The Highland Council

Agenda Item	**8**
Report No	**SCC/17/26**

Committee: **Sutherland County**

Date: **1 June 2026**

Report Title: **Core Path Diversion - SU06.02: Loch Brora – West Track by Kilbraur, Brora**

Report By: **Executive Chief Officer – Place**

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides Members with information regarding a proposed diversion of an adopted core path (SU06.02). As a consequence of changes in land management and the loss of path infrastructure, the core path is no longer fully accessible along the entirety of the route.

1.2 The report outlines the proposed actions, including an alternative terminus, a new terminus and a short diversion, that will continue to provide the public with a network of paths sufficient for the purpose of delivering reasonable access throughout the area. The report seeks Committee approval to carry out a public consultation on the proposed amendments to the core path.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **agree** that the Council promote the diversion of the Loch Brora – West Track core path (SU06.02) by notifying the relevant landowners, occupiers and those with an interest in the area and undertaking a formal 12-week public consultation.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - There will be staff time required to prepare the formal landowner notifications and undertake the formal consultation for the diversion but this can be covered with existing resources.

3.2 **Legal** - None

3.3 **Risk** – There is limited risk associated with this report and its recommendation. Should any objections be received that cannot be resolved, this may lead to a public local enquiry.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – The proposed amendments will ensure users have a safe and accessible path network and that users are not directed to the former location of the Kilbraur suspension bridge and an impassable section of the River Brora.

3.5 **Gaelic** – There are no Gaelic implications arising directly from this report. Any signposting of core paths would include Gaelic in line with council policy.

4 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on 13 May 2026. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that are a small number of minor, but positive impacts, and no negative impacts resulting from this report, and that a full impact assessment is not therefore required. Members are asked to consider the summary in **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

5 Introduction

5.1 Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 (the Act) grants the public statutory access rights to be on and cross land for recreational purposes. These rights should be exercised responsibly, and landowners or managers have a corresponding duty to manage their land in a way that respects these access rights for non-motorised activities.

5.2 Under Section 13 of the Act, local authorities have a statutory duty to assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction or encroachment any route or other means where access rights may reasonably be exercised.

5.3 Section 20(1)(b) provides that a local authority may review its Core Paths Plan at any time if it considers it appropriate, in order to ensure the plan continues to provide reasonable public access across the area.

6 Loch Brora – West Track (SU06.02)

6.1 The West Track at Loch Brora (SU06.02) starts by the Doll Bridge and heads in a north westerly direction passing Carrol Farm before reaching Kilbraur. The core path, as adopted, crossed a large pedestrian suspension bridge at Kilbraur before terminating on the C1022 public road by Ascoilebeag. This is a total distance of approx. 8.5km - see Appendix 2 for a map of the core path as currently adopted.

6.2 In 2021, the suspension bridge at Kilbraur was closed and eventually removed. The core path as adopted is, therefore, no longer accessible at this location; the River Brora is a significant barrier that is not possible to ford. The former location of the suspension bridge (now removed) is shown on the map in Appendix 2. There is no expectation of a replacement bridge being a feasible option in the short to medium term.

6.3 To mitigate for the loss of the suspension bridge and find alternative options to retain core path SU06.02, the Council's Access Officer has undertaken informal consultation with the Sutherland Local Access Forum and other interested parties. A number of options have been considered including diverting the existing core path to a new point on the C1022; terminating the core path at Kilbraur; providing an alternative terminus; and removing the core path in its entirety from the Core Paths Plan.

6.4 The preferred option, and the only option that readily satisfies the Council's duty to ensure the public are provided with reasonable access in their area, is to divert the core path to a new terminus on the C1022. An acceptable location on the C1022 (via Dalvaich to Balnacoil (**see Appendix 3**)) has been identified that provides the shortest link to the public road in the Ascoile/Balnacoil area.

