** would link Auldearn, Rait, Cawdor and Culloden Battlefield by road although there is a ford and footbridge at Bog of Cawdor.

3. Why create new trails and paths?

This process is more about identifying and linking existing paths and tracks than creating new ones. However there is already a demand for new paths in this area. The development of the A96 corridor will increase the residential and industrial population of the area. With it will come more demand for a recreational and functional network.

It is important that we meet that demand if we want to help create a healthier and more enjoyable place to live and work; where people can benefit from exploring the landscape and environment and where tourism, communities and the local economy can benefit.

This comes at a time when talk of a Scottish Coastal Way has begun and a steering group formed to take the concept forward. At this early stage the aims are encouraging more people to enjoy the outdoors, increasing visits to the coast and developing the economic benefit for businesses and communities. At the same time some regional and local authorities sharing the North Sea coast are working together to develop and promote the North Sea Trail.

Led by the Green Framework for the A96 Corridor Masterplan and the local plans for both Inverness and Nairnshire this is not a new initiative. However The Highland Council is in the process of planning for green networks with the help of Scottish Natural Heritage. There will be overlaps between where access and habitats overlap and these may prove a priority in managing development.

4. How much will they cost?

In many cases very little. There are quite a few paths and tracks out there already which could form the basis of these routes. Provided that land managers are happy to accommodate the coastal or landward trail it may simply be a question of signposting.

There are gaps though which will be more expensive to fill.

Design and Maintenance

Different paths will be designed and maintained differently. For instance the **coastal path** will be an important route for recreation and active travel. To that end it should be designed and maintained to accommodate those uses.

On important new remote paths [not next to a road] where different users are expected to meet each other on an unsegregated path the surface should ideally be 3m wide with 0.5m wide verges. The cost of such a path is estimated at £50 per linear metre excluding drainage features, signposting etc.

Maintenance will involve tasks such as mowing verges, controlling weed encroachment, cutting back vegetation, repairing damage to the path surface and keeping drainage features working. This is estimated to cost £0.40 per linear metre per year or £400 per km per year.

A standard specification may look like this:

3m wide aggregate path, shoulders level with 0.5m wide grass verges, with a central camber of between 1:25 to 1:50, finished with blinding of compacted 3mm to dust to fill all voids and shed water above 100mm compacted type 1 [40mm to dust] above 150mm compacted 75mm to dust [over medium grade woven geo-textile]¹.

Routes like the **landward trail** will already follow existing paths and tracks. These range from 3m wide tarmac cycleways to narrow, little used old driveways which are poorly drained. Much of it will already be looked after in some form or other and it is not realistic to expect it all to be mud-free. There are grants available to land managers through the Scottish Rural Development Programme to help maintain paths and some parts of this trail already fall into that category.

There will be variety in the linking north-south routes too but the hope is that they will always be as accessible as possible.

¹ Where required

5. Who will pay for them?

Coastal Trail

Where there are no proposals for development we will negotiate with land managers to secure agreement to install paths. In these cases there are a number of funding options:

Council capital funding where there are agreements in place
Council revenue funding under Core Paths LEADER budget
SRDP funding under Land Managers Options or Rural Priorities
Heritage Lottery Funding
Common Good funding
Greeninverness

Where possible we will secure the provision and maintenance of paths through the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.

Landward Trail

Much of this route is in place. Some of it is managed as Council assets, some as part of Forestry Commission Scotland's holdings. Much of it is managed privately as forest tracks such as that through High Wood and Dallschyle and some of it is already managed under the Land Managers' Options scheme.

Links remain to be identified between these established routes, core paths and other forest tracks while the question over who maintains them is unresolved for the most part.

North-south links

These will be a mixture; some will exist already, some will be created as elements of large developments, some may be created with the agreement of land managers while some may follow quiet roads.

Tourist Trail

Since this mostly follows roads that the Council looks after costs are likely to focus on some kind of signposting. Responsibility for the bridge at Bog of Cawdor brings its own costs too however.