

## Open Letter regarding Dalwhinnie level crossing

Joint letter led by:  
Ramblers Scotland  
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To Alex Hynes:  
Managing Director, Scotland's Railway  
151-155 St Vincent Street  
Glasgow  
G2 5NW

Dear Mr Hynes,

This is an open letter on behalf of a diverse range of your local and national stakeholders regarding Network Rail Scotland's decision to lock the gates at the Ben Alder level crossing at Dalwhinnie in late July.

This decision - taken with no consultation - has severed a historic route that has been used for generations to access popular glens, lochs and hills including much-loved Ben Alder. It has also made it hard to reach local trails, built by the community to the west of the line.

The closure has united a wide range of voices including residents, local chamber of commerce, outdoor recreation groups, landowners, local businesses, planning authorities and elected representatives. In fact, Network Rail faced unanimous calls for the gates to be unlocked from every single attendee at an online stakeholder meeting in September.

Meanwhile more than 9,000 people signed a joint petition led by national walking, climbing, cycling, paddling and horse-riding organisations that called for the route to be reopened to allow a genuine consultation.

Your organisation's unacceptable decision has:

- Severed a Right of Way that has been used for hundreds of years, well before the arrival of the railway.
- Increased safety risks, as walkers, cyclists and dog-walkers continue to climb the gates to cross despite your ongoing attempts to make this more difficult.
- Undermined [Network Rail's pledge](#) to work collaboratively and sensitively with lineside neighbours.

Network Rail's diversionary signage points to an underpass a mile south of the crossing. But this route offers inadequate parking and creates an unattractive and lengthy diversion for residents and visitors arriving on foot, by car or – ironically – rail.

This is particularly frustrating as the 'Hillwalkers' Car Park' next to the level crossing has recently been expanded to support visits to Dalwhinnie and the surrounding countryside.

Your organisation claims that the crossing presents a safety risk, yet we see no record of any accident in decades of it being in use.

Stakeholders have raised several potential practical solutions with your managers, but none have been accepted. These include the installation of Miniature Stop Lights, as was recommended by a safety review by your own organisation in February 2020.

**We, the undersigned, urge you to urgently unlock the gates at Dalwhinnie ahead of a proper consultation with all stakeholders.**

Signed,

Brendan Paddy, Ramblers Scotland director  
Kate Forbes, SNP MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch  
Ariane Burgess, Scottish Greens MSP for Highlands & Islands  
Stuart Younie, Mountaineering Scotland chief executive officer  
Jen Dickinson, Dalwhinnie Community Council  
Anne Butler, The Munro Society president  
Tim Atkinson, Ben Alder Estate factor  
Richard Barron, ScotWays chief operating officer  
Mark Tate, Cairngorms Business Partnership chief executive  
Jim Densham, Cycling UK in Scotland campaigns and policy manager  
Eddie Palmer, Scottish Canoe Association access committee chair  
Helene Mauchlen, The British Horse Society's Scottish manager  
Dr. Lee Cleghorn, Dalwhinnie Old School Hostel  
Mike Daniels, John Muir Trust head of policy and land management  
Stewart Eastaugh, The Highland Council access officer