

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 landowners, 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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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Area boundaries	3
Choosing Your Route	4
Access Issues.....	4
Damaged Bridges.....	4
Vehicle access.....	4
Way-marked and long-distance paths.....	4
Scottish Hill Tracks.....	4
Core paths	5
Camping.....	5
Serviced sites:	5
Wild camping.....	5
Bothies.....	5

Inverness Expedition Area

Other modes of travel	5
Travel and transport to the area	6
Expedition aim ideas	6
Scottish Wild land areas	6
Physical and Human Geography.....	6
History	6
Nessie	6
Hazards	7
Ticks	7
Midges	7
Snakes.....	7
Drinking water	8
River crossings	8
Hours of daylight	8
Emergencies and Incidents.....	8
Mountain rescue	8
Mobile Signal	9
Outdoor access code	9
Landuse.....	9
Landowners	9
Lambing	9
Traps	9
Scottish game seasons.....	10
Weather forecasts	10
Useful Links.....	10

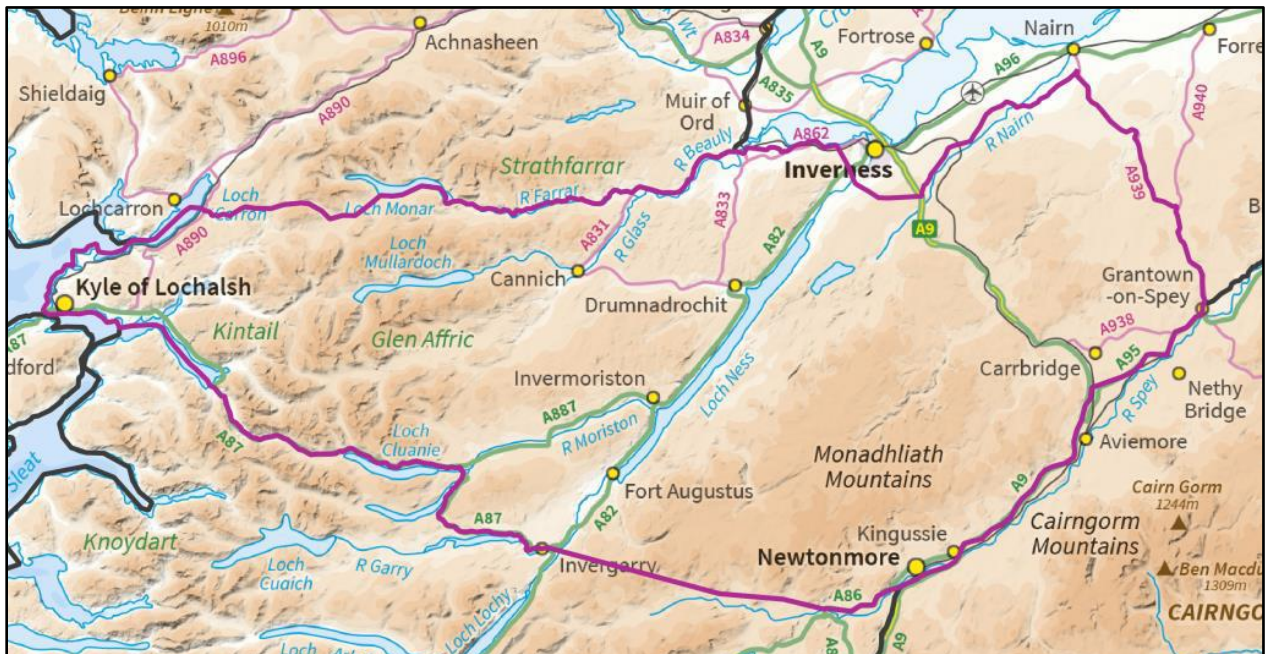
Introduction

The Inverness Expedition Network area is one of the least visited. The area is crisscrossed with a network of trails, historic drove roads and stalkers paths, meaning 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 this truly wild land.

Area boundaries

The area follows the route of the Spey from source to Granttown, where it follows the A939 north to the River Nairn. The area skirts Inverness and then cuts West following rivers and lochs to Lochcarron. The Southern boundary cuts under Kintail and Glenaffric, through Invergarry before reaching the Spey once more.

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



Choosing Your Route

Access Issues

Considerable disruption has been caused by Wind Farms and Hydro electric developments in the southern reaches of the Monadhliath Mountains, towards Fort Augustus.

The path beside the Falls of Glomach (NH 017 256) is steep and rocky and may present a particular hazard to teams in wet weather. There is a bridge over Allt a Ghlomaich below the falls (NH 012 266) which is not clear on all maps.

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. There 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.

Damaged Bridges

There is no bridge on the River Elchaig at NG 996 268.

The bridge at NH 336 056 over Invervigar Burn is non-existent and there is dense vegetation in that area making it difficult to get back onto a track.

Vehicle access

Strathfarrar has a unique access agreement for vehicles details of which can be found here:

<https://www.mountaineering.scot/access/special-arrangements/strathfarrar>

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. **In this area walking, cycling and riding Silver and Gold teams should avoid the use of the Affric Kintail Way, the Loch Ness 360 and the Great Glen Way.**

Scottish Hill Tracks

Scotways, the Scottish rights of way and access society, publishes **Scottish Hill Tracks**, a book listing rights of way across Scotland's 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 [Scottish Natural Heritage website](#), with links to details from each council.

Camping

Serviced sites:

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.

