

A Guide to Blockades: The G8 Edition

compiled by the Deconstructionist Institute for Topology (DIST)

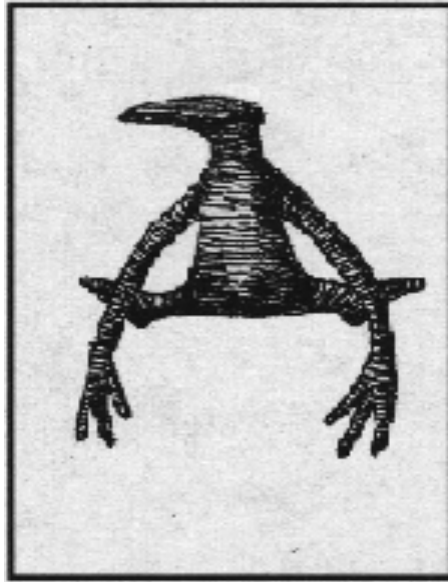


Table of Contents

1. Background
2. Preparation
3. Transportation
4. Security
5. Communication
6. Some items to bring
7. Tips and tricks
8. Blockade locations

(1) Background

The G8 cannot solve the problems of climate change or poverty – they are responsible for the very policies which are causing climate change and poverty. We cannot call on them to solve the world's problems, but must put a stop to their policies and shut down their institutions. Groups within and allied to the Dissent Network have thus called on protesters and the public to blockade the G8 on July 6th.

Gleneagles was chosen because of its isolation -- yet its isolation means that there are fewer roads to blockade. Unfortunately, none of the convergence centres are located near blockade points, thus transportation will be a limiting factor (please see the transportation section for more info). Gleneagles is about a one hour drive north of Glasgow and Edinburgh, both places which have convergence centers where protesters will be staying. The rural convergence center (ecovillage, or Hori-zone), is a full day's walk from Gleneagles.

The 8 leaders are likely to arrive into Prestwick airport near Glasgow, and will probably be flown in by helicopter at hourly intervals on July the 6th. Delegates and staff will almost certainly have to drive in, and are known to be staying in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Some staff are also believed to be staying in the town of Crieff, near Gleneagles. The University of Stirling, near the ecovillage, will house the London police, and the media. It is rumoured that George Bush, being a bit of a coward, may arrive through RAF Leuchars air base to the East of Gleneagles near St. Andrews.

Map 1 has been kindly provided by Tayside police, and indicates which roads will be closed or controlled. Additionally, they have issued the following understatement: "police officers will be stationed at junctions at Blackford, Loaninghead, Auchterarder and Aberuthven to help vehicles enter and exit the A9 safely. Police officers will also patrol the local road network to ensure all road users are aware of the traffic management measures."

The following roads will be closed from July 3rd:

1. A823 from the A9 to the A822
2. A824 Orchil Road from the A823 to Western Road
3. C464 Muirton Road
4. C467 from A823 to A822
5. U23 Gleneagles Hotel

The A9 is a dual carriageway, while the A823 and A824 has two small lanes. The C and B roads are single lane, and are probably unfit for motorcades.

If the police are unable to manage protests, they have announced back up venues of the police college at Tulliallan, in Fife, followed by Lancaster House in London. Gleneagles itself is protected by a very low double fence, and an inner fence.

(2) Preparation

Protesters often organise in units which can operate independently, but simultaneously coordinate their actions with others. People are more effective when they act together, rather than as a large mass of individuals.

A common tactic is to organise into small "affinity groups" of 8-10 people: you and your mates -- people you know well, and trust. Affinity groups usually share a common view on tactics and risk, so that you will not have to split up, or have lengthy discussions before making a decision. Because you know each other well, you are a secure network, and are unlikely to be infiltrated by the police or journalists.

Affinity groups usually plan what they want to do at the blockade - and then get the necessary gear together well in advance: some groups have announced they will do lock-downs on the road; others have talked about providing scouts and helping different blockades communicate between each other. In general, having a common task helps you use the energy that exists in your group to greater effect.

Once organized into affinity groups, the "clustering" process begins. Affinity groups start talking with others they know well, and organise into clusters of about 10 affinity groups which share common goals, and have skills which complement each other. You are now a group of 100 people who can act quickly and autonomously. Clustering together with groups who will be using a common means of transport (whether that be bikes, cars, hill walking, or marching), can be useful.

