



PGCert

Outdoor and Adventure Therapeutic Practice

Programme Handbook

CONTENTS

Welcome!	4
Overview – programme introduction	5
Quick Information reference points:	5
Background: Outdoor and Adventure “Therapeutic Practice”	5
Defining Outdoor and Adventure Therapeutic practice – scope of this programme.....	6
Aims and Objectives of the Programme	7
Programme educational Aims.....	7
Overall programme objectives and Graduate attributes	7
Programme Learning Outcomes – PGCert Outdoor and Adventure Therapeutic Practice.....	7
Modules	9
1. Theoretical Basis of Outdoor and Adventure Therapies	9
2. Reflexive Therapeutic Practice in Outdoor Environments	9
3. Therapeutic Programming in Outdoor and Adventure Practice	10
Teaching and learning	11
The Residential Experience	13
Residential Costs – applies to each residential field course	13
SOAS Practical Programme	14



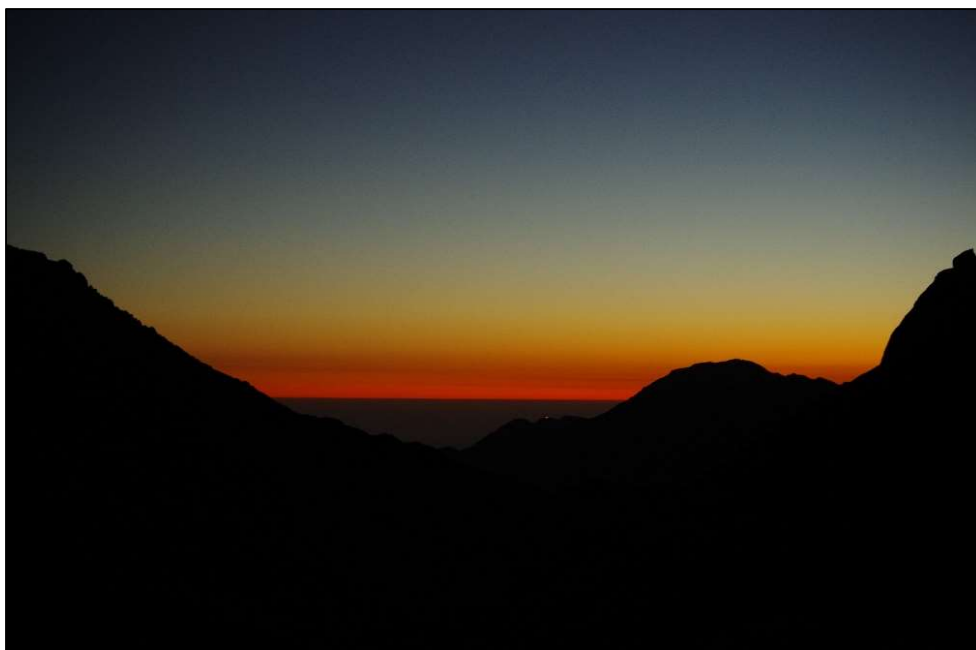
Fort William and Ben Nevis © Matt Groves 2018, licensed to UHI



Peas in a pod © 2019 Heidi Shingler, licenced to UHI

“In every walk with Nature, one receives far more than he seeks.”

John Muir (1838 – 1935)



WELCOME!

This programme will provide you with ideas, tools, and knowledge to take your understanding and practice in the outdoors to a new level – and to inspire a rich new approach to supporting participants to discover new ways of being.

Therapeutic practice in the outdoors can happen at many different levels, requiring a variety of specialist expertise and qualifications to help, support and work with people with mental health issues. Through this course we hope to bring you professional development to help you implement important and safe strategies in working with groups and individuals in professional outdoor settings, as well as allowing you to critically explore theoretical, social, personal, and organisational components of therapeutic practice in the outdoors. This handbook will outline some key points to be aware of for the programme.

We hope that the programme will support you in recognising and taking a lead role in your own career path. An important step in this path is learning to understand yourself in relation to all this, so reflective skills and self-awareness will be emphasised in the programme, as well as understanding the wider frameworks of practice in the outdoors.

