

## Glengarry Community Council: The Black Bridge Core Path, Invergarry

**Introduction** Glengarry Community Council (GCC), on behalf of the community, strongly advocates the immediate temporary safe stabilisation and continued long term existence of a crossing between the Mandally road community and the centre of Invergarry, as we have emphasised in our correspondence with Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) ever since the state of the bridge became of increased concern in 2024.

**Importance of the footpath link** The footbridge was originally provided by the generous foresight of the local estate owner; and the importance of the link has been emphasised by its status as a core path (ref: Black Bridge to Mandally road LO11.05). The present safe and largely off-road walking journey along the path to the village school, church, post office and hall would be increased from ten minutes to thirty by the closure of the footbridge, and would be made more hazardous by having to pass along two major roads.

The existence of the link to the village has over the years, and more recently, supported the building of new housing, and the growth of a mixed demographic there, including working families. Our recently published Local Place Plan (LPP), produced after consultation with the community, recognises that fact. The LPP and the associated Community Action Plan both clearly refer to walking and footpaths being important to Glengarry.

The path can also contribute to the continuing economic development of Invergarry as a centre of active tourism. For example, it provides safe access to river walks and extensive FLS woodland paths into Lochaber and beyond, as well as forming the route of the Glengarry Highland Games foot race, and being accessible from the Great Glen Way.

**Funding** An accident of public policy history has made FLS responsible for the maintenance of the footbridge. It now seems ironic that the actions of a self-funding executive agency of the Scottish Government should be proposing something so contrary to the Government's own commitment to supporting health and sustainability with Twenty Minute Neighbourhoods providing good active travel links between services and facilities.

Recent, and understandable, cost concerns about conserving the bridge as a significant historical artefact, not a modern working access route, have over-influenced discussion about the future of the link, and caused a culpable delay in forward planning.

The possibility of significant investment in the community through community development funding from major infrastructure projects is an attractive promise. However, the timescale of such funding is vague, the only certainty being that it will not be available for some time. In the meantime, the community will suffer.

**Proposal** GCC is unable to take on assets such as a bridge and therefore proposes that the Scottish Government and Highland Council urgently take immediate steps to fund temporary repairs to the timber surface of the bridge, in order to keep it safely in service and to delay the extreme proposal to close it forthwith, and also to put in place immediate plans for the replacement of the bridge with a modern structure protected by financial and ownership security for the future.