

Exploring Caithness – Site Guide for School Fieldwork

Introduction

This site guide has been developed and produced by Scottish Natural Heritage and Highland Council Ranger Service as part of a Highland Environmental Network (HEN) project, initiated in 1999, to facilitate fieldwork for 5-14 Environmental Studies by schools within The Highland Council area.

The “School’s Out!” project has produced the following, all currently available free of charge to all schools within The Highland Council area.

Local site guides which are currently available for:

- Inverness, Nairn and Easter Ross
- Skye and Lochalsh
- Lochaber
- Caithness

Topic-based activity packs for fieldwork in the following areas:

- Woodland
- Seashore
- Harbour
- Ponds
- Burns and streams
- Waste
- Landscape
- Minibeasts

In preparation:

- Peatlands

The site guides have been compiled by a wide range of local providers, as well as by members of the HEN School Group. Used in conjunction with the guidelines for best practice and the “School’s Out!” activity pack, it is hoped that this site guide will provide a useful resource for those in Caithness, pursuing environmental education aims through the 5-14 Environmental Studies and right across the curriculum.

The “School’s Out!” resources are copyright free to all Highland schools and community groups.

For additional copies of this site guide and any other “School’s Out!” publications please contact: Highland Environmental Network: Tel: 01349 863441. Any feedback or comments should be sent to: Highland Environment Network, c/o Raigmore Primary School, King Duncan’s Road, Inverness, IV2 3UG. Tel: 01463 234971

Tidal information – we suggest you contact the local harbourmaster before you visit the following sites:

Berriedale
Dunbeath Harbour
Dunnet Beach
John O’Groats Harbour
Keiss Beach and Harbour
Latheronwheel Harbour

Lybster Harbour
Reiss Beach
Sannick Bay
Scrabster Harbour (01847 892199)
Thurso Beach and Riverside
Wick Harbour & River (01955 602030)

Coastguards:

Scrabster Harbour: 01847 892779
Wick Harbour Trust: 01955 602030



Acknowledgements

A number of organisations have helped to compile the information in this site guide, in particular Highland Council Ranger Service and Scottish Natural Heritage. Local landowners and managers were also involved in the process. Toni Clark, MNT Associates also assisted in the development of this project.

Map production is by Wendy Price. Illustrative work is by Artysans and typesetting and printing are by Nevisprint.

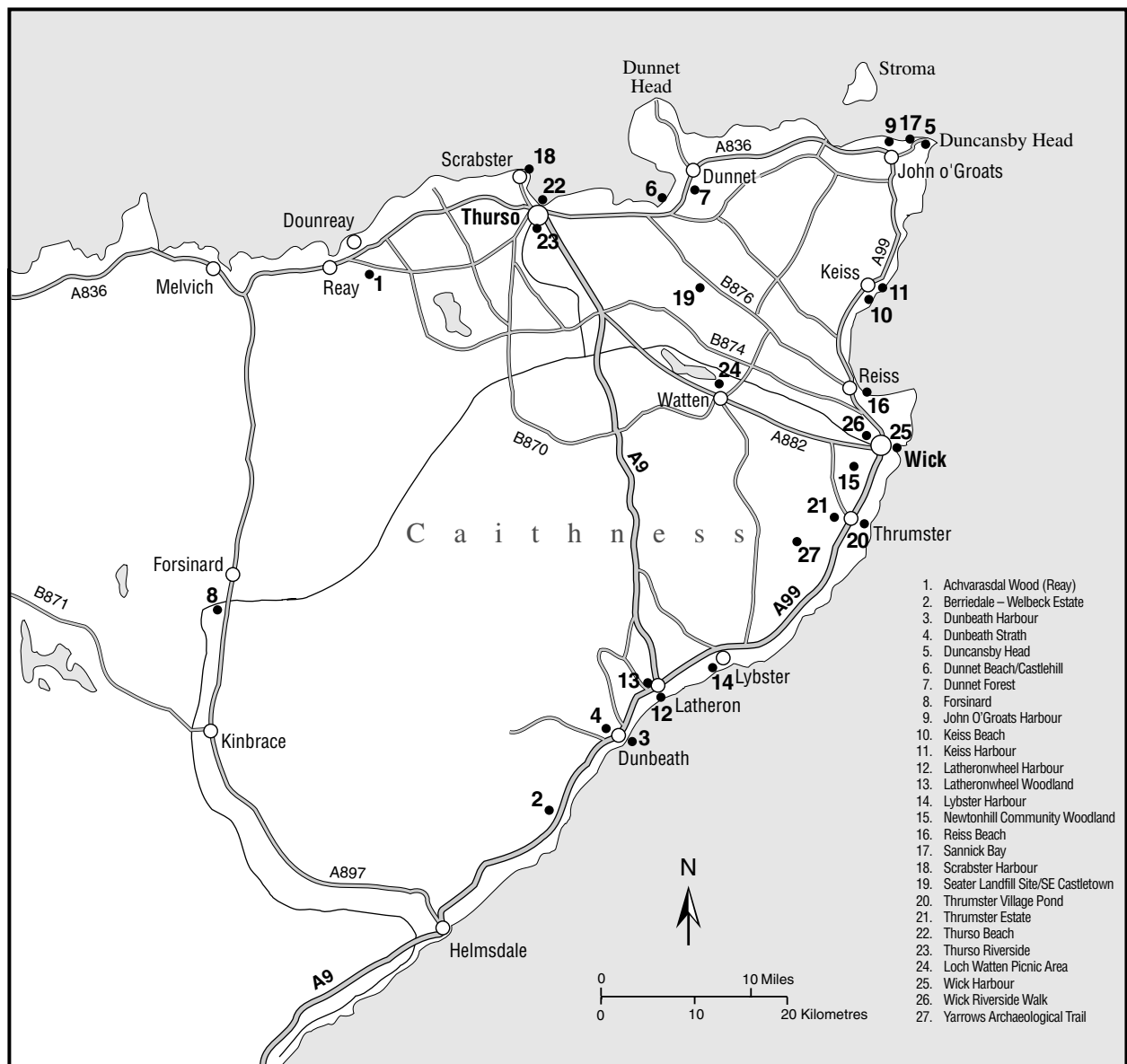
The Highland Environment Network (HEN) Schools Group have also been involved in this project, by initiating the "Schools Out!" project, supporting its development and promotion.

Key to maps

	Picnic area		Viewpoint
	Toilets		Information
	Campsite		Footpath
	Parking		Track
	Telephone		Route of walk

The maps are not suitable for navigation purposes.

Caithness Sites



Contact details “Where to go for HELP with your visit”

Highland Council Ranger Service, Wick.....	01955 607758
Highland Council Ranger Service, Dunnet Bay.....	01847 821531
Highland Council Archaeology Section	01463 702250
Highland Council Protective Services	01955 607737
Highland Council Roads Department.....	01955 607762
Highland Environment Network.....	01349 863441
Scottish Natural Heritage (Golspie).....	01408 633602
Welbeck Estate, Berriedale.....	01593 751237
Dunbeath Heritage Centre.....	01593 731233
Latheronwheel Estate.....	01593 741206
Waterlines Visitor Centre, Lybster	01593 721520
Sinclair Bay Residents Association.....	01955 602396
Thrumster Estate.....	01955 651876
Wick Harbour Trust	01955 602030
Wick Heritage Centre.....	01955 605393
South Yarrows Farm.....	01955 651345
Scrabster Harbour.....	01847 892779

Links to “Schools Out, Fieldwork made easy” pack of fieldwork activities

Site Name	Access Grid Ref	Peatlands	Burns and streams	Harbour	Landscape	Minibeasts	Ponds	Seashore	Waste	Woodland
Achvarasdal Wood (Reay)	OS11 NC987649									
Berriedale – Welbeck Estate	OS17 ND119227									
Dunbeath Harbour	OS17 ND166294									
Dunbeath Strath	OS17 ND159299									
Duncansby Head	OS12 ND405734									
Dunnet Beach/ Castlehill	OS12 ND219705									
Dunnet Forest	OS12 ND221698									
Forsinard	OS10 NC891425									
John O’Groats Harbour	OS125 ND380735									
Keiss Beach	OS12 ND344601									
Keiss Harbour	OS12 ND352609									
Latheronwheel Harbour	OS11 ND191321									
Latheronwheel Woodland	OS11 ND189323									

Links to “Schools Out, Fieldwork made easy” pack of fieldwork activities

Site Name	Access Grid Ref	Peatlands	Burns and streams	Harbour	Landscape	Minibeasts	Ponds	Seashore	Waste	Woodland
Lybster Harbour	OS11 ND244349									
Newtonhill Community Woodland	OS12 ND348495									
Reiss Beach	OS12 ND344556									
Sannick Bay	OS12 ND397732									
Scrabster Harbour	OS12 ND101703									
Seater Landfill Site (SE Castletown)	OS12 ND249603									
Thrumster Village Pond	OS12 ND340454									
Thrumster Estate	OS12 ND335449									
Thurso Beach	OS125 ND121688									
Thurso Riverside	OS12 ND115678									
Loch Watten Picnic Area	OS12 ND247550									
Wick Harbour	OS12 ND366509									
Wick Riverside Walk	OS12 ND361511									
Yarrows Archaeological Trail	OS12 ND361511									

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13. Latheronwheel Woodland
14. Lybster Harbour
15. Newtonhill Community Woodland
16. Reiss Beach
17. Sannick Bay
18. Scrabster Harbour
19. Seater Landfill Site/SE Castletown
20. Thrumster Village Pond
21. Thrumster Estate
22. Thurso Beach
23. Thurso Riverside
24. Loch Watten Picnic Area
25. Wick Harbour
26. Wick Riverside Walk
27. Yarrow's Archaeological Trail

1) Achvarasdal Wood (Reay)

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

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Access point:

Achvarasdal Wood surrounds Achvarasdal House on the Shebster road, east of Reay off the A836.
Grid Ref: NC 987 649

Site description:

This is old mixed woodland with birch, sycamore and conifers. It's a good place to study broad-leaved trees with natural regeneration taking place. It also has areas of wetland and contains a broch.

Access for special needs:

Good quality firm footpaths around the forest.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Spring, summer and autumn when good for fungi.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access. Ranger Service can accompany. See below.

Safety aspects:

Care needed when getting out of the bus onto the road.

Nearest help/telephone:

In emergency at Achvarasdal House.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Level paths up to 2km.

What to take:

Warm clothes, magnifiers, tree field guides and insect ID.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

Information board on drive near entrance.

FACILITIES

Parking:

There is parking for a bus in the lay-by on the road and for a few cars just inside main entrance.

Toilets:

None. Nearest are at Sandside Bay open in summer months. Ten minute drive and parking for bus available.

Food:

Packed lunch required.

Nearest wet weather option:

None (Dounreay visitor centre, open April – end October).

Picnic tables:

None. Several benches along paths.

Shelter:

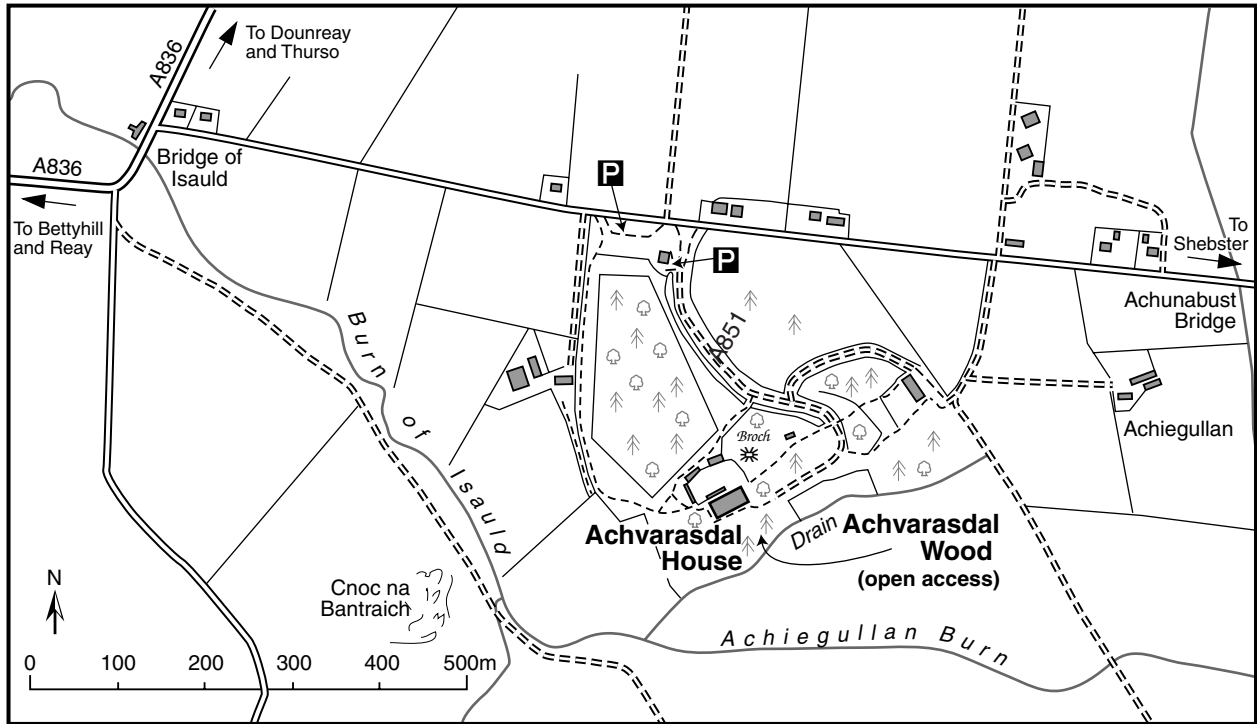
The woods are reasonably sheltered, nothing else.

Ranger/expert help:

Achvarasdal Woodland Management Committee, Tony Bradford, Secretary. Tel: 01847 811298. Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Contact Tel: 01847 821531.



1) Achvarasdal Wood (Reay)



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Woodland
- Minibeasts

Related topic work:

- Non-flowering plants
- Bats
- Archaeology (broch)

Link visit with sites at:

- Dunnet Forest
- Thurso Riverside

2) Berriedale – Welbeck Estate

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

17

Access point:

The Estate Office is to the west of the A9 at the bottom of Berriedale Braes.
Grid Ref: ND 119 227.

Site description:

Berriedale Strath consists of rich woodland with mixed natural and planted species. There is also a working Victorian garden on the estate, which may be available for viewing by closely supervised children. The shingle/pebble seashore is a good location for viewing breeding seabirds during the summer months.

Access for special needs:

The woodland grows on both sides of the private, single-track, tarmac road, running to Langwell House. Views of the seashore are possible from Mill Road while access to the shore is across a suspension bridge.

Opening times/best time to visit:

All year – best to visit in good weather conditions.

Who to contact before you visit:

A call to Welbeck Estate is required for any visit.
Mr R. Howden (Estate Factor), Welbeck Estate, Berriedale. Contact Tel: 01593 751237

Safety aspects:

Care is required crossing the A9 road and the suspension bridge leading to the seashore. Usual water hazards and slippery rocks on shore.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Wick Harbour Trust, Harbour Terrace, Wick. Tel: 01955 602030.

Nearest help/telephone:

Welbeck Estate Office, Berriedale village. Public telephone by post office/estate office (approximately 200m from beach).

Terrain/amount of walking:

Minimal. Parking facilities are adjacent to sites. Woodland is within a few hundred metres of parking area.

What to take:

Equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

None.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Private single track road to Langwell House is not suitable for coaches – please arrange parking with the estate. Parking for the seashore is available before the suspension bridge on Mill Road.

Toilets:

Berriedale café – by arrangement. Tel: 01593 751400.

Food:

Packed lunches required or Berriedale café.

Nearest wet weather option:

Berriedale café – by arrangement. Dunbeath Heritage Centre. Contact Tel: 01593 731233.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

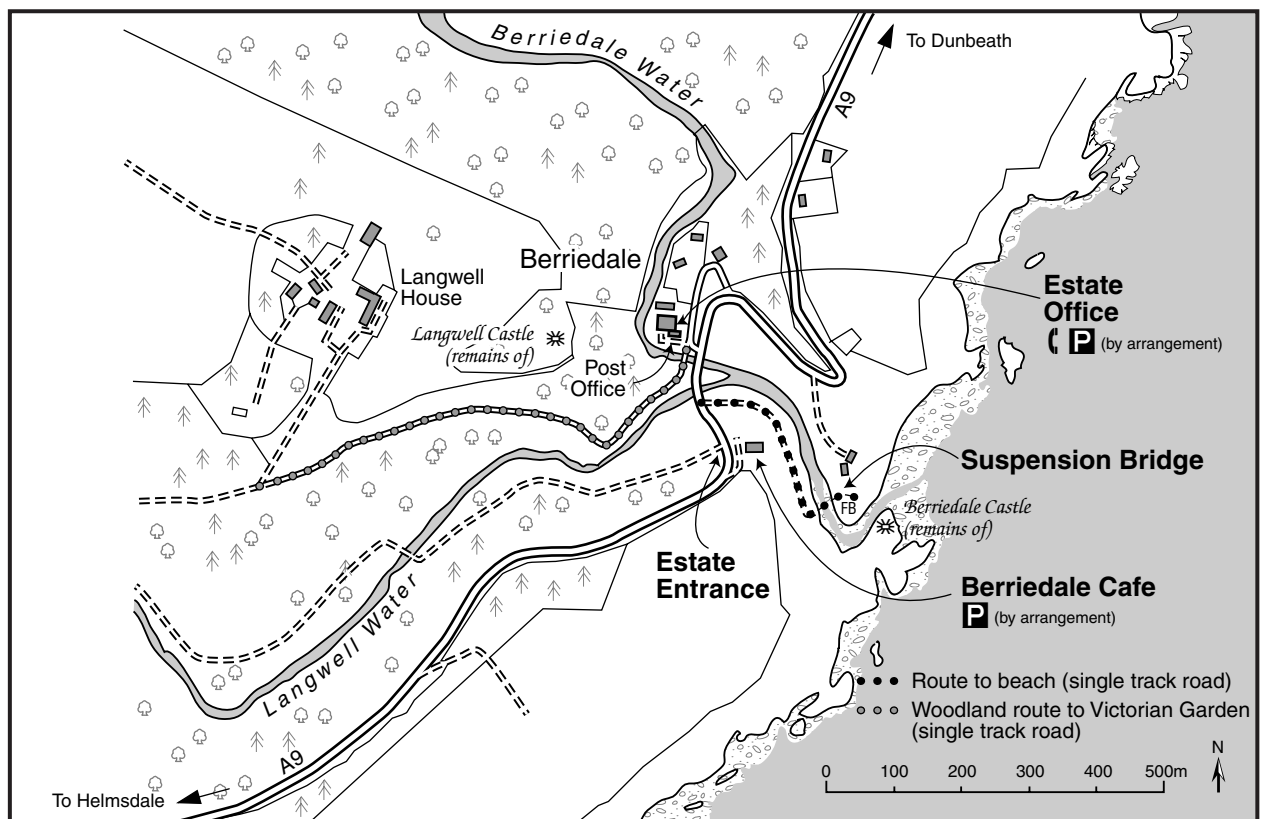
By arrangement with the Estate and/or Berriedale café.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



2) Berriedale – Welbeck Estate



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Woodland
- Seashore
- Minibeasts

Related topic work:

- Birds
- Garden

3) Dunbeath Harbour

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

11

Access point:

Take old A9 into village and follow road running along the north side of Dunbeath Water to the harbour. Grid Ref: ND 166 294.

