

Natural Retreats are not fit to manage Cairngorm

Description



The new damage created alongside the car park t-bar on Sunday – photo Alan Bratney

One might have thought after all the recent publicity about destruction at Cairngorm that Natural Retreats would have started to take just a little more care. The latest evidence show nothing has changed and the spin from Natural Retreats bears no resemblance to what is happening on the ground.

Having claimed on their website what a great restoration job they had done on the trench where new cable was laid alongside the Carpark T-Bar, on Sunday Alan Bratney and George Paton witnessed the skiers uptrack being badly damaged by a vehicle. People had been working to erect new steel structures to the top of the tow towers (nothing wrong with that) but when they had finished, they then drove an all terrain vehicle down the uptrack to get back to the Day Lodge. The photos show the damage and the vehicle that caused it.



Photo credit George Paton

Ironically, the towers they were working on were close to the unlawful track to the Shielling rope tow that Natural Retreats and HIE are now claiming is needed to prevent damage to vegetation. However, instead of using this new track, which would have been a longer way round, the vehicle simply drove downhill and through the soft ground which is an almost permanent feature of the lower part of the tow track due to a spring which emerges there. A complete lack of care and proof that were the Cairngorms National Park Authority to approve a retrospective planning application for the Shielling Rope Tow track it will do nothing to stop the damage at Cairngorm. Natural Retreats allow their staff to drive anywhere. This makes a mockery of the whole planning process. Its also completely undermines the Visitor Management Plan at Cairngorm where Natural Retreats are legally bound to educate visitors about their impacts on the environment – with messages about treading lightly – while they allow their own staff and vehicles to plough furrows willy nilly across the hill.

Yesterday I received from HIE a copy of the Environment Management Plan referred to in their lease with Natural Retreats [160805_ Environmental Management System – Cairngorm Mountain Limited \(A2247756\) \(A2674921\)](#). Compare the photos above with this extract from their Environment Policy:

“To minimise environmental impacts concerning our activities, products and services, we shall:.....

* Educate, train and motivate employees to carry out tasks in an environmentally responsible manner”.

Has Natural Retreats carried out any education or training? They clearly have not motivated their employees to carry out tasks in an environmentally sensitive manner but this would probably take too much money, including paying them a decent wage in return for high standards of work. The Environment Management system is not worth the paper it is written on.

I am afraid that Natural Retreats appears to be one of those companies that engages expensive external consultants to write up policies and procedures so they can tick boxes and win contracts and then just simply ignores them in practice. HIE needs to hold them to account.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. HIE
3. natural environment

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