

## **SOAC Part 13 - Railways**

Access rights do not apply to railways, however there is some great hill walking and climbing country which can pretty much can only be reached by crossing a railway. So how do you access the hills north of Achnashellach Station or Ben Alder group from Dalwhinnie? Are you within your access rights? Are you breaking the law?

In the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, section 2.11 says “access rights do not apply in the following places ... Railway and airfield infrastructure and airports” There is no section specific for access users with guidance on crossing railways as it is not a recreation in its own right (well not if you like living!). So if you cannot fly, what do you do?

The National Access Forum has been in discussion with Network Rail for a few years and they are essentially claiming that all pedestrian level-crossings are in their opinion “shut” to you unless you are a recognised user. This does not seem to affect the thousands of people that cross them regularly. Network Rails “health and safety” objections are also holding up core path plans in the Highlands and Fife. There are also a number of Rights of Way that cross railways where people frequently cross.

In summary, crossing a railway is a very grey area. Many of us do it in a responsible way; if you are do so be alert, look, listen and move carefully and quickly.