

# Ledgowan Estate seek to justify heavy-handed approach to security

Ledgowan Estate in Wester Ross have confirmed their policy of requesting contact details for people walking on the property, listing security concerns in defence of this heavy-handed approach.

Details of the estate's access policy were included in an open letter handed to residents in Achnasheen recently, which also provided an account of a recent run-in with walkers.

The access policy states that all walkers met on Ledgowan will be asked for contact details, adding: "If this is not forthcoming or staff consider there is any reason for doubt they will take a photograph of the individuals and or their vehicle."

The following points are also listed:

- *no one is denied access – we abide by the law*
- *no one is allowed to walk in the curtilage of our property*
- *gates will remain locked due to security concerns (citing thefts and keeping poachers out).*

These policies are said to be in response to thefts, signs being pulled off gates, and the shooting of a rare black-throated diver by Loch Gowan in July which, the letter

notes, "had nothing to do with the estate staff".

Under estate policy, "in line with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code", dogs must be kept on a lead or at heel during the ground-nesting bird season – from April to July.

In addition, safaris are available to take people on the hill roads "to view wildlife", possibly explaining the use of 18 kilometres of track – measuring five-metres across – which have been dug into the hillside above Achnasheen.

The letter also states: "We are concerned that a stalker coming off the hill with a rifle is a vulnerable

target for malicious people who may be out to cause trouble."

In October, Glenmoriston resident Dr Ken Brown recounted how he and his wife, Maureen, were walking on the estate when they were accosted by a man – later identified as Richard Simpson, son of Ledgowan owner Andrew Simpson – who demanded to know what they were doing on the property.

On seeing the estate policy, Dr Brown commented: "I have no idea whether the Ledgowan Estate's own 'access code' is the result of ignorance about the existing official

guidance on responsible access or contempt for it; the latter seems the more likely in light of our experience of Simpson's behaviour. For instance, dogs have to be under control, not on a lead. 'Under control' means that they will walk next to you when required to, not that they always must do so.

"On 5th October, there was absolutely nothing to say that stalking was in progress that day, though on our return visit on 30th November we saw that stalking notices had been placed on newly-padlocked gates and we photographed them."

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## Bridge Community Centre land award from STV Appeal

Stornoway's Bridge Community Centre have received a £2,000 cash boost courtesy of the STV Appeal 2013.

The youth and community group aims to increase the amount of opportunities for young people to play and socialise and used the money to fund excursions.

Sophie Maclean, youth worker at the Bridge Community Centre, said: "With the money granted from the STV Appeal we were able to provide a wide range of free trips and activities for the youth club. These included ten-pin bowling, decorating ceramic plates and ornaments, using the golf driving range, arts and crafts

activities, as well as sports, pampering and movie afternoons, all of which were really enjoyed by the young people and volunteers who helped out."

He added: "Without the support of the STV Appeal we wouldn't have been able to offer these free activities for the young people."