Site description:

Small harbour, once home to a sizeable herring fleet. The site offers a river estuary, areas of shingle, and a small sand and boulder beach bound by rocky cliffs. Also impressive views of rocky coastal scenery.

Access for special needs:

Good hard surface around the harbour. Access to beach is over rocks and shingle.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Throughout year.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

Harbour contains deep water – no hand rails along most of the working areas of the quay and pier. Flagstone surface of the pier and quay slippery in wet weather.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Wick Harbour Trust, Harbour Terrace, Wick. Tel: 01955 602030

Nearest help/telephone:

Public phone at the harbour and in the village.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Minimal at beach. It is possible to walk from Dunbeath Heritage Centre to the beach, approximately 2km round trip – it may be advisable to arrange for transport to collect the group from the beach.

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

Interpretation panel at the harbour.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Parking for several cars. There is also space for large buses.

Toilets:

The harbour.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Dunbeath Heritage Centre.

Picnic tables:

At small beach to the north of harbour.

Shelter:

Fisherman's Bothy in the harbour – must be arranged with Dunbeath Preservation Trust (c/o Dunbeath Heritage Centre) prior to outing. For small groups only, no seating.

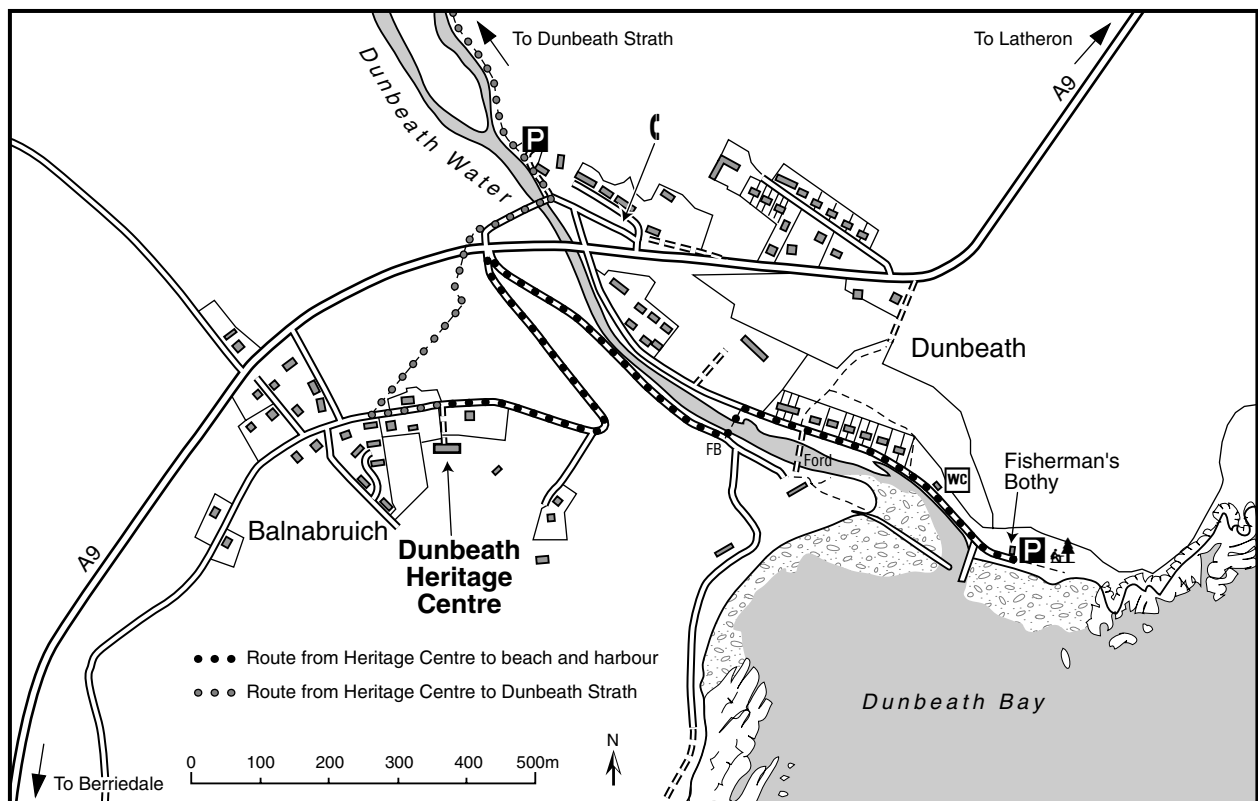
Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.

Dunbeath Heritage Centre can offer expert guidance and education regarding the heritage of the area – prior booking essential. Tel: 01593 731233.



3) Dunbeath Harbour



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Harbour
- Seashore

Related topics:

- Habitats (river mouth, shingle, sandy shore, rocky shores)
- Oil industry
- Historic community
- Fishing industry
- Cetacean studies

Link visit with site at:

- Dunbeath Strath

4) Dunbeath Strath

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

11/17

Access point:

Access to the parking area is via the old A9 route through Dunbeath, directly under the A9.
Grid Ref: ND 159 299.

Site description:

Dunbeath Strath is one of the most popular and well known walks in Caithness. The Strath is famed for both its beauty and its connections with the author Neil M. Gunn, whose book "Highland River" is based on the area. The walk along the Strath is most often undertaken from the small car park and picnic area next to the old, tumble-down meal mill. It is possible to walk the entire length of the Strath from the harbour. It must be noted that the path covers land with stock and visitors are asked to keep to the path, shut gates and keep dogs on leads etc.

Access for special needs:

Uneven surfaced path with kissing gates and steps.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Open all year – best time spring, summer and autumn.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

Paths slippery in wet weather. Steep sided banks alongside path in places.

Nearest help/telephone:

Public phone at the harbour and in the village.

Terrain/amount of walking:

The path along the Strath is unsurfaced, resulting in an uneven path surface along most of the route. It is possible to have a lengthy walk of over 6 miles (round trip), from the car park to the stone quarry. Walking boots are essential.

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on site interpretation:**

There is an interpretation panel at the start of the walk providing much background information.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Parking for 5 cars. Sufficient space for large buses to turn at access road to parking area, for groups not walking from the harbour. The parking area is signposted.

Toilets:

None on site – public toilets at the harbour.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Dunbeath Heritage Centre.

Picnic tables:

Picnic tables, benches and litter bin, adjacent to the car park.

Shelter:

None along the Strath, other than wooded sections of the walk.

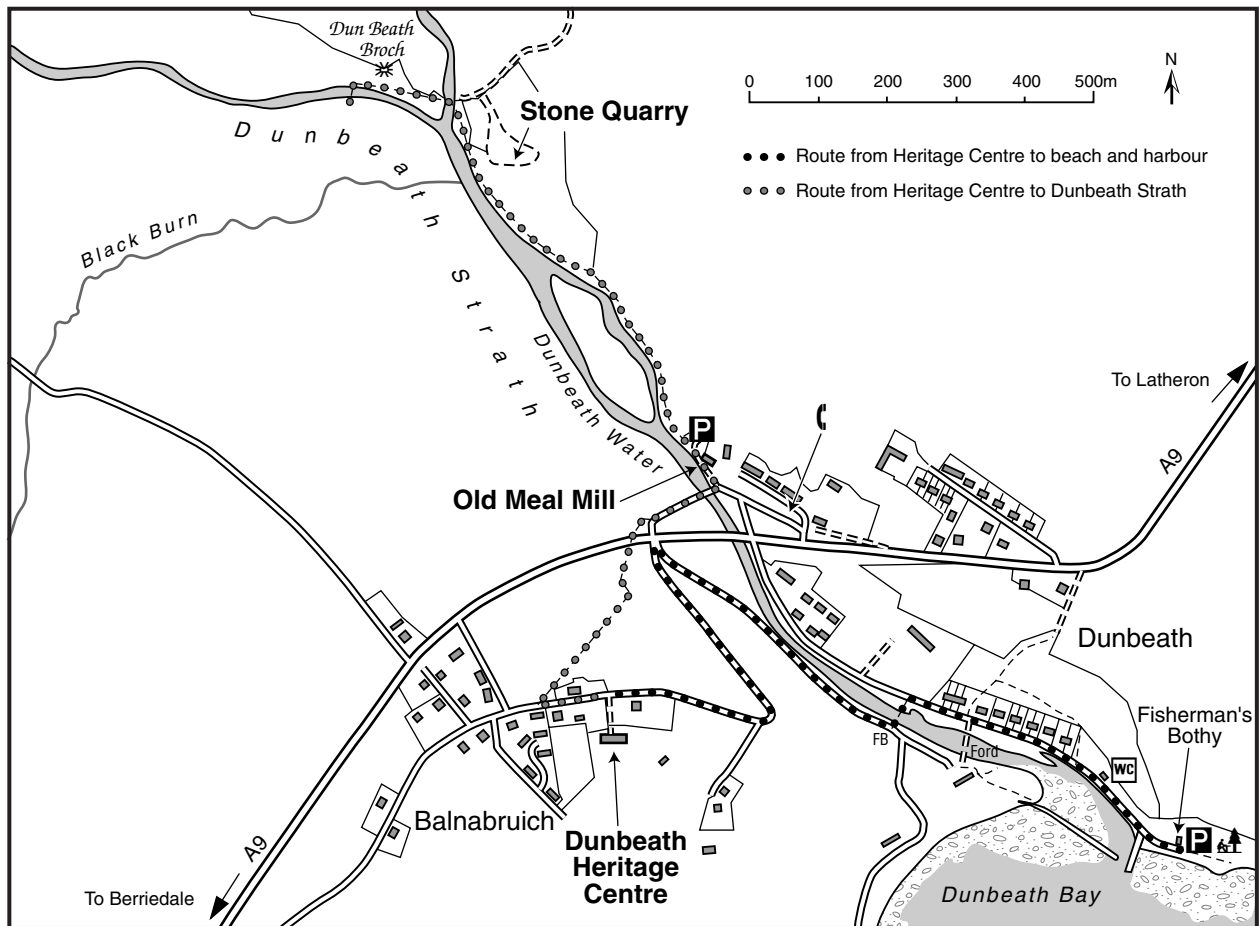
Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.

Dunbeath Heritage Centre can offer expert guidance and education regarding the heritage of the area – prior booking essential. Contact Tel: 01593 731233.



4) Dunbeath Strath



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Bog/peatland
- Burn/stream
- Landscape
- Minibeasts
- Woodlands

Related topic work:

- Historic community
- Prehistoric man
- Archaeology
- Agriculture/land use through the ages
- Brochs

Link visit with site at:

- Dunbeath Harbour

5) Duncansby Head

OS Map 1: 50 000 Sheet No:

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Access point:

Right turn off A99 in John O'Groats village (opposite the post office). Two miles to lighthouse car park. Grid ref: ND 405 734.

Site description:

Headland with 60 metre high sandstone cliffs looking out to Orkney. In May, June and July it is the breeding ground to many seabirds. The site is fenced off from the sea.

Access for special needs:

Uneven, grassy (often muddy), informal network of tracks. No constructed path surfaces except in car park.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Summer months as the site is very exposed.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

Although cliffs are fenced make sure no one crosses them. It is an exposed site so avoid windy weather or haars.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Scrabster Harbour. Tel: 01847 892779.

Nearest help/telephone:

Public phone in John O'Groats village (2 miles). NB. Mobile phone signals are difficult on the headland.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Slightly undulating, and gentle gradient. Two miles return walk to Stacks.

What to take:

Stout footwear/ waterproofs and warm clothing as site is exposed.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

Interpretative panels at lighthouse car park. Leaflet on sea birds is available from Highland Council Rangers or Tourist information.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Car park at lighthouse for buses and cars.

Toilets:

John O'Groats (fee payable).

Food:

Packed lunches required or snack can be bought in John O'Groats.

Nearest wet weather option:

John O'Groats Village.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

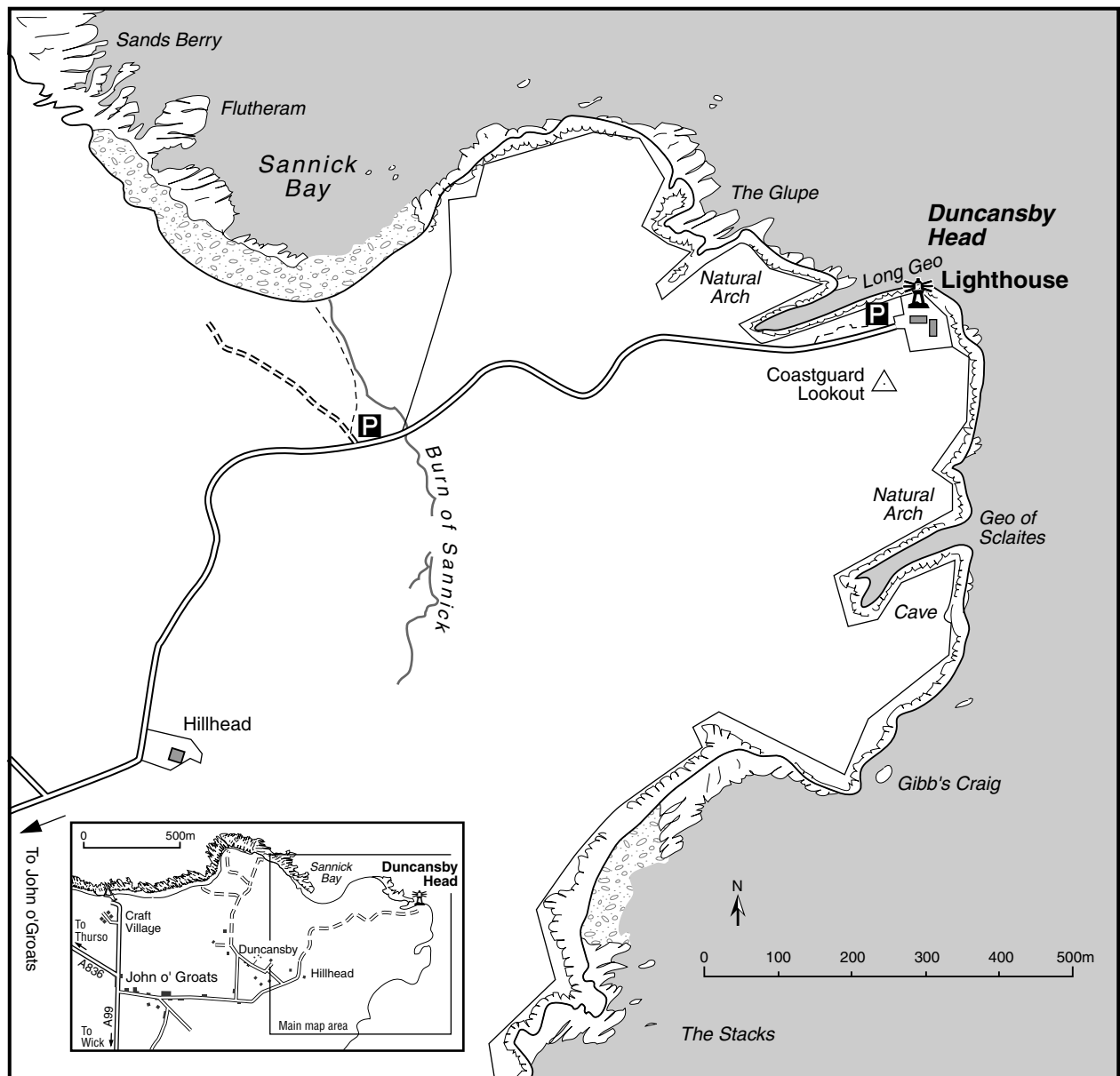
None.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Contact Tel: 01847 821531. Binoculars are available for children's use if accompanied by Ranger.



5) Duncansby Head



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Landscape

Related topic work:

- Birds
- Marine life
- Coastal erosion
- Map reading

Link visit with sites at:

- John O'Groats Harbour
- Sannick Bay

6) Dunnet Beach/Castlehill

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access points:

Access is 800m south of Dunnet village at the Natural History Centre and caravan park on A836, Grid Ref: ND 219 705. The south end of the beach is accessible from east of Castlehill harbour, Grid Ref: ND 202 682.

Site description:

Three kilometres of sandy beach and dunes, with rocky shores at either end. At the Castlehill end there is a further network of waymarked paths.

Access for special needs:

Rough and uneven, soft sand and steps along boardwalk. Surfaced path from car park at south end of beach.

Opening times/best time to visit:

All year, very exposed particularly in winter.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access. Highland Council Ranger Service can accompany. See below.

Safety aspects:

Sea and rock pools need to be treated with care. Occasional broken glass, sharp objects etc. along the strand line.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Scrabster Harbour. Tel: 01847 892779.

Nearest help/telephone:

Ranger base in Natural History Centre at Grid Ref: ND 219 705. Public phone in Dunnet village 1.5 miles.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Flat beach, dunes unsuitable for walking in except on paths.

What to take:

Stout footwear/wellies, waterproofs and warm clothes.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

Interpretative panels at north end car park. Natural History Display at Dunnet Bay car park. Ranger service can supply topic-related activity worksheets. See below.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Car park 800m south of Dunnet village at the north end of beach, large enough for buses. Smaller rough surfaced car park at southern end of beach near Castlehill harbour.

Toilets:

Open in summer (Easter to late October) at Natural History Display car park.

Food:

Castletown/Dunnet villages.

Nearest wet weather option:

Natural History Display, at Dunnet Bay.

Picnic tables:

Two at each end of beach.

