



# TGO Challenge 2022 – Final Details

Firstly, a big thank-you for sticking with us and being so flexible over the last two years. It has been something of a rollercoaster ride for the Challenge. The world faces many bigger challenges than crossing Scotland on foot, but we hope the Event can give us some relief from the current global gloom.

The relaxation of Covid restrictions means we can return to the normal TGO Challenge structure. The staggered start and finish will be the only substantial change to the Event from pre-pandemic years. The landscape will look a little different in some places as Storms Arwen, Malik and Corrie have felled huge swathes of trees in the Central Highlands, Aberdeenshire and Angus and this may cause problems on some routes – most notably Jock’s Road. More information can be found on page 9.

Scotland’s weather is as gloriously unpredictable as ever so, you need to be prepared for all possibilities: rivers in spate necessitating long detours, hard frosts maybe even snow and, you never know your luck, the sun might come out too!

Before you head to the West Coast, please read through these pages carefully as they contain information essential for your crossing – including details of Challenge Control and the phone numbers you will need.

## CHALLENGE CONTROL

VOICE CALLS – 07562 083 996 TEXTS – 07593 185 124

If the voice call number is busy you may also use the text number for a short call but please **do not** text the voice call number.

We no longer use a landline number as Challenge Control. If you have this in your phone from previous crossings, please delete it.

## BEFORE YOU START

### MEDICAL INFORMATION AND EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS

Please complete the form (which can be found [here](#)) and send it to the Coordinators at [newtonmorehostel@gmail.com](mailto:newtonmorehostel@gmail.com) as soon as possible.

**Completion of this form is a requirement for participating in TGOC22.**

We will not pass any comment or judgement on your fitness. It is up to you to ensure you have a suitable level of fitness to participate and we encourage you to get out and test your capabilities as restrictions ease. If you have any long-term health problems or other concerns about your health, we strongly advise you to seek advice from your health professional, making sure they are fully aware of the nature of the Event.

We also require details of your emergency contact(s). It is important that they:

- are not participating in TGOC22
- give their consent to Challenge Control holding their details
- know you are participating in and understand the nature of the Event
- understand that Challenge Control (and the Police if Mountain Rescue are involved) may contact them if you have missed a phone-in or there is concern for your welfare
- have access to your GPS tracker beacons/map if you are using one.

Information given will be held securely, treated confidentially and deleted immediately after the Event. Only the Coordinators, Challenge Control staff and, if relevant, the emergency services will have access to it. Please note, due to data protection regulations we can no longer hold emergency contact details on your route sheet – any information given there has been deleted.

## COVID-19 GUIDANCE

Thankfully this section is a lot shorter than last year! All legal restrictions related to Covid-19 are likely to be removed by May. However guidance in Scotland will remain that you wear a face covering in indoor public spaces such as shops and public transport. We ask that you respect this guidance. Wearing a face covering is to protect others rather than yourself. Please ensure you carry one, use it when appropriate and be aware of the, often unvoiced, concerns and vulnerabilities of others. We will speak to The Park Hotel nearer the Event about what measures will be needed at Challenge Control and in the hotel in general.

Should you test positive for Covid-19 or develop symptoms in the five days before you start or during the Event please inform the Coordinators. We ask that you follow [Scottish Government self-isolation guidance](#) which may mean you need to delay, withdraw or retire from the Event.

Covid-19 travel restrictions have been lifted for those entering the UK so overseas Challengers are no longer required to test on entry or complete a passenger locator form.

## GPS TRACKERS

If you are planning to use a GPS tracker, also known as personal locator beacons (PLBs) or satellite messengers, please give a link to your personal map on the [Medical Information and Emergency Contacts](#) form. **You must still phone in as planned even if we have access to your beacons.**

Your tracker will not be checked by Challenge Control unless you have missed a phone-in or we are concerned about your welfare. You must ensure someone at home is checking your beacons/messages regularly. Ideally, they should be one of your emergency contacts. Please **DO NOT** use the Coordinators' or Challenge Control's email address or phone numbers as one of your regular contacts.

We have had several instances of devices failing, causing anxiety to family and friends whilst the Challenger has been, thankfully, fine. Therefore, we will not initiate a search just because your tracker is not moving – we need some other indicator, such as a missed phone-in, that you may be in trouble. You should discuss with your emergency contact what they will do if your tracker stops transmitting. Challenge Control will, of course, be happy to talk to your emergency contact(s) about your welfare.

## ACCOMMODATION DETAILS

If you haven't already done so, please send us the name and phone number of any accommodation you have pre-booked. This helps us greatly when trying to locate overdue Challengers. Please add the information to your route sheet in the Overnight Halt Column and send it to us.

2 DURING THE EVENT CALL CHALLENGE CONTROL on **07562 083 996** or **TEXT 07593 185 124**  
PLEASE QUOTE YOUR NAME(S) AND CHALLENGE NUMBER(S)

## SETTING OFF

### SIGN-OUT REGISTERS

You can sign out between 9am and close of business for your start point establishment on your allocated start day. Contact details for start points can be found in the [Event Details](#) and at [www.tgochallenge.com](http://www.tgochallenge.com). The registers are normally held at reception, the exception being Glenelg where the register hangs in the porch of Mrs Davidson's house, Taobh na Mara, which is close to the War Memorial.

