



The resurfaced Brenchoillie Road.

Improving timber transport case study

Brenchoillie Road

What?	Resurfacing the first mile of the East Loch Awe Timber Haul Route
When?	2011–2012
Where?	Brenchoillie, near Inveraray, Argyll
Who?	Argyll and Bute Council, Forestry Commission Scotland
How much?	£238 060 (STTS £73 500)
Timber tonnage	1m tonnes over 10 years

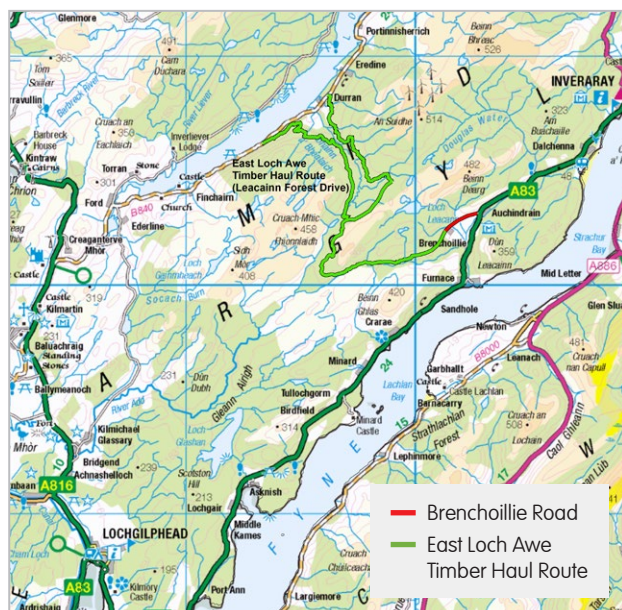


Bridge on the Brenchoillie Road.

A 12.5 mile haul route accesses woodland on Argyll Estate and Eredine Forest and links through to the public road on East Loch Awe.

Brenchoillie Road

Location map.



At least 80 000 tonnes of timber per year is now brought over the 12.5 mile haul road crossing Argyll, avoiding the weak public roads on East Loch Awe and significantly reducing rural lorry miles. When timber boats are loading at Ardrishaig, near Lochgilphead, the frequency of lorry traffic can be very high.

The last mile of the haul route is the unclassified, single-track public road to Brenchoillie serving a handful of houses and a farm. Following a study tour to Sweden, the Council agreed to trial a conversion of the public road to a 'waterbound' (gravel) road which they thought may be easier and cheaper to maintain than a tarmac surface.

The experience has been otherwise. While timber lorries can cope with a relatively rough surface, the expectations of car drivers has required a much higher level of maintenance than envisaged. The road surface needed to be frequently graded and rolled, and even then, the cars became filthy in the wet and raised the dust when it was dry. After the haul road was linked

through to East Loch Awe, the route was promoted as the 'Leacainn Forest Drive' encouraging more car drivers in the summer months and creating extra pressure for a high degree of maintenance.

In Scandinavia they are quite happy to drive cars on gravel roads, so why not in Argyll? In retrospect it is clear that the Brenchoillie road was a challenging choice for the trial. It receives Argyll-amounts of rain, and particularly high levels of timber traffic. This stretch of road is also in a frost-hollow and suffers from regular frost/thaw cycles. Waterbound roads are particularly fragile while they are thawing out and have to be closed to heavy traffic. They also cannot be de-iced with salt as this increases the stresses as the road de-frosts. In Scandinavia by contrast, the roads tend to stay frozen (and strong) all winter.

In 2010, with annual maintenance on the 1400m stretch of road coming in at £10 000/year, the partners decided to call an end to the trial and re-tarmac the public road, requesting around a third of the costs from STTS.

The work was carried out in December 2011. Passing places have been upgraded and the road has been resurfaced and white-lined. Vehicle safety fencing was required on two raised sections of road. The road remains a public road although the bridge built previously, to enable timber lorries to bypass the old stone bridge, remains in use and is owned by Forestry Commission Scotland.

While the Brenchoillie trial has not delivered the benefits expected, the option to change from a tarmac to a waterbound surface remains a consideration for various minor roads around the country with a high proportion of timber traffic.

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