Shelter:

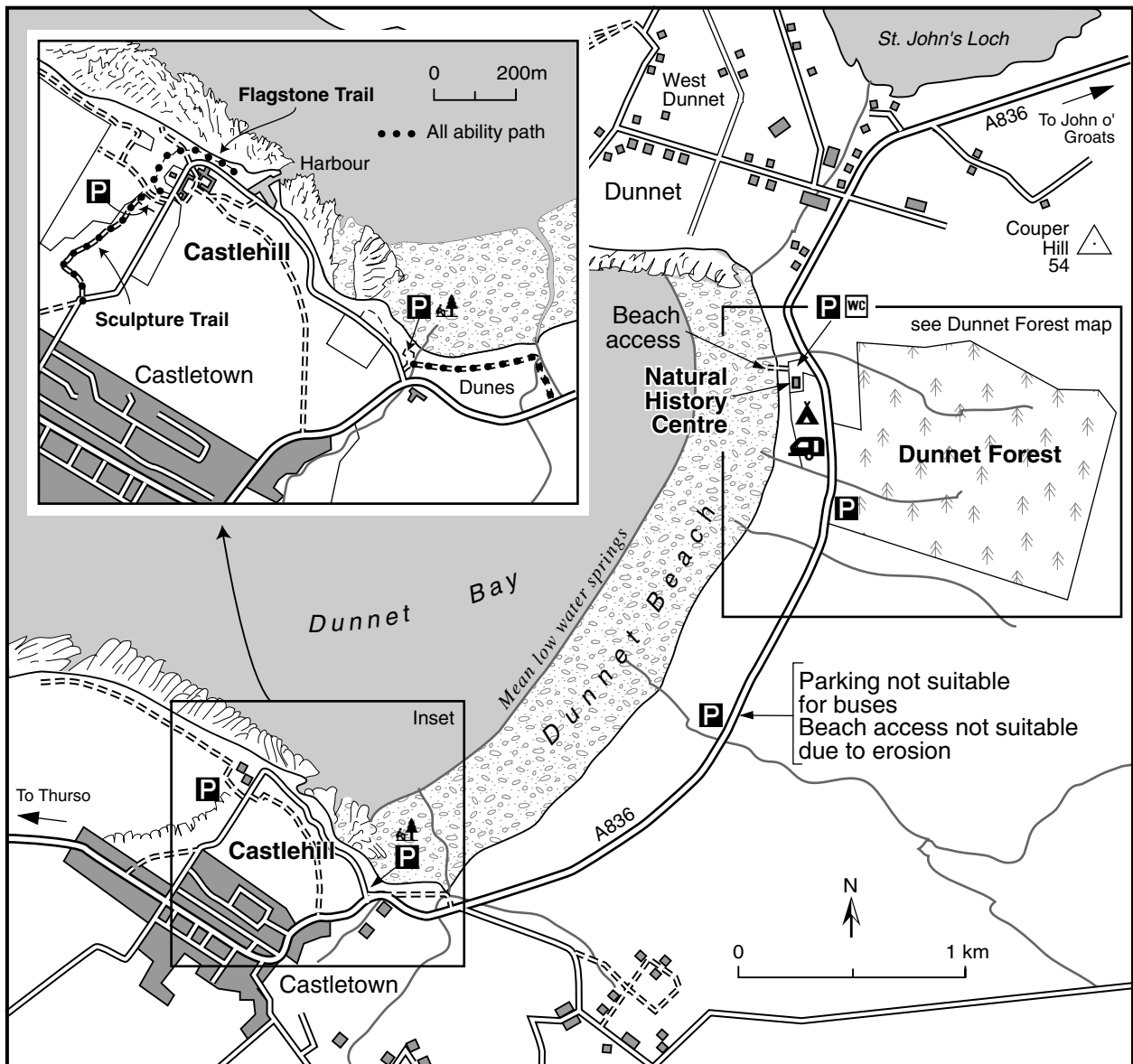
Natural History Display.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Contact Tel: 01847 821531.



6) Dunnet Beach/Castlehill



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Landscape
- Seashore

Related topics:

- Food webs
- Salt water habitats
- Dune formation
- Coastal erosion
- Litter survey
- Rock pools

Link visit with site at:

- Dunnet Forest

7) Dunnet Forest

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

Dunnet Forest is on A836 2 miles north east of Castletown village. Grid Ref: ND 221 698.

Site description:

Former commercial forest planted in the 1950s as an experimental plot. Now owned by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and leased by Dunnet Forestry Trust. Broadleaf trees have been introduced and new ponds excavated. Waymarked paths of varying lengths.

Access for special needs:

One mile of all-abilities, easy access path.

Opening times/best time to visit:

All year. Spring, summer, autumn particularly good.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

Management of the wood will be taking place over the next few years. Observe forestry safety signs. Remind all to look out for ticks in summer – advise children to wear long trousers and not shorts. Treat ponds with respect. It is advisable to avoid the site in gale force winds due to possible falling trees. Some of the more remote paths have deep ditches to cross.

Nearest help/telephone:

Public phone in Dunnet village 1.5 miles. Castletown.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Flat, good tracks. Extensive network throughout forest – both waymarked and unwaymarked. Distance depends on which habitat you visit.

What to take:

Stout footwear, wellies, waterproofs, leaflet, magnifiers, clip board and pencils.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

Interpretative panels at entrance plus trail leaflet and topic-related worksheets available from Highland Council Ranger Service.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Forest car park, room for bus to drop off pupils. Bus can then remain in car park at Dunnet Bay.

Toilets:

Open in summer (Easter to late October) at Natural History Display car park.

Food:

Castletown/Dunnet villages.

Nearest wet weather option:

Natural History Display, Dunnet Bay.

Picnic tables:

One in forest clearing near entrance.

Shelter:

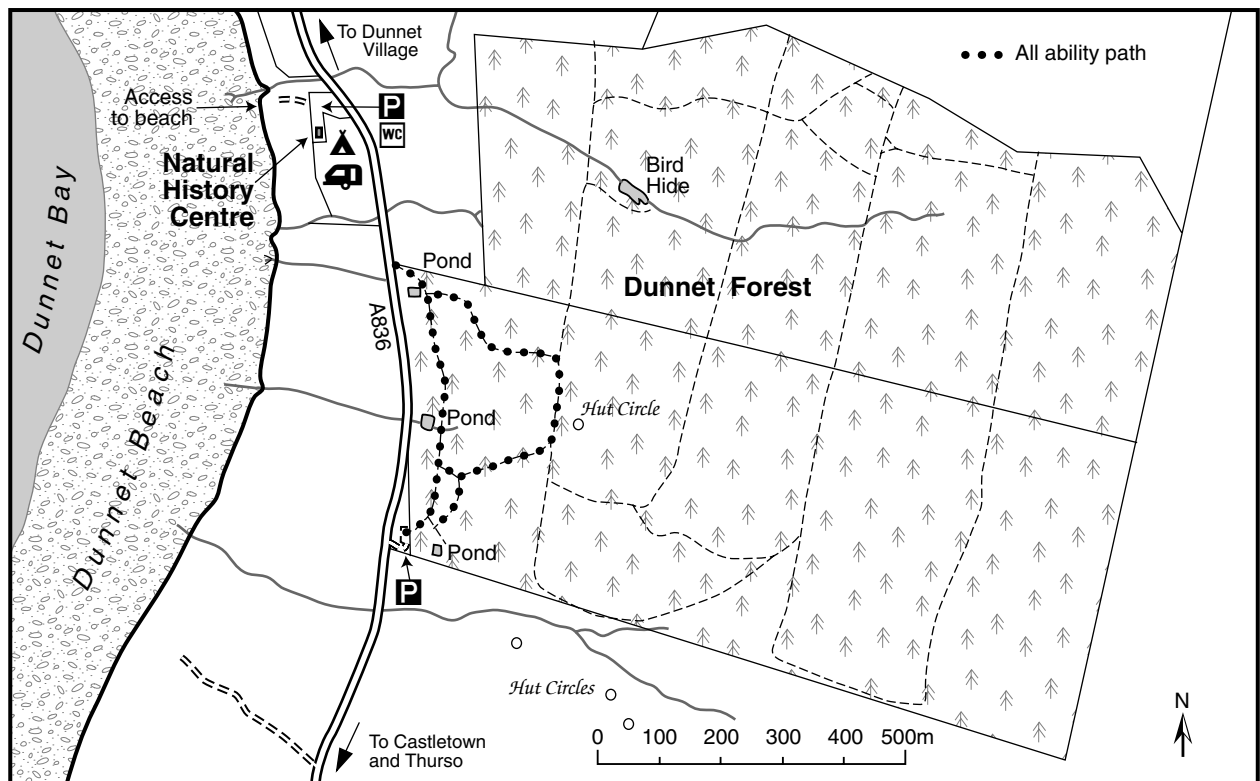
Small bird hide near new pond, Natural History Display Centre.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Contact Tel: 01847 821531.



7) Dunnet Forest



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Mini beasts
- Pond/loch (with Ranger Service)
- Woodland

Related topic work:

- Orienteering
- Non flowering plants
- Food webs
- Forest management
- Fresh water habitats
- Archaeology (hut circles)

Link visit with site at:

- Dunnet Beach

Other Comments:

Dunnet forest will be undergoing future management work, which could possibly effect access.

8) Forsinard

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

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Access point:

Grid ref: NC 891 425. Forsinard Station on A897 between Melvich (14 miles) and Helmsdale (24 miles).

Site description:

This is an area of blanket bog or peatland, with extensive pool systems, situated in Strath Halladale, Sutherland. Although outwith the county it is probably the best place to study peatbogs as there is a good interpretative facility. The RSPB employ field teachers to run a programme of activities for visiting schools.

Access for special needs:

The Dubh Lochan trail is uneven and over rough boggy ground. Visitor centre has facilities for the disabled.

Opening times/best time to visit:

The reserve is open at all times. The visitor centre is open Easter – end October 9am to 6pm. Best time to visit is April to end of June. RSPB will open the centre for groups throughout the year.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access to reserve. RSPB staff are available all year. See below.

Safety aspects:

Warm and spare clothing needed, as this is a very exposed site.

Nearest help/telephone:

In emergency – Forsinard visitor centre.

Terrain/amount of walking:

There is a 1 mile self-guided trail (Dubh Lochan) on flagstones laid over the peat. It provides magnificent views and a close-up look of the lochans and peat.

What to take:

Warm clothes, wellies, magnifiers, binoculars, insect ID and midge repellent.

Cost:

Free. Donations to RSPB welcome.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

There are two leaflets available – an introduction to the nature reserve and nature trail guide, interpretive display in station buildings, a teacher's pack on peatlands and video about the reserve. RSPB staff are available all year for your visit. See below.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Coach/car park next to visitor centre.
Regular Scotrail service to Forsinard.
Tel: 0845 7 48 49 50, service offers good opportunity to observe the flow country and afforestation.

Toilets:

At visitor centre – when open. Forsinard Hotel – check opening times.

Food:

Packed lunch. Forsinard Hotel – check opening times.

Nearest wet weather option:

Visitor centre – when open. See above.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

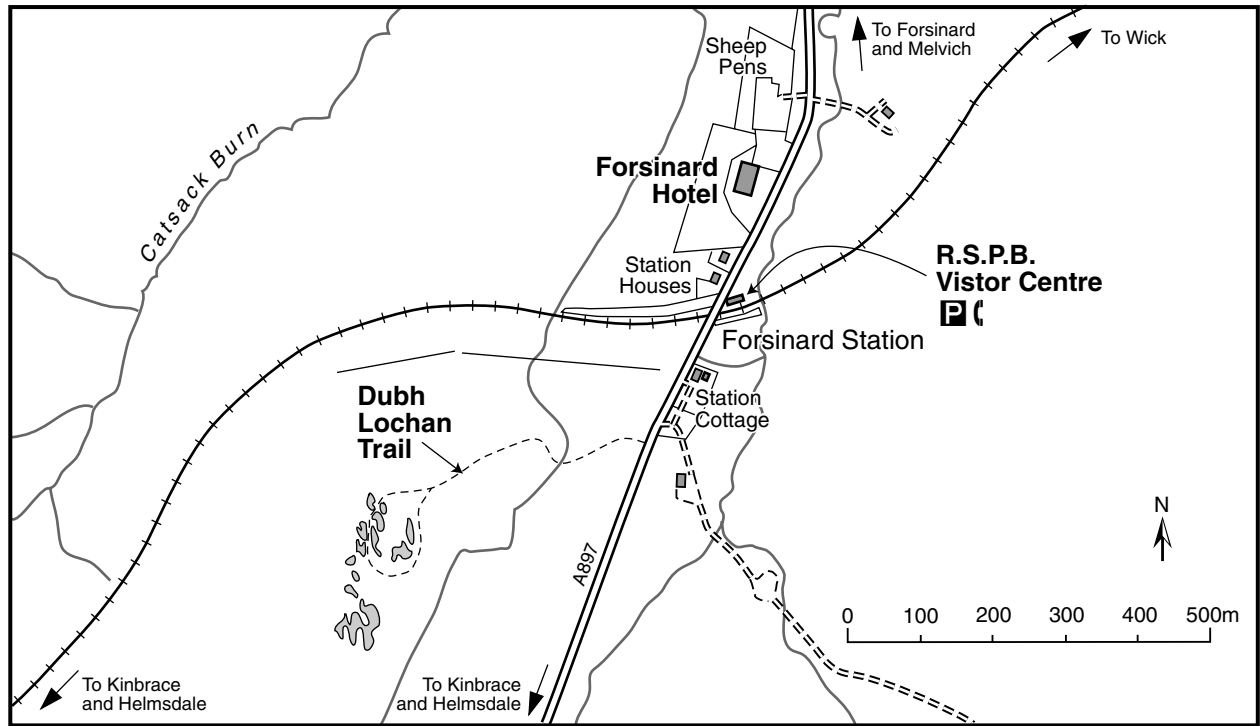
There is no shelter once on the trail. Visitor centre – when open, station buildings.

Ranger/expert help:

The RSPB field teachers based at Forsinard will, with prior arrangement, be available to run a programme of activities to suit individual classes. Visits normally last three hours. Contact Tel: 01641 571225 to discuss your visit and which topics you would like to be covered.



8) Forsinard



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Seashore
- Bog/peatland
- Landscape
- Minibeasts

Related topic work:

- Birds
- Forest Management

9) John O'Groats Harbour

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

Continue along A99 through John O'Groats village – harbour and craft village are well signed.
Grid Ref: ND 380 735.

Site description:

Busy harbour, ferry terminal with extensive tourist attractions and shops.

Access for special needs:

Hard surface paths.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Summer.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access. Ferry operators D.Thomas
Tel: 01955 611353.

Safety aspects:

Usual caution for water safety. Very busy with traffic.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Scrabster harbour.
Tel: 01847 892779.

Nearest help/telephone:

Harbour office ferry terminal or Tourist Office.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Flat, approx 0.5km.

What to take:

Stout footwear/ waterproofs and warm clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

Information panels in car park area and leaflets from tourist information.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Ferry car park and public car park. If leaving a bus it would be best to arrange beforehand.

Toilets:

Yes (open March – November, fee payable).

Food:

Grocer in John O'Groats and small tourist shops – in season.

Nearest wet weather option:

Last House Museum.

Picnic tables:

Yes.

Shelter:

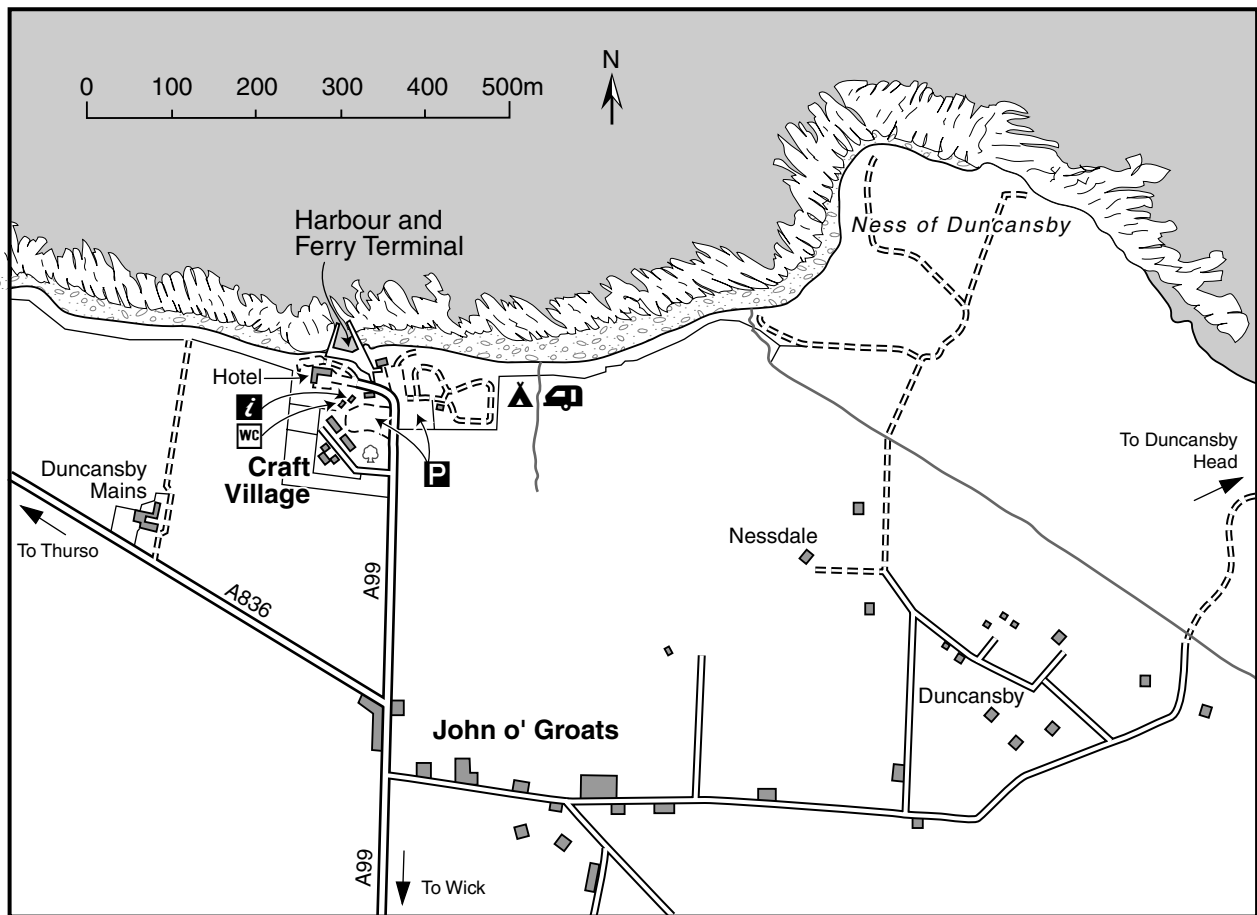
Tourist shops.

Ranger/expert help:

Ferry operators D.Thomas.
Contact Tel: 01955 611353.
Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Contact Tel: 01847 821531.



9) John O'Groats Harbour



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Harbour

Related topic work:

- Safety at sea
- Map reading

Link visit with sites at:

- Duncansby Head
- Sannick Bay

10) Keiss Beach

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

Access by vehicle from the A99, prior to reaching Keiss village from the south. The beach is signposted from the A99. Grid Ref: ND 344 601.

Site description:

The area to the north of the access point is pebble and rock covered shore, whilst the area to the south is mostly sandy. High dunes extend along the shore towards Reiss.

Access for special needs:

An uneven path with no hard surface runs parallel with beach.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Open access to the beach all year. For beach work, visit approximately 2 hours before low tide.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

Pebbles and rocks can be slippery.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Wick Harbour Trust, Harbour Terrace, Wick. Tel: 01955 602030.

