



## Useful information from the Expedition Network

### Welcome!

Green forms and requests for assessment should be submitted to the Scottish Network Co-ordinator, who can also assist with enquiries regarding routes and campsites.

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### Area advisor

The local area advisor is based in the area and can assist with enquiries regarding routes and campsites.

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## Introduction

The Inverness Expedition Network area is one of the least visited and yet the area west of Loch Ness is described in the Scottish Hill Tracks book as follows,

*“This country defies superlatives and adjectives, it is a land of high mountains, very remote country and superb cross-country routes. Especially rewarding are the Glens of Affric, Strathfarrar and Monar areas”*

Glen Affric is an area of outstanding natural beauty, National Nature Reserve, Special Area of Conservation which was recommended to become Scotland's first National Park, although this recommendation has not been followed through yet . It is a spectacular area with over 30 Munros including the highest north of the Great Glen, Carn Eighe at 1183m and interspersed with many large lochs running east to west which could be suitable for remote canoe expeditions, or even potentially a combination of canoeing and walking.



Glen Shiel is a mecca for hillwalkers. From the Clunie Inn looking up to the south is the South Clunie/Shiel ridge, 27Km and 7 Munros with another possible 2 Munros at the west end for the fittest walkers. This is one of the finest high-level walks in Scotland. To the right the North Shiel ridge, 20Km and 6 Munros and behind you and to the North at least another 10 Munros.

The area is crisscrossed with a network of trails, historic drove roads and stalkers paths with information available in 'Scottish Hill Tracks', <https://www.scotways.com> and <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk>.

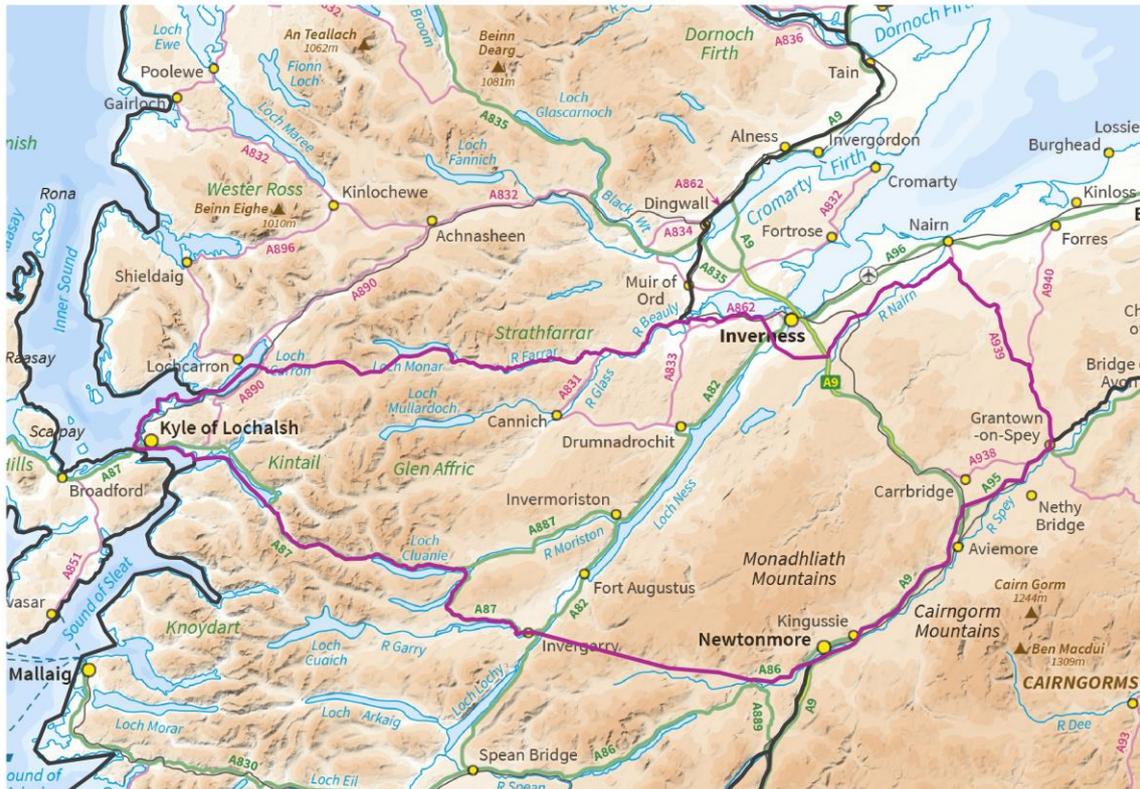
The Affric Kintail Way is a long distance trail from Drumnadrochit, by Loch Ness, through to Morvich on the west coast. Apart from this increasingly popular route, it is possible to spend days in this huge area without meeting another person, other than your Assessor! Groups should have no difficulty in selecting and planning exciting and challenging routes with a real feeling of remoteness in truly wild land.