Please be patient. Remember that we must fit in with the normal business hours of the establishments that kindly agree to hold the registers, so please don't get upset if there is a delay.

**If for any reason you are unable to start, you must inform us as soon as possible and cancel any accommodation you have booked.**

## ALONG THE WAY

### CHALLENGE CONTROL

This is your point of contact during the Event for regular phone-ins, weather forecasts, to notify us of a change in your route or if you need to retire from the Event.

### VOICE CALLS – 07562 083 996

### TEXTS – 07593 185 124.

Open 9am-9pm daily from Tuesday 10th May to 5pm Friday 27th May.

Please add both numbers to your phone before you set off. If the voice call number is busy you may also use the text number for a short call but please do not text the voice call number. If both lines are busy, please send a text. Please do not send a text to the voice call line. Overnight please send a text or, in an emergency, phone the voice call line.

Give your name(s), Challenge number(s) and location each time you phone or text.

A friendly and confidential ear available if you need help, advice or encouragement, feel unsafe or uncomfortable or need to report any concerns.

It will be based in Newtonmore during the first ten days, then move to The Park Hotel, Montrose, for the remainder of the Challenge.

Staffed by experienced Challengers – John & Marie Donohoe, Alan Hardy, Sue & Neil Oxley and Pauline Marshall.

## SAFETY

### Emergencies

If the situation is serious, dial 999 or 112 and ask the Police to contact Mountain Rescue.

North American participants: please note that 911 does NOT work in the UK. If you are in difficulty but don't need the emergency services call Challenge Control for help and advice.

If you only have enough signal for a text you can still contact the emergency services if you have previously registered your phone. Text "register" to 999 and follow the instructions.

### Phone-ins

These are our main safety system. Please phone as soon as you arrive at your phone-in point or whenever you have a signal if you are behind schedule.

### Route changes

If you need to modify your route at any point before the Challenge please update your route sheet, highlighting the changes, and send it to the Coordinators. During the Event if you change your route at any point, or adopt a multiday FWA, contact Challenge Control as soon as you have enough mobile signal for a phone call or text.

### Maps and navigation

Whether using physical maps or electronic devices you should have a backup. Devices may run out of battery or malfunction and paper maps can blow away. Only OS or Harvey's maps are appropriate for the TGO Challenge. Sadly, the successor to the much-missed Viewranger app does not support maps that we consider suitable. Whatever you use you must have sufficient leeway either side of your route to allow for intentional or unintentional diversions. We suggest 10km or the next major glen or route to either side as a minimum.

All members of your team must be able to navigate independently and should have their own maps. We ask that you follow the Mountaineering Scotland and Mountain Rescue services request to download the OS Locate app if you do not have a navigation app that can quickly provide emergency services with an accurate grid reference. This is preferred to the What3Words app.

### GPS trackers

These devices, also known as personal locator beacons (PLBs) or satellite messengers, are a useful additional safety measure. They are certainly not compulsory but if you are injured and unable to move the capacity to contact the emergency services is invaluable, especially if you walk solo. Their capacity to send tracker beacons can be useful to Challenge Control and the emergency services if there is concern for your welfare as well as being a comfort to relatives and friends at home.

### Equipment and fitness

You should ensure both you and your equipment are tried, tested and fit for purpose. For some this will be the first long backpacking trip for several years and it will be difficult to know how the body will react to the demands of the Challenge. Please don't hesitate to simplify your route – remember FWAs can also be Feeling Weary Alternatives!

As experienced backpackers we will not give you an equipment list but please note, even if you are planning a B&B based route, you must carry a suitable shelter. You should make sure the contents of your first aid kit are suitable and in date.

### Roads

Many Highland A and B roads are blighted by fast traffic including large lorries. Please try to avoid them and take care when there is no other option. Overseas Challengers – don't forget vehicles drive on the left in the UK!

### Lyme disease

Ticks are easily picked up when walking through bracken, heather or high grass. Ticks hide in your warmer regions and bites can go unnoticed. You can buy tick removers for your first aid kit. Learn how to remove them safely and examine yourself for ticks when possible. If you feel unwell and suspect you have been bitten, seek medical advice as soon as possible. Early **Lyme disease** symptoms may include fever, headache, tiredness, and a circular rash. Many Challengers have been bitten and a few have been diagnosed with Lyme disease and successfully treated. Further information can be obtained here. Please be vigilant!

### Bothies, shelters and non-commercial accommodation

You need to make your own assessment of risks including the behaviour of others present. For example, we know of at least one occasion when a bothy inhabitant has created a serious fire risk endangering others in the building.

### Human waste

This must be buried at least 15cm deep and at least 30m from watercourses. Soiled toilet paper and sanitary products should be carried out and disposed of appropriately.

### Personal safety

In general, most people feel less at risk from others in the hills than in urban settings and the camaraderie of the Challenge hopefully reduces this risk further. Please be mindful of others and if you witness, or are a victim of, inappropriate behaviour please speak in confidence to Challenge Control.

### River crossings

Your vetter may have warned you of potentially difficult crossings. However, bridges may have been lost over the winter and in extreme conditions even small streams can become difficult or impossible to cross safely. Lindy Griffiths recent experience ([click here](#)) is a sobering account of just how dangerous a normally minor burn can be.