Nearest help/telephone:

Public phone in Keiss village.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Access is adjacent to the parking area. 1 - 2.5 miles to cover whole site. A track follows the shore north to Keiss village and harbour, 30 mins (approx).

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

None.

FACILITIES

Parking:

There is limited parking to the northern end of the sands in Sinclair's Bay. Parking for 4 cars. Sufficient space for a bus if other cars are not parked.

Toilets:

Keiss village (seasonal). Wick.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Wick.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

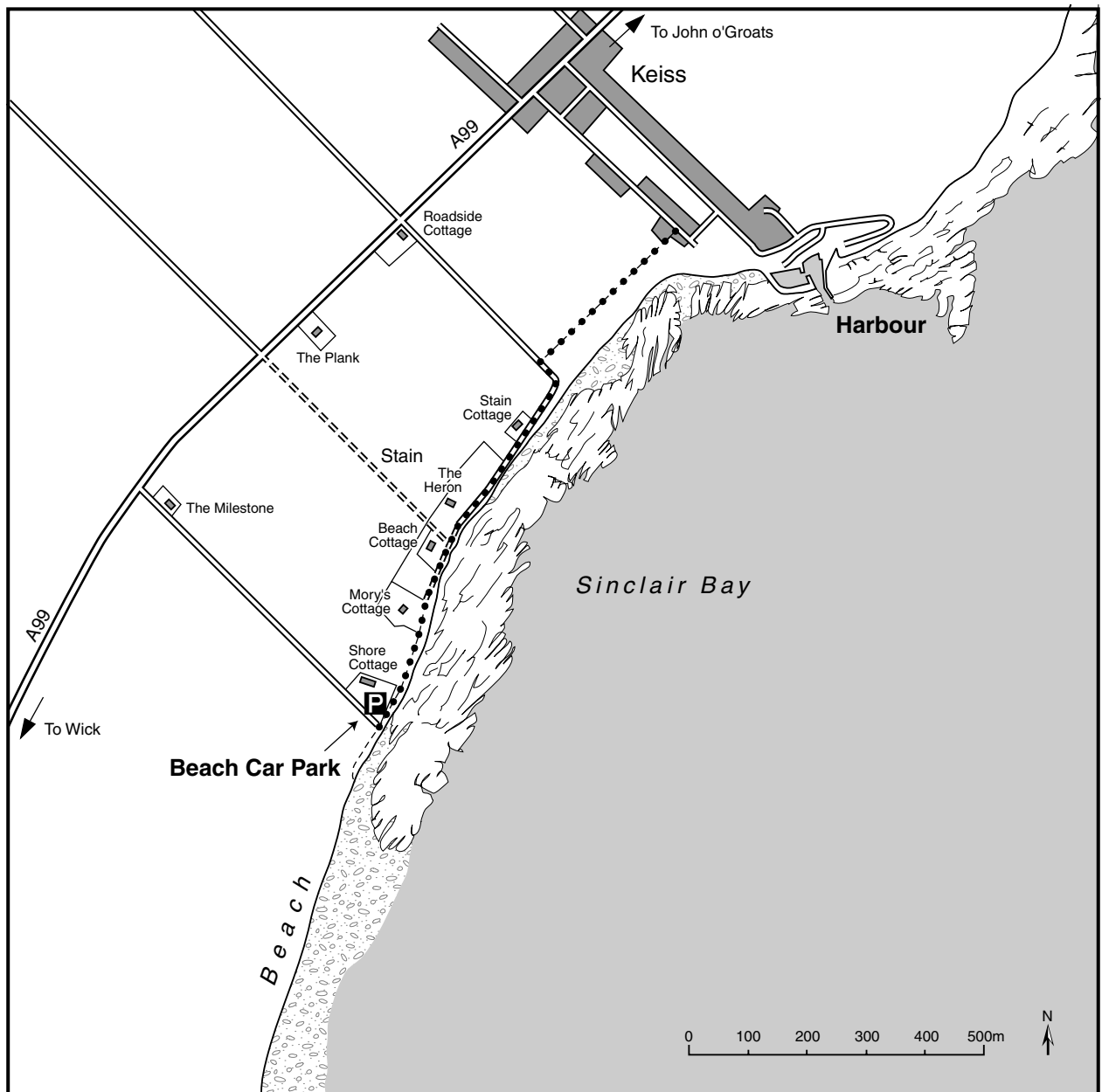
None.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



10) Keiss Beach



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Seashore

Related topic work:

- Habitats (sand, dunes, shingle, rocky shore)
- Birds
- Coastal features (shingle bank)
- Cetacean studies

Link visit with sites at:

- Keiss Harbour
- Reiss Beach

11) Keiss Harbour

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

Access to the harbour is signposted from the A99 which passes through Keiss.
Grid Ref: ND 352 609.

Site description:

Keiss Harbour is situated in the north of Sinclair's Bay. Sea birds, particularly sea duck, can often be seen off the harbour.

Access for special needs:

Hard flagstone surfaces – slightly uneven.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Access available all year. Best times are spring and summer.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

Deep water in the harbour at high tide. Stone surfaces of harbour can be very slippery when wet. Care should be taken in harbour area, particularly at low tide when there is a greater drop into the water.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Wick Harbour Trust, Harbour Terrace, Wick. Tel: 01955 602030.

Nearest help/telephone:

Public telephone in Keiss village.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Large groups will have to walk down to the harbour from the village due to the lack of parking/turning space for buses at the harbour. The distance is approximately 0.5 km. The harbour can be reached from the Keiss Beach car park in about 30 minutes.

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

None.

FACILITIES

Parking:

There is roadside parking available in the village. Limited parking at the harbour but take care to avoid inconveniencing harbour and other road users.

Toilets:

Keiss village (seasonal). Wick.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Wick.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

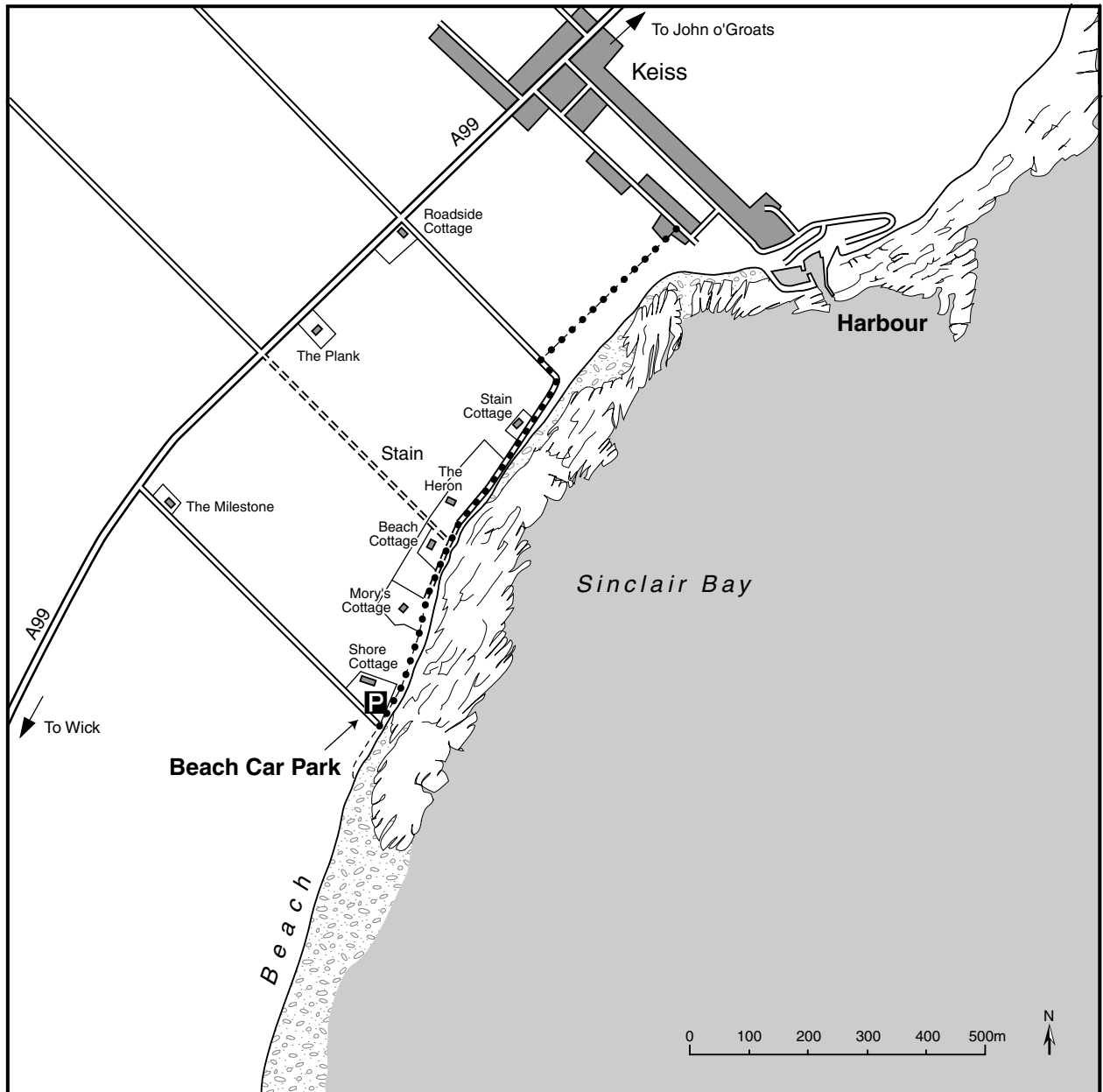
None.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



11) Keiss Harbour



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Harbour

Related topic work:

- Habitats (sand, boulders/pebbles, harbour walls, seaweed)
- Birds
- Historic community
- Fishing industry

Link visit with sites at:

- Keiss Beach
- Reiss Beach

12) Latheronwheel Harbour

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

11

Access point:

Access is gained by turning east off the A9 and driving through the village. Grid Ref: ND 191 321.

Site description:

A fascinating small harbour, previously used during the times of the herring fishing. Small accessible area of beach on south side of river. Only suitable when river is low as it must be crossed.

Access for special needs:

Uneven surfaces beyond the car park.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Open access to the beach all year. For beach work, visit approximately 2 hours before low tide.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

Deep water in harbour – no safety barriers. Flagstone surface of the pier can be slippery in wet weather.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Wick Harbour Trust, Harbour Terrace, Wick.
Tel: 01955 602030.

Nearest help/telephone:

Public phone in the village.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Minimal – car park is adjacent to the harbour.

What to take:

Binoculars and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

None.

**Information/leaflets/
on site interpretation:**

None.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Access road to the harbour is not recommended for large coaches. Sufficient parking for several cars, and large enough for use by a mini bus.

Toilets:

Car park at Clan Gunn Heritage Centre. Seasonal.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Clan Gunn Heritage Centre (check opening hours), Dunbeath Heritage Centre Tel: 01593 731233.

Picnic tables:

Picnic benches and barbecue facilities.

Shelter:

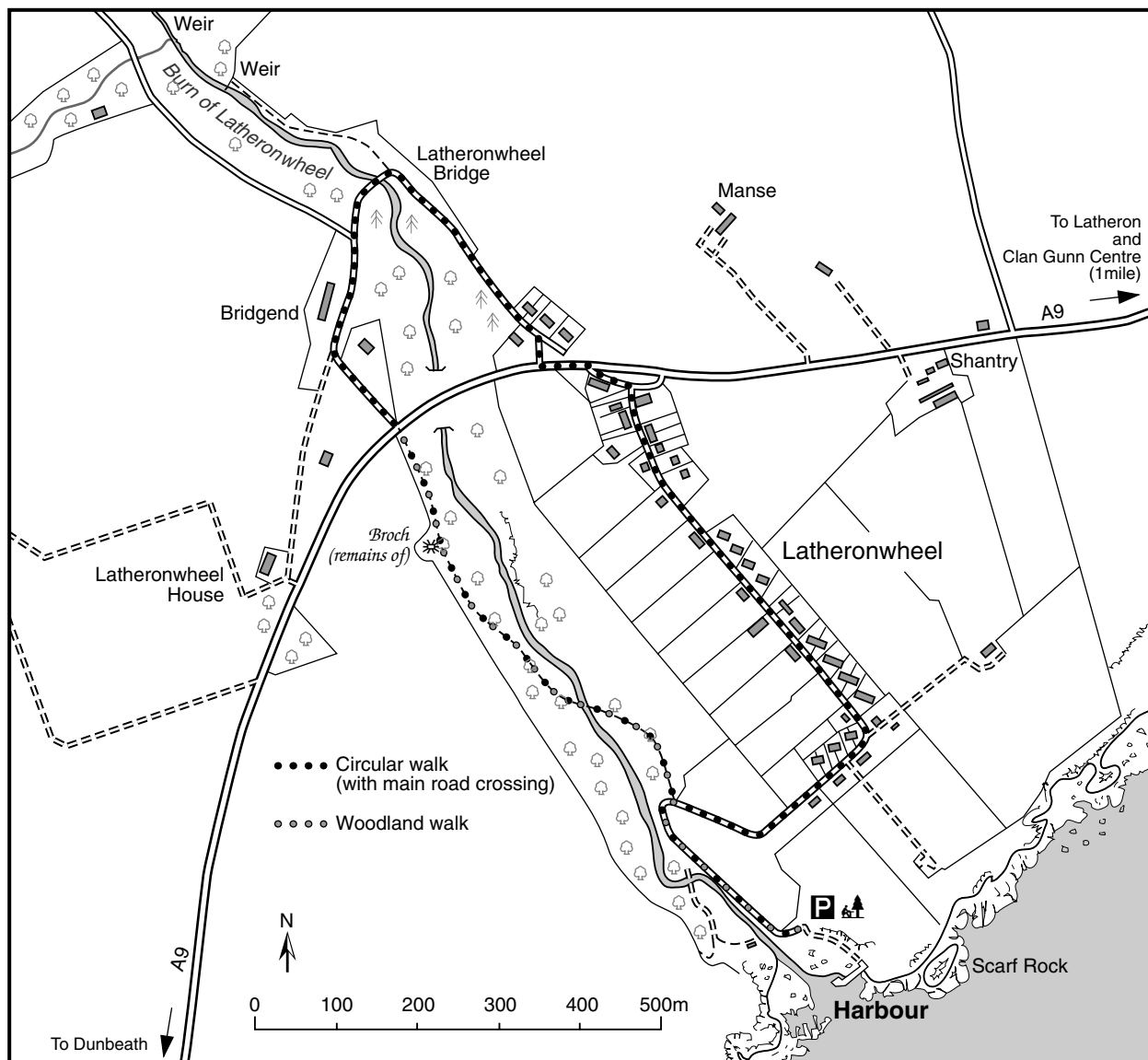
None/woodland (see Latheronwheel Woodland).

Warden/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



12) Latheronwheel Harbour



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Burn/stream
- Harbour
- Seashore

Related topic work:

- Sea birds
- Cetacean watching

Link visit with site at:

- Latheronwheel Woodland

13) Latheronwheel Woodland

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

11

Access point:

Access is gained by turning east off the A9 and driving through the village as if heading for the harbour. A path into the wood leaves the road on the right at the hair-pin bend. Grid Ref: ND 189 323.

Site description:

A small, rich area of woodland comprising native and non-native species. The path makes good walking although in areas vegetation has become overgrown.

Access for special needs:

Very uneven surfaces and steps.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Open access to woodland walk all year. The woodland is of interest throughout the year as it provides food and shelter to a variety of birds and animals in all seasons.

Who to contact before you visit:

A telephone call is required to Mr Iain Black, Keeper, Tel: 01593 741733 or 07818 061817. Or Latheronwheel Estate. Tel: 01593 741206.

Safety aspects:

Some areas of the path are muddy/slippery, and overgrown. Section of the path along the top of the steep banking is unfenced, which makes close supervision of children necessary. Take care at steep steps which can be slippery.

Nearest help/telephone:

Public phone in the village.

Terrain/amount of walking:

The path surface is good if dry, but can be treacherous in wet or frosty conditions, especially on the section of steps. The path is overgrown in areas.

What to take:

Binoculars and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

None.

FACILITIES

Parking:

There is ample parking in the village, and space for 5-6 cars at the harbour. The access road to the harbour is not recommended for large coaches.

Toilets:

Car park at Clan Gunn Heritage Centre. Seasonal.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Clan Gunn Heritage Centre (check opening hours), Dunbeath Heritage Centre

Picnic tables:

Two at the harbour.

Shelter:

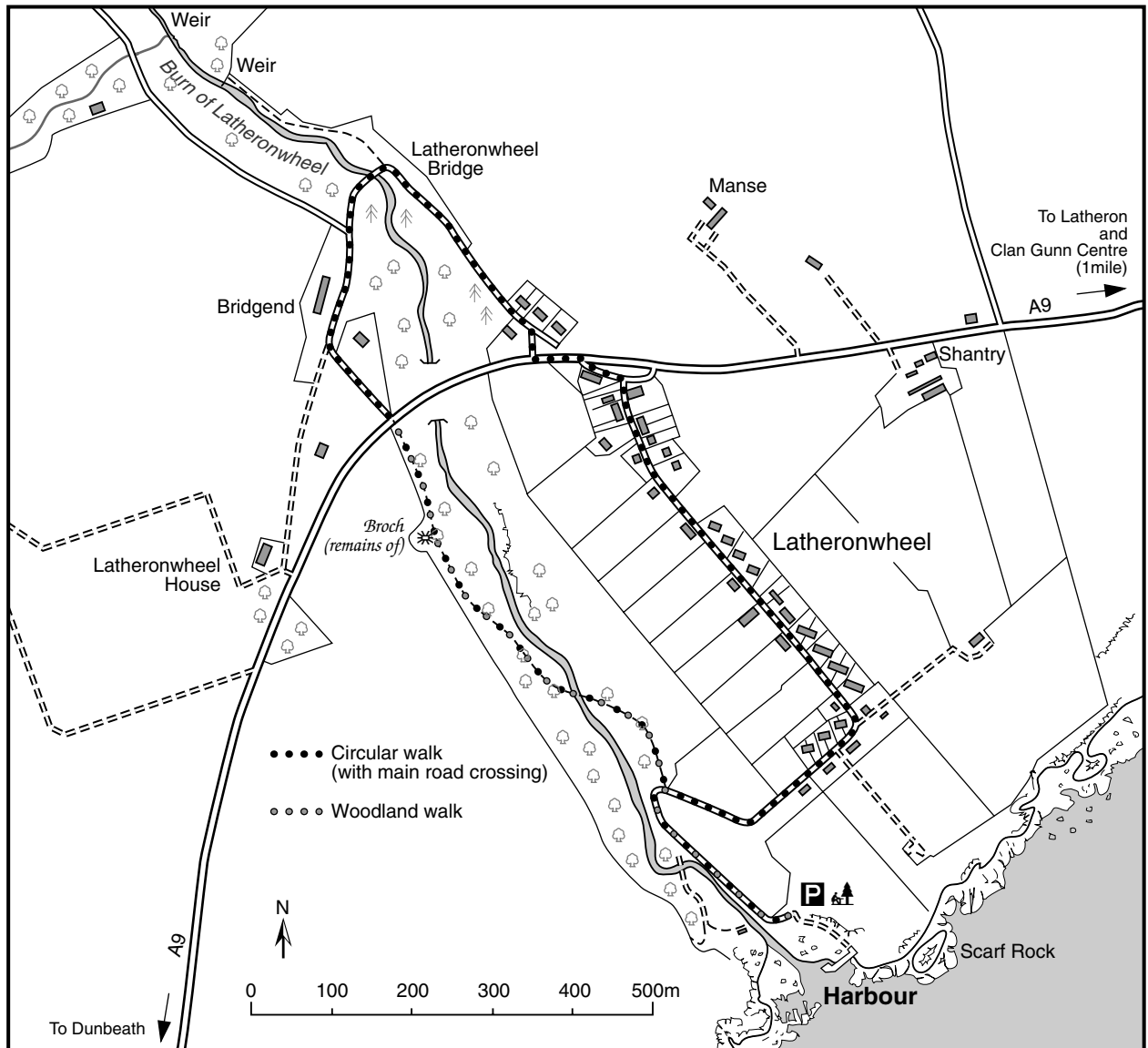
There is no shelter apart from the wooded sections of the walk.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



13) Latheronwheel Woodland



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Burn/stream
- Minibeasts
- Woodland

Related topic work:

- Small mammal studies
- Investigating changes in the landscape through time

Link visit with site at:

- Latheronwheel Harbour

14) Lybster Harbour

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

11

Access point:

The harbour is signposted from Lybster village east of the A9. The access road to the harbour is unsuitable for large coaches. Grid Ref: ND 244 349.