To the east of Loch Ness lies a contrasting area, the Monadhliath Mountains, equally remote and rarely used by groups. In contrast to the Affric mountains these are gentler rolling hills with a few Munros and a lesser network of routes. This is an area of 'grouse moor' and deer stalking which means it is important to contact the estates when planning routes.

The rounded almost featureless nature of Monadhliath hills can make navigation extremely difficult in poor conditions with few obvious landmarks and large areas over 600m. This is an area frequented by ski mountaineers in winter with its excellent snow holding abilities and it has an almost arctic like experience. Mountain hares and Eagles can be seen regularly.

## Area boundaries

The DofE website includes a downloadable [GPX of the area boundaries](#).



## Route updates

Considerable disruption has been caused by Wind Farms and Hydro electric developments in the southern reaches of the Monadhliath Mountains, towards Fort Augustus. OS online mapping should indicate the extent of these changes.

Strathfarrar has a unique access agreement for vehicles details of which can be found here <https://www.mountaineering.scot/campaigns/safeguarding-access/strathfarrar-access>

The path beside the Falls of Glomach (NH 01 25) is steep and rocky and may present a particular hazard to teams in wet weather. There is a bridge at the Allt a' Ghlomaich below the falls at NH 012 266 which is not clear on all maps.

There is no bridge on the River Elchaig at NG 996 268. For routes using this the wet weather alternative would be using the bridges up vally over the Allt a' Ghlomaich (NH 012 266) and Loch na Leitreach outflow (NH 008 269).

The path shown on OS maps above Camas-luinie (NG 939 282 – NG 944 294) does not exist on the ground.

The path shown on OS maps ascending westwards towards Beinn Bhuide from Leinassie, near Morvich (NG 960 216 – NG 951 218) doesn't exist on the ground. The is a path ascending northeastwards from the carpark by the cemetery (NG 946 212) which joins the marked route at NG 951 218 and then continues ascending northeast as shown on the maps.

## Way marked and long distance paths

The DofE *Expedition Guide* says "long distance footpaths should not be used, particularly by Silver and Gold teams, except in small sections to link up other paths." (page 10, also see page 39). The quality of way-marked and long distance paths in Scotland varies considerably – some are concepts that don't exist on the ground (for example the Skye and Cape Wrath trails) while others are clearly signposted heavily used routes (for example, the West Highland Way).

In some areas there are no alternatives to some way-marked paths. Teams may use these, but should not plan an expedition with more than half a day continuously on the same route. Heavily used way-marked paths provide little navigational challenge, undermine the sense of isolation, and potentially have negative

environmental impacts, and therefore should be avoided by DofE teams as much as possible. Any such routes in this area have been highlighted in the above advice about route updates.

### Scottish Hill Tracks

Scotways, the Scottish rights of way and access society, publishes ***Scottish Hill Tracks***, a book listing rights of way across Scotlands uplands. This is an excellent resource for ideas for routes as some paths are not shown connecting on a map where historic routes exist. Scotways are also interested to hear about any issues with paths and routes.

### Core paths

Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 every local authority and National Park authority (access authority) in Scotland was required to draw up a plan for a system of core paths that gives the public reasonable access throughout their area. Some of these paths do not yet appear on OS maps, and may help DofE teams link up routes. All core paths can be seen **on the SNH website**, with links to details from each council.