The course brings a blend of work in the online and physical environments, with online learning and mandatory residential-based group and field work. Our aim throughout is to build a spirit of community among the students – this community of practice will not just help you to find strength and support, but also to explore ideas from a wider range of perspectives. We provide a flexible and professional learning environment, where you will have the opportunity to develop while working and enjoy the benefits of participating in a wider community.

Being part of SOAS also includes you in this wider community of students and staff, a vibrant group of people who share a passion for the outdoors. There are opportunities to join in club activities in many different adventure sports and the option to join in with the SOAS practical programme, which provides a diverse mixture of skills development, governing body award training and assessment, and much more. If you are studying away from Fort William, we can support you to seek out these opportunities around the residential weeks to make the most of your time.



Matt Groves

Programme Leader

OVERVIEW – PROGRAMME INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of the PGCert Outdoor and Adventure Therapeutic Practice is to situate therapeutic theory and practice in outdoor and adventure professional contexts, which is essential for anyone wishing to expand into this field of employment and enhance their knowledge of therapeutic interventions in the outdoors. Graduates from this programme will be able to combine their existing skills, experience, and qualifications to progress a career engaging in the therapeutic benefits that the outdoors and adventure can offer or providing therapeutic enhancement through focused interventions in outdoor programmes.

This programme is an important development for the sector, offering an innovative approach to an ongoing problem of providing a pathway to defining and upholding professional standards for outdoor and adventure-based therapeutic practice. The programme gives critical learning and professional development for people wishing to enter, or already employed, in this field, as well as enhancing and contributing to the wider community of practice.

QUICK INFORMATION REFERENCE POINTS:

- This programme provides professional development aimed at:
 - providing therapeutic enhancement in outdoor learning settings
 - enriching outdoor experiences for groups with additional mental health needs
- The PGCert will **not** qualify you to practice as a registered counsellor or psychotherapist
- The programme includes two residential field courses, which are mandatory for completion of two of the modules. You can find out more information about this and the costs involved in this handbook.
- Other parts of the programme will be taught online, through live video conference technologies and self-study tasks. There will be a combination of presentations, group work, and one-to-one discussions.
- Students can participate in the SOAS extra-curricular practical activity programme to develop greater personal skills and professional activity qualifications (NGBs). This programme is based from the West Highland College UHI Fort William campus, so opportunities can be taken up when in the area.

BACKGROUND: OUTDOOR AND ADVENTURE “THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE”

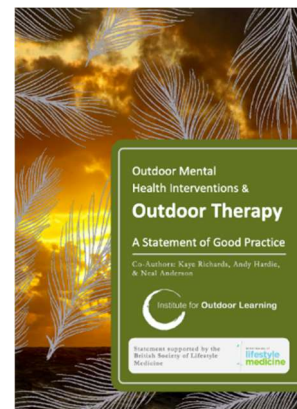
The PGCert Outdoor and Adventure Therapeutic Practice signals an important point in the emergence and maturing of this field of practice in the UK. This programme aims to offer a professional development opportunity that embarks along a pathway.

Therapeutic practices based in outdoor and natural spaces have existed for many years, under a variety of names such as nature-based therapy, ecotherapy, wilderness therapy, with examples dating back to the 1920's. These have evolved with changing social and cultural attitudes and developments, as have different interpretations of nature and wild places, alongside the growing use of terminology such as “wellbeing” and “mental health”.

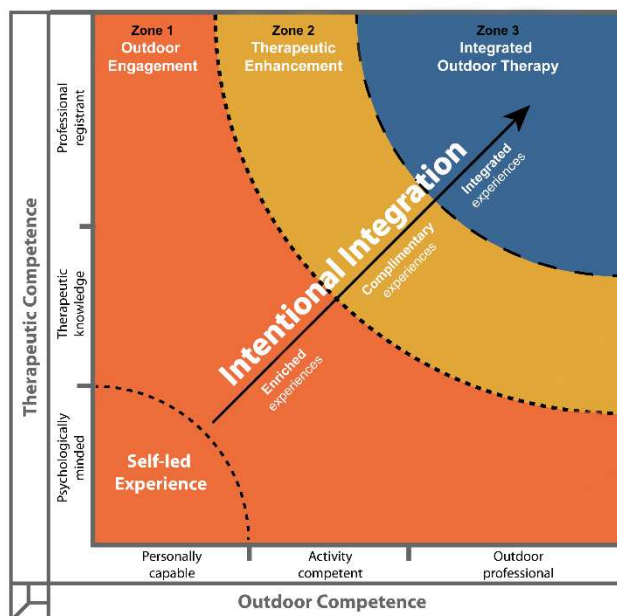
However, no frameworks have emerged to clearly define boundaries of practice in what we might call “Adventure Therapy”, and as a result, examples of practice are diverse across the sector, with no agreed training standards. We have structured this programme to help provide an appropriate understanding of professional boundaries and ethical standards of good practice to protect clients and promote personal development.