Site description:

One of the principal harbours of the east coast of Caithness, Lybster is a traditional ex-herring fishing port. There is a small area (under 50m) of accessible, rocky, pebbly, beach.

Access for special needs:

Hard surfaces around the harbour but can be very slippery. Access to the beach by steps, or over rough ground.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Access available all year. Spring, summer and autumn best time to visit.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access. Staff at 'Waterlines' Visitor Centre, Lybster Harbour may assist your visit. Details below.

Safety aspects:

Deep water in the harbour at all times. The harbour is still in use, with no rails along the piers, great caution is required with small children. Stone surfaces of the pier in the outer harbour can be slippery when wet.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Scrabster Harbour. Tel: 01847 892779.

Nearest help/telephone:

"Waterlines" Visitor Centre.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Minimal, as parking is available at the harbour.

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope for sea/bird watching, equipment relevant to point of study. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on site interpretation:**

There is an interpretation panel outlining the history of the harbour. "Waterlines" Visitor Centre, Lybster Harbour, Tel: 01593 721520.

FACILITIES

Parking:

There is limited parking for cars at the harbour and parking is available at "Waterlines".

Toilets:

Public toilets on Lybster Main Street. Customer toilets at "Waterlines".

Food:

Packed lunches required. Café at "Waterlines".

Nearest wet weather option:

"Waterlines". Open daily from May to September, 11.00 – 17.00. Enquire re. opening out of season.

Picnic tables:

At village side of the harbour at the 'Green'.

Shelter:

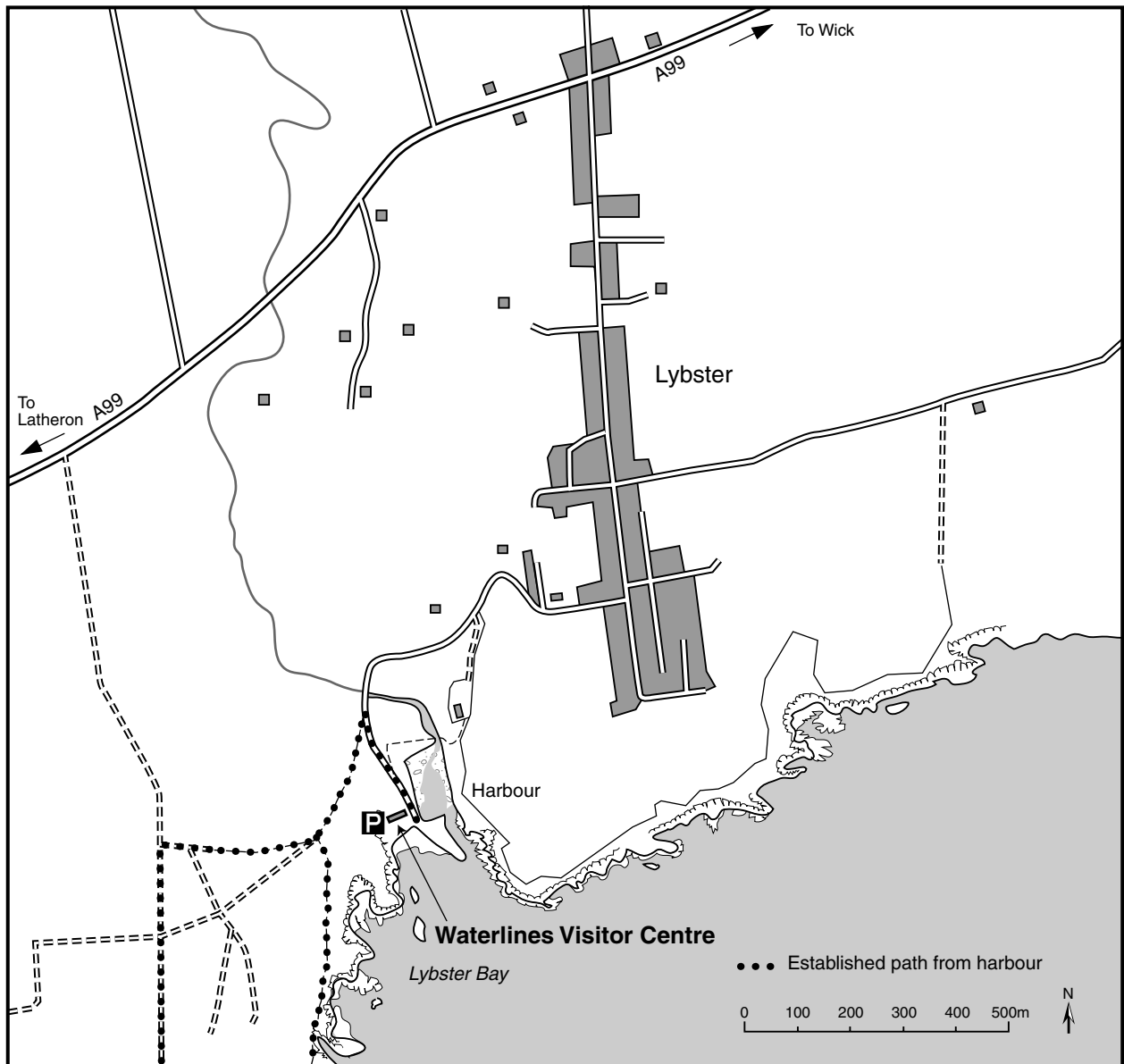
"Waterlines" with prior arrangement.

Rangers/expert help:

Iain Gunn (Chairman), Waterlines Visitor Centre. Tel: 01593 721520
Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



14) Lybster Harbour



Educational value

School's Out! activity areas:

- Harbour
- Seashore

Related topic work:

- Rise and fall of herring fishery
- Comparative studies with other harbours in Caithness
- Cetacean studies
- Geology
- Flora and fauna

Link visit with sites at:

- Latheronwheel Harbour
- Latheronwheel Woodland

15) Newtonhill Community Woodland

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

The woodland can be reached from Wick by following the sign on the minor road which passes Wick High School, or by taking the A882(T) Wick - Thurso road and taking the first left after leaving Wick. The site is not signposted or marked on the O.S. map other than being known as Newton Moss. Grid Ref: ND 348 495.

Site description:

The site has undergone several dramatic changes in its history, being used initially as a quarry, then as a municipal tip before undergoing landscaping and being developed as a community woodland. There is a network of gravel paths around the site, a sand covered bridle path, a picnic area and a view point. The entire site extends to 11.5 hectares.

Access for special needs:

The paths and bridleway around the site are mainly on the level, apart from a few dips and slopes, and the central hillock. There is access to the picnic area with the provision of a wheelchair friendly gateway.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Site is of interest throughout the year. Visits in good weather are recommended due to the lack of shelter on site.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

Site is a former tip which has been landscaped. Waste protruding from the ground in the woods may pose hazard but can be avoided by sticking to the paths. Dog fouling along the paths.

Nearest help/telephone:

Wick.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Footpaths are all gravelled, whilst the bridlepath is covered with sand. The site is adjacent to the car park with the longest circular route around the site taking 20-25 mins.

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope and equipment relevant to the activities to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

There is a roofed information board at the car park. There is a basic self guided trail leaflet available on site and interpretation panel on the hillock.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Space for 6-7 cars. Sufficient room for a bus to park or turn.

Toilets:

None.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Wick.

Picnic tables:

Two tables in car park and three in picnic area with wastebin at the car park.

Shelter:

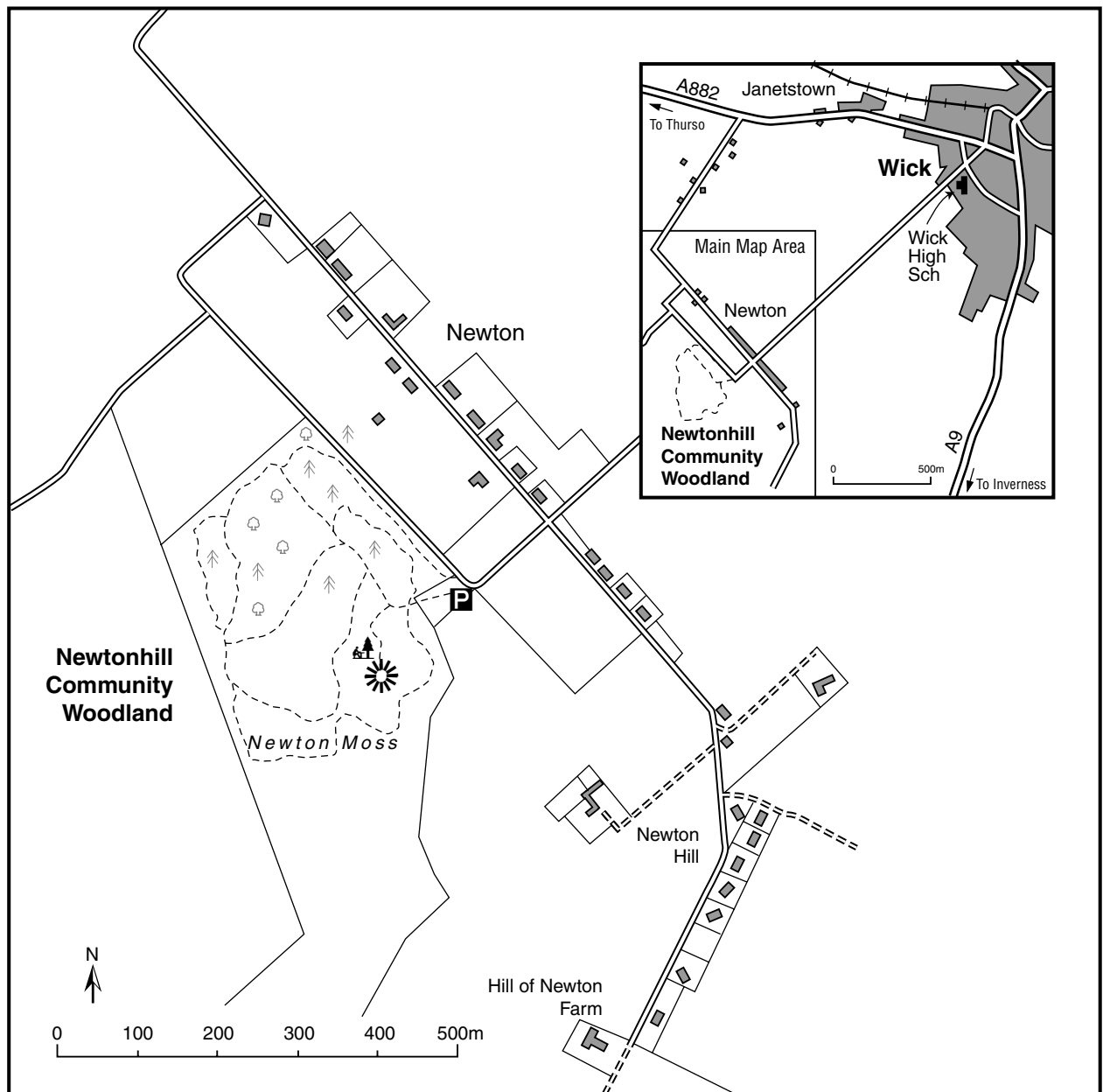
None, except under the trees.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



15) Newtonhill Community Woodland



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Burns/streams
- Bog/peatland
- Landscape
- Minibeasts
- Waste recycling
- Woodland

Other related topics:

- Reclaimed and landscaped municipal landfill site
- Birds

Link visit with site at:

- Seater Landfill

16) Reiss Beach

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

From the A99 prior to reaching Reiss c.3 miles NW of Wick. Take the road to the Golf Course and beach, which is signposted. Grid Ref: ND 344 556.

Site description:

A very popular area at the southern end of Sinclair's Bay. The beach is mostly sandy, backed by high dunes which extend along the shore to the access point at Keiss to the north. The southern end is mostly rock and shingle. This area of the beach is over looked by Ackergill Tower.

Access for special needs:

Uneven surfaces, steps down to beach.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Open access to the beach all year. For beach work, visit approximately 2 hours before low tide.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

Pebbles and rocks can be slippery.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Wick Harbour Trust, Harbour Terrace, Wick.
Tel: 01955 602030.

Nearest help/telephone:

Telephone at Golf Clubhouse.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Parking area is adjacent to beach.
Walks of up to 2-3 km.

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

None.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Parking for 10+ cars, there is also space for a large bus. Car park and path presently suffering from erosion problems. Care is required.

Toilets:

None. Nearest in Wick.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Wick.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

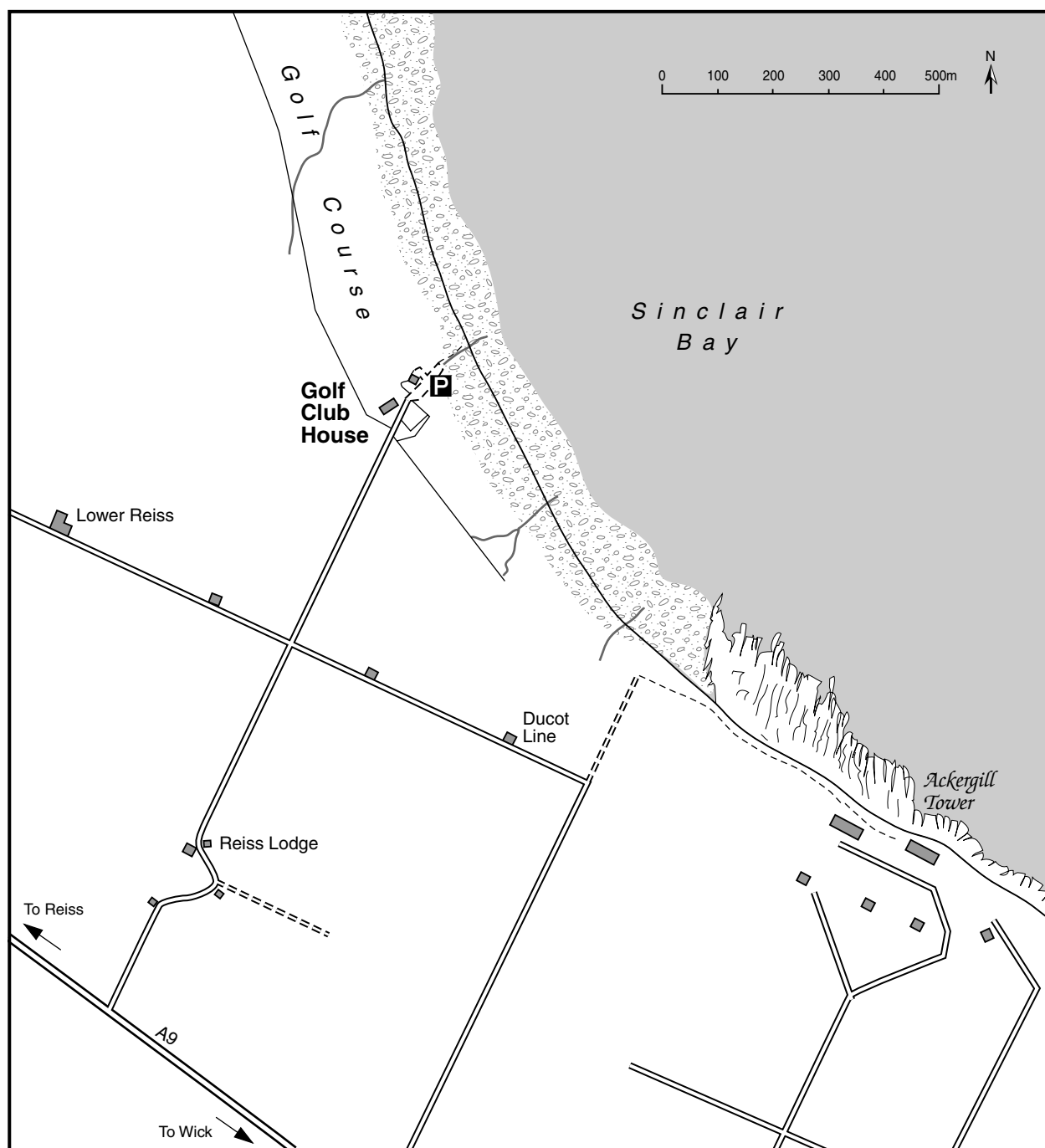
None.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.
Sinclair Bay Residents Association (Carol Rider).
Contact Tel: 01955 602396



16) Reiss Beach



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Seashore

Related topic work:

- Habitats (sand, dunes, shingle, rocky shore)
- Birds
- Coastal features (shingle bank, dunes)
- Cetacean studies

Link visit with sites at:

- Keiss Harbour
- Keiss Beach

17) Sannick Bay

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

Right turn off A99 in John O'Groats village towards Duncansby Head. The beach is on the left after about 1.5 miles. Grid ref: ND 397 732.

Site description:

A small sandy beach with rocky sections and grassy slopes backing it.

Access for special needs:

Access to beach is soft and sandy plus gradient needs assessing.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Summer.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

Rock pools can be deep. Check suitability for exploration.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Scrabster Harbour
Tel: 01847 892779.

Nearest help/telephone:

John O'Groats village.

Terrain/amount of walking:

On coastal turf five minutes to the beach itself.

