

Planning failures at Badaguish â?? by Phil Swainson

Description



General View over part of Badaguish site Feb 2017 showing rubbish, incomplete tree planting that was not in the original planning consent and which has largely failed, part of a bike track and some accommodation pods as part of the development we should expect in the National Park?

On Friday 19th August 2016, after a site visit, Cairngorms National Park Authority Planning Committee passed the latest, and certainly not the last, of a series of highly controversial planning applications by the Speyside Trust, which manages a large site at Badaguish, in the heart of Glenmore Forest. The

applications are controversial because the Speyside Trust has frequently breached planning regulations, because the applications are riddled with inaccuracies and false statements, and because the area around Badaguish is a breeding site for Capercaillie, a bird needing special protection. There is a European Conservation Site (SPA), some 200 metres from the Badaguish boundary.



A further photo (taken Feb 27 2017) showing the car park without required edging of logs and with m... the time of the 2016 site visit by the CNPA Board. Inappropriate gorse plantings can be seen on the background.

One of the conditions attached to the CNPA's planning permission in August 2016 read as follows:

Within 6 months of the date of this permission the parking area shall be edged with logs to define its boundaries and thereafter kept free for the parking of vehicles, unless otherwise

agreed in writing with the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development fits into the landscape setting and future landscaping approved for this site in accordance with Policy 5: Landscape of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2015.

The six months is now up and yet again nothing has happened.

CNPA Planning Officers have regularly, since September 2011, had some of the more blatant inaccuracies and untruths pointed out to them, by telephone, by e mail, and by personal visits to their offices by myself and members of the Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group. So far, they have chosen to ignore these warnings which I believe is a total abdication of their responsibilities to their office, the public and the environment.

To demonstrate one of the more obvious and crucial pieces of false information, I will consider documents submitted to planning about capacity at the site. The charts Capacity and Flows and Loads were submitted by the Speyside Trust to support the original application, 2011/0206/DET, submitted in June 2011.

CURRENT OCCUPANCY 2009	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	N
EXISTING OCCUPANCY											
Speyside Trust Lodges	728	969	984	687	683	857	820	1050	942	939	
SN Bednights		42	24	310	411	262	184	211	237	264	
HC Lodges	311	470	782	984	1201	1113	976	779	656	510	
Camping under Canvas				840	670	224	458	450	266	84	
TOTAL BEDNIGHTS	1039	1576	1790	2821	2965	2456	2438	2490	2101	1797	1
PROJECTED FUTURE CAMPING OCCUPANCY											
Camping under Canvas				570	550		100				
Wooden Camping Huts	120	30	60	270	120	270	630	630	120	180	
TOTAL CAMPING BEDNIGHTS	120	30	60	840	670	270	730	630	120	180	

CAPACITY	Previous	Current	Projected
	1996	2010	2012
ST Lodges	48	48	48
HC Lodges	63	63	63
Respite Unit	10	10	10
Campsite	100	100	100
Stone Bothy	20	nil	nil
Jubilee Bunkhouse	20	nil	nil
TOTAL	261	221	221

Note how capacity is presented as having reduced since 1996

FLOWS & LOADS

Description	Number of Users	Water Dem (L/per person)
4No. Existing Lodges	40 ⁶⁸	180
Respite Lodge	20	180
Jubilee Bunkhouse	20	180
Wardens House & Staff Accommodation	4	180
Non Resident Office Staff	12	50
Events (additional people on site)	100	10
Camping	100	75
4No. New Lodges	40 ⁴⁸	180
New Cafe	120	15
Jubilee Bunkhouse no longer accommodation	-20	180
Total	436	950

ALTHOUGH THE TOTAL POPULATION IS SHOWN AS 164.6 PERSONS, THIS IS AT ONE TIME. THIS WOULD NEVER BE THE CASE. A POPULATION OF 120

EXISTING TO BE REMOVED

Description	Number of Users	Water Dem (L/per person)
Camping	100	75

PROPOSED

Description	Number of Users	Water Dem (L/per person)
Wigwams	87.5	75
Camping	12.5	75

THIS SHOWS THAT THE NEW PROPOSALS ARE OFFSET BY THE EXISTING

On the Flows and Loads chart it is stated, in block capitals, "THIS SHOWS THAT THE NEW PROPOSALS ARE OFFSET BY THE EXISTING SCHEME THAT IS TO BE REMOVED." This strongly suggests the applicant is stating that there will be no increase in the capacity of the site. Assuming so, this document, and the capacity chart giving a history of site capacity, appear designed to deceive. The potential number of people camping has always been the same. The licence, issued by the Highland Council is for 100 tents and 10 caravans. How many people is that? Over 200, yet Speyside Trust claims there will be just 100 campers. However, the numbers of fixed beds have increased enormously since 1996.

My comparison chart Flows and Loads compared with Capacity chart shows the anomalies.

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Flows and Loads document compared with Capacity chart.

