



Perth and Kinross
COUNTRYSIDE
TRUST

Kirkmichael 2023 Path Network Survey

Report



Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust
Pullar House
35 Kinnoull Street
Perth
PH1 5GD

Email: christy.bridgeman@pkct.org

www.pkct.org

Scottish Charity No. SC027481

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BACKGROUND

Kirkmichael Path Network

Launched in December 2016, the Kirkmichael Path Network includes over 10 miles of waymarked paths in and around the village of Kirkmichael. Four paths range in length from a short, riverside walk to a longer adventure through Kindrogan Forest, which is ideal for mountain bikers, horse riders and those after a long-distance ramble.

Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust

Founded in 1997, Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust (PKCT) is an independent charity that negotiates access to land, builds paths, helps care for the countryside and undertakes conservation projects all to improve and promote access to the countryside for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Project Team & Management

The Kirkmichael Path Network is managed by Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust's *Strategic Route Officer*, Andrew Barrie. Path survey and report conducted by Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust's *Engagement and Communications Intern*, Christy Bridgeman.

OVERVIEW

The Kirkmichael Path Network, launched in 2016, is developed and maintained by Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust and the Mount Blair Community Development Trust in the village of Kirkmichael, Perth and Kinross. It is 21 kilometres north of Blairgowrie and sits on the River Ardle. The Kirkmichael Path Network also nears the village of Enochdu.

Recent developments include the publication of a paths leaflet and illustrative map (see *Figure 1*), waymarking across the network, the installation of interpretive signage, and fundraising via the Co-op's cause scheme. More widely, Kirkmichael is part of the *Cateran Trail*, one of the *Scottish Great Trails*, a 103-kilometre long-distance walking route which includes many partnerships between accommodation providers and PKCT. The *Cateran Yomp*, a soldiers-charity running event, also takes place on the *Cateran Trail* through the village.

Local amenities include the village shop, hotel, fire station, holiday lodges and a primary school.



Figure 1 - Kirkmichael Path Network

Aim

The aim of this report is to survey the general quality of the Kirkmichael Path Network, signage, waymarking and interpretation and identify potential new opportunities for waymarking, signage or interpretation. It aims to provide a snapshot of the current conditions across the *Village Loop* and the *Pitcarmick Loop*. The *Kindrogan Loop* was not surveyed.

The [Cateran Trail Accessibility Map](#) can be viewed to see the conditions of gates, cattlegrids, stiles, etc. as of May 2023.

This report also includes some amateur promotional and marketing images options of the Kirkmichael Path Network.

Findings Sections Breakdown

The findings in this report will be broken down into the following sections:

- Village Loop, Pitcarmick Loop (separated)
 - General pathing
 - Signage/Interpretation
 - Waymarking
 - Gates, bridges, stiles, etc.

Opportunities Sections Breakdown

- Village Loop, Pitcarmick Loop (separated)
 - Signage/Interpretation
 - Waymarking
 - Gates, bridges, stiles, etc.
- Context Map
- Promotional images options

Findings and opportunities shall be displayed counterclockwise (see *Figure 1*) with location context maps and coordinates provided. The opportunities section contains some potential promotional images.

METHODOLOGY

The path survey is to be conducted on 10 July 2023 by PKCT *Marketing and Communications Intern*, Christy Bridgeman. Weather must not be detrimental to the condition of the path as to not generate an inaccurate snapshot of general conditions. Images shall be taken throughout the *Village Loop* and *Pitcarmick Loop* with special attention to waymarkers, signage, gates, bridges, etc. and displayed in findings below.

FINDINGS

Village Loop

Village Loop - General Pathing

Much of the Village Loop features paved road walking sections which are in a good condition. The road is not busy but does not feature pavements for pedestrians, regardless (see *Figure 2*). Although not on the Village Loop, many walkers will use the main bridge in town over the river to the small shop. This bridge also features no pavement but does have a painted designated area for pedestrians.