DEFINING OUTDOOR AND ADVENTURE THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE – SCOPE OF THIS PROGRAMME

The programme has been designed to align with work recently published by the Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL), (Richards, Hardie and Anderson, 2020). This very useful document provides a model to map the scope of current practice in mental health interventions in the outdoors. The diagram in figure 1 shows the model and helps us to visualise the boundaries of practice and expertise in therapeutic interventions in the outdoors; it also illustrates well the scope that this programme is intended to prepare you for. This model categorises mental health interventions under three “Zones” (1, 2 and 3), “Outdoor Engagement”, “Therapeutic Enhancement” and “Integrated Outdoor Therapy”, which are defined by increasing levels of *Therapeutic Competence* and *Outdoor Competence* combined.



The Outdoor Mental Health Interventions Model



© 2020 Co-authors Kaye Richards, Andy Hardie, Neal Anderson

While the **PGCert Outdoor and Adventure Therapeutic Practice** does not qualify you for registration with a mental health or Counselling and Psychotherapy body, our key focus and expectations are around building your subject specialism to work in Zones 1 and 2, which will enhance your capabilities to practice with a diverse range of presenting needs.

Graduates who hold additional specialist qualifications and professional registration may develop that application of skills to integrate “professional competence in both outdoor learning and psychological therapy to meet clients’ needs” (Zone 3, Richards, Hardie and Anderson, 2020).

Figure 1: The Outdoor Mental Health Interventions Model (Richards, Hardie and Anderson, 2020)

REFERENCE:

Richards, K., Hardie, A. and Anderson, N. (2019) "Outdoor Mental Health Interventions: Institute for Outdoor Learning Statement of Good Practice", IOL, (Online) Available at: https://www.outdoor-learning.org/Portals/0/IOL%20Documents/Outdoor%20Mental%20Health/Outdoor%20Mental%20Health%20Statement.Final.1.1...Oct.9.2019_compressed-1.pdf?ver=2019-11-27-090910-310



Chno Dearg sunset © Matt Groves, 2021, licensed to UHI

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

We have broken these down into the **Programme Educational Aims** (what we aim to provide students with educationally), the **Overall Objectives and Graduate Attributes** (what we think you should get from doing the programme), and the **Programme Learning Outcomes** (what specific skills and knowledge you should get from it as a postgraduate programme).

PROGRAMME EDUCATIONAL AIMS

THE PGCERT OUTDOOR AND ADVENTURE THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE PROGRAMME AIMS TO:

1. Provide accessible professional development for practitioners wishing to specialise in the application of therapeutic approaches and enhance related knowledge and skills in outdoor learning.
2. Enhance the professional profile of practitioners, creating valued competencies that foster complimentary and collaborative working opportunities alongside therapy professionals.
3. Situate skills and knowledge development in a context that is relevant and applicable to professional practice.
4. Facilitate authentic and critical exploration of theory and practice through experiential and immersive processes.
5. Develop students' capacity for critical reflexivity and reflection to raise self-awareness both in terms of personal competencies and in relation to the wider professional domain.

OVERALL PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES AND GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

THE PROGRAMME WILL ENABLE STUDENTS TO:

1. Specialise or become more highly specialised in outdoor and adventure therapeutic practice.
2. Critically apply knowledge of professional responsibility, integrity, and ethics; and critically reflect on their own progress as a learner.
3. Make an effective contribution to the outdoor and adventure therapy sector through the critical integration of forefront knowledge and skill domains.