Flows and Loads	Capacity Chart
4 No existing lodges. Built 2001, leased to THC 2007, maximum users now 68	Lodges did not exist in 1996. Accommodation on site was stone bothy and bunkhouse. Not sure when respite unit was built. HC lodges leased to HC in 2007, maximum users was 63, now 68
4 No new lodges. Built 2007, max users unclear, advertised at 10-18 at different times.	ST lodges are new lodges built 2007/8, maximum users unclear, advertised from 10 to 18
Respite lodge. Not sure when built, max users shown as 20	Respite Unit-presumably same as respite lodge, max users shown as 10.
Total "population" shown as 164.6, though states "this would never be the case. 120 is average." There are regularly well over 150 people on site	Total capacity-1996 figure not true as lodges did not exist. It should probably be 50 beds plus tent camping. 2010 figure of 221 probably reasonably accurate. In 2012 there were 10 wigwams operating with 40 beds in total on top of the 2010 figure. In the near future, there will be 35 wigwams, with 175 beds on top of all the other facilities, yet total remains the same at 221. There will be 315 guest bed spaces onsite, plus tent camping space, plus resident and non-resident staff.
Camping/wigwams. "Existing to be removed" (tent camping) shown as 100 in table, 82 on plan. How many people is camping area licensed for? Wigwams-proposed numbers shown as 87.5, but total bed spaces will be 175. (Question; what is difference between "number of users" and "population"?)	Camping figures, especially projections, seem arbitrary. Projected occupancy rates for the wigwams are low overall (20% per annum), and unrealistically so in May (11.4% in the busiest month of the year).
"This shows that the new proposals are offset by the existing scheme that is to be removed". Tented camping is not being removed, it is being relocated to a new area of the site, figures may well remain the same or even increase. The wigwams represent an increase in fixed bed spaces of 175	The capacity chart shows a decrease over the years whereas it should show a steady increase in total numbers, i.e. 1996- 50 or 60 plus camping, 2010-121 plus camping, 2012 was 161 plus camping, soon it will be 319 plus camping, plus non-resident staff, café customers, bike park users etc. i.e. well over 400.

Basically, in 1996 there were about 50 beds on site, mainly bunkhouse style. When all the proposed new beds are in place, it will be something over 300 despite 2 buildings no longer having bunks in them. And why give figures for lodge occupancy in 1996, when the lodges were not even built? The first 4 lodges were built in 2001 and a further 4 in 2007.

CNPA officers' responses to my clarification of the information has been mixed. There was no response at all in 2011. In September 2013 I was astounded to hear "We have to believe what an applicant tells us" from senior planning officers at a meeting in the CNPA offices in Grantown. The latest, and surely most pathetic, is in an e mail I received. A senior planning official from CNPA stated:

Based on information provided with planning applications and recent planning consents, the Badaguish site has planning permission for developments with a bed provision of 221 and a camp site of unspecified capacity. The figure of 262 was one claimed for the site in 1996 when the accommodation on site was significantly different. The CNPA can't verify whether that figure of 262 is accurate or not. The planning permissions granted in the past few years don't limit the number of people who may visit the site. However, whether the 1996 figure was accurate or not does not affect the planning permissions that have been granted.

So the senior CNPA planner is unable to verify the facts. Perhaps he could ask the number of Highland Council, the Planning Authority in 1996, is in the phone book. And he seems to believe that the current bed capacity is 221, when in fact it is over 300. And if he could be bothered to read the site camping licence, he would discover that the campsite is not, in one respect, "of unspecified capacity". This huge increase in bed capacity was never discussed at planning meetings, and goes against all the local plans for the area for the last twenty years:

