

ALL-ABILITIES ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS IN GLEN NEVIS

The Highland Council has awarded a contract for a new all-abilities crossing over the River Nevis to Fion Construction Ltd, based in Fort William.

The new bridge will be located at the Glen Nevis Visitor centre, replacing the old structure nearby, which will be removed. The new bridge will be capable of accommodating the high visitor numbers experienced at this popular site and will provide access across the river for all abilities. The existing bridge at the Youth Hostel will be upgraded. The riverside path between the visitor centre and youth hostel will be upgraded to provide an all-abilities riverside walk. This project, is being delivered by Highland Council and Nevis Landscape Partnership, and is funded by The Highland Council, Heritage Lottery Fund, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Rural Development Programme and Sport Scotland.

Works will commence on site on Monday October 31st and are scheduled for completion over a period of 16 weeks. During construction works, temporary diversions will be in place to maintain access to Ben Nevis always. Temporary diversions will be clearly signed. The Youth Hostel bridge will be closed between October 31st and December 2nd 2016. The riverside path will be closed between October 31st and February 7th 2017. Access via Achintee will remain available always.

Dingwall-based consulting engineers, Wallace Stone, worked with Highland Council and other stakeholders to develop designs for the new bridge, which will be located closer to the visitor centre, at which essential safety information is provided for those intending to tackle the Ben.

The Highland Council owns Glen Nevis Visitor Centre, which receives around 65,000 visitors per annum, with numbers climbing Ben Nevis itself at around 120,000 per annum. In addition to investment in the bridge, The Highland Council is also contributing £35,000 to refurbishment of the visitor centre which will provide new and informative displays including vital mountain safety information for those venturing to the summit of Ben Nevis.

Councillor Audrey Sinclair, Chair of the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee said: 'Ben Nevis, as the UK's highest mountain, attracts thousands of visitors to Lochaber 12 months of the year so it is important that we provide people with the best and safest experience possible. These improvement works will enable a far wider range of visitors to enjoy the lower-level scenery and splendour of the glen and, at the same time, provide essential safety information and guidance for anyone climbing higher in the Nevis Range. It is a great example of good partnership working and I'm particularly pleased that to complement the improvements outside, we are also allocating funds to provide more information and displays within the popular Visitor Centre.'

Alex Farquhar, Chairman of Nevis Partnership said 'We are pleased to see this project, one of nineteen that the partnership is undertaking, get underway. It will allow access to the riverside to all sections of the local community and provide an enhanced experience to the increasing visitor numbers to the area. We are grateful to the organisations who have worked together to make this happen.'