### Campsites

Due to the popularity of the North Coast 500 route accommodation all round this route are booked up in advance year round, so leaders should be aware of this when planning their accommodation.

#### Serviced sites:

Cannich (NH 340 314) - <http://www.highlandcamping.co.uk/>

Sheil bridge (NG 938 186) - <http://shielbridgecaravanpark.co.uk/>

Morvich (NG 960 211) - <https://www.caravanclub.co.uk/club-sites/scotland/highlands/morvich-caravan-club-site/>

### Wild camping

Scottish access rights (see the **Outdoor access code section** for further information) extend to wild Camping for small groups (i.e. individual expedition teams), although the DofE still recommends that, as a courtesy to land owners concerned and to maintain existing good relations, expedition teams inform them of their intentions. It is reasonable for owners to react by saying why a particular site might be unsuitable and to suggest alternatives.

If multiple teams from the same DofE centre intend to camp at the same location, this falls outside the definition of 'Wild camping' permitted under access rights. Therefore, centres planning to camp with multiple teams in the same location should always seek permission from the landowner.

Teams should consult the advice on camping in the *Expedition Guide* (page 101), there are also lots of useful information resources about wild camping;

- **Mountaineering Scotland** has lots of good advice, with links to their minimal impact and 'where to go in the outdoors' leaflets
- **The Outdoor Access Code website** has advice on responsible wild camping, including various information downloads.

### Hostels



A footpath from Cluanie through the glen to the north, An Caorann Mor, leads to the **SYHA hostel at Alltbeithe** and into the heart of this spectacular mountain region. This remote Hostel, only accessible on foot or bike is popular with supervisors and assessors and should be booked well in advance.

Alltbeithe Hostel SYHA

### Bothies

Bothies are basic shelters in the hills. Many are open to the public for use and managed by the **Mountain**



**Bothies Association (MBA)**. If teams plan to use a bothy for lunch or shelter they should be aware of the **MBA's bothy code**.

DofE teams are generally advised not to camp within close proximity to a bothy without permission from the owner because of problems that come with the pressure of numbers. This often leads to issues with pollution from human waste, so risk assessment would suggest these sites are not appropriate as a campsite. You can find more information about use of Bothies, via the DofE **'Use of Bothies information sheet'**

Cambar bothy

## Travel and transport to the area

The Monadhliath Mountains has easy access from the A9 to the east, A86 to the south and the B862 to the west.

The areas north of the Great Glen are readily accessible by the following routes. Via A82 to Drumadrochit and A831 to Cannich, then a minor road to the Forestry Car Park in Glen Affric. This route also gives access to Strathfarrar and Monar areas. See the note in routes about vehicle access to Strathfarrar.

Alternatively continue the A82 to Invermoriston, and then the A887 to the Cluanie Inn where parking is usually available in this area. Take a moment to enjoy the spectacular scenery around you.

### Road works

Road closures and works in the area can have a serious impact on the ability of team's and leaders to get to and from expeditions, and for supervisors and assessors getting around due to the lack of quick alternative routes. Information about current or planned noticed road works in Scotland is available at **the Scottish Road Works Register**

## Expedition aim ideas

### Scottish Wild land areas

The Scottish Government has **defined 42 Wild land areas around Scotland**. The discussions around defining these areas and the implications of this may be of interest for teams considering aims around landuse and wildness.

## Hazards

### Ticks

Ticks are small, blood sucking creatures found across the uplands of Scotland, especially in areas with lots of deer and sheep. Some ticks carry Lyme disease, which is treatable but can be tricky to diagnose. Teams should be made aware of the risks of Lyme disease and how to reduce the risk of being bitten. All teams should carry a tick remover and check themselves daily.