In the section by the cottages by the river, the Village Loop features gravel road walking. Other than numerous potholes, the condition is good (see *Figure 3*). Residents of these cottages use this same road to park their vehicles.

The main car park by the fire station in the village has electric car charging, large recycling and general bins. There is also an interpretation panel (see *Village Loop – Signage*). From the car park to the road there is no pavement, and the turn into the car park for cars is very tight and relatively blind for drivers viewing pedestrians leaving the car park.



Figure 2 - Road walking conditions near Village Loop



Figure 3 - Gravel road walking conditions on Village Loop

Village Loop – Signage/Interpretation

Interpretation Panels

There are two interpretation lecterns near but not on the Village Loop; one at the village shop and one at the car park.

The structure of the ‘Welcome to the Bannerfield’ lectern is in good condition with no evidence of rotting or graffiti, it also has no lichen or moss. However, the panel itself requires some care (see *Figure 4*). The panel has not faded

and shows no sign of vandalism or deterioration. However, moss/dirt has stained many of the corners and sides of the panel.



Figure 4 - 'Welcome to the Bannerfield' interpretation lectern



Figure 5 - Close up of 'Welcome to the Bannerfield' lectern

The bottom right of the panel shows evidence of cleaning by users to be able to read the text because of moss/dirt staining rendering it illegible (see *Figure 6*).



Figure 6 - Evidence of users cleaning staining to read text on 'Welcome to the Bannerfield' interpretation lectern

However, the bottom left of the panel has not been cleaned and renders the two internet URLs to PKCT and Mount Blair Community Development Trust (MBCDT), respectively, illegible (see *Figure 7*). Equally, the MBCDT URL is a dead link and does not lead to a live website at time of writing.



Figure 7 - Staining on bottom left of 'Welcome to the Bannerfield' interpretation lectern

The interpretative 'Kirkmichael Fairs' lectern near the village shop is considerably cleaner than its 'Welcome to the Bannerfield' counterpart, but, however, shows signs of graffiti or deterioration.



Figure 8 - 'Kirkmichael Fairs' interpretation lectern

The wooden structure of the lectern is in good condition minus some minor staining from bird droppings. The painted *Cateran Trail* logo is in very good condition (see Figure 8).

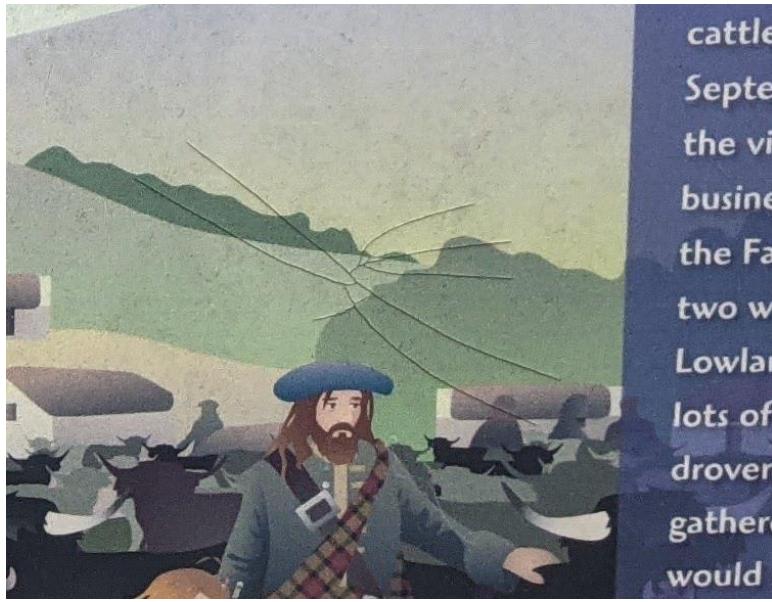


Figure 9 - Cracking on 'Kirkmichael Fairs' interpretation lectern

The graphics panel itself is cleaner than the 'Welcome to the Bannerfield' panel but is still stained slightly altogether with dirt more visible in light-coloured areas. There is one crack in the main illustration on the panel (see Figure 9), and there are some faint scratch marks also (see Figure 10). The red arrows highlight the scratches (arrows sit to right of scratches). The panel has a very old PKCT and Scottish Outdoor Access logo and may generally be considered dated overall.