Please ensure you have the relevant skills and experience; if you are in any doubt, and certainly if the water comes above your knees, we advise looking for a plan B. Be prepared to divert substantial distances upstream or put up your tent and wait for the water to recede. We were mindful of Lindy's experience this spring when faced with a usually innocuous ford that wouldn't normally wet your boots but had become tumultuous water four feet deep!

### Extreme weather

You should be prepared for Scotland's unpredictable climate! We have already mentioned the risks of rivers in spate. Snow is often still lying on hills in May and fresh snow to lower levels is not uncommon. Scotland is one of the world's windiest countries, making walking conditions difficult at times, especially on the tops but not infrequently in the glens too. In particular the Lairig Ghru is a wind funnel which is why it requires a FWA. Prolonged hot weather brings the risk of dehydration, heat exhaustion and wildfires. All of these factors may necessitate using your FWA or modifying your route.

The **Mountain Weather Information Service** (MWIS) provides detailed three-day forecasts from their website and app. The **Met Office** also gives specific forecasts for some summits. Whilst Challenge Control will check both sites daily and circulate extreme weather warnings by text, you should check forecasts relevant to your route when possible.

## We're Waiting for your Call!

It can be wonderful hearing of Challengers' adventures but at Challenge Control it is the phone calls that we don't get which make the job stressful. The tale below from 2018 illustrates just how important it is to phone in on time, or as soon as possible if you are delayed.

### Day 2 – 9pm

The phone line is officially closed for the night but at Control we still have work to do. A review of the Challenge ledger gives a list of 15 individuals or groups who have failed to phone in as scheduled. A risk analysis is done on each bearing in mind their experience, type of route, age, confirmed sightings, whether solo or a group and any other risk factors. After careful consideration we text reminders and plan to re-evaluate in the morning.

### Day 3 – 9am

Several apologetic messages account for most of the "naughty list". Time for the detective work to start. For those that have given names of B&Bs or campsites we phone the establishments. This takes more off the list, but concern crystallises around one Challenger who was never booked at the remote hotel on his sheet. As other Challengers phone in we start asking about sightings of our missing few and this one in particular.

### Noon

A few more have phoned in and we have confirmed sighting of others – most simply forgot but a few have been delayed by slow progress or injury. Another attempt to contact the Challengers directly and one answers. Just two left now – a pair of first timers and an experienced solo Challenger. We know how much a phone call to an emergency contact can cause distress and worry so it's a last resort. We risk assess the two cases again – call log, ledger and route sheets are double checked – and decide to wait another few hours.

### 3pm

Still nothing. Time to phone the contacts. The pair are quickly accounted for so just our solo Challenger left. Surprisingly his emergency contact had not heard from him for many months and was unaware of his participation on the Challenge – not helpful from our point of view and worrying for his family. We search the start lists and route sheets for those on similar routes looking for late starters who will, in effect, sweep the route and send texts asking for any sightings.

### 4pm

We have a sighting! Reports of him travelling very slowly on his first day under a huge pack and camping 10km short of his planned destination. He had declined offers of help and advice to send unnecessary gear home. We now know he is behind schedule rather than having walked through his phone-in point which narrows down a potential search area. We are minded to give him another night until . . .

### 5pm

A report comes in saying our missing Challenger left camp before several quicker Challengers but none of them passed him again. So, where is he? Lying injured out of sight of the track? Now we have serious concerns about his welfare.

We have a big decision to make. Phone calls are diverted to the Park reception. We have speculated much – theories he has travelled fast and gone through early were replaced with speculation he is moving slowly or has even gone home and not told us. Now we must draw together the facts: an experienced Challenger but no recent crossings, no direct contact from him, now nearly a day overdue, the phone-in point doesn't recognise his description and reports from other Challengers that he is struggling and/or injured. Yes, most likely he is just moving very slowly but there is a significant risk he isn't moving at all . . . We dial 999 and ask for the police.

### 6pm

After a frantic hour emailing route sheets to Mountain Rescue and defining the area he is likely to be in, we are now serving tea to two Montrose Police officers being reassured we have done the right thing – to have waited longer would have lost valuable hours of daylight. Mountain Rescue are walking the relevant section of his route from both ends and police are visiting his home address to check he hasn't returned home. Two more reported sighting of him "being in a bad way" heighten our concerns.

### 10pm

The search has been called off as the light fades. There have been several difficult phone calls to his family who are understandably distressed, but we can offer no reassurance. We now start preparing the next "naughty list". A bed is set up by the phone in the Control room but not much sleep is had amid nightmares of losing our first-ever Challenger.

### Day 4 – 5am

Mountain Rescue resume search.

### 9am

A text from one of the late starters tells us he walked with him for a day but left him camping a few miles short of his phone-in point. We inform the police just as they contact us on another line to say he has been found. The cheer at Challenge Control is probably audible throughout Montrose. We can now focus on the next overdue list.

### Noon

We finally speak to the Challenger. He is unaware of the anxiety caused and plans to continue but after a frank discussion we advise him to stop and retired him from the Event. It has taken four days to walk two days of his route, he is unwilling to lighten his load and seems unconcerned at the level of concern caused.

Our elation is now tinged with frustration. This whole episode was preventable. There was a good signal where the Challenger camped on his first night. A phone call to Control telling us he was behind schedule would have prevented his family's distress, our anxiety and many hours of Police and Mountain Rescue time . . .