PROGRAMME LEARNING OUTCOMES – PGCERT OUTDOOR AND ADVENTURE THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE

ON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THIS PROGRAMME, STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

1. Demonstrate a critical awareness of the principal and specialised theories, concepts, and features of outdoor and adventure therapeutic practice.
2. Identify, conceptualise, and define the contextual role and impact of outdoor environments and adventure activity settings as integral elements within the outdoor and adventure therapeutic relationship.

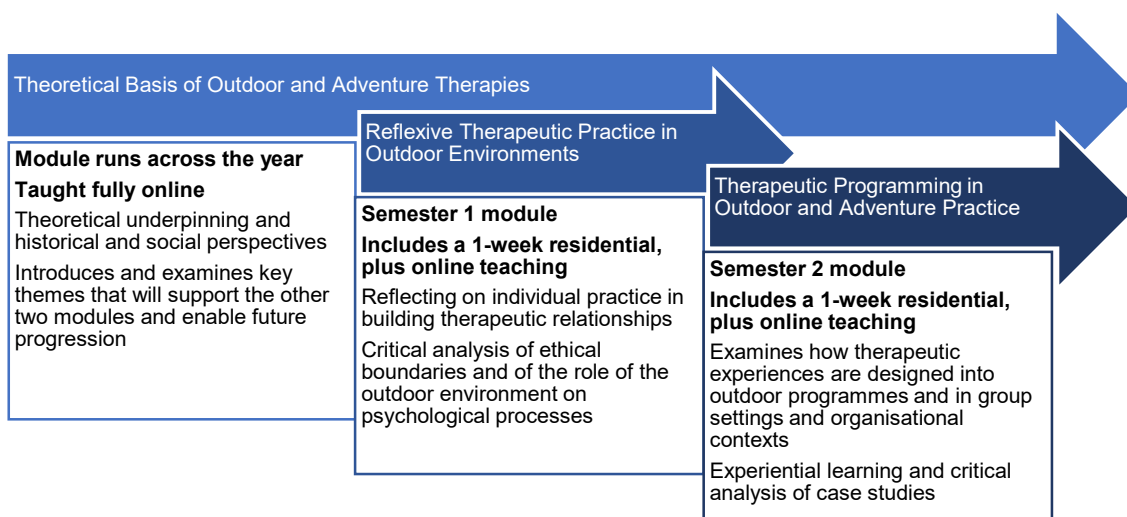
3. Apply critical analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of regulatory and ethical frameworks to recognise the boundaries of practice within specific working contexts and make informed judgements on issues not addressed by current professional or ethical codes.
 4. Demonstrate a range of specialised skills, techniques, and practices in outdoor and adventure therapeutic practice which are informed by forefront developments.
 5. Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in professional level activities and work in a peer relationship with other specialist practitioners.
 6. Critically review, consolidate, and extend reflexive awareness of their own values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours in therapeutic practice and in the therapeutic relationship.
 7. Support and enhance work with a wide range of ICT applications and adjust features to suit purpose and to critically evaluate and interpret a wide range of sources.
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MODULES

The PGCert offers a very simple structure of three core modules. These are required to cover the fundamental elements of developing the underpinning skills and knowledge of the programme title.

They follow an approximate chronology, although they can be taken in parallel as a full-time enrolled student. The diagram below gives key headline information, and we have given more detailed module summaries and learning outcomes below.



1. THEORETICAL BASIS OF OUTDOOR AND ADVENTURE THERAPIES

This is a key foundational module to explore the principles and practice of psychological change, human development, and therapeutic models in outdoor environments. It will consider the socio-cultural influences that have shaped the field and theoretically frame the interdisciplinary roots.

The module will also introduce a range of practices and umbrella terms, such as outdoor therapies, adventure therapy, wilderness therapy, and ecopsychology, offering case examples. It will explore the concepts of psychological change and human development that exist within outdoor learning contexts and consider related concepts, findings and practices in psychology, mental healthcare professions, the social sciences, and the humanities. Finally, we will consider the evidence-base for this emerging field of practice to gain perspective on the current scope and support for approaches in a UK context and worldwide.