Figure 10 - Scratches on 'Kirkmichael Fairs' interpretation lectern

Beside the primary school there is a small 'Explore Kirkmichael Path Network' sign (see *Figure 11*). The sign is in good condition and very vivid, but with a couple imperfections to note.



Figure 11 - 'Explore Kirkmichael Path Network' interpretation sign

The 'Explore Kirkmichael Path Network' sign is surrounded by other signs including a small speed limit reminder sign, a title sign for the primary school nearby, and a temporary corrugated plastic arrow.



Figure 12 - Close up of 'Explore Kirkmichael Path Network' interpretation sign

Some edges of the panel show evidence of deterioration or weathering, as bubbling can be seen under the graphics print on the panel itself (see Figure 12).



Figure 13 - Close up of 'Explore Kirkmichael Path Network' interpretation sign with visible markings

The left side of the sign has evidence of staining, bubbling and a large scratch mark (see Figure 13). Again, the Mount Blair Community Development Trust link has expired.

Village Loop - Waymarking



Figure 14

Waymarking on the Kirkmichael Path Network is overall very good, however, there are opportunities for future waymarking and general improvements or clarifications where existing waymarking exists.

Where the Village Loop turns back into the village, the fingerpost present has a large crack on the sign (see *Figure 14*). Equally, there is at least one screw missing from each waymarker disc.



Figure 15

The waymarker post on the Village Loop leaving the village towards the lodges is surrounded by many other signage clutter. Moreover, the post has had a third-party sign affixed to it (see *Figure 15*). Moreover, the waymarker discs have some missing screws.

Pitcarmick Loop

Pitcarmick Loop - General Pathing



Figure 16

The path at this point stops being paved and turns into gravel roads in a holiday lodge site. The gravel stones are small and so are easy to walk on. There is a finger post (W4, see *Figure 32*) beyond the dirt track to the left which may be missed by some users as it is in the shadows and is beyond the fork in the path (see *Figure 16*, red arrow).



Figure 17

The path onwards from the top of the lodges gravel road forking off to the left here becomes increasingly rocky with a grass median. This area of path is no longer gravel with small stones (see *Figure 17*).



Figure 18

The section of path forking off to the left from the top of the lodges towards the burn is particularly rocky, but is otherwise good. The grass median is not overgrown but the fairly large rocks may cause issues to those with mobility issues



Figure 19

After crossing the metal bridge (see *Figure 59*, *Figure 60* and X3), the immediate area is susceptible to flooding and is thus moderately boggy (see *Figure 19*). A raised recycled plastic boardwalk raises users above the boggy path.



Figure 20

The recycled plastic raised boardwalk is in very good condition and shows virtually no signs of deterioration (see *Figure 20* and *Figure 21*). Tall grass does, however, grow between the gaps. The boardwalk also partially undulates towards the left and right following the ground below.



Figure 21



Figure 22

Few sections of the boardwalk path are incomplete and return to thin dirt footpaths between boggy heather and tall grass. The condition of these sections of path is good, if somewhat narrow, and not as boggy as sections nearer to the burn. The height between the boardwalk and the footpath is low and does not feature a noticeable drop either side; it is level and suitable.



Figure 23

This section of path beyond the high deer fence towards the stone hut circles is very good, if a little narrow (see *Figure 23*). However, there are sections where heather and grass tufts are slightly overgrown and in the median of the path.



