The transport â??masterplanâ?• for Cairngorm

Description





Following the downpour at Cairngorm (see here and left) the photo above taken last week shows the impact of such flood events. While Natural Retreats and HIEâ??s recent mismanagement of Cairngorm has contributed to this, the problems go back much longer and the large car parks for example contribute to the rate that water runs off the hill. The motor car (which most people including this writer rely on for transport much of the time) has been central to the unsustainable development of Cairngorm ever since the ski road was constructed. As part of the Cairngorm masterplan (see here) Natural Retreats included a section on transport. The analysis and proposals in it are far more sensible than the Ptarmigan re-development or installation of snowflex artificial ski

slopes above the Coire Cas carpark but do they offer a way forward?

Natural Retreatsâ??s brief summary of the transport situation at Cairngorm, if you read past the marketing speak, is pretty damning:

12 TRANSPORT STATEMENT

The Cairngorm Mountain is no stranger to challenges bu
more subtle can be even harder to solve. The present tra
hill' is mainly by car, supposing one has access and the ab
to the area it is not uncommon to find poor bus timetab
school term time there is no bus and when one does turn u
should cycling or walking be a chosen method of transpo
'The logging Way'. The Cairngorm Mountain realise this f
pre planning application is to develop the facilities on site
the most busy of ski days. That said, stronger transport lir
open up the opportunity to groups, particularly families t
due to the reliance and need for a car.

default watermark

Extract from FOI

Poor public transport, no imaginative solutions such as those used in the Alps (where school buses are used to transport people up valleys in the holidays), no bike or ski racks, a lack of path connections.

So what are Natural Retreatsâ?? solutions?

default watermark

Proposal
Implementation of ski/bike racks to no. 31 Stagecoach bus
Collaboration with BSCTC to promote existing visitor servic
Undertake survey of customer database on travel needs/ re expectations
Priority parking for High Vehicle Occupancy
Installation of Electronic displays for multi modal informati
Offer reward to clients not using car or offering car sharing
Updating NR website offering on 'how to get to us'
Highlight EV charging and points
Introduction of Electric Bike/s
Introduce bike station with connected wifi hub and bike co
App/website for personalised data for travel and working v Cairngorm Connected to provide better information.
Implementation of parking Charges
Facilitate car sharing and introduce a car club website/app
Introduce tailored transport services for collection of guide classes/programmes from Aviemore
Invest in hybrid bus to operate in the local area or provide