(3) Transportation

Most of the blockade points are near Gleneagles and are not accessible from Edinburgh or Glasgow. They are accessible from the ecovillage, but only with considerable walking. The following modes of transport are being considered:

1) Hill walking

The surrounding countryside is beautiful, and those willing to hike for a day can position themselves in places close to blockade points. If you go hill walking, you need to be prepared, with good boots, a compass, map, tent, sleeping bag, and plenty of food, water and warm clothes. Some people will be heading out on the 5th, and lighting Beacons of Dissent. See <http://silver.j12.org> for more resources. There are some closer departure points which may be reached by car, and there has been some talk of arranging a shuttle service to these points. Maps can be purchased in town, and some photocopied maps may be available.

2) Bikes

Fast, and able to get past other blockades. There has been a call for those with extra bikes to bring them up and loan them out. For a good place to get cheap bikes in Edinburgh check out the Bike Warehouse in the Waverly train Station, whose erratic operating hours are displayed on www.thebikestation.org.uk.

3) Cars

Some people who have cars, buses, or vans, may consider loaning them to people. However, they will no doubt be in very short supply. There has been some talk of setting up a car pooling system, so that efficient use is made of the little transport available. A call for extra vehicles has gone out. It is possible to rent vehicles in the United Kingdom for around 100-200 pounds for a week. Also, one can often buy used cars for 400-500 pounds, and in the transaction one may not be forced to give a real name. Cars in the UK need to be taxed, have an inspection by the MOT, and have a legally insured driver. UK drivers caught driving without insurance may lose their license, so it is preferable to have internationals drive if the vehicle is uninsured. Cheap insurance can be gotten off the Internet, including using a British Citizen as the primary driver who may not actually be driving the car, and insuring others as additional drivers. The insurance can usually be canceled once the G8 summit is over.

4) Marching from the site

You've come this far, and now you may have to hike for a few extra hours. Getting out of the ecovillage may be an issue, as the site can be blocked in by the police. Those departing from the ecovillage, will no doubt learn the site well, and explore all possible routes to where they want to go.

5) Autonomous camping

Some may choose to find camping sites (whether they be urban or rural) closer to where they will blockade. Being in an isolated campsite can be uncomfortable or even dangerous, so groups have been urged to stick together, and scout out their camping location well in advance.

6) Flying clusters

Groups which are particularly mobile, sometimes form flying clusters which don't set up a blockade, but instead hover near a particular region. If a blockade goes down, or a hole is found, they go to the hole.

(4) Communications

Mobile phones may go down due to police intervention, or just because too many people are using them in the area. To avoid the latter, it has been suggested not to use the phone too much. In the area around Gleneagles, the mobile phone coverage of various networks is spotty. It can be useful for each mobile phone

to have multiple SIM cards on different networks with calling time already installed. The best coverage in the area around Gleneagles seems to come from Vodafone, O2, and T-mobile. Do not use Orange and Virgin as your primary carrier if possible.

If you set up text messaging, it has been asked that you only have one person in each affinity group hooked up to it. This will increase the speed of the network. In case of the network breaking down, people might want to have alternative means of communication. Bike messengers, walkie-talkies, flag waving, smoke signals, whatever. Don't keep trying the phone network, you will only slow it down further. Use megaphones, and talk with the people around you so that you can act together.

Affinity groups may connect themselves to communications systems that already exist. While many sources of information are not set-up to co-ordinate blockades but only to broadcast news, they may provide very useful information by accident and so should be carefully monitored.

(5) Some items to bring

Many guides would suggest things like swimming goggles for tear gas. We just suggest to pretend you are going on a picnic, and take plenty of food and water -- if the blockades are successful, you may be staying out for a long time. Communication devices and megaphones may also be useful. The medics and the legal team will have cards with their numbers.

(6) Security

Complete openness gives people the potential to organise without hierarchy, get to know each other, and make solid plans. It also gives the police enough information to stop blockades before they even start. Many things can be discussed openly, but discussion of specific tactics, and the locations of the blockades are usually avoided. Keeping these small details private need not limit your ability to organise non-hierarchically. Clusters of affinity groups will often decide on their tactics autonomously. As for the blockade points, there are people who are very familiar with the area and can reveal the locations at the last possible moment.

As a general rule, one should try to balance paranoia with effective organising. Often, activists take precautions which have a huge negative effect on organising, but do little to increase security.