Figure 24

This section of path is less defined than the previous section and slightly more overgrown (see *Figure 24*). It is also quite narrow. However, less heather in this area would make maintaining this section much easier. A small burn runs to the west of the path (see *Figure 25*) which may be confused for the footpath, and is, in fact, arguably more defined than the actual footpath as it is, in parts, wider and more defined with rocks.



Figure 25



P11

Figure 26

The section of path down towards the Cateran Trail and past the stone hut circles goes across grassy fields with a faintly defined path. The colour of the path and the surrounding field is very similar, and thus the compressed grassy path acts as the only navigation tool next to waymarkers.



P12

Figure 27

As the path joins the Cateran Trail, it joins very well-defined gravel farm tracks with a grass median. There are some potholes as the path nears the village of Kirkmichael.

Pitcarmick Loop – Signage/Interpretation

Interpretation Panels



S4

Figure 28

The ‘Round Houses’ interpretation lectern structure is in very good condition and shows no evidence of vandalism or deterioration (see *Figure 28*). Overall, the sign is very legible and should not require cleaning. However, the protective coating on the panel (see *Figure 29*) is very cracked and uses an old PKCT logo. Moreover, the MBCDT link in the bottom left of the panel is expired.



Figure 29

Other Signage

The Pitcarmick Loop features some informal signage installed by other third-party users.



Figure 30

There is a warning sign upon leaving the lodges gravel track into the fields on the Pitcarmick Loop path regarding hunting and shooting. The sign does not reference deer stalking or grouse shooting and thus times cannot be looked up regarding hunting times. The sign shows signs of fading suggesting it remains perhaps all year round, this may greatly reduce public access (see *Figure 30*). Equally, the estate does not seem to appear on Outdoor Access Scotland's website: <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/doc/heading-scottish-hills-stalking-tables-eastern-highlands-area-5>.

Towards the upper left of the lodges path there features a makeshift memorial and laminated poem stapled to a tree (see *Figure 31*).



Figure 31

There is a laminated informal sign on a metal field gate near the Cateran Trail. At time of writing, the field gate was open and could be a confusing fork in the path for walkers. In such a case, the below laminated sign may assist walkers but the contents and restrictions imposed by the landowner via the sign may restrict public access (see *Figure 32*).



Figure 32

Pitcarmick Loop – Waymarking

Waymarking on the Pitcarmick Loop is overall very good, and the colour coordination with the printed map in the leaflet can be particularly helpful to users.

The first waymarking post in the lodges area on the Pitcarmick Loop is in very good condition and easily visible. It does, however, have at least one missing screw on each waymarker disc (see *Figure 33*).



Figure 33

The first fingerpost upon entering the lodges area is in very good condition with high quality signage. There is some lichen on the fingerposts and some minor bird droppings staining on the signage panels. Moreover, at least one

screw is missing from each waymarker disc. Most importantly, however, the fingerpost comes after the fork in the path and sits under the tree canopy in the shade; whilst its direction parallel with the lodges gravel path may make it more visible to those users on the Village Loop coming to a fork in the path, it may be easily missed by those already on the lodges gravel path, but it may, however, be missed completely as it sits in the shade (see *Figure 34*).



Figure 34

Waymarker posts throughout the lodges gravel track are in very good condition other than some missing screws on waymarker discs. There is also lichen/moss on each waymarker post (see *Figure 35* and *Figure 36*).



Figure 35



Figure 36



Figure 37

The fingerpost at the crossing between the Pitcarmick Loop path and the Kindrogan Forest path is in okay condition (see *Figure 37*). It is slightly stained green and features some moss and lichen. However, the cracking in the main post may soon expand and should be monitored for potential further deterioration. The graphics panels are in very good condition.



Figure 38

All remaining waymarkers on the Pitcarmick Loop are in very good condition and very sturdy (see *Figures 38–58*), apart from some missing screws (see *Figures 44, 48, and 53* for examples) some missing logo discs (see *Figure 50*) and some inconsistencies in the colour palette (see *Figures 49–53*). There is also a third-party logo disc on the waymarker closest to Kirkmichael towards the south (see *Figure 58*). Some waymarker posts also feature the Cateran Trail logo despite not being on the official Cateran Trail footpath (see *Figure 39, 46 and 51*).