Glenmore Corridor Background

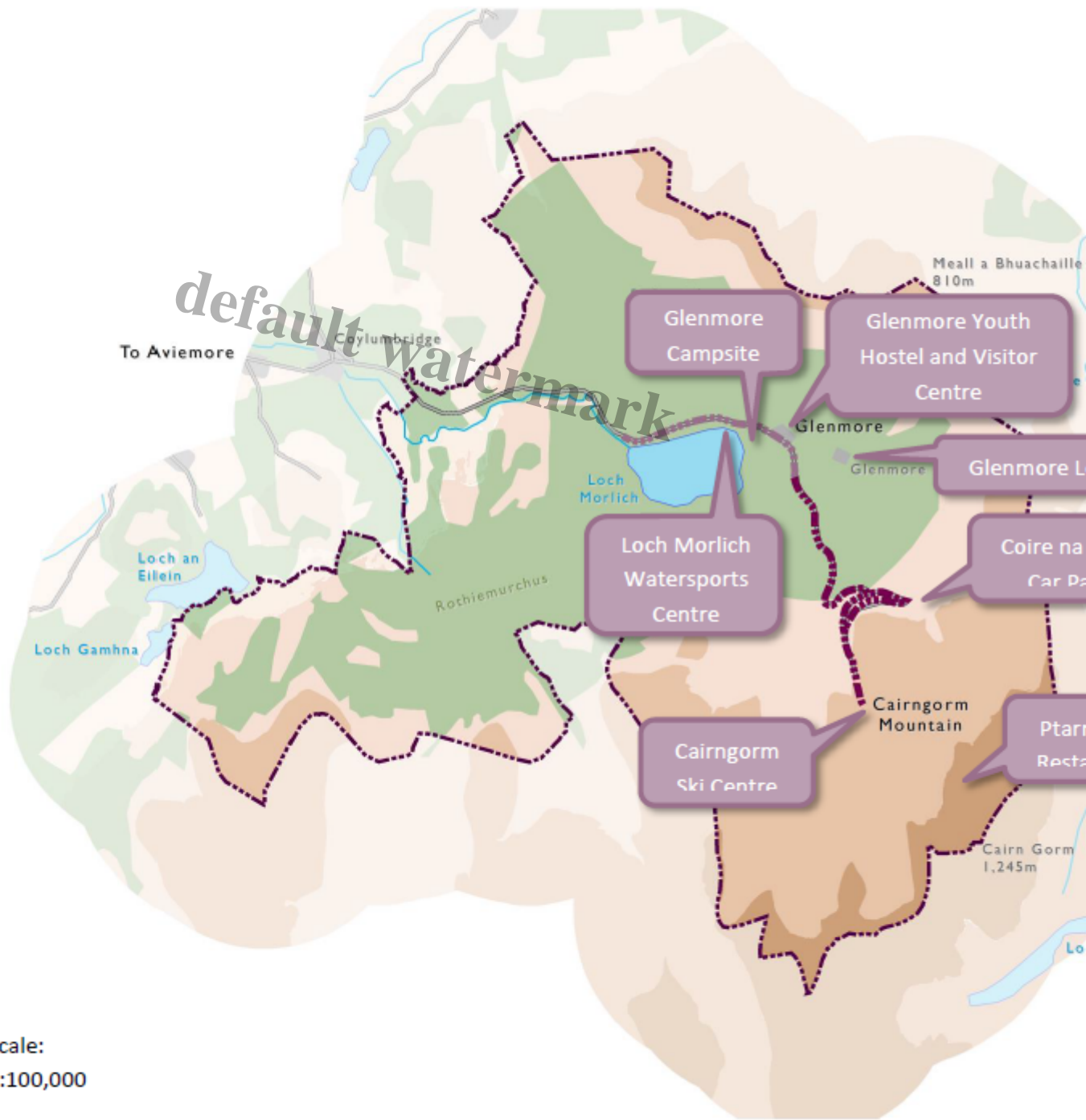
Further to Chapter 2, (2.5.11) the Council recognises the integrity of the corridor linking from the Spey into the Cairngorms, its distinctive conservation features and the mounting visitor pressures. Certain objectives follow which the Council believes should be adopted as the basis for co-ordinated action and management in future years.

Policies and Proposals

Development

4.14.1 *Whilst reasonable consolidation and*

Note back in 1997 (4.14.1) there was a "strong presumption against further development" while the Glenmore Strategy agreed last year looks like this:



Scale:
1:100,000

No sign of any visitor infrastructure improvements being agreed for Badaguish, in fact it does not even feature on the map!

Here is another document in the 4 submitted, headed "The Proposal" from the supporting documents submitted in 2011.

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1) THE PROPOSAL

This Proposal will provide new upgraded all weather campsite accommodation organized youth and community groups together with an additional on site area and bike funpark for centre visitors.

It is the final phase of a European and Scottish Government funded development of Badaguish Centre as a Centre of Excellence for equal opportunity access to education, training and employment opportunities in the National Park.

Partners

Speyside Trust is the lead partner and has run Badaguish Centre and campsites for many years. This proposal represents the final phase of development to complete the project investment by the project partners. On completion it will provide affordable and high quality, equal opportunity environmental and outdoor education services for national and Highland youth and community groups. It is a unique facility and opportunity for Scotland. It offers the partners an important opportunity to pool resources and work together to engage with young people in a positive and enjoyable way using outdoor and environmental education.

Funding

433,358	Speyside Trust
200,000	Social Investment Scotland
175,000	Communities Scotland
125,000	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
85,640	Highlands & Islands Community Energy Company
40,000	Cairngorms National Park Authority
850,000	Highland Council - Northern Constabulary
<u>1,177,056</u>	European Regional Development Fund
3,086,054	TOTAL

Timescale

The estimated funding window and timescale for completion is September 2018 to September 2020.

Description

This proposal will provide budget accommodation in 'camping huts'. These are small units sleeping up to 4 people in all year round accommodation with bio-composite heating.

I will explain some of the financial figures in my next post. However, observant readers will note that one of the funding partners, with a donation of Â£40,000, is the CNPA. What was the purpose of this grant and how does it fit with the planning applications? I think we should be told.

What's wrong about all of this is that the CNPA is allowing Badaguish to grow in size contrary to all plans and by default. While expressing concern about failures of the Speyside Trust to abide by planning conditions, it will be interesting to see if it does anything about the latest breach. Meantime the CNPA has just decided not to call in an application to convert a toilet block into a campsite warden's office (Ref 16/05426/FUL, on HC website), even though the wrong location has been highlighted on the location plan. About 20-30 metres out!

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. camping
2. CNPA
3. conservation
4. planning

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