6.5 Two further diversions of the core path were proposed during the informal consultation with the Local Access Forum and the tenant farmer at Carrol Farm.

6.5.1 The first diversion concerns the route of the core path at Carrol Farm, which follows a historic track through a number of the lower fields by Loch Brora (see **Appendix 4**). Whilst this track may have been regularly used when the core path was first adopted in 2011, its use has significantly reduced in recent years and there is now very little evidence of a track on the ground. Waymarking this section of track was discussed with the tenant farmer but an alternative, which the public are already directed towards, was proposed. The alternative path passes closer to the farm buildings but is not substantively longer, follows similar ground and avoids a number of fields which are used for cattle grazing; this would be a more amenable route for users with dogs or those unsure of cattle, and is supported.

6.5.2 The second further diversion proposed (from Kilbraur to Farlary - see **Appendix 5**) resulted from the consideration of an alternative terminus to the core path from that existing at Ascoilebeag. On its own the alternative terminus proposed at Farlary would not be considered as a suitable substitute due to its length and geography, and that it terminates in an adjacent glen. However, when combined with the Dalvaich/Balnacoil diversion this extra terminus provides both additional sufficiency, as required by Section 17(1) of the 2003 Act, and also a future proof alternative if the Dalvaich crossing is removed or becomes inaccessible (the footbridge at Dalvaich is not in a good condition). The Farlary track already sees moderate levels of use and is used more by the public than the existing core path. Although this is not an obvious diversion it helps satisfy the Council's duty under Section 17(3)(a) that when identifying routes, to have regard to the likelihood that persons exercising access rights will do so by using core paths.

7 Formal Consultation and Next Stages

7.1 The Sutherland County Committee is asked to agree that the proposed amendments (as set out above) of core path SU06.02 can be released for a 12-week consultation period. All relevant landowners, occupiers and those with an interest in the land will be notified of the consultation. Furthermore, the proposed amendment will be advertised by the Council on its website and in the local press. Other interested parties, including public agencies, community groups, recreation interest groups and neighbours will also be consulted.

7.2 After the 12-week consultation period, should there be no outstanding objections, the amendments will be notified to Scottish Ministers and the amendments to core path SU06.02 with be adopted. If there are outstanding objections which cannot be resolved then a further paper will be presented to this Committee.

Designation:	Executive Chief Officer - Place
Date:	14 May 2026
Author:	Matt Dent, Access Officer
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment
	Appendix 2 – Map of Existing Core Path SU06.02
	Appendix 3 – Detail of Dalvaich Diversion
	Appendix 4 – Detail of Carrol Farm Diversion
	Appendic 5 – Detail of Farlary Diversion

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

About proposal

What does this proposal relate to? Redesign or change to existing service

Proposal name: Core Path Diversions- Kilbraur, Brora

High level summary of the proposal: The report outlines proposed action to divert a core path to provide the public with a system of paths sufficient for the purpose of delivering reasonable access throughout an area.

Who may be affected by the proposal? Highland Council residents and land owners/occupiers

Start date of proposal: 15/06/2026

End date of proposal: 07/12/2026

Does this proposal result in a change or impact to one or more Council service? Yes

Which Council services will be impacted by this proposal? Place

Does this relate to an existing proposal? No

Author details

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Service: Place

Responsible officer details

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Sign off date: 2026-05-14

Equalities, poverty, and human rights

Protected characteristics

Select what impact the proposal will have on the following protected characteristics:

Sex: No impact

Age: Positive

Disability: Positive

Religion or belief: No impact

Race: No impact

Sexual orientation: No impact

Gender reassignment: No impact

Pregnancy and maternity: No impact

Marriage and civil partnership: No impact

Protected characteristics impact details: No impact of protected characteristics due to proposal being a map based change of service only. Limited proposal on the ground.

Poverty and socio-economic

What impact is the proposal likely to have on the following?