Figure 39



Figure 40



Figure 41



Figure 42



Figure 43



Figure 44



Figure 45



Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48



Figure 49



Figure 50



Figure 51



Figure 52



Figure 53



Figure 54

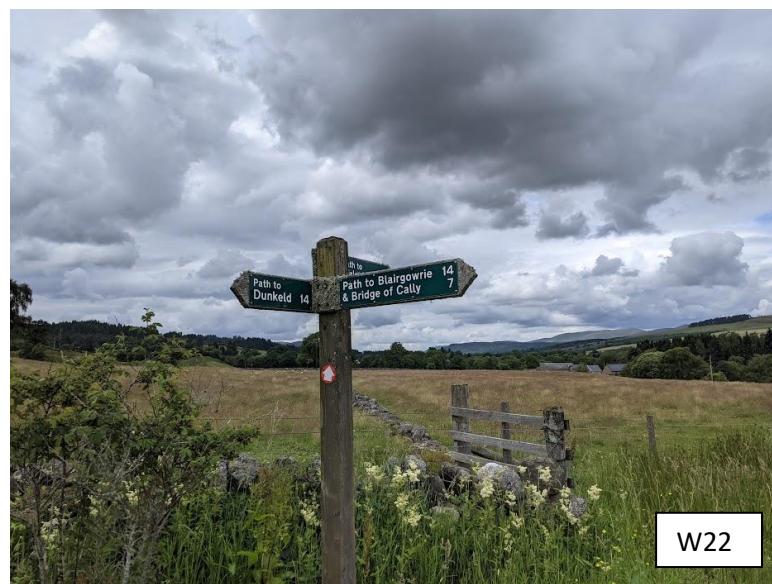


Figure 55



Figure 56



Figure 57



Figure 58

Pitcarmick Loop - Gates, bridges, stiles, etc.

Near the entrance of the lodges on the Pitcarmick Loop there is a large metal road barrier (see *Figure 59*), given its poor condition (rust, peeling paint and bird droppings), it suggests that it is rarely closed and thus does not obstruct public access.



Figure 59

Towards the end of the lodges at the top of the track there is a large metal field gate (see *Figure 60*), it is tied open with blue rope. The path's overgrown branches and tall grass suggests it is rarely closed and thus does not obstruct public access.



Figure 60

There is a large metal stile over a dry-stone wall near Balnald Burn (see *Figure 61*) with handrails. It is in very good condition.



Figure 61

Similarly, the bridge and platform across Balnald Burn (see *Figure 62*) is in very good condition but may be slippery when wet.

Beyond the bridge there is a steep and dangerous drop from the bridge onto the rocky ground (see *Figure 63*). The rocky area also appears to often flood as there was a large puddle at time of surveying. There is a dog lead attached to the railing of the bridge which may be used by walkers to ascend and descend.



Figure 62



Figure 63

The start of the boardwalk begins with a toppled fence/gate (see *Figure 64*). It appears to temporarily sit on supports on the adjoining fences, but does not open and close on a hinge. Equally, there are four exposed nails (head exposed, not point) on the wooden support on the fence post to the left. The toppled fence/gate sits on a boggy section of ground so was perhaps put there by walkers.



Figure 64

The high field gate beside the ‘Pitcarmick Round Houses’ interpretation lectern is in a very bad condition (see *Figure 65*). Wooden panels are broken and it does not stand up unless leaning against the adjoining fences slightly. There is an informal hinge made of metal wiring, of which the top hinge is made of barbedwire (see *Figure 66*).



Figure 65



Figure 66

Towards the end of the forest plantation section of the Pitcarmick Loop there begins a series of self-closing gates. Both gates are in very good condition (see *Figure 67* and *Figure 69*), however the former has the tall lever zip tied down.