**Please ring us as soon as you arrive at your phone-in point. To us it is the day you are due to phone, rather than the place, which is most important. If you are behind schedule or struggling, check your phone for a signal and please, as soon as you can, ring and let us know.**

## PHONE-INS

These are the core of our safety system.

- ❑ You must ring in from every phone-in point on your route sheet. Failure to do so may result in the emergency services being contacted unnecessarily.
- ❑ If you have enough signal and charge, please ring rather than text as we prefer to talk to you when possible.
- ❑ Please phone as soon as you arrive at your phone-in point – send a text if after 9pm. Do not wait until the morning – it is all too easy to forget!
- ❑ **Texts can go astray or be delayed, occasionally arriving after a subsequent one. To avoid confusion please include the time and date in the body of the message. You should not assume a text has been received until you have had a reply.**
- ❑ **Do not** send important or time sensitive messages on Facebook, Messenger, Twitter or Instagram, by email or use our usual contact phone numbers (01540 673 360 / 01540 673 583 / 07786628105) after 9th May as these will not be regularly monitored during the Event.
- ❑ If you are behind schedule, please phone on the designated day, or as soon as you have a mobile signal. Do not wait until you reach your official phone-in point.
- ❑ We're happy to hear from you, especially solo participants and those on higher routes, in between planned phone-ins. If you have a signal, pass a payphone, or can use a landline, make the most of it and let Challenge Control know where you are.
- ❑ If you decide to change your route, or are delayed, let us know personally, and **not by a message through a third party**, at the first opportunity.
- ❑ If you have to retire from the Event, let us know as soon as possible and definitely within 24 hours.
- ❑ Overseas participants – if you intend to buy a new SIM card on arrival in the UK please let Challenge Control know your new number as soon as possible, and definitely before you set off from the West Coast.

## ACCESS

Please see the [Event Details](#) for general information and check the [Access](#) page on the Challenge website before you leave for specific information, including missing bridges. In particular, we ask you to respect the reasonable estate requests in areas such as Glen Muick and Glen Mazeran.

## LOCH NESS FERRY

Gordon Menzies sails from Temple Pier (NH 528 300), a mile from Drumnadrochit, at approximately 8am and 4-5pm – please note times may vary. Please pre-book, if you haven't already done so, by email to [gordonlochness@gmail.com](mailto:gordonlochness@gmail.com), and confirm your place by text (07831 434 691), including the names of all in your group, when approaching Drumnadrochit. Please do not phone as Gordon cannot answer whilst sailing. At busy times Gordon may need to cross several times, but he will endeavour to get everyone across to Inverfarigaig (NH 517 237) as soon as he can. The pier here has seen better days – please follow Gordon's instructions when disembarking.

## ACCOMMODATION

The popularity of the Highlands since lockdowns released and the closure of some business during the last two years means it may be difficult to find accommodation on the day. You are strongly advised to book prior to the Event. If you do not have a booking in a town or village where you intend to stay be prepared to walk on and wild camp if necessary.

Many Highland communities have had bad experiences with “fly-camping” by roads and at beauty spots in recent years. We cannot risk the TGO Challenge's good name by any association with this so let us set a good example to less experienced visitors. We ask you camp at least 1km outside of villages/towns, are not visible from any road or occupied property, and of course leave no trace when you depart. In particular, please do not camp by the Clunie Water near Braemar.

### **Borum Farm campsite, Drumnadrochit**

Contrary to previous advice, they will now be open to backpacking tents in May.

**Red Squirrel Campsite, Glencoe** has recently been taken over by Matt MacLeod who had intended to participate this year. His new job means he has had to withdraw but he will offer a discount to Challengers staying and showers and mobile phone charging to anyone passing through.

**Kilvrecht campsite, Carie by Loch Rannoch** is currently closed as they have been unable to recruit a warden. This may change if they appoint someone by May.

A few notes on those places that make a special effort for the Challenge:

**Ault na Goire, Errogie** – Janet and Alex Sutherland offer camping and meals and will also hold parcels. Please contact them in advance ([janet.sutherland@talk21.com](mailto:janet.sutherland@talk21.com) or 01456 486711) if you want to stay.

**Cougie** – sadly, following the recent loss of their father Brian Pocock, Melanie and her family are unable to offer any food or accommodation this year. We have offered condolences and ask Challengers whose routes pass through Cougie to give them the space they need and avoid camping in the area.

**Callater Lodge** – Bill Duncan and Mike Glass will once again welcome Challengers but there will be a few changes:

- ❑ Numbers inside the Lodge, at any one time, will have to be limited for fire safety as well as limiting the spread of Covid-19. They hope to provide a gazebo outside.
- ❑ **They will not be providing evening meals** so please bring your own food. Bacon rolls will be available in the mornings.
- ❑ They will have some alcohol available but not the usual array so please bring your own if you want to share a drink with them.
- ❑ Camping will be available as usual beside the lodge and the MBA bothy will be open.

**Mar Lodge** offer hot drinks and biscuits in the Stables from 16th - 24th May and will hold re-supply parcels but cannot take any responsibility for them. Please label clearly with your name, Challenge number and "TGOC for collection" and send to: Rangers Office, Mar Lodge Estate, Braemar, Aberdeenshire, AB35 5YJ.