Prospects and opportunities: No impact

Places: No impact

Financial: No impact

Poverty and socio-economic impact details: The change of service is remote from the nearby settlements of Golspie, Rogart and Brora. Whilst there may be an increase in recreation opportunities the diversion is not expected to be used for active travel to work, school or more generial social visiting use.

Human rights

Which of the below human rights will be affected by this proposal? No human rights will be affected

What impact do you consider this proposal to have on the human rights of people? Positive

Human rights impact details: Promotion of basic network of paths is a duty of the Council to allow the public to actively engage and enjoy the natural environment, this proposal will increase these opportunities.

Equalities, poverty and human rights screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to equalities, poverty and human rights? No impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Children's rights and wellbeing

What likely impact will the proposal have on children and young people?There will be limited/no imopact of childrens and young peoples rights.

Which of the below children's rights will be affected by the proposal?No children's rights will be affected

Explain how the children's rights selected above will be affected:

Children's rights and wellbeing screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to children's rights and wellbeing?No impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Data protection

Will your proposal involve processing personal data? Yes

Is any of this data already processed by the Highland Council?Yes

What is the purpose of the personal data being processed?There is a statutory notification process to all land owners, occupiers and those with an interest in the land. Names and address are collected to be able to undertake this notification.

A public consultation will take place and invite comments and objections from the public. Names and address are required to validate these representations as competent.

Is there an up-to-date privacy notice available on the Highland Council website? Yes

Data protection screening assessment

What change will there be to the way personal data is processed?New data will be processed

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Island and mainland rural communities

Does your proposal impact island and mainland rural communities? No

Island and mainland rural communities screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to island and mainland rural communities?Minor differences

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Climate change

Does the proposal involve activities that could impact on greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e)? Yes

Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity? Yes

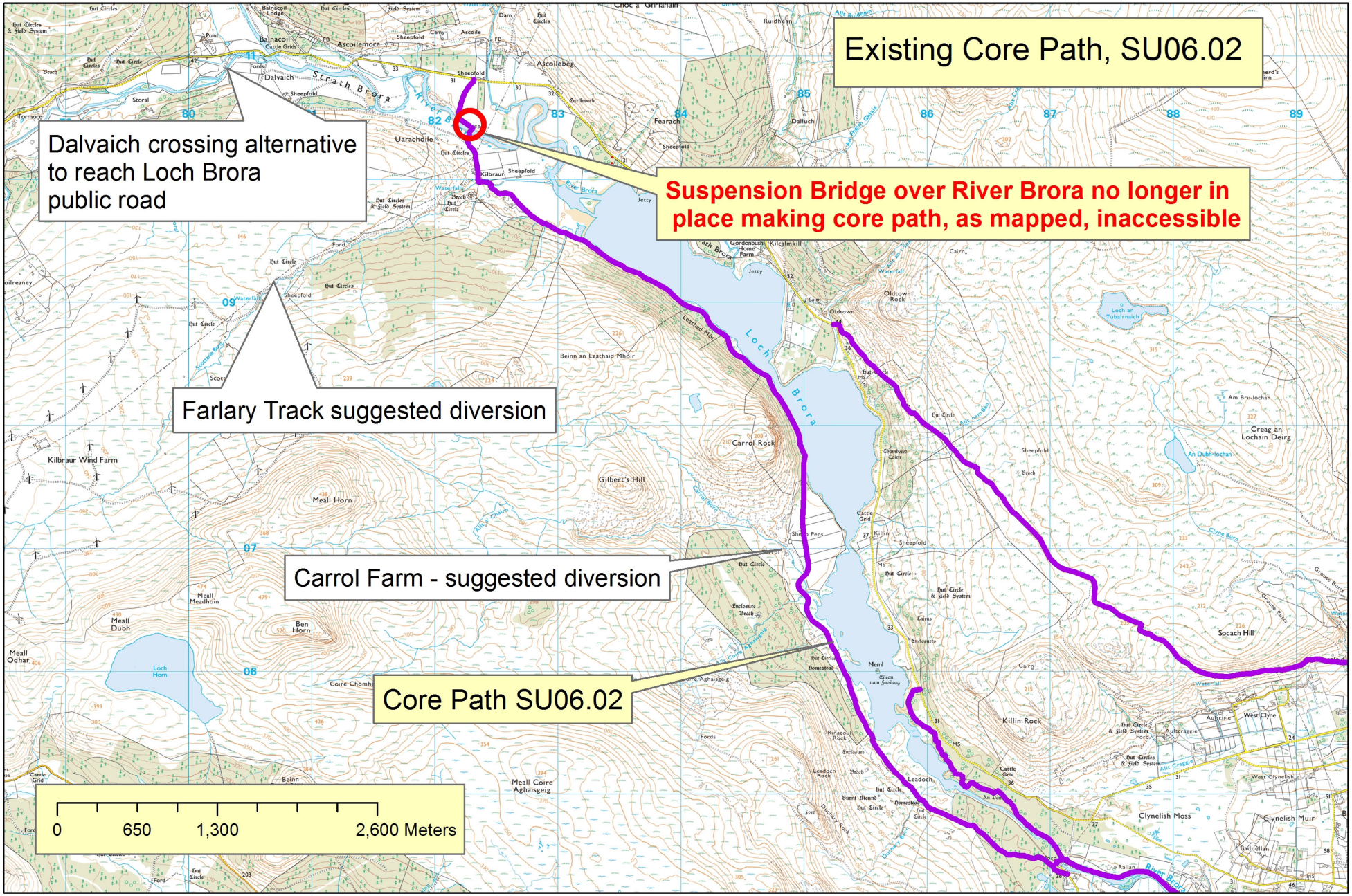
Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate? No

