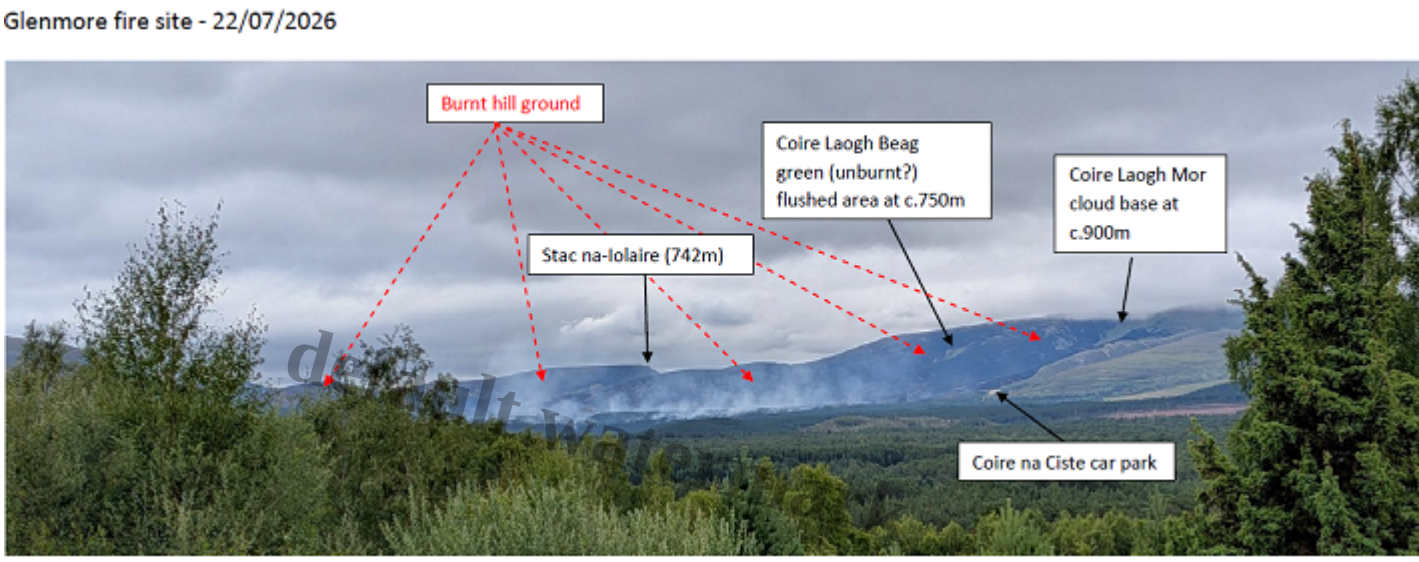
The potential ecological impacts of the fire in Strathy Nethy and Glen More

Description



View from Whitewell (NH915087). Burnt hill ground extends to >900m altitude. On the right (south) side of the photo, the fire extended to the footpath up the ridge on the east side of Coire na Ciste. Photo credit Andy Amphlett

UPDATE 25/07/2026 08.30
This blog was written on Thursday 23rd July, when fire flare ups were first being reported. Police Scotland declared a major incident on the evening of the 24th, with residents of Nethybridge evacuated as a precaution. The current extent of the fire is unclear.

There is (currently) no public access to the Glenmore / Ryvoan fire site (Cairngorms National Park Authority Update 17.00 on 23rd July see here), and restrictions to the area are unlikely to be lifted before next week (CNPA Update 21.00 on 22nd July (see here) . Therefore, this annotated photograph (from Whitewell, c.10km away) may be of interest but, with a flare-up reported later yesterday (see here) the damaged area may now be greater than previously reported.

Open hill ground was burnt up to c.900m altitude (possibly higher). On the right (south) side of the photo, the fire extended to the foot path up the ridge on the east side of Coire na Ciste.

The photo does not show anything of the fire area within Glenmore Forest itself.

The fire started over the skyline on RSPB ground. There is a short video by Ronan Dugan (Wildland) (see here) that gives a glimpse of the extent of the fire in Strath Nethy. It extended southwards as far as OS grid square NJ0206, level with Bynack Beg and Coire Laogh Mor.

RSPB, Forest and Land Scotland, Wildland, other estates and volunteers, plus Agencies have understandably been giving and continue to give their full attention to tackling the fire. Hopefully, in due course, an accurate map will be published showing the extent of the fire.



Drone footage of part of the burned area by the Green Loch in pass of Ryvoan. Photo credit CNPA/BBC

An assessment of the impacts of the fire will have to wait until fire suppression is completed and there is access again. There is a lot of pre-fire survey data, e.g of tree regeneration, flowering plants, mosses and liverworts, and it will be informative to learn what what survived. Amongst boulders and scree, and in flushes I would expect (hope) that quite a lot will have survived. Within the forest, I would expect impacts will vary a lot, depending on age and density of the trees and the type of field layer in the woodland. It appears that within the area burnt on the east side of Ryvoan Pass, many (most?) of the old pines have survived the fire, which is very encouraging.

It has been suggested that the fire burnt c.10km^2 before the flare up last night. That looks to be approximately right. 10km^2 is 1.7% of the whole Cairngorms Connect area and c.0.2% of the whole Cairngorms National Park. So a very big fire, but in the context of the wider landscape, perhaps not a disaster although extremely tough for those still trying to extinguish it.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. Caledonian Pinewood
2. CNPA
3. conservation
4. wildfire

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Author
andy-amphlett

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