What to take:

Warm clothing, stout shoes, equipment as required, and a set of spare clothes in case anyone gets wet.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

There is some useful information in the leaflet on a coastal route from John O' Groats to Duncansby Head available from Highland Council Ranger Service. However the walk is not recommended due to erosion problems.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Wide lay-by adjacent to beach big enough for bus to drop off children, bus can then park at Duncansby Head.

Toilets:

John O'Groats (fee payable).

Food:

Packed lunches required or snack can be bought in John O'Groats.

Nearest wet weather option:

John O' Groats.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

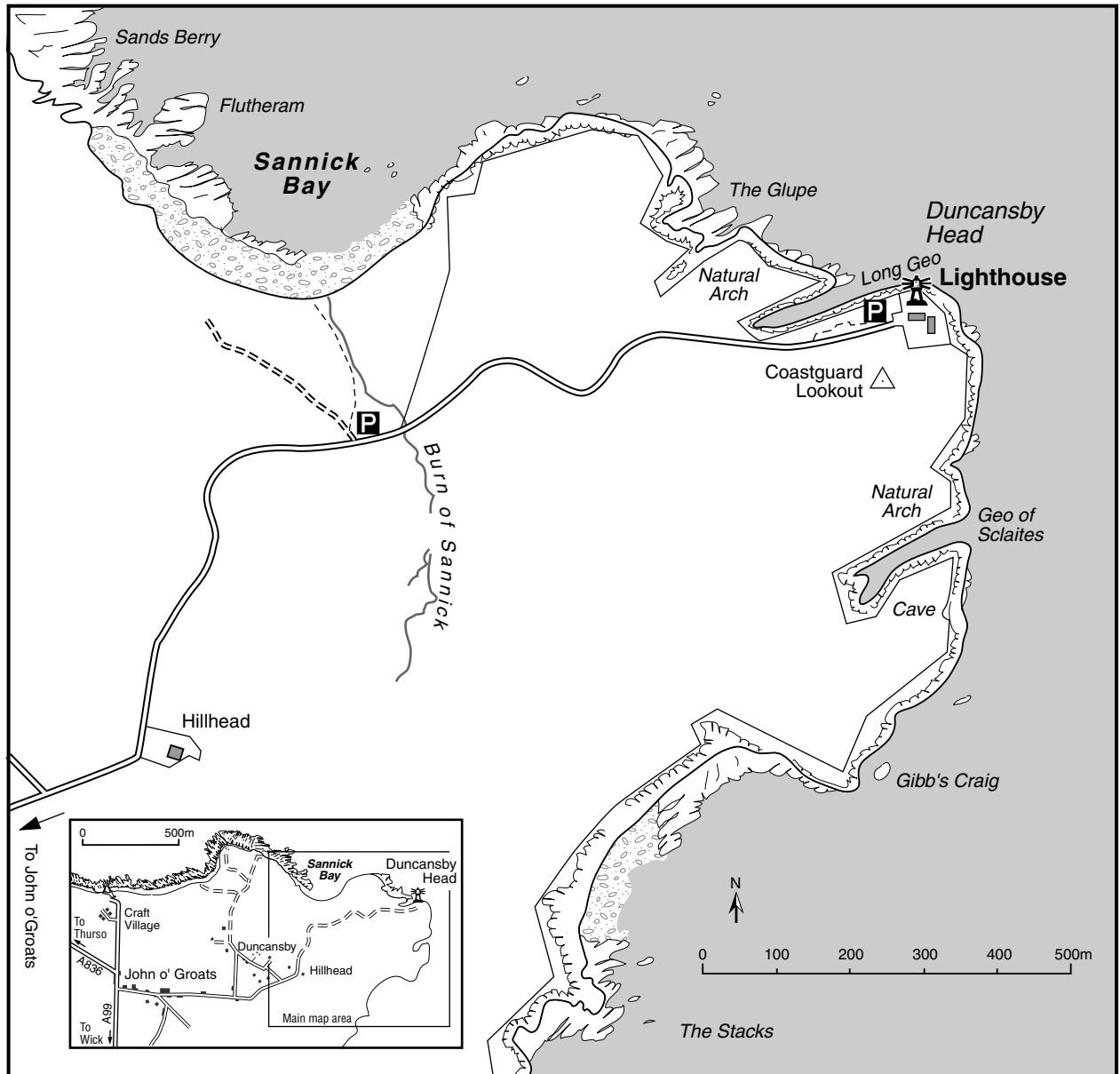
None.

Ranger/Expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Contact Tel: 01847 821531.



17) Sannick Bay



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Landscape
- Seashore

Link visit with sites at:

- John O'Groats Harbour
- Duncansby Head

18) Scrabster Harbour

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

Scrabster is on A9, 2 miles north west of Thurso.
The harbour is signposted. Grid Ref: ND 101 703.

Site description:

Scrabster is one of the major fishing ports in the UK
and a very busy commercial and ferry port.

Access for special needs:

Hard surface paths in the area of the ferry access and
assembly areas.

Opening times/best time to visit:

All year. Fish market times are recommended for
organised groups.

Who to contact before you visit:

It is essential to contact the Harbourmaster,
Mr B Williams, Harbour Office, Scrabster KW14 7UJ.
Tel: 01847 892779
e-mail: harbourmaster@scrabster.co.uk

Safety aspects:

Extra care must be taken when visiting the harbour.
Organised escorted groups can be accommodated
and all party members must be made aware of all
health and safety issues. Usual caution for water
safety. Very busy with traffic, many of which are
heavy lorries.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Scrabster.
Contact Tel: 01847 892779.

Nearest help/telephone:

Harbour office, ferry terminal building, ferry assembly
area and business park.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Flat, up to 0.5 mile.

What to take:

Stout footwear/waterproofs and warm clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

Information panels in harbour office and terminal.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Ferry car park and public car park. If leaving a bus it
must be arranged in advance.

Toilets:

Ferry terminal.

Food:

Fisherman's mission and ferry terminal.

Nearest wet weather option:

Thurso.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

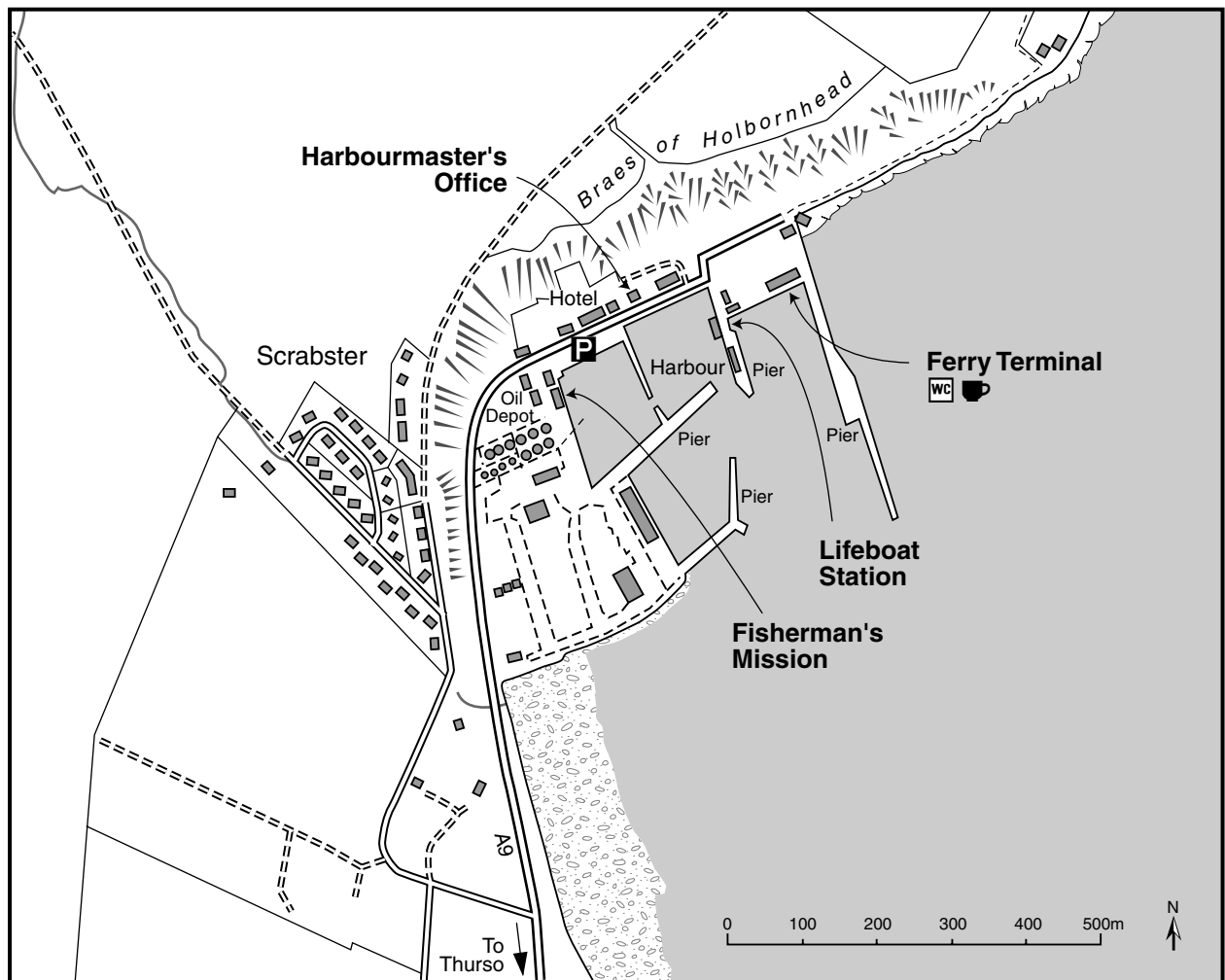
Ferry terminal.

Ranger/expert help:

Harbourmaster/coastguard/RNLI contact harbour
office as above.



18) Scrabster Harbour



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Harbour

Related topic work:

- Safety at sea
- Map reading
- Seabirds

Visit could be linked with sites at:

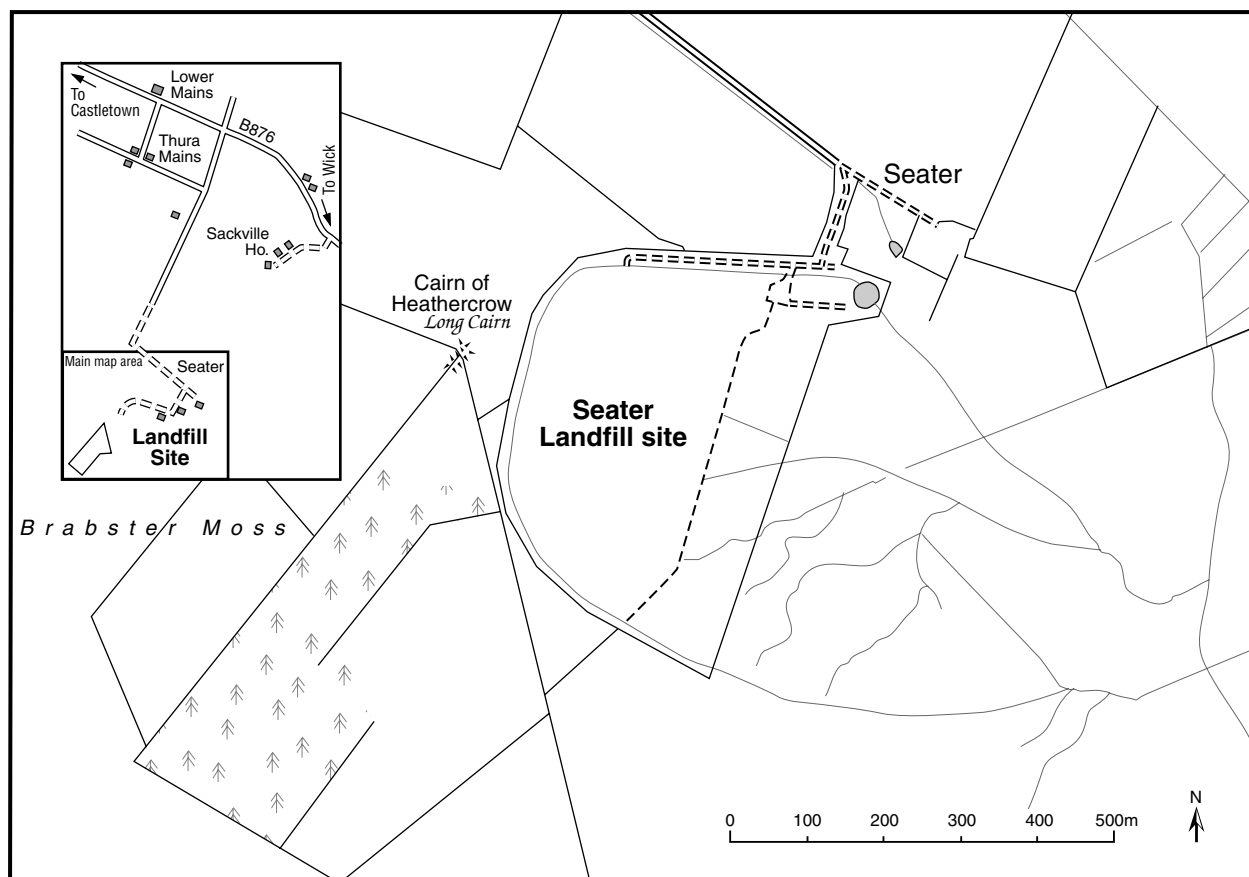
- John O'Groats Harbour (Ferry operator D Thomas Tel: 01955 611353).
- Thurso Beach
- Thurso River

19) Seater Landfill Site/SE Castletown

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:	12
Access point:	Two miles south of B876 Castletown to Wick road, near Thura. Grid Ref: ND 249 603.
Site description:	Landfill site for Caithness, operated by The Highland Council.
Access for special needs:	Level, tarmac surfaces.
Opening times:	All year.
Who to contact before you visit:	James Chalmers, Tec Services, The Highland Council, Market Square, Wick KW1 4AB Tel: 01955 607737. All groups must book in advance.
Safety aspects:	Groups must be accompanied and observe all health and safety rules. There will be heavy traffic at all times.
Nearest help/telephone:	Site office.
Terrain/amount of walking:	Minimal.
What to take:	Stout footwear/waterproofs and warm clothing. Packed lunches.
Cost:	Free.
Information/leaflets/ on-site interpretation:	Ask site manager.
FACILITIES	
Parking:	On site.
Toilets:	Staff – on site.
Food:	None nearby.
Nearest wet weather option:	Wick.
Picnic tables:	None.
Shelter:	Ask site manager.
Ranger/ expert help:	Landfill operator. Contact Tel: 01955 607737. Ranger service can assist with classroom work on recycling, waste minimisation. Tel: 01847 821531. WHAM Contact Tel: 01349 868203.



19) Seater Landfill Site/SE Castletown



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Landscape
- Waste/recycling

Related topic work:

- Land restoration

Link visit with sites at:

- Newtonhill Community Woodland
- Castlehill Community Woodland (See Dunnet Beach)

20) Thrumster Village Pond

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

Take the Sarclet road off A99 into Thrumster village. The pond lies on the right of the road running parallel with the A99 between the school and TV mast. Grid Ref: ND 340 454.

Site description:

The pond hosts a range of water life and is suitable for pond dipping. A small platform has been built to make dipping easier and safer for the children. When the water level is low the area is good as a bog/peatland habitat.

Access for special needs:

Very uneven surfaces and also soft ground.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Open all year. Best in good weather.

Who to contact before you visit:

Highland Council Ranger Service. Tel: 01955 607758.

Safety aspects:

Usual water hazards. Pond is unfenced – supervision of children required.

Nearest help/telephone:

Thrumster village (in case of emergency, Thrumster School).

Terrain/amount of walking:

The pond is a very short walk from limited street parking. The path has been improved but is still wet and boggy in places.

What to take:

Equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken; warm, waterproof clothing and wellies.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

None.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Parking on street, or at Thrumster School (only with prior arrangement with school).

Toilets:

None.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Wick.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

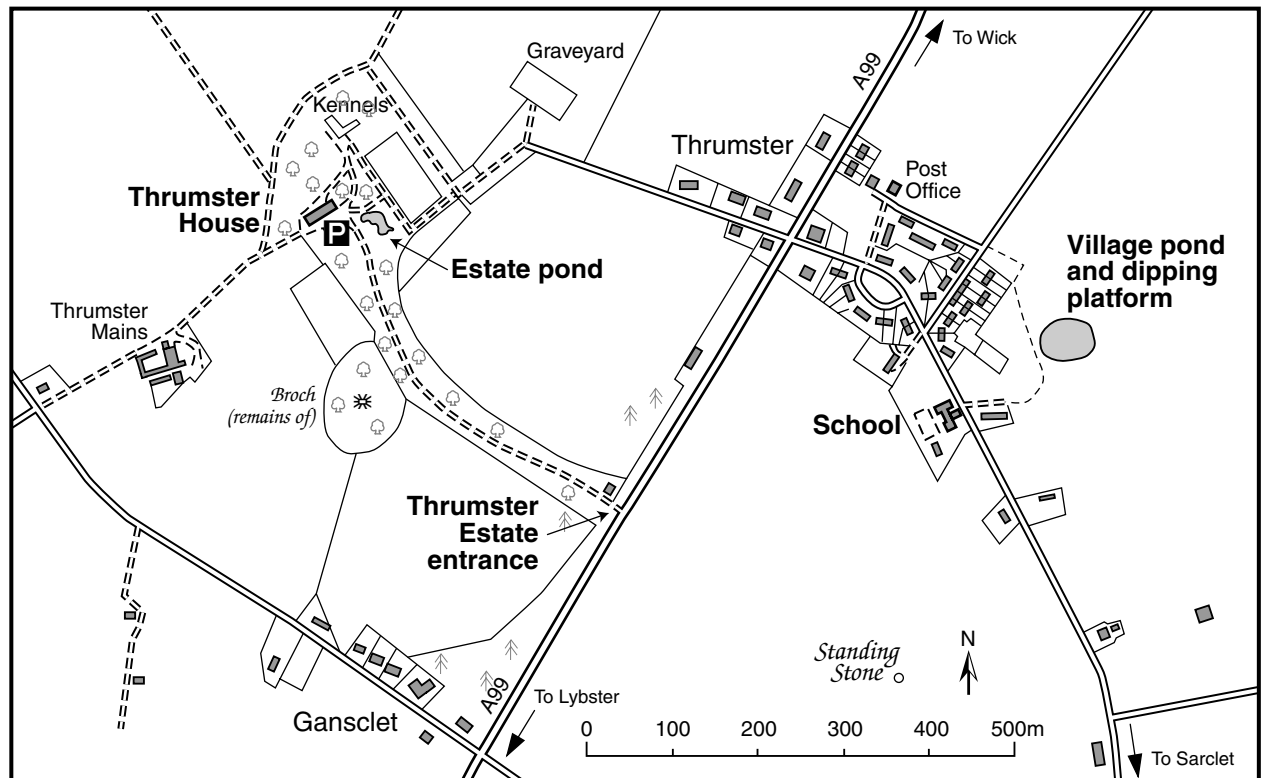
None.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



20) Thrumster Village Pond



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Bog/peatland
- Pond/loch

Related topic work:

- Minibeasts

Link visit with site at:

- Thrumster Estate

21) Thrumster Estate

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

The main entrance to Thrumster House is off A99 just south of Thrumster village. Grid Ref: ND 335 449.