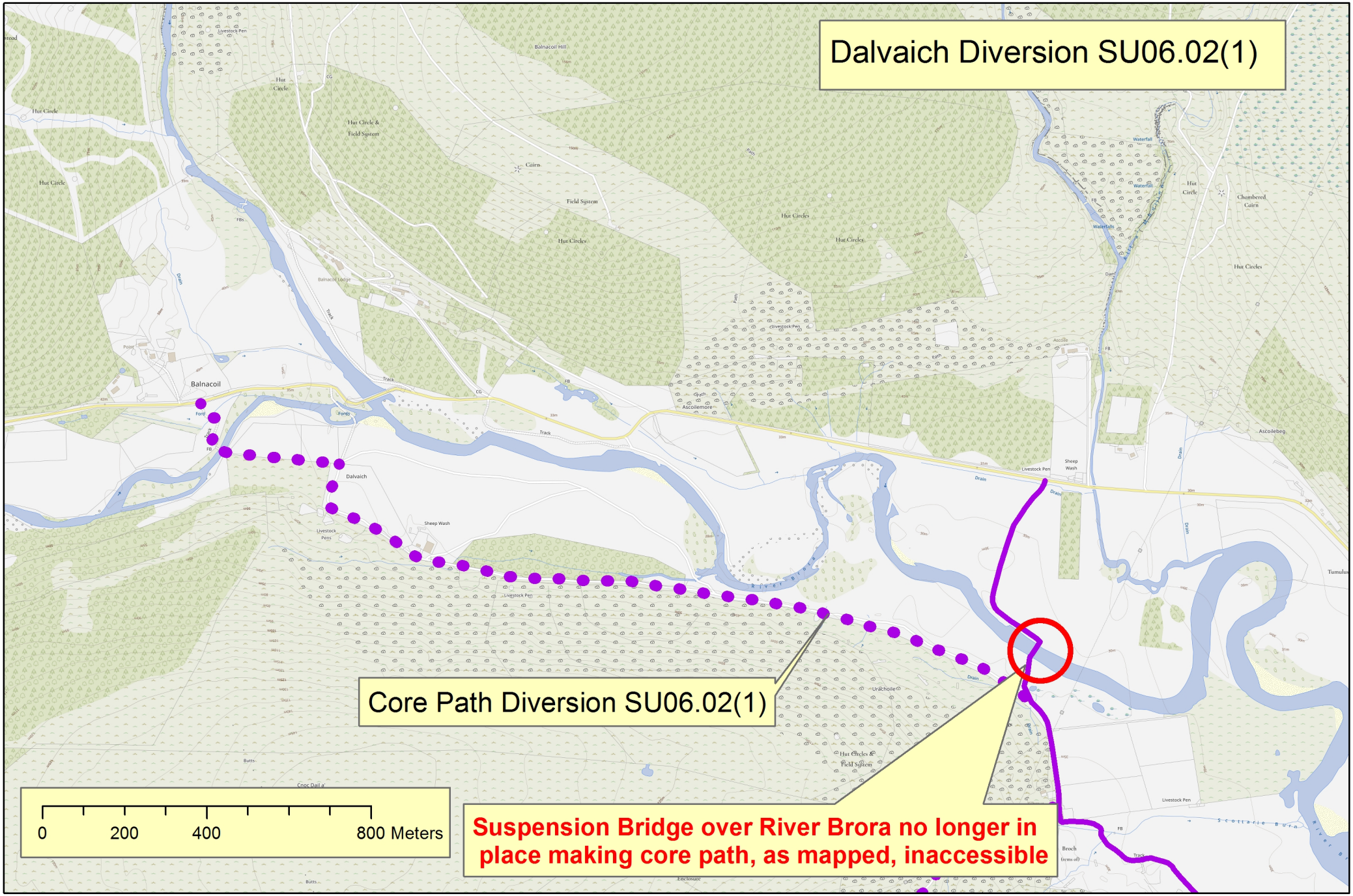
Provide information regarding your selection above: The diversion proposed is all on existing path so whilst no development in sensitive environment is required there may be element of increased disturbance.