MODULE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- LO1 Critically examine the theoretical roots, history, and socio-cultural context of outdoor and adventure therapeutic practice; relate this to the context of current terminology, boundaries, and features of practice.
- LO2 Demonstrate a critical awareness surrounding the principal theories, concepts, and principles of psychological change and human development that relate to outdoor learning and therapeutic contexts.
- LO3 Critically analyse and evaluate evidence of the effectiveness of approaches in outdoor and adventure therapeutic practices, drawing on a wide range of sources.

2. REFLEXIVE THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE IN OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS

This module is grounded in self-reflection and reflexive practice.

Key to the module is a mandatory residential field course where students will develop listening and therapeutic skills through group work, experiential, reflective exercises, and shared communal experiences to understand the impact of the natural environment on therapeutic practice. Students will explore their personal perspective on the interrelationship between health, wellbeing, social and environmental factors, to facilitate greater self-awareness as a reflective and reflexive practitioner.

Looking at a range of forefront issues, we will review ethical boundaries, the practitioner's role in facilitating therapeutic experiences, and the role of the environment on the therapeutic relationship. Students will consider their identity, experience, and personal-cultural context in relation to place, the natural environment, and the more-than-human world. Students are invited to examine their motivations for integrating outdoor, adventure and ecological practices with therapeutic practices.

MODULE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- LO1 Apply critical analysis, evaluation, and synthesis to develop original, creative responses to complex or forefront issues in outdoor and adventure therapeutic practice, critically reviewing a range of ethical boundaries and the practitioner's reflexive role in the therapeutic relationship.
- LO2 Demonstrate a critical contextual understanding of the role of the outdoor environment in the therapeutic process, to critically conceptualise and respond to group experiences from a range of perspectives (including different group roles and theoretical perspectives).
- LO3 Use models of critical reflexivity and reflection to extend knowledge and review your skills for working therapeutically in relation to place and outdoor environments.

3. THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMMING IN OUTDOOR AND ADVENTURE PRACTICE

This module considers the design and programming of outdoor and adventure therapy initiatives, particularly for groups. It considers the fundamental differences between clinical interventions for mental health and generalised programmes for personal development or wellbeing. It provides opportunities to understand and implement relevant facilitation and therapeutic skills and to evaluate these in relation to the various philosophies of therapeutic change.

Key to the module is a mandatory residential experience, where students will engage in practical examples and group work.

Students will have the opportunity to examine and compare a range of therapeutic approaches using case studies and work-place examples, including guest lectures. They will examine how programmes can address specific needs for a client or within a group. Students will consider how to best monitor and assess group needs and emerging dynamics. Through self-reflective and experiential activities, they will develop awareness of ethical issues as they relate to professional requirements and best practice guidelines.

MODULE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- LO1 Critically analyse, evaluate, and synthesise the design of outdoor or adventure therapy programmes and initiatives within a variety of professional contexts, referring to the core features and boundaries of outdoor and adventure therapy practice.
- LO2 Demonstrate originality and creativity in the design and planning of an outdoor and adventure therapeutic programme that is informed by forefront developments.
- LO3 Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in a range of specialised skills, techniques, and practices in outdoor or adventure therapeutic activities, and work in a peer relationship with other practitioners to enhance the therapeutic experience.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

You will study through a blend of independent online learning using the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Brightspace, synchronous video technologies, and face to face residential experiences. Online content is available 24/7 on various platforms allowing good flexibility to suit your location, life, and work, supporting the timetabled teaching element which can be attended live or caught up with via recorded sessions.

Each module follows a syllabus (scheme of work) available on the module space on the online learning platform *Brightspace* (brightspace.uhi.ac.uk). Within this framework and timescale students can arrange their academic work to suit their own circumstances. This allows students to access the materials flexibly whilst working to an agreed and clear structure of learning and teaching as set out in each module descriptor.



Full use is made of a wide range of technologies and technology networks to facilitate links between tutors and students, and within the peer-group. This allows students to share experiences, materials, and case-study contexts. Students are encouraged to access a wide range of online resources, including e-books and academic journals, industry reports and other relevant materials.

