

Compare and contrast Natural Retreats claims with the evidence

Description

The claims



“Image showing reinstatement of turf on new ground contours prior to lift installation Oct 2015. Track on left of work site retained to move materials and ski lift components avoiding tracking on reinstated vegetation”.

Natural Retreats provided this photo in their [supporting statement](#) to the Cairngorms National Park Authority for retrospective planning application for the new track they created at Cairngorm. If the ground had been restored as well as this photo suggests, the heather would now be in bloom – the reality is rather different.

The evidence from yesterday

While Parkswatch has a large bank of photos of the “restoration” of the reprofiled slope, its hard to demonstrate the extent of the damage from ground level. The funicular however provides an excellent vantage point.



No sign of blooming heather, in fact most of it is dead.
Bratney

Photo credit Alan



Why, if the restoration was as effective as appears to be shown in the Natural Retreats photo, has such extensive re-seeding (the bright green is the newly sown grass) been required? Photo credit Alan Bratney.



And how did this tree end up on its side and dying? You can see evidence on the ground that suggests it was knocked over by an earth moving machine – perhaps someone got a bit careless when scattering these boulders? Photo Credit Alan Bratney



The machinery has turned the bottom of the rope slow into a quagmire. It might now turn into a bog but the whole reason for the CNPA granting planning permission to reprofile was to make it better for skiing and remove the old bulldozed tow line. Photo Credit Alan Bratney



Part of the problem is Natural Retreats has simply failed to empty the silt traps required by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. Unfortunately SEPA appears to believe Natural Retreats' claims that these are emptied on a daily basis. Photo Credit Alan Bratney.

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Natural Retreats further claims about car park ski tow

“This experience [of restoration] is being applied to this project and adjacent areas of ground disturbed in underground cable renewal and ski -tow remediation works next to the site at the car park tow and other lifts as part of a three year ski lift upgrade” (Supporting Statement)

The evidence from the ground

Parkswatch has [already](#) published photographic evidence of vehicles driving down the line of the carpark tow damaging the ground which Natural Retreats claim has been “restored”. These were taken at a distance so here are some from closer up which show what has happened.



It was easier for Natural Retreats to dump a couple of planks to help their vehicles get across boggy ground rather than use the new track which they claim was needed to prevent this happening! Photo Credit Alan Bratney



Photo credit Alan Bratney



Photo credit Alan Bratney

CNPA and HIE need to bring Natural Retreats under control at Cairngorm

These photos provide yet more evidence that Highlands and Islands Enterprise, as landowner, and CNPA, who are responsible for what happens in our National Parks, need to bring Natural Retreats under control in order to protect the environment at Cairngorm. Things they could and should do include:

- stop all off-road use of vehicles in the ski area without consent
- stop all further earth works at Cairngorms, whether requiring planning permission or not, until a proper plan is produced for the area. Any future works should be subject to outside and independent scrutiny/supervision
- CNPA should require Natural Retreats and HIE to pay for a fully independent ecological survey on the extent of the damage and options for restoration and meantime reject the current planning application for a track.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. natural retreats
3. planning
4. restoration

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