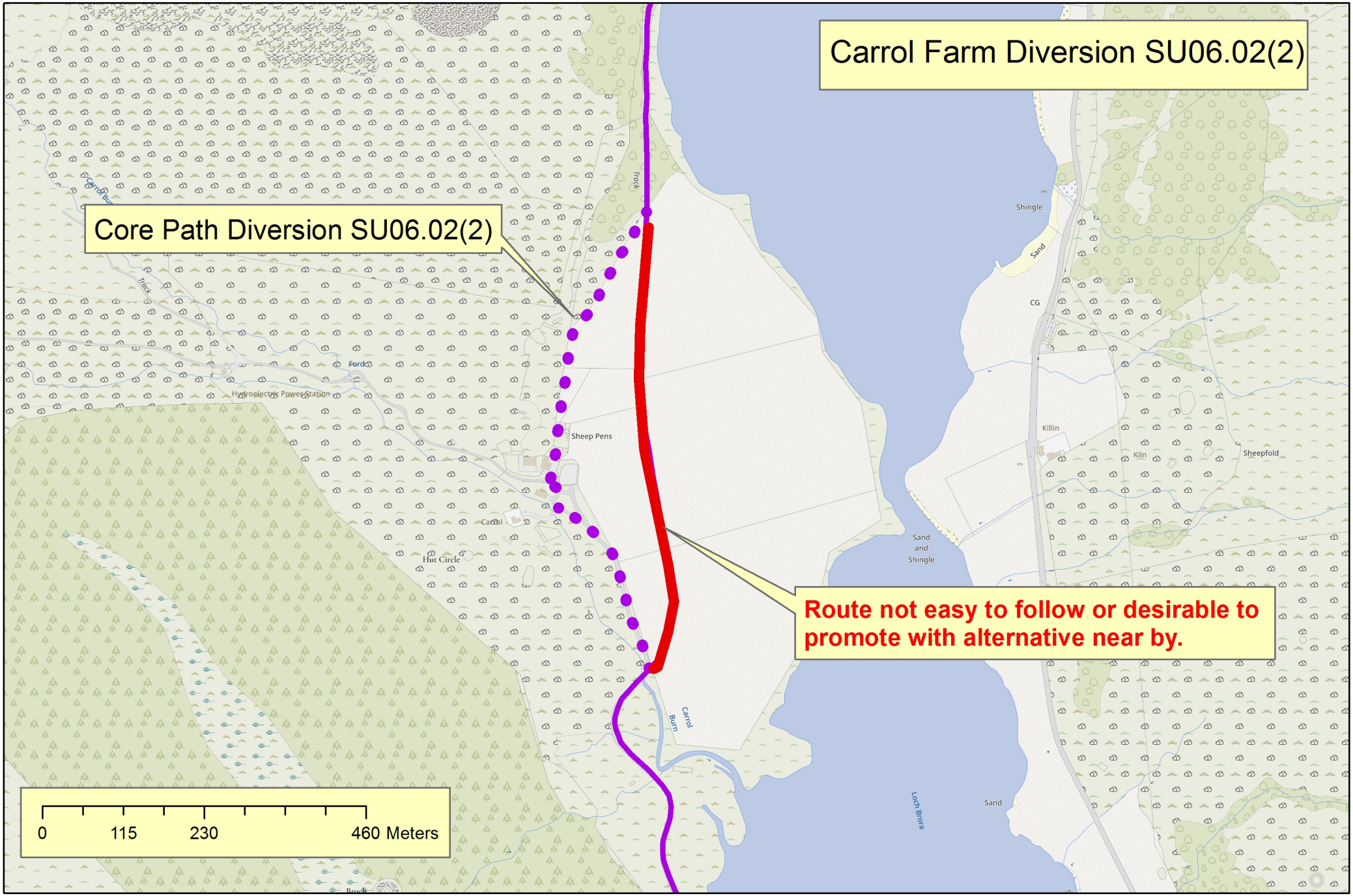
Climate change screening assessment

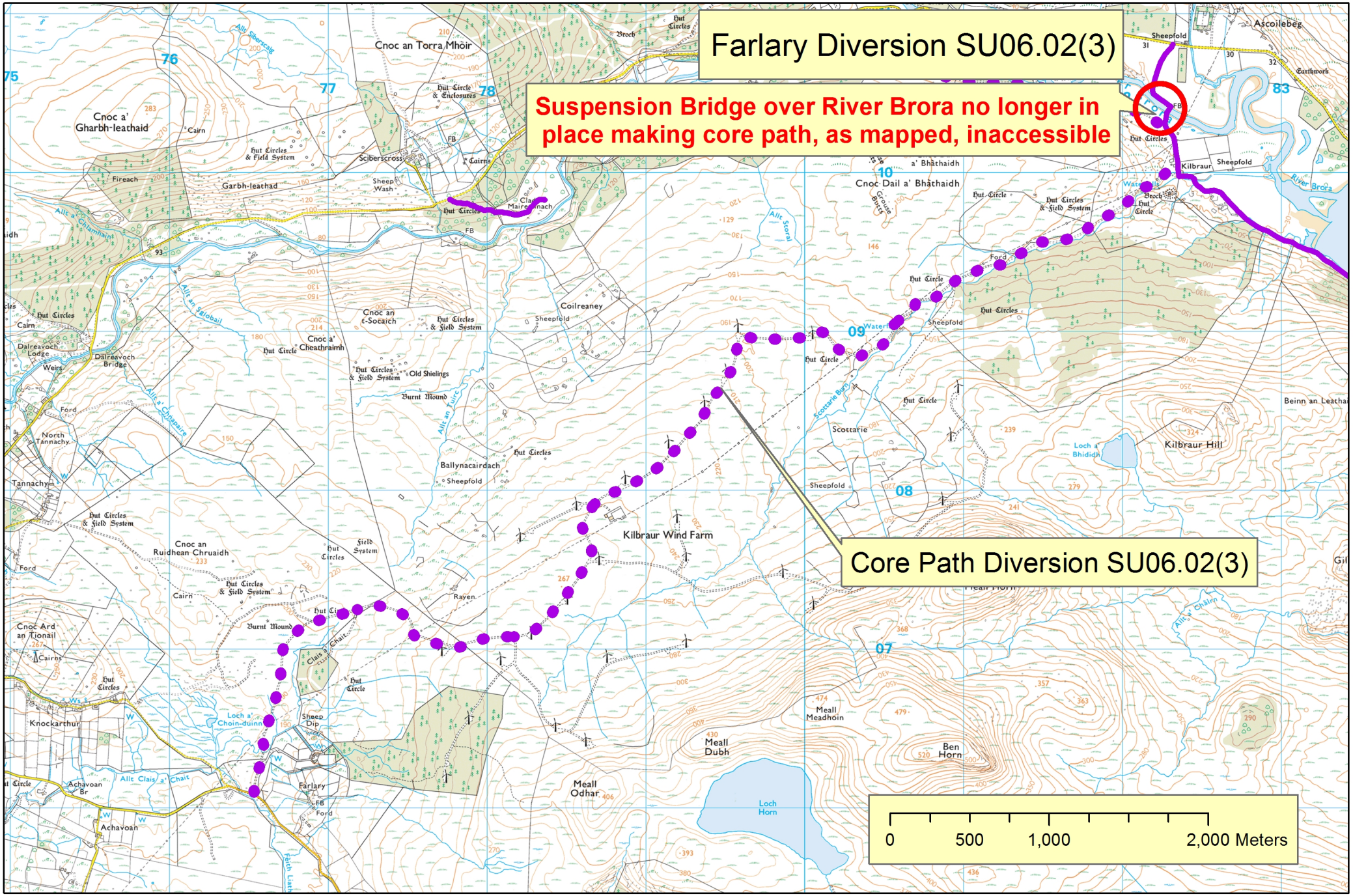
Have you identified potential impact for any of the areas above or marked any as not known? No

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No


Existing Core Path, SU06.02
Dalvaich crossing alternative to reach Loch Brora public road
Suspension Bridge over River Brora no longer in place making core path, as mapped, inaccessible
Farlary Track suggested diversion
Carrol Farm - suggested diversion
Core Path SU06.02
0
650
1,300
2,600 Meters


Dalvaich Diversion SU06.02(1)
Core Path Diversion SU06.02(1)
Suspension Bridge over River Brora no longer in place making core path, as mapped, inaccessible
0
200
400
800 Meters
Balnacoil
Dalvaich
Ascoilemore
Ascoilebeg
Urachoille
River Brora
Scottarie Burn
Balnacoil Hill
Hut Circle
Hut Circle & Field System
Cairn
Field System
Hut Circles
Chambered Cairn
Waterfall
Waterfalls
Livestock Pen
Sheep Wash
Livestock Pens
Track
Path
Drain
Ford
Broch
Tumulus
Butts
Enclosure


Carrol Farm Diversion SU06.02(2)
Core Path Diversion SU06.02(2)
Route not easy to follow or desirable to promote with alternative near by.
Track
Ford
Hydroelectric Power Station
Sheep Pens
Carrol
Hut Circle
Carrol Burn
Shingle
Sand
CG
Killin
Kiln
Sheepfold
Sand and Shingle
Loch Brora
Sand
0
115
230
460 Meters


Farlary Diversion SU06.02(3)
Suspension Bridge over River Brora no longer in place making core path, as mapped, inaccessible
Core Path Diversion SU06.02(3)
0
500
1,000
2,000 Meters