

Welcome to Strathdon

Strathdon boasts stunning scenery, an abundance of wildlife and is steeped in history. A deep-rooted sense of community and self-reliance is to be found within its settlements.

A network of paths and tracks explore the area, providing a variety of routes to enjoy with fine views, a rich local history and abundant wildlife. You can also join paths and minor roads together to make your own, longer routes.



Lonach Gathering

The normally quiet Strathdon comes to life on the fourth Saturday of August for the Lonach Highland Gathering – arguably one of the most famous highland games in Scotland. The Gathering keeps alive the traditions, music and Highland dress of the district.

If you enjoyed exploring the paths around Strathdon, look out for other path leaflets in this series to help you explore more of the Cairngorms National Park.

Pick up a leaflet locally or download from cairngorms.co.uk



Explore the SnowRoads, a 90-mile road trip, one of the best driving routes in the Scottish Highlands.



Visitor information is available at visitcairngorms.com

Produced by the Cairngorms National Park Authority in association with the Strathdon Community Development Trust.

Cover image: River Don © France Denerley. Poldullie Bridge © Charlotte Milburn. Strathdon, Bellabeg, the Doune © Frances Denerley. Lonach gathering © Isla Gordon

Paths around Strathdon

Where rivers meet



Cairngorms National Park

Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh

A heart of water

The River Don winds its way through Strathdon, fed by waters from the surrounding glens. It both nourishes and divides the strath, presenting a challenge for travellers. You'll cross many bridges while exploring the area!

The single arch stone Poldullie Bridge, one of the oldest, was built in 1715 and spans *Poll Doille*, 'powl dol-ye', the Gaelic for 'pool of blackness'.



Poldullie Bridge

The main settlement of Bellabeg sits where the Water of Nochtly flows into the River Don, and was originally known as Invernochty.



View over Bellabeg

Keep an eye out along the rivers for the rich riparian wildlife – dippers, otters and visiting osprey are often spotted.

History and heritage

The Strathdon area has a rich history, with evidence of human habitation dating as far back as 2000 BC.

The Doune of Invernochty is one of the finest examples of Norman earthworks in Scotland. The motte and bailey castle was built on the site of a much earlier Pictish fortress. This was the stronghold of the mormaers of the ancient Scottish kingdom of Mar. Mormaer is from the Gaelic *mor* ('great') and *maer* or *maor* ('steward') and was a regional ruler in medieval Scotland.



The Doune of Invernochty

Although the fort became redundant in the 13th century, the bailey church remained the local place of worship until the mid-17th century, when it was moved to the south bank of the River Don.

Field and forest

The area of Strathdon is one of contrast. The landscape changes from low-lying fertile farmland to dramatic woodland, leading up into the wilder, more rugged moorland and hills. The area is bound by the Deeside Hills to the south and the Ladder Hills to the north, including the mountain road to the Lecht ski centre.



View over Strathdon

Farming has been the mainstay of the local economy since the 18th century. The scattered ruins and remnants of many small farms and crofts are still visible throughout Strathdon. During the 19th century the landscape changed with the planting of large conifer forests, the earliest of which were in 1815. As the trees are felled for timber the landscape continues to change, often revealing stunning views.

Paths around Strathdon

We hope you enjoy exploring the trails around Strathdon, but please do so responsibly. The National Park is a special place with rare wildlife, some of which is sensitive to disturbance. You can help protect the local wildlife by following all signs and keeping dogs close by (on a lead where requested).

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Roughpark path

A varied walk from Bellabeg to Roughpark taking in a memorial avenue of lime trees, the impressive Doune of Invernochty, wildlife ponds, forest and farmland. Lovely views over Strathdon.

Mixture of firm, gravel and grassy paths. Long, moderate slopes.



easy

2 miles
3.2km
Allow
1½ hours

Distance / time is there and back

half mile

one kilometre



NORTH

Ben Newe

An interesting hill walk with superb views. Climb up through the forest before reaching open hill and a rocky outcrop at the summit, which incorporates a medieval well and trig point. Well worth the effort!