**Newtonmore Hostel** – we will be offering hot drinks and cakes to passing Challengers with donations for Cairngorm Mountain Rescue. The hostel itself will not be open as it will be in use as Challenge Control. Showers are available for a small fee. We will hold parcels and can buy in gas canisters if requested prior to the Event. Please let us know in advance if sending a parcel.

**Dalwhinnie** – The Loch Ericht Hotel allow camping in the grounds and offer showers to Challengers camping or passing through. The new Dalwhinnie Old School Hostel is also fully open and will stock up with some basic supplies including camping gas. Reservations can be made at [dalwhinniehostel@gmail.com](mailto:dalwhinniehostel@gmail.com).

**Laggan** – The Coffee Bothy have always welcomed Challengers often opening on their days off. The business is currently for sale though it is unlikely to happen before the Event. This year they will be closed on Wednesday 18th and Thursday 19th May. We thank them for their support and wish them well in their new lives. The Caoldair Pottery café at NM 620 936 will be open daily.

**The Burn, nr Edzell** is not available this year.

**St Drostan's, Tarfside** will be open once again and run by Challenge volunteers Ann & Alvar Thorn and Gus & Rita McKinnon. Please note there will be changes from previous years:

- ❑ Volunteers will arrive by mid-afternoon on Thursday 19th May and leave by noon on Thursday 26th May.
- ❑ The hostel will be open from 9am to 9pm. Outside of these hours it will be closed to everyone except residents.
- ❑ There will be drinks and light snacks such as cakes available but there will be no main meals or alcohol. **Please ensure you have sufficient food with you.**
- ❑ Hostel beds will be available on a first-come-first-served basis at a cost of £25 per night. Please note these cannot be prebooked and the hostel cannot hold resupply parcels.
- ❑ Camping will be available as usual on the playing field.
- ❑ You will be able to leave your name and Challenge number on a phone-in list which will be passed to Control every evening.

Please note the Coordinators do not have any control over the organisation of any formal or informal accommodation (other than St Drostan's), bothies or other gatherings so you use them at your own risk.

#### SUPPLIES

Where possible please use local shops – they will appreciate your custom. However, in many areas supply options are limited so you may need to post yourself resupply parcels. Most accommodation providers will be happy to hold a parcel for you but please ask permission in advance. Gas or other fuel for stoves cannot be posted so you need to think carefully about how you will access them.

Please respect Scottish Government guidance that face coverings should be worn in shops.

#### A FEW RULES

**Companions** – dogs are not allowed on the Challenge. Anyone breaking this rule will be disqualified. Unofficial crossings are not permitted. The limit on numbers taking part in the Event have been set for sound reasons and with regard to visitor pressures. Anyone crossing with a non-Challenger will be disqualified, although friends or relatives may join you for a few days.

**Walk Every Step** – you may take transport away from your route for accommodation or supplies but you **MUST** return to the exact same spot before

you continue. If you have a gap in your crossing due to injury, illness or fatigue please let us know on Control. We appreciate this is your holiday and many people will have used valuable annual leave so you may of course continue if you wish but it will not count as a completed crossing.

**Behaviour** – we know the vast majority of Challengers do not need reminding of their responsibilities to others or that they are representing the Event as well as themselves. However, when the drinks flow in some of the towns and villages that welcome the Challenge every year spirits can sometimes get a little high. . . Please be aware of how this may affect others.

Many communities, whilst welcoming the boost to their economies, remain anxious of the consequences of an influx of people, so the good reputation of the TGO Challenge is even more important than usual. The Event cannot be policed as such and neither do we want it to be. Its good name relies on the good behaviour, camaraderie, patience, helpfulness and tolerance of its participants. If you see, or are subjected to, any behaviour you feel is inappropriate please contact Challenge Control at the earliest opportunity.

## FINISHING YOUR CROSSING

### FINISH CONTROL

When you reach the east coast, please make your way to **The Park Hotel, John Street, Montrose DD10 8RJ** to complete your Challenge. Motorised transport is now allowed! You must sign out at Challenge Control on or before 5pm on the 15th day of your crossing or 5pm on Friday 27th May, whichever is the earlier, so please ensure you allow enough time to get to Montrose.

**Pin badges** – if you ordered a pin badge when applying this can be paid for (cash payments only – £5 each) and collected at Challenge Control.

### A WALK TO THE PARK

Reaching The Park Hotel from Montrose Station sometimes proves more difficult than navigating your way across Scotland!

From the train station, walk up to the roundabout with its swan sculpture. Keep right, crossing the road where the railing ends, go straight ahead up a small alley (Railway Close) to the High Street. Cross the High Street, turn left, then right down John Street. The Park Hotel is on the second corner.

### CELEBRATING YOUR CROSSING

Last year's enforced smaller gatherings were much appreciated by many and with this year's start and finish being staggered we plan to have more, smaller dinners. The plan for 2022 is:

- Celebratory dinners each night from Monday 23rd May to Friday 27th May
- 3 course meal, usually costing around £25, paid directly to The Park Hotel when arriving in Montrose.
- Maximum 100 people per evening.
- Plaques will be presented to those who have crossed 10, 20 or 30 times.
- Everyone who has requested a dinner on their route sheet is guaranteed a place.
- Confirmation will be requested during the second week of your crossing with flexibility to change the day if you get behind or ahead of schedule.
- Space for Challengers to bring a guest on most evenings. Please request this via the Coordinators.