There are several useful information resources about ticks;

- The organisation Lyme Disease Action has useful downloadable **leaflets about ticks and Lyme disease**.
- **Stop the tick** has lots of infographics (some a bit graphic, but informational)
- Lyme disease UK has posters and leaflets as part of their **Wake up to Lyme campaign**, as well as detailed information about the disease

### Midges

The biting midge is particularly prolific in parts of Scotland, and worst in late Spring through to early Autumn. The detrimental effect midges can have on an expedition is not proportionate to their tiny size, and should not be underestimated, especially with teams unused to them. During this summer period teams should carry midge nets, insect repellent and clothes to provide full coverage (including gloves and long sleeved tops) and first aid kits should include antihistamines to reduce discomfort. Teams should also be aware of how to reduce their impact including:

- choice of campsite (in direct sunlight and breezy, ideally in both morning and evening)
- choice of clothing (pale, bright, and smooth rather than dark, wooly, or fleecy)

- campcraft (menu planning, positioning of tents, keeping tent doors closed)

### Snakes

There are Adders (the UK's only venomous snake) in the area. They are not aggressive or commonly seen, but they will bite if stood on, sat on, or picked up. Because of this teams who are wild camping should always wear shoes (which the snakes cannot bite through) and not walk around bare foot, in socks, or in sandals such as flip-flops. If anyone has the unusual misfortune to be bitten, then medical assistance must be sought urgently.

### Drinking water

Watercourses across Scotland can contain a variety of waterborne infections. Therefore, when wild camping it should not be assumed that streams and rivers are clean sources of drinking water, especially due to the high density of livestock and deer across large areas. Leaders should refer to the DofE *Expedition Guide* advice on taking water from streams (pg 122). Other good sources of information about health and hygiene outdoors (including issues around drinking water) are the NHS advice about [avoiding bugs and germs outdoors](#), and the Mountaineering Scotland advice on [health and hygiene](#).

### River crossings

Rivers and streams throughout the area rise quickly after rain, or during snow melt, and careful consideration should be given to any route which involves river crossings. Even small streams can quickly become completely impassable and larger rivers can become very dangerous even if the rain has not been falling in the immediate vicinity of the planned crossing.

All teams should understand what to do in case of streams rising – stream levels will fall as fast as they rise and often waiting overnight is all that is needed. In case of snow melt, peak levels are often late afternoon/evening, and the lowest levels in the morning. Teams planning river crossings must have an alternative plan in the event of continued wet weather.

### Hours of daylight

All visitors, especially those from the south, need to be aware of the shortness of daylight hours in the expedition shoulder season; March has 11 hours of daylight and the October half term a little over 9 hours.

## Emergencies and Incidents

### Mountain rescue

In Scotland, responsibility for the provision of rescue facilities rests with the Police Force - who will call out/co-ordinate mountain rescue as appropriate. Teams must be clear that if they need to call for help they must ask for the police, and then ask for mountain rescue. Teams may not be connected to the nearest police control room to their location, so should be clear on the general area they are in, and their exact location. [Scottish mountain rescue](#) has advice about the process of calling for help, and the information that should be supplied.

Teams must be trained to supply the control room with a six-figure grid-reference for their location, including the two-letter prefix code e.g. NX 345 678 not 345 678. 'GR' is not the correct prefix for any location; it is a commonly used shorthand for 'grid reference'. There is information about six figure grid references [the Ordnance Survey website](#). Correct provision of a full six figure grid-reference is essential as the police computer system will not be able to interpret a grid reference without this two-letter prefix. Also, some Network Areas in Scotland have intersections of the letter labelled 100 km<sup>2</sup> grid squares in their centre, so a mistake may lead to significant delays in support from Mountain Rescue. DofE Scotland strongly recommend that all DofE route cards are prepared including two letter prefixes to avoid delays or uncertainty in emergency situations.

The Mountain Rescue team that covers the expedition area are [Dundonnell MRT](#) and [Kintail mountain Rescue](#) west of the Great Glen and [Cairngorm Mountain Rescue](#) to the east.

Remember that in case of an incident both the team's Licenced Organisation and the [Scottish Expedition Network Coordinator](#) should be notified using the DofE Incident Report Form (available through the resources zone in eDofE).

### Mobile signal

It should be noted that in many parts of the area telephone boxes are rare and the mobile phone network reception is limited/non-existent away from centres of population and cannot be relied upon for getting

assistance. Therefore, teams must know how to deal with an emergency in a location without mobile phone signal.

Teams should be encouraged to **sign up for the 999 text service** in advance of their expedition to give them the best chance of contacting emergency services in an emergency.