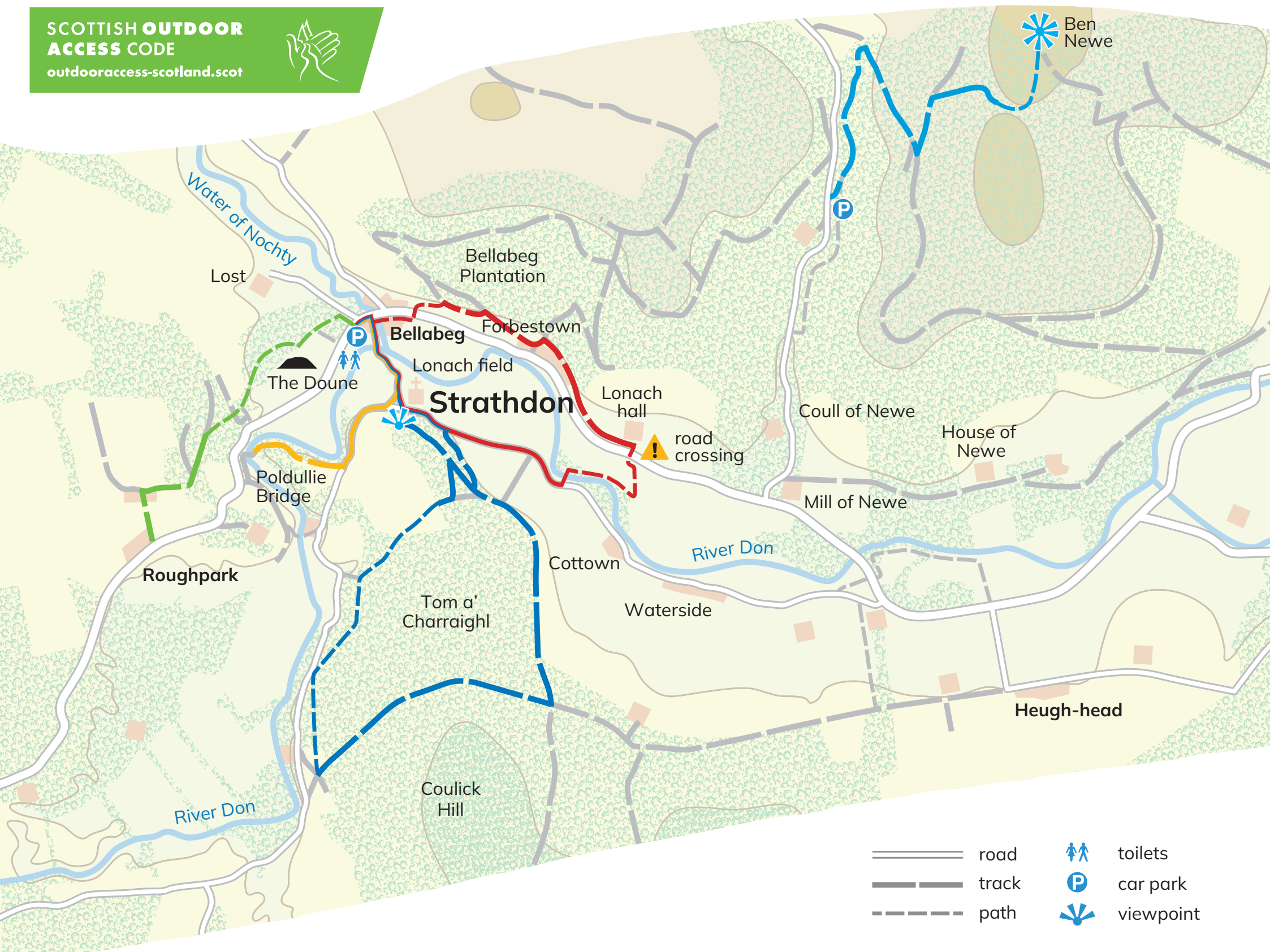
Forest tracks with fairly steep long climbs, can be muddy. Rough, uneven steep path to summit.



strenuous

2½ miles
4km
Allow
2½ hours

Distance / time is there and back



Poldullie Bridge

An exploration of the 'backstreets' of Strathdon. The route passes Strathdon Kirk, around Kirk Hill and onto the picturesque Poldullie Bridge over the River Don.

Minor roads with long, moderate slopes. No verge / footway in places.



easy

2 miles
3.2km
Allow
1¼ hour

Distance / time is there and back

Bunzeach trail

A forest walk around Tom a' Charraigh offering lovely views over Strathdon. A worthwhile side path leads to a viewpoint on Kirk Hill.

Minor roads to reach forest. Firm and grassy forest tracks and rough, unsurfaced paths. Long, moderate climbs and several gates.



moderate

4 miles
6.5km
Allow
2½ hours

Lonach loop

From Bellabeg this route rises behind Forbestown, offering lovely views across the River Don before reaching Lonach Hall. The route continues across the road, through farmland and across the River Don before returning along the minor road to Bellabeg.

Uneven, rough grassy paths with moderate slopes, rough firm forestry track and minor roads. Narrow in places with gates.



moderate

2 miles
3.2km
Allow
1½ hours