[Cannich](#) (NH 340 314), Beauly
[Sheil Bridge](#) (NG 938 186), Glenshiel
[Morvich Caravan Club Site](#) (NG 960 211), Inverinate, Kyle

A footpath from Cluanie through the glen to the north, An Caorann Mor, leads to the [SYHA Glen Affric Hostel at Alltbeithe](#) (NH 079 202) 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.

Wild camping

Scottish access rights (see the [Outdoor Access Code section](#) for further information) extend to wild camping for small groups (at DofE we consider this to be individual expedition teams). Although not strictly necessary, the DofE recommends that, as a courtesy and to maintain existing good relations, expedition teams inform relevant land owners 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 is also lots of useful information and resources about wild camping available via [Mountaineering Scotland](#) and [The Outdoor Access Code](#).

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'](#).

Other modes of travel

Information about paddling the Great Glen is available in our [Great Glen Canoe Guide](#).

Travel and transport to the area

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 land use, flora and fauna and wilderness. Inverness is home to numerous tree restoration projects – why not look at these for an expedition project?

Physical and Human Geography

The Inverness Expedition Area cover the Monadhliath Mountains in the East and Glen Affric and Kintail to the West, split by the Northern part of the Great Glen, which runs from Fort William up to Inverness.

The landscape of the Monadh Liath is one of the most ancient in Britain, its essentials as a secondary massif flanking the Cairngorms having evolved continuously since the Caledonian Mountains were created over 400 million years ago.

Until the last few years, the Monadh Liath interior was remote and desolate, a naturally treeless and largely trackless wilderness, one of the last large tracts of 'wild land' in human terms at least, known only to a few deer and grouse enthusiasts. The renewable energy gold rush has already led to the Glendoe hydro-electric scheme above Fort Augustus. The actual reservoir and dam are not unduly intrusive, but the extensive network of heavy-duty access roads to service all the weirs diverting water into the catchment have altered its remoteness and wildness.

Loch Ness is the second largest Scottish loch by surface area at 56 km² after Loch Lomond, but due to its great depth, it is the largest by volume in the British Isles. Its deepest point is 230 m, making it the second deepest loch in Scotland after Loch Morar. It contains more fresh water than all the lakes in England and Wales combined and is the largest body of water in the Great Glen, which runs from Inverness in the north to Fort William in the south.

Loch Ness lies along the Great Glen Fault, which forms a line of weakness in the rocks which have been excavated by glacial erosion, forming the Great Glen and the basins of Loch Lochy, Loch Oich and Loch Ness.

Glen Affric is a magical mix of native woods, glistening lochs and haunting moorland. It features over 30 miles of ancient pinewoods and is one of the largest ancient Caledonian pine woods in Scotland. You can wander amongst the pine trees accompanied by the chirpy calls of woodland birds. Elsewhere you might encounter ospreys, secretive otters or red- and black-throated divers. Come in autumn and you'll be inspired by the mosaic of colour and the echoing roar of red deer stags.

History

Nessie

There have been numerous sightings of the monster, affectionately known as 'Nessie'.

Inverness Expedition Area

The first recorded account is of an eyeball to eyeball confrontation with the Irish saint, St. Columba in the 6th century. St. Columba, so the story goes, ordered one of his monks to swim across the loch and fetch a boat. Halfway across the monster appeared and rushed at the swimmer, roaring in a most frightening way! Columba cried out to the monster, "Go no further, nor touch the man! Go back!". The monster is said to have fled!

Since then, Nessie has been seen many times but has never harmed anyone. Sightings have been sporadic over the centuries, but in the 20th century Nessie has been more active, which has had a profound affect on local business!

1933 was the year when the first photograph was taken of the monster, or what is said to be the monster. It showed something with a long neck arched over a thick body. This photograph, taken by a London surgeon caused a sensation when first published in the Daily Mail.

Interest in Nessie became intense and over the years several scientific investigations have taken place. In 1961 the Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau was formed and even two submarines have been brought into the search with sonar experts on board! When the submarine Pisces was diving off Castle Urquhart, where the water is 950 feet deep, a vast underwater cavern was found. Was this Nessie's home?

However, the Loch Ness monster is not as unique as it seems – reports of similar creatures have come from other lochs in the West Highlands.

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.

Some useful resources about ticks:

- Lyme Disease Action has useful downloadable [leaflets about ticks and Lyme disease](#).
- [Stop the tick](#) has lots of infographics (some are a bit graphic, but informative)
- Lime 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 disproportionate 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). 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

Inverness Expedition Area

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 barefoot, 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. [Mountaineering Scotland](#) 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 refence'. 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. The two letter prefix locates your grid reference within a 100km square; a mistake here 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 teams that cover the expedition area are Cairngorm MRT, Dundonnell MRT and Kintail MRT.

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.

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 and 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

Any access issues should be reported to the [Scottish Expedition Network Coordinator](#) who will investigate.

Landuse

The [Countryside Calendar](#) 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 . There is a subscription option which gives access to see contact details.

Lambing

Sheep and lambing season is usually between around 10th April until around 25th 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

Inverness Expedition Area

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 Northwest and North Grampian. This includes 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 forecasts that cover the area are Cairngorms NP, Monadhliath and North-West Highlands.

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.

Useful Links

Listed below are some links you may find useful. Please note that the Inverness Expedition Area does not directly endorse any of the sites listed.

<https://www.visitinvernesslochness.com/> - a tourist site

<http://greatglencanoetrail.info/> - for those interested in paddling Loch Ness

<https://www.canoescotland.org/> - for more information on paddling

DofE resources

The current DofE expedition kit list can be downloaded from:

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/**

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