### THE PARK HOTEL

We would like to say a very big thank-you to the Park Hotel. Throughout the forty-year history of the TGO Challenge they have made its finish a wonderful event. Over the last 2 years they have been incredibly helpful, resourceful and flexible. They are a family-run business and the pandemic hit them particularly hard. Whilst we appreciate not everyone will be comfortable in a social setting, we very much want to support them so please consider attending one of the meals, having a drink at the bar or staying the night. Discounted rates are available to Challengers. Please ring 01674 663400 or email [reservations@parkmontrose.co.uk](mailto:reservations@parkmontrose.co.uk). Please note the discount is not available for online bookings. They have only a few rooms left on Friday 27th May but good availability on other days. They also allow a number of Challengers to camp in the garden with breakfast and access to a shower at a very reasonable rate. This must be pre-booked by phone or email.

### PARCELS

You can post clean clothing to Challenge Control to pick up on your arrival in Montrose.

- Label clearly with your name and Challenge number.
- Post to: TGO Challenge, The Park Hotel, John Street, Montrose, Angus, DD10 8RJ.
- Do not send parcels until shortly before the Event as the hotel cannot store them for long periods.

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

**Reunions** – the Spring Gathering (organised by Alan Hardy) takes place in March/April. This year it was held in Hayfield in the Peak District. The Scottish Reunion (organised by Kirsten Paterson) will be held in the autumn. We will circulate details whenever arrangements are finalised.

**Hill and Mountain Walking Club** – founded by Challengers, this meets regularly throughout the year both in the UK and abroad. You are welcome to come to a meet before joining. Details can be found [here](#).

## 2023 TGO CHALLENGE

We very much hope we can finally return to normal (probably a new normal – whatever that is!) for TGOC23. We will review TGOC22 in the summer and give more precise details before the entry process starts in September 2022. Provisional dates are 12th – 26th May 2023.

We wish you a safe and successful crossing.

### Once a Challenger: Always a Challenger

There are many past Challengers, who can no longer participate but who would like to be involved in some way. Do you know any? If so, please put them in contact with us.

So, don't be a stranger and keep in touch!



## 2022 Facts and Figures

A warm welcome to the 129 people who will be crossing for the first time. As ever, first timers are the life blood of the Event. It is also good to see many of our 2021 first timers returning. We are relieved that the camaraderie of last year's smaller June Event outweighed the midge bites!

This year our youngest Challenger will be 24-year-old Daniel Haig. The three octogenarians who completed crossings in 2021 all return – John Burt is once again our senior Challenger at 83 years young followed by Jean Turner (82) and Alan Kay (81). They are joined by David and Margaret Brocklehurst who with a combined age of 162 are our senior couple.

We have twelve Challengers hoping to complete their 10th crossing and two, Ian Cotterill and Margaret Hems, who will reach 20. Sadly Bert Hendrikse, who would have been our first overseas Challenger to reach 20 crossings has had to withdraw due to a broken arm. With the 2020 cancellation and overseas travel restrictions preventing a 2021 crossing it will be, we hope, fourth time lucky for him in 2023!

Plaques will be presented to all those completing their tenth, twentieth or thirtieth crossings at the celebratory dinners in Montrose. Friday's will be a very special evening as, assuming he crosses successfully, Graham Brookes will become only the second person to complete thirty Challenges.

It's good to see our overseas contingent back to full strength. Challengers from 16 countries outside of the UK will make up 26% of 2022 Challengers. 35 Challengers from the USA and 11 from Canada will be making their way across the Atlantic. Top of the European league is the Netherlands with 22 followed by Germany with 16, France, Ireland and Sweden with 3, Denmark, Ireland and Lithuania with two and one each from Finland, Norway and Slovakia. Outside of Europe

and North America we welcome three participants from Israel, and it is good to see our regular Challenger from Barbados returning after two Covid-affected years. Don't forget to bring the sunshine William!

The top of the start point league has swapped around again with Shiel Bridge reclaiming top spot with 68 starters; Dornie has jumped to second with 53 and Oban is third with 52 whilst Mallaig, which was 2021's most popular start is now in fourth place with 49. Strathcarron is becoming increasingly popular with 42. Mid table we have Lochailort (31), Torridon (22), Glenelg (20), Portavadie (19), Kilchoan (18). Acharacle (15) has gained in popularity. Bottom of the league are Plockton (6), Morar (5) and Ardrishaig (4). No risk of them being relegated, as they all offer excellent routes. Why not try one for TGOC23?

The staggered start means a maximum of 20 people will start from any start point in a day. Our aim, when we planned TGOC22, was to reduce the pressure of numbers on popular start points and despite the relaxation of regulations we think this is still a good thing. We hope though that the 10 Challengers who will start by themselves are looking for a bit of solitude.

87 Challengers will reach the east coast at Stonehaven knocking Montrose with 77 into second place. St Cyrus with 50 comes in third. Lunan Bay is popular this year with 35 just ahead of Dunnottar Castle on 32. Kinnaber Links (28), despite the reopening of the Charlton strawberry farm café, is down to sixth followed by Scurdie Ness (20), Aberdeen (17) and Arbroath (17). All other finish points are in single figures. Only 9 Challengers plan to finish north of Aberdeen, the majority of them in or around Fraserburgh and Peterhead. There are 10 Challengers using a unique finishing point – we rather hope they are not the same 10 who will start alone!