Figure 67



Figure 68

Between the two modern self-closing gates there is a heavy wooden field gate (see *Figure 68*). Its condition is fair, however it sits on the ground and requires the user to lift it to open and close. There is an informal metal wire hinge around the adjoining fence post which is also very close to barbedwire which sits loose off the post.



Figure 69

As the Pitcarmick Loop joins the Cateran Trail, there is a step-over self-closing gate which is in very good condition (see *Figure 70*). The large wooden farm track bridge into Kirkmichael is also in very good condition (see *Figure 71*).



Figure 70



Figure 71

OPPORTUNITIES

Village Loop

Village Loop – Signage/Interpretation

There may be opportunities to incorporate smaller signs or plaques throughout the village of Kirkmichael and the Village Loop to pinpoint more accurately locations of historical importance. Such examples could be in regards to the areas Pictish history, with potential opportunities for collaboration with Meigle Museum or the Cateran Eco Museum.

Considering other interpretation panels on the Pitcarmick Loop, there could be opportunities for similar panels in the village to encourage walkers to continue their walks to see what is featured on the Pitcarmick Loop and interpretation panel.

An excellent opportunity would be the reconstruction of roundhouses, stone querns or similar buildings or tools for educational purposes around the village loop.

Village Loop – Waymarking

If walkers are to start from the carpark and visit the village shop before starting the Village Loop, they will read both interpretation panels on the loop within a few minutes. If walkers were to be encouraged to visit the shop at the end of a walk around the village, the interpretation they consume would be spread out over their walk instead of being focused on at the beginning of their walk. This would, hopefully, act to ensure the content of the interpretation panels is more meaningful to visitors.

Village Loop – Gates, bridges, stiles, etc.

As stated earlier, the corner from the car park to the main road is very tight and ‘blind’ for drivers seeing walkers exiting the car park. There is a great opportunity here for a convex mirror for car park to main road by fire station. There are already existing poles in the correct location a mirror could be attached.

Pitcarmick Loop

Pitcarmick Loop – Signage/Interpretation

There may be opportunities for interpretation regarding sustainable buildings with the use of natural materials by the lodges area, deeper dives into climate change and the importance of recycling with the recycled plastic boardwalk (eg: how many bottles it is made up of), or opportunities for wildlife spotting with ospreys and buzzards spotted during raised sections of the walk looking over the glen.

Pitcarmick Loop – Waymarking

To some walkers it may be very easy to walk off of the designated path at the top section of the lodges track as it forks to the left and the right and both seemingly appear well paved and welcoming. It is at this location where there may be an opportunity for waymarking (see *Figure 72*). There is already a white thin wooden mast in the ground painted white at the top of the fork, but it is not obvious if this is a waymarker or something else installed by a third-party (see *Figure 73*).