Site description:

The estate offers a wide range of habitats and other points of interest including woodland, ponds, burn/stream and archaeological sites.

Access for special needs:

The majority of the site is uneven and rough ground, the single track road leading to Thrumster House offers good views of the woodland with a good firm surface.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Open all year. Best in good weather.

Who to contact before you visit:

A phonecall to Thrumster Estate is required before any visit. Please contact Ms Islay Macleod, Thrumster Estate Ltd, Thrumster House, Thrumster, KW1 5TX. Tel: 01955 651876.

Safety aspects:

Thrumster is a working estate and attention must be paid to farm operations and machinery. Close supervision of children required at all times. Various safety considerations depending on activity e.g. water safety if pond/river dipping.

Nearest help/telephone:

Thrumster village or in case of emergency, Thrumster House.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Parking at Thrumster House – amount of walking will depend on study area. The main pond is adjacent to parking area.

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

None.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

None.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Parking for up to 6 cars at Thrumster House.

Toilets:

None.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Wick.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

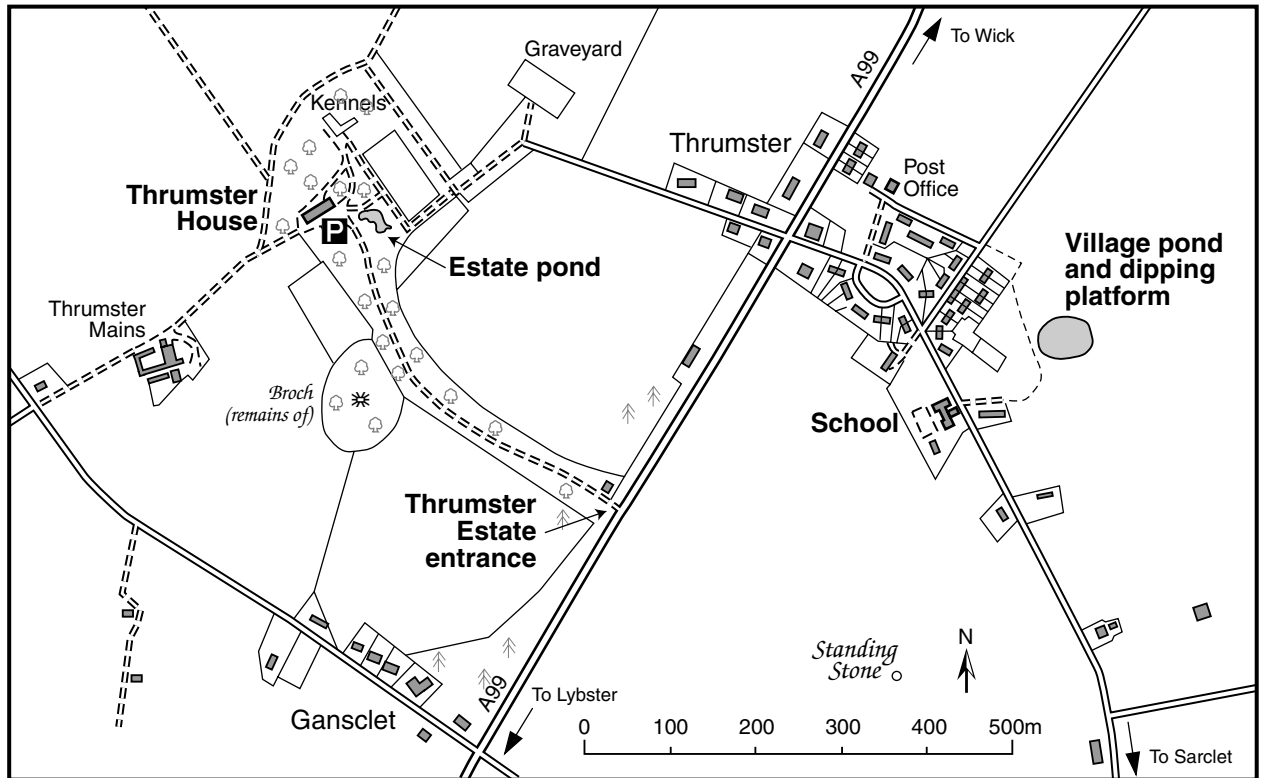
None.

Ranger/expert help:

A member of the estate staff will accompany all groups. Highland Council Ranger Service may also be available. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



21) Thrumster Estate



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Bog/peatland
- Burn/stream
- Landscape
- Minibeasts
- Pond/loch
- Woodland

Related topic work:

- Birds
- Ancient Settlements
- Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age Man

Link visit with site at:

- Thrumster Village Pond

22) Thurso Beach

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

Harbour car park at the end of Riverside Road.
Grid Ref: ND 121 688.

Site description:

500m wide beach, flanked by rocky shore and Thurso river outlet.

Access for special needs:

Steps down to beach or across loose rocks to beach.

Opening times/best time to visit:

All year. Two hours either side of low tide.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access. Highland Council Ranger Service willing to accompany or advise. See below.

Safety aspects:

Usual water safety issues for seaside visits.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Scrabster Harbour.
Tel: 01847 892779.

Nearest help/telephone:

Public phones in Thurso.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Flat, 0.5km.

What to take:

Stout footwear/waterproofs and warm clothing as site is exposed. Gloves if doing litter survey and clipboards/survey sheets.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

Litter survey sheets can be obtained from ranger service.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Harbour car park has room for buses and some schools could walk.

Toilets:

Nearest are at the harbour (seasonal opening) others opposite Tourist Office (open all year).

Food:

Packed lunches or in Thurso.

Nearest wet weather option:

Thurso Museum.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

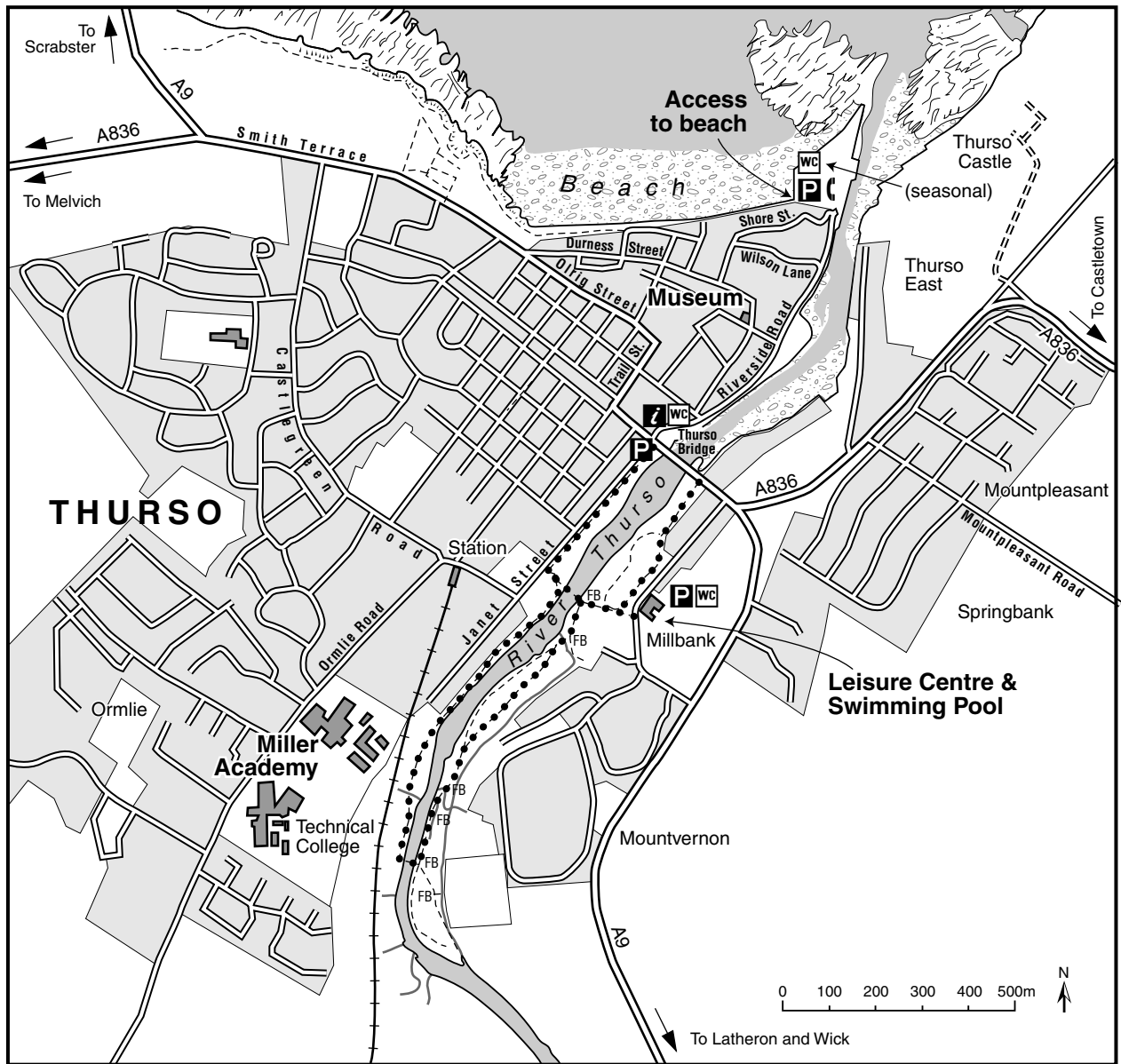
None.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Contact Tel: 01847 821531.



22) Thurso Beach



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Seashore
- Waste/recycling

Related topics:

- Salt water/freshwater habitats
- Coastal erosion

Link visit with sites at:

- Thurso Riverside
- Scrabster Harbour

23) Thurso Riverside

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

The riverside path can be accessed from either Janet Street or the swimming pool car park.
Grid Refs: ND 115 678 and ND 117 683.

Site description:

Mature river flanked by broadleaf woodlands and pathways.

Access for special needs:

Hard surface path with steep gradient leading to riverside.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Open all year, spring and summer.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access. Highland Council Ranger Service willing to accompany. See below.

Safety aspects:

Usual caution for water safety as the path follows the river and there is no fencing.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Scrabster.
Tel: 01847 892779.

Nearest help/telephone:

Miller Academy school and housing nearby.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Flat. Routes of various lengths possible, up to 2 miles.

What to take:

Stout footwear/waterproofs and warm clothing as site is exposed. Magnifiers, wax crayons, paper (tree rubbings) work sheets/clip boards and cameras.

Cost:

Free.

**Written material/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

Information boards along river. Worksheet about the river available from Ranger service. See below.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Janet Street car park has room for a bus.
Swimming pool car park. Some schools could walk.

Toilets:

Miller Academy School (by arrangement) or public toilets opposite tourist information office at Grid Ref: ND 116 683.

Food:

Packed lunch or Thurso shops.

Nearest wet weather option:

Thurso Museum.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

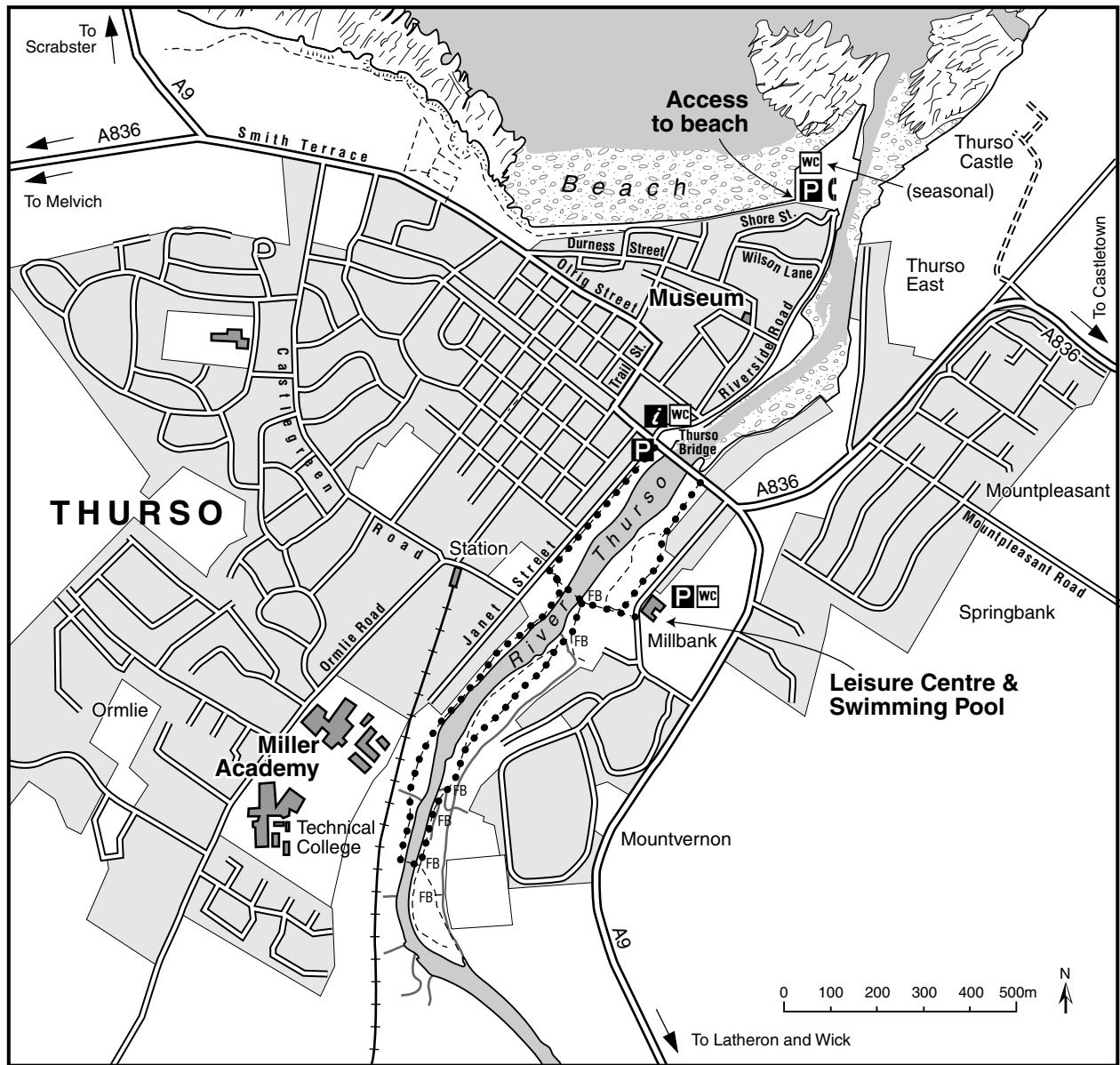
In park at Janet Street, but not very clean.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you but this needs to be arranged prior to outing. Contact Tel: 01847 821531. Thurso Fisheries may be available to talk about the life-cycle of salmon. Check contact details with Ranger Service.



23) Thurso Riverside



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Minibeasts
- Woodland

Related topic work:

- Life cycle of salmon
- Map reading
- Birds
- Water cycle
- Flowering and non flowering plants
- River studies (NOT sampling)

Link visit with sites at:

- Thurso Beach
- Scrabster Harbour

24) Loch Watten Picnic Area

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

Take B870 off A882 (Thurso-Wick Road) at Watten village. Grid Ref: ND 247 550.

Site description:

Formal picnic area on the shore of Loch Watten. The site is split by the road with parking in a lay-by on the side furthest from the Loch and within a small car park next to the Loch. This site affords good views of the Loch, even from the comfort of a car. The loch is one of the best in the county for wintering wildfowl.

Access for special needs:

Very uneven ground around the loch edge. The views afforded of the Loch from the parking area make this an ideal site for the less mobile to watch birds.

Opening times/best time to visit:

Open all year. Summer best for outdoor work, such as loch dipping and minibeast hunts. Comfortable bird watching can be done in the winter months.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

One of the parking areas is across the road from the lochside – care required. Both the outflow stream, which has some steep banking, and the loch are unfenced – close supervision of children required.

Nearest help/telephone:

Watten village.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Access is adjacent to the parking area.

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on site interpretation:**

None.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Sufficient parking for 7-9 cars between the two car parking areas.

Toilets:

None. Nearest in Watten village.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Wick.

Picnic tables:

Three picnic benches.

Shelter:

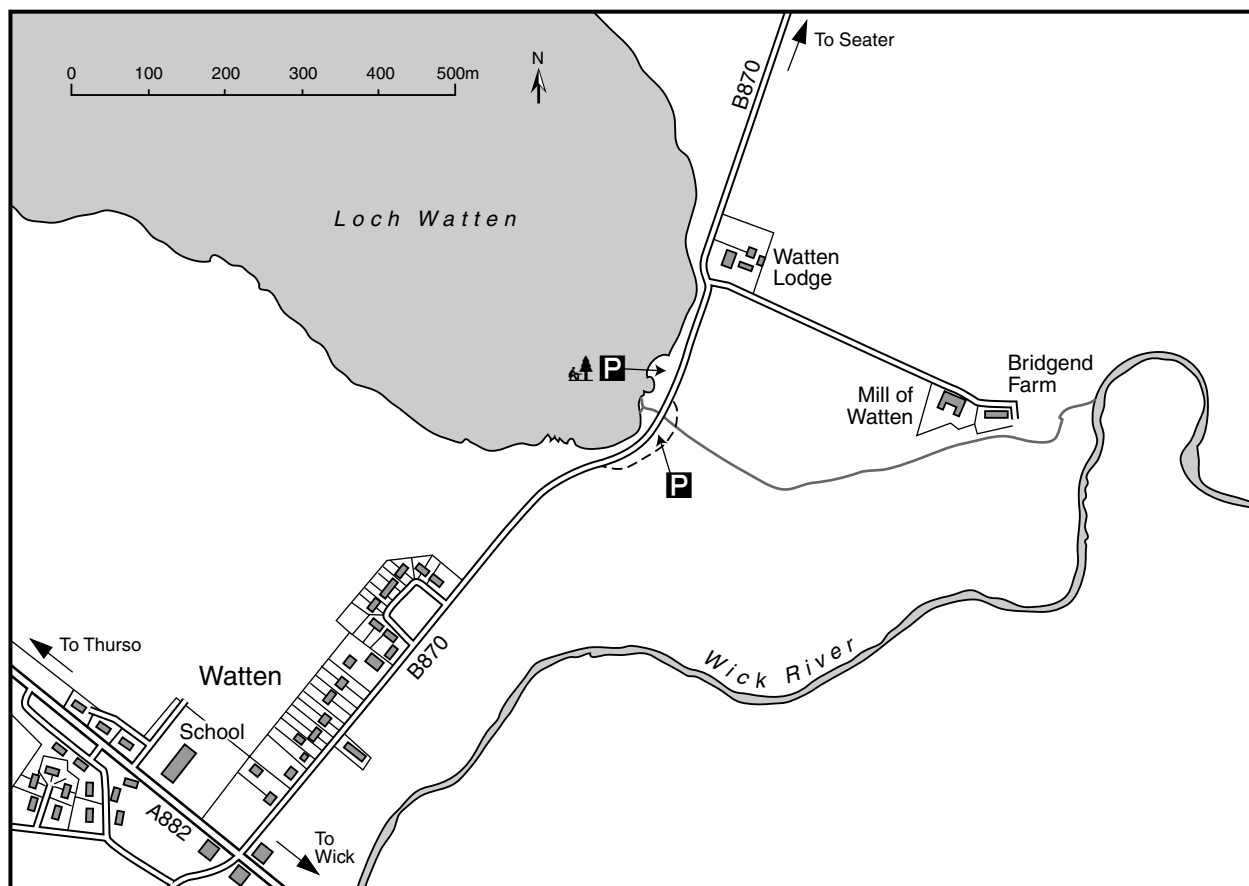
None.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



24) Loch Watten Picnic Area



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Pond/loch
- Minibeasts

Related topic work:

- Birds

Link visit with sites at:

- Newtonhill Community Woodland
- Seater Landfill
- Reiss Beach

25) Wick Harbour

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

The harbour is signposted in Wick. Some of the harbour has restricted access. There is public access to the shore. Grid Ref: ND 366 509.