If you want to include someone in your plans, one often asks for a reference -- the name of a common friend, or a friend of a friend, who can verify the security of the individual. This builds up a network of trust.

In open discussion, it is often good not to discuss details, but rather, the big picture and answer important questions: How to arrange transportation? Will groups camp somewhere else the night before? What regions will people cover? How will people ensure that the various routes are evenly covered?

(7) Tips and Tricks

The following is a compilation of tips which have appeared in previous publications.

The police will want to clear protesters well away from a motorcade route. Usually, a route must be completely clear for ten minutes before it is considered secure for motorcades. The police do not want protesters anywhere near the route when a motorcade goes by. Pushing blockaders backwards often has little effect, because the protesters are still on the route. The police will thus try to clear people to the side, preferably chasing them down side roads. Blockaders often try to stay on the road they are blockading, even if it means moving back a bit.

Police in the U.K. tend to try to create a pen around people. Don't let a police line form around you, it can be a dangerous place to be. Rather, move quickly and together as soon as you suspect the police are trying something. "Out of the pen" is a common signal for people to quickly get out together, in one single motion.

After a fast manoeuvre, quickly gather back together. The police want people dispersed in different locations, because they know that individuals may lose energy. Regroup, and stick together. Decide on gathering locations. Communicate with each other, make friends, and use noise to signal gathering places.

If the blockade does not involve locking-down, those most responsible for the blockade may want to have a well-laid out escape route. If the blockade involves some locking down, make sure people monitor the police and tell them of the danger of removing people who have physically put themselves in the way of the traffic. Having a few cameras around, whether they be Indymedia or otherwise, can sometimes cause the police to think twice before doing something violent. Contact the media group or Indymedia for help with this.

Blockades which are set up during traffic times will blockade random cars. Dealing with irate drivers can be difficult, but if you are calm, and polite, the driver may be more than happy to leave their car sitting in the middle of the road. A row of cars with protesters intermingled is a nightmare for the police to clear.

Remember that it would be tragic if a blockade of the G8 caused a traffic incident that hurt or even killed someone, so be very careful in slowing traffic down before blockading. This can easily be done by having dummy cars slow traffic down,

using flares, or having large official-looking signs.

Those driving in cars will be most vulnerable during the drive up to the blockade. Plan beforehand what you will do if the cops try to pull you over, or what, if anything, you will say. Having some items in the car will clearly demarcate you as someone who is trying to blockade, so hide items or think of ways of doing blockades that would allow you to be effective even if the Police try to stop you at a random checkpoint.

Those camping in autonomous zones will also be vulnerable during this time. The police will be able to spot you from the air. You might want to stick in very secluded areas far from the road.

Don't blockade other blockades!!! Timing can be crucial. A blockade that is set up too early can end up blockading other protesters who planned to set up beyond your location. Use scouts and communication systems.

Have a few scouts in key locations also lets you know what is up ahead and behind. Know the location well beforehand, but be careful when doing advance scouting, as you let the police know what areas you are considering as blockade points.

Be patient. It may feel like your blockade is not useful, or not on a motorcade route. But every blockade is important, and if you leave yours, the route coordinators can re-route the motorcade through the place you left. Be wary of decoy motorcades, although there is really no easy way to tell them apart from the real thing.

Have back-up plans. Decide beforehand what you will do if the police stop you before you get to your desired location, or if the place you want to be is too hot.

On July 4th, there will be a blockade of the Faslane Nuclear base, and a carnival for full enjoyment. Try not to get nicked before the 6th.

Oh oh, have to wake up early. But when do blockades go down? And what will people do after? So that energy doesn't dissipate, have a spokescouncil at your blockade, and communicate with other blockades to decide what to do. Will you go back and come again tomorrow? Will you march on Gleneagles? There are three days when the G8 is meeting, so make use of them all.

(8) Blockade Locations

Everyone who looks at the map will have some idea of what locations are likely to work. To balance out the number of people at each location, clusters often communicate with other clusters to ensure that all points are covered. The blockades group meetings at each of the convergence centers will likely produce a plan of action that is accessible to everyone (although the locations of this

action may or may not be public). Autonomous groups often don't feel bound by the plan of action developed at the meetings – but will probably not put up a blockade which will interfere with it. Thus, autonomous groups doing very close blockades will likely start earlier than the rest. Communicating through networks of trust can ensure that actions are coordinated.

Map 1