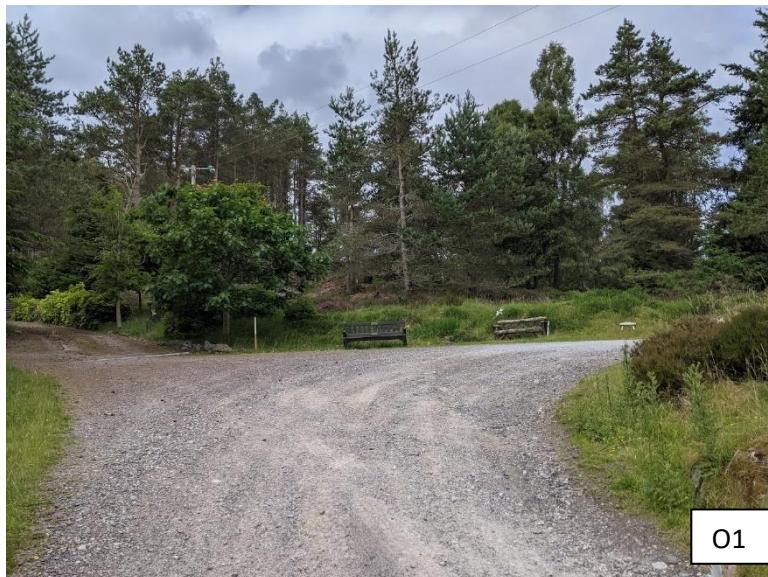


Figure 72 - Waymarking opportunity at top of lodges gravel road



Figure 73 – Close up of post at top of lodges gravel road as above

On the path towards the entrance to the lodges track there is an existing fingerpost waymarker for the attention of walkers on the Village Loop and Pitcarmick Loop. As it sits *after* the fork in the path and beneath the shadows of trees, it may be easily missed by walkers who instead may take the leftmost path at the fork (see *Figure 74*).



Figure 74 - Existing waymarker in shadows and after fork in path

Pitcarmick Loop – Gates, bridges, stiles, etc.

The stand-out opportunity on the Pitcarmick Loop is at the Balnald Burn. Here, the bridge has a sharp drop on one side to a rocky, often flooded or partially flooded ground (see *Figure 76*). The viability of this walk is greatly reduced for users with limited mobility at this point in by the burn. There should be a platform and ramp installed.