Site description:

The largest harbour in Caithness. Wick provides scope for viewing a number of different aspects of man's inter-relationship with the sea. Wick remains a working harbour and can accommodate large vessels. Associated with the harbour there are a range of facilities (e.g. workshops, international road hauliers, ice plant, chip shop, cafe) and both a Coastguard and Lifeboat station. At low tide access may be gained to parts of the shore.

Access for special needs:

Vehicle access to the harbour with access to the beach being uneven and over rough ground.

Opening times/best time to visit:

The harbour can be viewed at any state of the tide. If undertaking shore investigations, it is advised that arrival is two hours before low tide.

Who to contact before you visit:

Wick Harbour Trust, Harbour Terrace, Wick.
Tel: 01955 602030 or 01955 605738. Wick Heritage Centre, 20 Bank Row, Wick. Tel: 01955 605393.

Safety aspects:

Deep water in the harbour at all times. The harbour can be busy, with no rails along the piers – stone surfaces can be slippery when wet. The roads around the harbour are all well used, especially by lorries.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Wick Harbour Trust, Harbour Terrace, Wick.
Tel: 01955 602030.

Nearest help/telephone:

Public telephones at the harbour.

Terrain/amount of walking:

Minimal – parking is available at the harbour.

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on site interpretation:**

None.

FACILITIES

Parking:

There is parking for cars at the harbour.

Toilets:

None. Nearest public toilets are next to the tourist information office, on access road to the riverside park and Safeways supermarket.

Food:

Packed lunch or shops in Wick centre.

Nearest wet weather option:

Wick Heritage Centre, Caithness Glass Factory.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

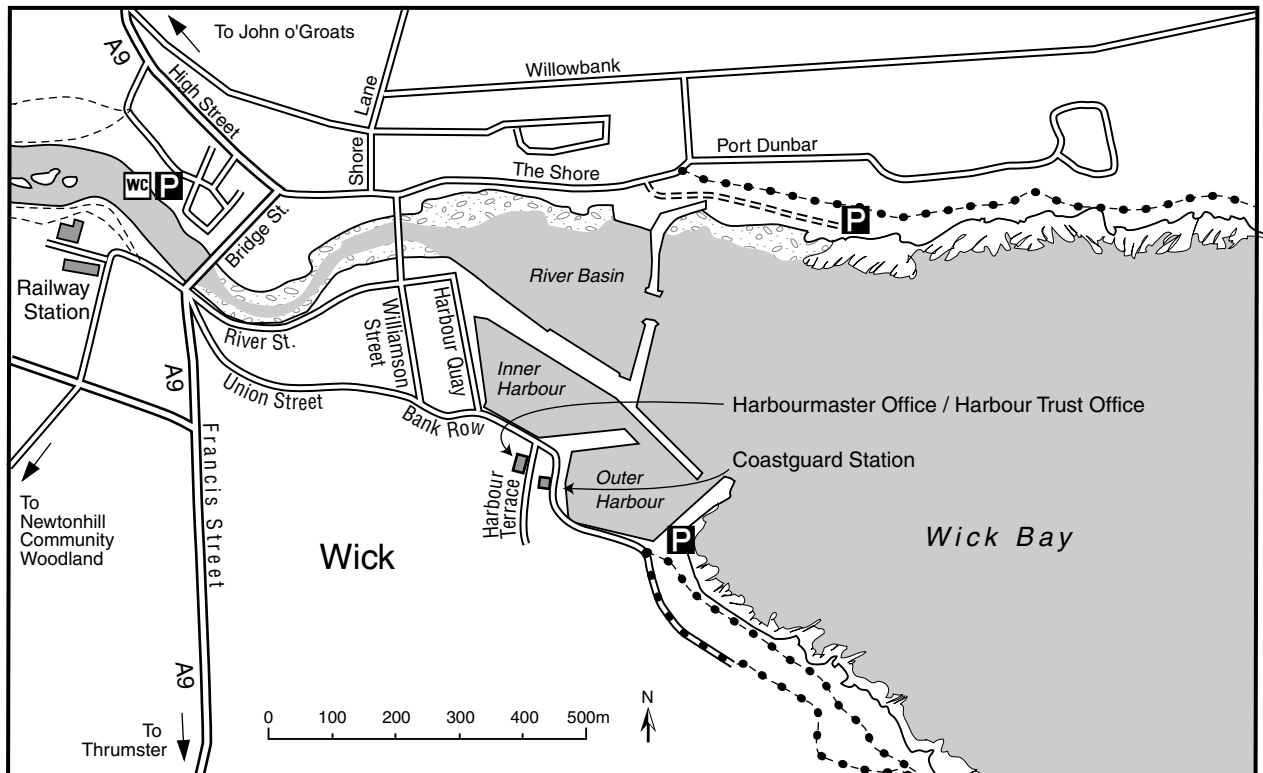
In Wick, and by prior arrangement with the Wick Heritage centre.

Ranger/expert help:

Wick Harbour Trust, Harbour Terrace, Wick.
Tel: 01955 602030.
Wick Heritage Centre, 20 Bank Row, Wick.
Tel: 01955 605393. Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



25) Wick Harbour



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Harbour

Related topic work:

- Habitats (sandy shore, boulders)

Link visit with sites at:

- Wick River
- Keiss Harbour
- Reiss Beach
- Newtonhill Community Woodland
- Thrumster Village Pond
- Thrumster Estate

26) Wick Riverside Walk

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

Best access point is via the riverside car park, next to Safeway supermarket. Alternative access via Wick caravan site, which is signposted from the A882 Wick-Thurso road. Grid Ref: ND 361 511.

Site description:

This is one of the few well known walks in the vicinity of Wick, leading from the Riverside car park to the small footbridge at ND 344 519. The path lies within the Lower Wick River S.S.S.I. (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and is of great interest to ornithologists and botanists with its various habitats. A wide variety of birds use the this area as a stopping off point during migration and as an over wintering site, particularly waders and ducks.

Access for special needs:

The path is gravel, unsurfaced beyond the limits of the riverside park, uneven in parts.

Opening time/best time to visit:

Open all year. Best in good weather (no shelter). Winter provides good bird watching opportunities.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

Usual hazards associated with water. River is deep in places and is tidal along most of the length of footpath. The path is unfenced next to the river – best to stay on the path at all times. Beyond the footbridge, the path to Lower Gillock Farm, is unmaintained and very rough with one section climbing steeply.

Tidal information:

Contact harbourmaster at Wick Harbour Trust, Harbour Terrace, Wick. Tel: 01955 602030.

Nearest help/telephone:

Wick. There are public telephone boxes in the Riverside car park.

Terrain/amount of walking:

The path surface beyond the Riverside park, is gravelled, broad and dry in all but the wettest conditions. The route is not circular with the path being unmaintained just beyond the footbridge preventing a link with the access track to Lower Gillock Farm. Grid Ref: ND 342 525. There is no definable track or path on the opposite bank of the River leading from the footbridge, apart from that created by anglers. It takes 20-25 minutes to walk from the car park to the footbridge.

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

Limited remains of an interpretation panel system along route. These were linked to the Wick River Nature Walk leaflet, which is no longer available.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Car parking available at the riverside car park.

Toilets:

There are public toilets across from Safeways, next to the Tourist Information Office.

Food:

Packed lunch required or shops in Wick centre.

Nearest wet weather option:

Wick.

Picnic tables:

Several benches in park and along first stretch of path. There is also a picnic area, with picnic benches, just above the river on the opposite bank from the park.

Shelter:

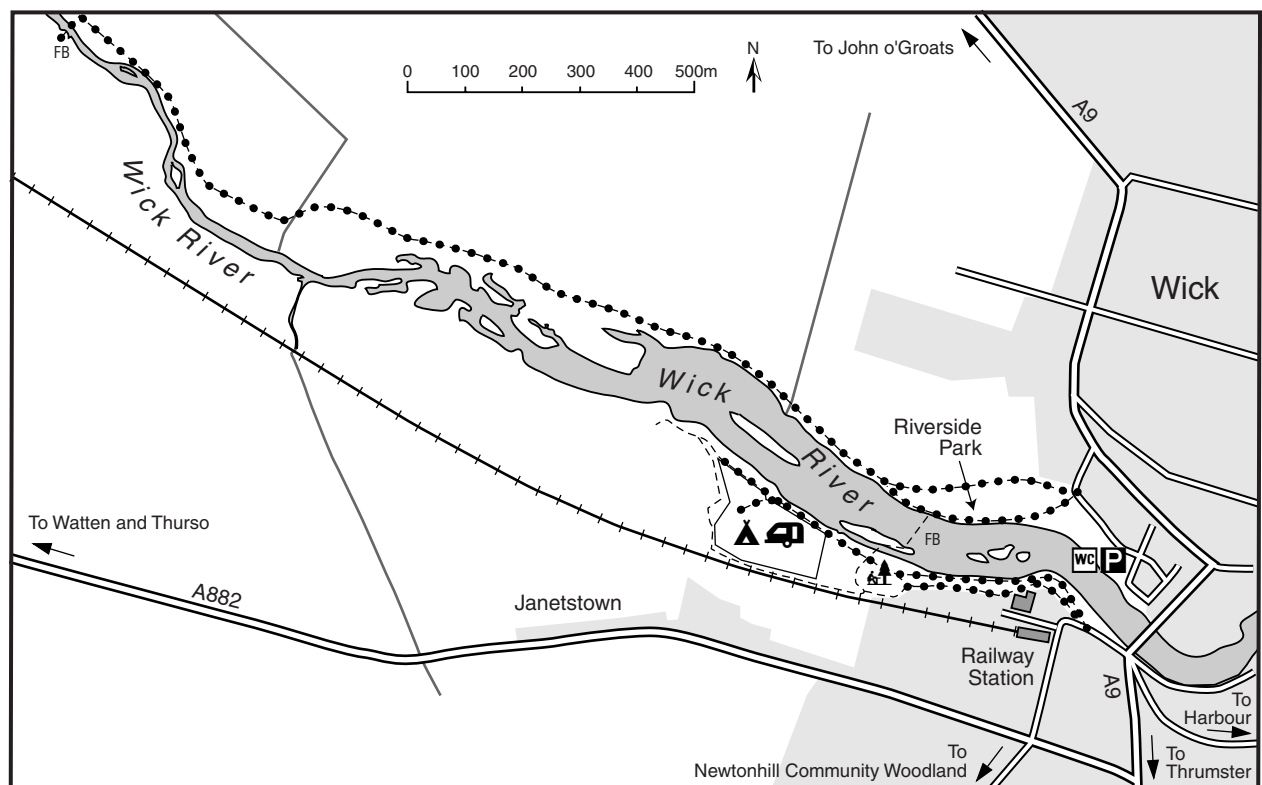
None along the route of the path.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



26) Wick Riverside Walk



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Burn/stream

Related topic work:

- Habitats (estuary, reed beds, sand/mudbanks, flood meadows)
- Birds

Link visit with sites at:

- Wick Harbour
- Newtonhill Community Woodland

27) Yarrows Archaeological Trail

OS Map 1:50 000 Sheet No:

12

Access point:

Access by vehicle from the A99. Take the minor road south of Thrumster, signposted for Haster. Unsuitable for coaches. New tourist information signs for the trail have been erected on both the A99 at Thrumster and on the A9 Wick-Thurso road.
Grid Ref: ND 306 434.

Site description:

The trail is through mainly open, rough hill country, with rudimentary way marking to guide visitors. Although primarily an archaeological site the paths offer easy access to moorland/upland habitats with most of the expected species of flora and fauna being represented. The Loch often has a variety of wildfowl through the winter months. As this site is also a working farm NO DOGS are allowed on the trail.

Access for special needs:

The site is over rough, uneven ground – stiles and fences.

Opening times/best time to visit:

At any time in good weather.

Who to contact before you visit:

Open access.

Safety aspects:

The trail is through farmland and open hill country and does not have a surfaced path. Way marking is basic – the guide leaflet is useful for first-time visitors. Take care in mist and poor visibility and in wet conditions as the path surface can be slippery.

Nearest help/telephone:

Public telephone at Thrumster. South Yarrows Farm is occupied but should only be called upon in emergencies.

Terrain/amount of walking:

The trail is on unsurfaced and occasionally boggy paths with flagstones and stepping stones in places. The full trail takes approximately 2 hours to walk without overly long stops at each site.

What to take:

Binoculars/telescope and equipment relevant to the activity to be undertaken. Warm, waterproof clothing. Footwear with good tread and waterproof if possible.

Cost:

Free.

**Information/leaflets/
on-site interpretation:**

There is a map of the site in the car park which includes some interpretation of the site. The self-guided trail leaflet is available at the car park and from Highland Council Archaeological Service.
Contact Tel: 01463 702250.

FACILITIES

Parking:

Parking for 5-6 cars. Sufficient space for a mini-bus.

Toilets:

None. Nearest – Wick.

Food:

Packed lunches required.

Nearest wet weather option:

Wick.

Picnic tables:

None.

Shelter:

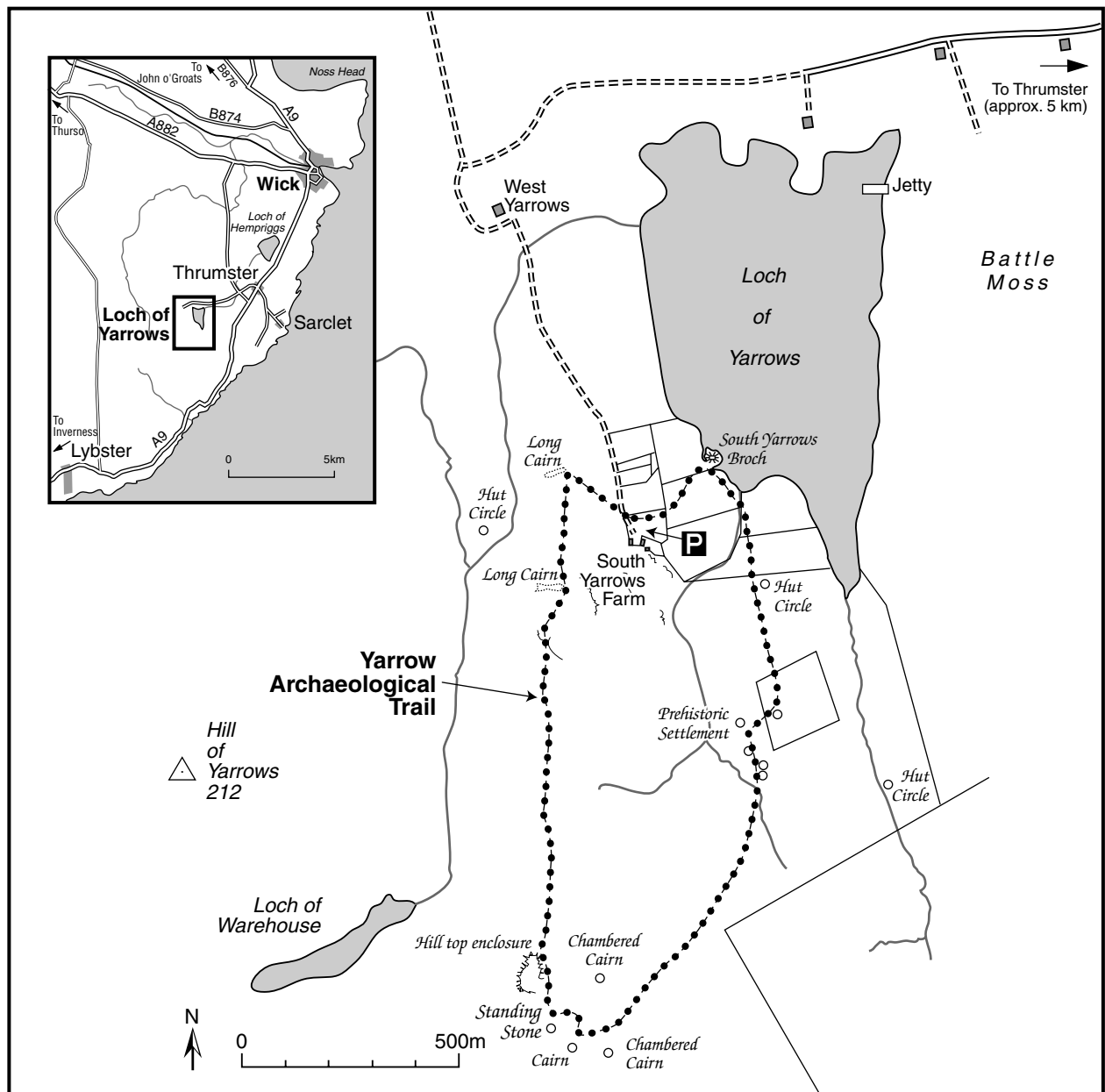
None.

Ranger/expert help:

Highland Council Ranger Service may be able to accompany you. This needs to be arranged prior to outing. Tel: 01955 607758.



27) Yarrows Archaeological Trail



EDUCATIONAL VALUE

School's Out! activity areas:

- Bog/peatland
- Landscape

Related topic work:

- Habitats (Loch/Reservoir; Lochan; Moorland; Bog; Rough Pasture)
- Birds
- Upland Vegetation
- Ancient Settlements
- Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age Man

Link visit with sites at:

- Thrumster Estate
- Thrumster Village Pond