## DAMAGE FROM STORMS ARWEN, MALIK AND CORRIE

This has been a winter of extreme winds and it is estimated that Scotland has lost 8 million trees since November. The eastern side of Scotland has suffered the worst damage but there could be recently windblown trees on any route especially those that go through commercial forestry plantations. It is likely that tracks used by forestry vehicles and those on recognised frequently used rights of way will be prioritised for clearance, but lesser-used paths may be blocked well beyond May.

Forest and Land Scotland warns:

*Windblow is inherently dangerous with huge tensions and forces both in individual trees as well as in jammed stems and root plates. Unstable trees, parts of trees, root plates and stones can suddenly topple, tip over, fall or roll away without any visible reason even days, weeks or months after a storm. Therefore, avoid walking through windblown areas and find routes to walk around them. If you can't find a route around stop and return back along route already used.*

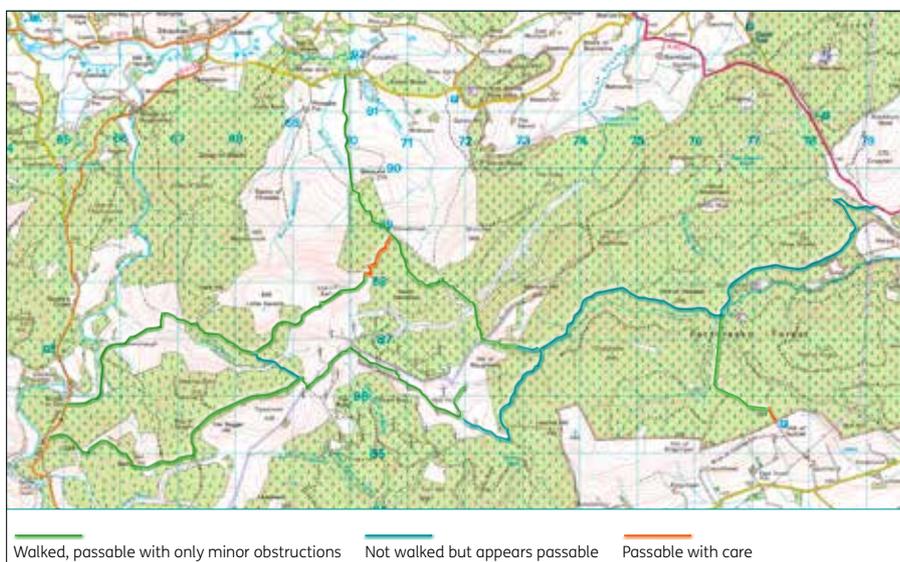
*We also ask please that all forest users are aware of biosecurity. Tree diseases and pests are posing an increasing threat to our forests and can be spread very quickly from forest to forest on muddy tyres, boots or paws. We believe everyone who loves spending time in the forest will want to help if they can to reduce the risk of spread of disease. For some simple ways **everyone** can help follow the link to find out more <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/keep-it-clean?highlight=keep%20it%20clean>*

### FETTERESSO FOREST

We explored the Fetteresso Forest ourselves in early March and can report the following:

#### ----- Routes walked by Co-ordinators with only minor obstructions

In a few places single trees are across the track but are easily circumnavigated. The eastern half of the path connecting North Dennetys and Hill of Roughbank has been clear felled in recent years so previous fallen trees have been removed. It is worth noting the track along the edge of the forest from Glenskinnan (NO 707 888) has been obstructed by longstanding fallen trees once it re-enters the forest for many years and remains so.



#### ----- Routes not walked but appear passable

**Windfarm Access track:** This was used by several vehicles whilst we were in the area, so we presume it is clear all the way to the main exit at NO 791 893. We did not have time to explore the smaller tracks via Stonehouse and Tillybreak to Mergie. The clearing regularly used for camping at NO 765 874 was accessible and free of windblown trees.

**Builg Road Right of Way:** The path from NO 683 867 has been clear felled as far as the Builg Burn and its course from there did not appear to have any large section of windblown trees affecting it. Should it be blocked, there would be access to the windfarm via a firebreak or by following the Builg Burn.

#### ----- Routes walked and passable with care

The descent NE from Kerloch has several trees across its path but branches have been cut to allow passage underneath them. The track continues to deteriorate and is very eroded with loose stones. It is not in a state to be used by forestry vehicles so is not likely to be a priority to be fully cleared.

The Hill of Quithel exit (NO 774 855) is severely affected by windblown trees and the main track is completely blocked. Forest and Land Scotland warn this area is dangerous. However, a path over fallen branches has been forged along the western side which we found to be passable with care.

Click [here](#) for high-resolution maps of Fetteresso and Glen Doll from our downloads area.

**GLEN DOLL**

The information below is based on reports and maps provided by the excellent Glen Doll ranger service. There are plans for the clear up to start in early April so it is highly likely there will be forestry operations underway during the Challenge.

**..... Routes impassable**

**Jock's Road** is the worst affected route with hundreds of windblown trees across it. It will take many months to clear it and it certainly will not be passable by May. **Please do not try to descend Jock's Road into Glen Doll as there is no feasible way to bypass these blockages or walk around the forest.**

**Dounalt Way:** This is the track on the south side of the White Water which is blocked but has been prioritised for clearance though this is also not likely to be completed by May.