All modules have dedicated online materials to enable and complement the module leader/tutor support. These are accompanied by core and recommended reading lists. The teaching and learning materials include module guidance, formative learning activities and further reading materials (library resources, online links, references to electronic journals, digitised files of certain specialised reading materials).



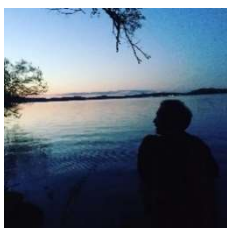
The diagram on the next page gives an example of how the teaching and assessment is scheduled across the year. The precise weeks are for indication only and the schedule might be subject to change from year to year, but it hopefully helps you to visualise how the modules fit together.

Above: Adirondacks Expedition Team © Matt Groves 2019, Licensed to UHI. Top: Tree canopy © Matt Groves 2019, licensed to UHI

[illegible]

Above: Example teaching schedule for the PGCert Outdoor and Adventure Therapeutic Practice, showing teaching, residentials, and assessments. Online taught sessions may be combinations of asynchronous pre-recorded presentations, and synchronous webinars, group tutorials, or guest speakers. Students will be assigned additional personal research, practice, or reflection tasks to complete outside of these sessions.

THE RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE



The modules *Reflexive Therapeutic Practice in Outdoor Environments* and *Therapeutic Programming in Outdoor and Adventure Practice* each include a residential field course, one in Autumn (Semester 1) and one in Spring (Semester 2). These are mandatory, with key assessments integrated into their structure. Full details of the venues, accommodation and programme for the courses will be given during the programme. As well as the assessment opportunities, the residential model of learning seeks to fulfil some important outcomes and benefits for the student that are key to the programme.

It is the chance to come together as a group, meet face to face in a shared communal space, and put into practice a range of therapeutic skills. The experiences will include developing listening skills through group work and applying models of practice in therapeutic programming, as well as exploring the interrelationship between therapeutic practice, health, wellbeing, and the natural environment.

The residential field courses are designed around maximising accessibility for all potential users, with accommodation and activities selected with high standards of inclusive access, in line with our statement on equality, diversity and inclusion (p.7). The activities are not intended to be physically demanding for participants, and we will work with students to create the most appropriate programme of outdoor field work for the course requirements and student needs.

A full residential handbook will also be provided as a supplement to this information



Above left: Evening chat © Matt Groves 2019, licensed to UHI.

Right: Lean-to camp on the 2019 Adirondacks River Expedition © Matt Groves 2019, licensed to UHI

RESIDENTIAL COSTS – APPLIES TO EACH RESIDENTIAL FIELD COURSE

The expected costs to students will include:

- Travel to and from Fort William Campus, UHI West Highland, including any international travel required for international students.
- Estimated food and accommodation costs in residential location - £500 per residential. This is based on an estimated accommodation cost of £60 per night for a 5-night residential in self-catering accommodation, plus food and subsistence costs. Actual costs may vary.
- Any personal clothing and footwear required to work outdoors, including waterproof clothing. There will be opportunities to buy personal clothing and equipment at discounted prices through our retail and trade supply partner organisations.



Costs that SOAS will cover:

- Minibus travel from Fort William to the residential field course venue (if required).
- Staffing costs for teaching and activity instructional staff.
- All specialist equipment or PPE for activities (you may wish to bring your own if appropriate).

Above: Not forgetting... © Matt Groves, 2013, licensed to UHI

SOAS PRACTICAL PROGRAMME

As a student enrolled on a programme at The School of Adventure Studies, you will have access to the comprehensive SOAS Practical 'token' programme. This provides a wealth of potential activity training and qualification opportunities that are embedded into your experience at Fort William.

At the start of the academic year, you will be credited with 'tokens', which can be used to pay for courses/days of your choice. The full list of opportunities will be published at the start of the academic year. Once your tokens are used up, it is possible to pay for extra practical sessions at a heavily discounted rate. This programme runs independently of your academic modules, so you will need to plan and manage your time accordingly.

If you are based away from Fort William, then we will work to support you to make the most of opportunities around the time of the residential field courses, or at other times that you are able to travel. Practical 'tokens' can only be used against approved SOAS activity.



Above: Open Canoe on the River Roy © Matt Groves, 2005, licensed to UHI