A VHF radio link to Kintail is available at the hostel for emergency use and only when the hostel is open for the season.

## Outdoor access code

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 has been implemented through the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This provides access rights for the purposes of recreation or education across most of the land and inland water in Scotland. This includes mountains, moorland, woods and forests, grassland, margins of arable crop fields, paths/tracks, rivers and lochs, and the coast. These access rights are balanced with responsibilities towards the environment and the interests of those who make a living from the land.

### Three key principles of access

- Take responsibility for your own actions
- Respect the interests of other people
- Care for the environment.

For further information (including a downloadable e-book) visit [www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)

Any access issues should be reported to the **Scottish Expedition Network Coordinator** who will investigate.

## Landuse

The **Countryside Calendar - Year** gives a month by month snapshot of typical activities and happenings in the farming and wildlife year in Scotland, any may be helpful in planning expeditions and thinking about appropriate aims.

### Landowners

To identify the borders of estates see [www.whoownsscotland.org.uk](http://www.whoownsscotland.org.uk). There is a subscription option which gives access to see contact details.

### Lambing

Sheep and lambing season cans start as early as February and can continue until the end of May and lambing ewes must not be disturbed. If an apparently 'lost' lamb is seen - do not touch or intervene, as the mother will not be far away. At all other times it is advised that teams should pass through sheep quietly and if possible at a distance in an effort not to disturb and stress them.

### Traps

Teams may observe traps on the high moorland. These should not be touched or disturbed as they have been set by the game keepers to catch predators to the ground nesting birds, typically the Hooded Crow.

### Scottish game seasons

During the deer stalking season teams should utilise the **'Heading for the Scottish Hills website'** in addition to contacting landowners to find out where and when shooting will be taking place. Teams should stay on recognised footpaths whilst in these areas for safety reasons.

Game	Season Opens	Season Closes
Salmon/Sea Trout	Jan/Feb	October (dates vary)
Trout	15th March	6th October
Roe Deer (bucks)	1st April	20th October
Red & Sika Deer (stags)	1st July	20th October
Fallow Deer (bucks)	1st August	30th April
Grouse & Ptarmigan	12th August	10th December
Snipe	12th August	30th January
Black Grouse	20th August	10th December

Wild Fowl	1st September	30th January
Partridge	1st September	31st January
Capercaillie & Woodcock	1st October	30th January
Pheasant	1st October	31st January
Roe Deer (does)	21st October	31st March
Red, Sika, & Fallow Deer (hinds)	21st October	15th February

## Weather forecasts

- The Met Office provides:
  - **Forecasts with summaries for the region and 7 day detailed forecasts for the chosen town/village.**
  - **Surface pressure charts**
  - **Mountain area forecasts for the Northwest and North Grampian.** These include a forecast for the region, with forecasts for individual summits available. These summit forecasts are for the summit height of the mountain, which should be considered when teams interpret them.
- **The Mountain Weather Information Service (MWIS)** provides 72 hour forecasts for 5 Scottish regions. These forecasts are for the summits of the mountains which must be considered when interpreting them for DofE use. They provide some interpretation which can assist participant understanding. The forecast areas that cover the expedition area are **North-west Highlands** to the west of Loch Ness and **Cairngorms NP and Monadliath** to the east.
- Outdoor conditions forecasts are available on BBC Radio Scotland (FM: 92.8-94.7, MW: 810) at 18:25 Monday-Friday, and on Saturday and Sunday at 07:00 and 19:00.

## DofE resources

The current DofE expedition kit list can be downloaded from:

**[www.dofeshopping.org/expedition-kit](http://www.dofeshopping.org/expedition-kit)**

A range of expedition downloads, such as the Green Form and spare expedition safety cards, can be downloaded from: **[www.dofe.org/leaders/resources-and-downloads/expedition-downloads/](http://www.dofe.org/leaders/resources-and-downloads/expedition-downloads/)**.

Further information of the Expedition section can be found at: **[www.dofe.org/doing-your-dofe/activities-sections/expedition/](http://www.dofe.org/doing-your-dofe/activities-sections/expedition/)**