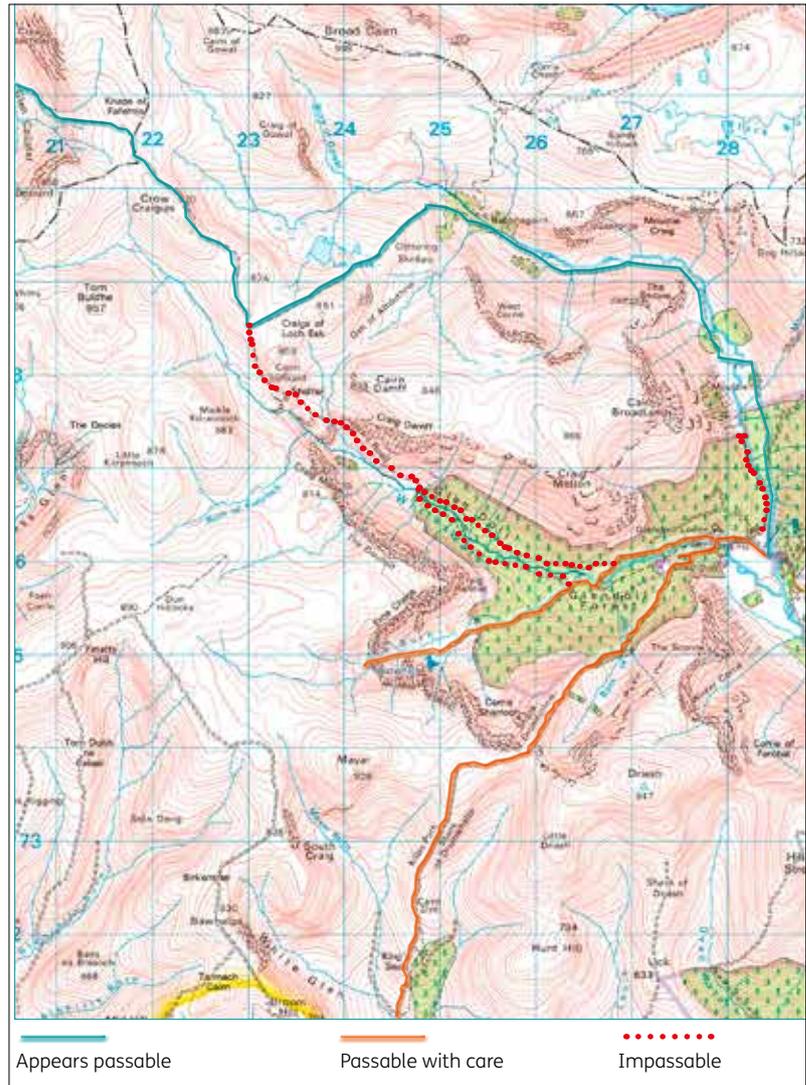
**----- Routes passable with care**

**Corrie Fee Path:** There are fallen trees affecting the path near the forest edge but it is possible to bypass them with care.

**Kilbo Path:** There are fallen trees across the path at the forest edge around NO 266 749 which can be bypassed by diverting onto the open hillside.

**----- Routes not walked but reported to be unobstructed**

**Glittering Skellies - Bachnagairn – Moulzie:** This is the only realistic route into Glen Clova from the top of Jock's Road. The start of the path off Jock's Road may require careful navigation as it has not been clear on the ground in the past. Although the path along the west bank of the South Esk is blocked the track on the east has been cleared so you will need to use the bridge at NO 277 789 to access this.



**BALMORAL ESTATE**

The Rangers report that all main tracks are passable on foot though in places you may have to divert around fallen trees.

**BENNACHIE**

A temporary route has been created from the summit of Bennachie to the Visitors Centre. However, routes to Oxen Craig and Mither Tap from the Back o'Bennachie carpark at NJ 662 245 are currently closed and it is not clear when they will reopen.



## TGO CHALLENGE SUPPORTERS

### The Great Outdoors magazine

*The Great Outdoors* is the UK's longest-established hiking magazine. We have been inspiring people to explore wild places for more than 40 years.

Through compelling writing, beautifully illustrated stories and eye-catching content, across a range of platforms, we seek to convey the joy of adventure, the thrill of mountainous and wild environments, and the wonder of the natural world. We're here to help you make the most of your time in the hills and mountains.

As well as stunning photography and top class writing, we are famous for the rigour of our gear reviews. Our reviewers are the country's most experienced team of testers – including world-renowned backpacking experts and long-distance walker, Chris Townsend – and we always ensure gear is put through its paces in challenging mountainous environments. Our essential skills advice is written by top outdoor instructors, guides and experts.

Our roster of contributors ranges from established outdoor writers and authors to younger, up and coming voices who reflect a new generation of outdoor enthusiasts.



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### Ultralight Outdoor Gear

Ultralight Outdoor Gear was founded to provide backpackers with real choice when it comes to their gear and to present more information than is available elsewhere about each piece of kit. We use as much of the gear as we can and tell our online visitors honestly what we think, the stuff we don't have time to use gets examined at our offices and we give our verdict on it all, product by product.

You'll also find articles about backpacking routes around the world, the latest gear technology, how to choose products from the wide ranges available and other useful articles on subjects like food, winter backpacking, essential kit etc.

We are passionate about backpacking, especially in wild places. This year two of our team will be participating in TGOC22.



[click here for website](#)