Figure 75 - Opportunity for ramp or steps onto bridge

Context Map

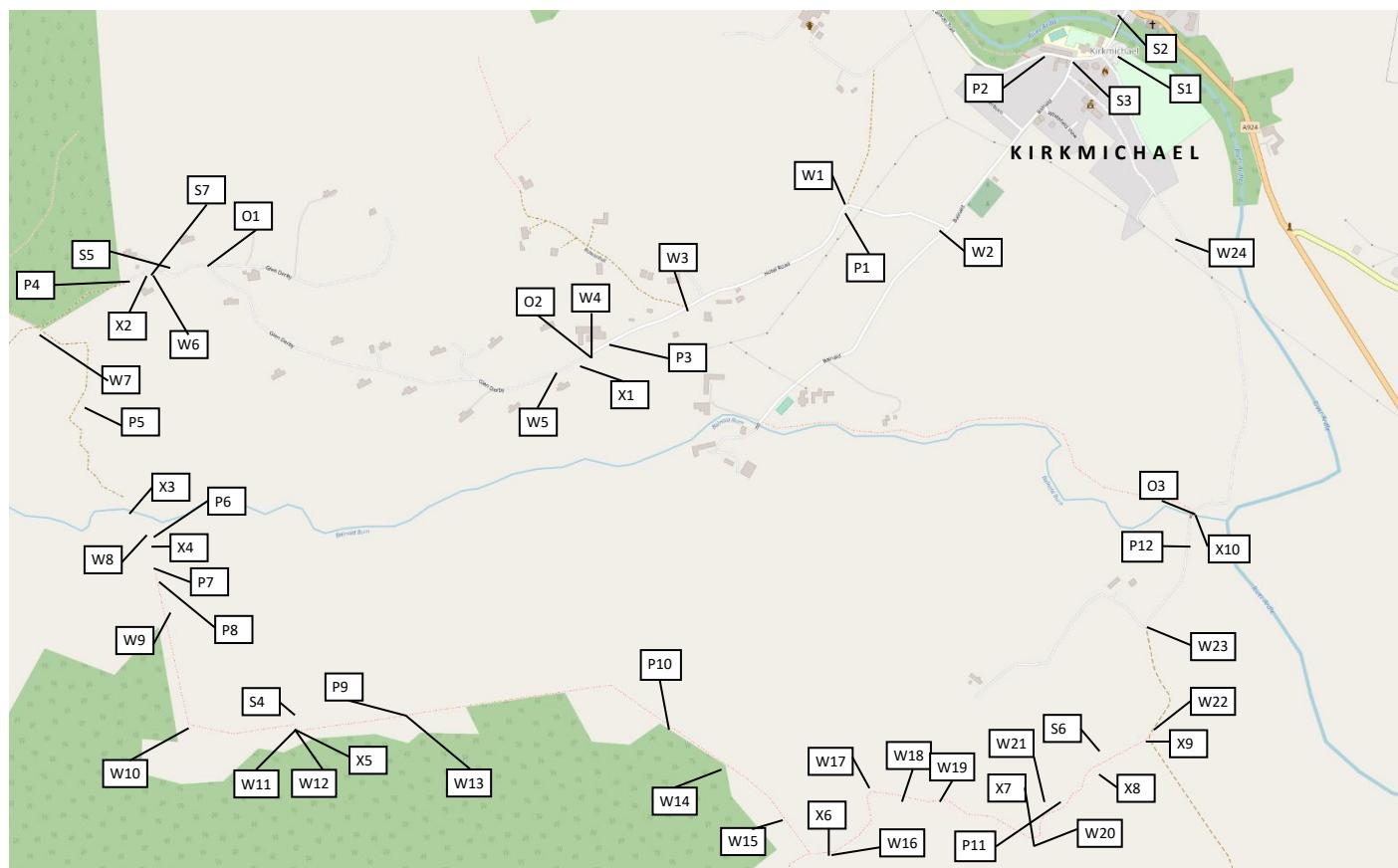


Figure 76 - Context Map (P=Path, W=Waymarker (incl. fingerposts), S=Sign, X=Gate, Bridge, etc., O=Opportunities)

Promotional Images Options

For future promotional campaigns, included in EDMS are a selection of images that may be useful for marketing. Find them at *EDMS PKCT > Documents > Current Projects > East Perthshire Area > Kirkmichael > Pics > July 2023 Promotional Images Options*

Leaflet Distribution

Approximately 60 Kirkmichael Path Network leaflets were delivered to the village shop and displayed. The village shop assistant also recommended leaflets be delivered to and displayed in the hotel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report shall be in regard to existing conditions on the Village Loop and Pitcarmick Loop. For opportunities, see the previous section.

Highest Priority

- Walkway, platform or ramp to be installed by dangerous drop at bridge over Balnald Burn [X3]
- High field gate to be fixed and barbed wire-hinge removed by 'Pitcarmick Round Houses' interpretation lectern [X5]
- Heavy wooden field gate to be balanced and fixed [X7]
- Toppled gate/fence on recycled plastic boardwalk to be fixed [X4]
- Outdated shooting sign potentially prohibiting public access to be removed or updated with accurate information [S7]

Medium Priority

- 'Welcome to the Bannerfield' interpretation lectern to be cleaned [S1]
- 'Kirkmichael Fairs' interpretation lectern to be replaced or fixed: cracks and scratches [S2]
- 'Pitcarmick Round Houses' interpretation lectern to have protective layer replaced: very cracked [S4]
- Convex road safety mirror to be installed by Kirkmichael carpark
- Cracked fingerpost graphics panel to be replaced [W1]
- Cracked fingerpost structure to be monitored: large cracks [W7]
- Rocky and slightly difficult to navigate path to be reviewed [P5]
- Fingerpost at entrance of lodges to be moved to a more visible area and before fork in path [P3]

Lowest Priority

- Potholes to be repaired by Kirkmichael cottages [P2]
- Mount Blair Community Develop Trust website link on interpretation panels to be updated [S1, S2, S4]
- Narrow path to be widened [P8]

- Undefined path beside dry, empty burn to be revised [P10]
- Safer pedestrian protections on bridge in Kirkmichael
- Cateran Trail logo discs to be removed on sections of Pitcarmick Loop
- Inconsistent colours on waymarker arrow discs on Pitcarmick Loop to be revised
- Screws to be installed where missing on waymarkers
- Signage clutter and third-party sign to be revised on waymarker post [W2]