default watermark

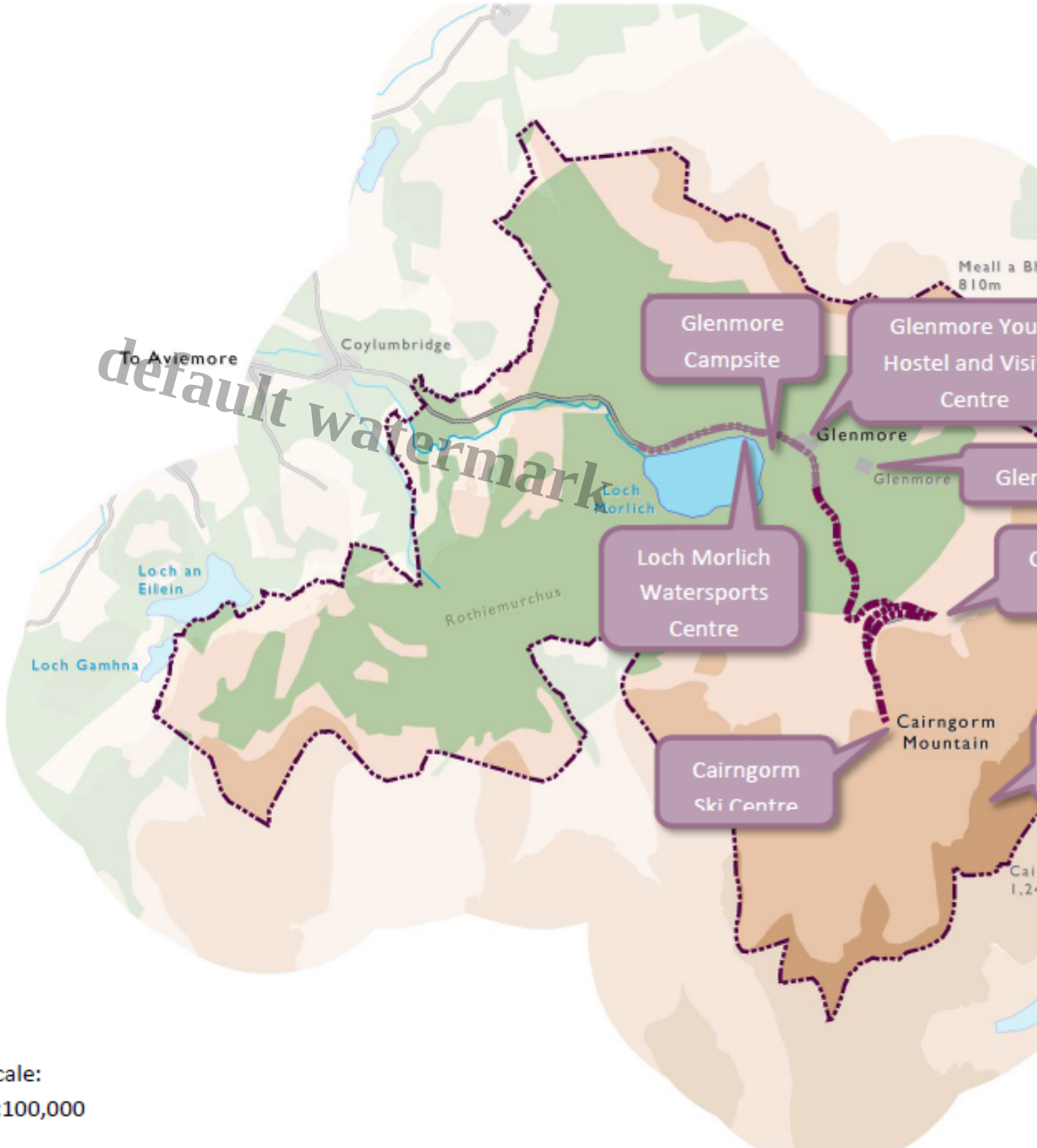
While there are some good ideas here the package has a whiff of self-interest. The short-term proposals should be easy to do, as they are all minor improvements, but could be read as a smokescreen for implementing parking charges at Cairngorm (which is one of HIEâ??s objectives). There is no information about how they, or more importantly the medium and long term proposals, could be financed despite the owner of Natural Retreats, David Michael Gorton, being extraordinarily rich â?? but then the way his companies are operating currently at Cairngorm is to take money out of the area rather than invest in it. Its not surprising therefore that the proposals such as hybrid buses, which the owner of Natural Retreats could afford to pay for now, have been scheduled as â??Medium to Long Termâ?•. There is no indication that he is going to invest anything that does not guarantee large immediate returns (like car park charges) or will not rely on the public sector to pay for everything while NR take the profit.

The proposals have been developed without any consultation. Under the Glenmore and Cairngorm Strategy, approved last year, Natural Retreats were supposed to be part of a Cairngorm & Glenmore Transport Working Group involving Highland Council, HITRANS, Forest Enterprise Scotland and the Cairngorms National Park Authority. Its not even clear whether this group has ever met let alone been and its telling that Natural Retreatâ??s refer to a slightly different group of stakeholders in the transport section of the masterplan including â??the Glenmore Masterplanâ?• (is this the same as the Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy?), the CNPA, Cairngorms Connected and Active Cairngorms. In other words HIEâ??s and NRâ??s proposals donâ??t appear joined up with the plan developed by the CNPA. There are a couple of specific examples of this.

default watermark

NRâ??s proposals make no reference to the action point in the Glenmore Strategy that there should be a â??Feasibility study for improved public transport and park and ride approachâ?•. So, does Natural Retreats support a feasibility study or not and will it contribute to the cost?

There is also no reference to the proposal for a new cycle route up to Cairngorm, the cycle link, as set out in the map below:



default watermark

On the other hand, HIE and NR have plucked out of a hat a new proposal for a *â??tourism train like*

that seen at Chamonix or Yorkâ?•. I am a fan of the Chamonix train â?? its free if you are staying in the valley â?? but to treat a back of a fag packet idea as a proposal without any consultation or working with other people on how it will be financed tells you everything you need to know about how NR and HIE operate.

What needs to happen

While some of NRâ??s proposals could support the objective of the Glenmore Strategy that, there should be *â??Improvements to transport and access infrastructure will increase public transport and non-motorised access to the area from Aviemore and beyond; and walking and cycling within the areaâ?•*, they are unlikely to *â??Make a significant change in the way people access the area to increase the proportion of non-car accessâ?•* because of the way they have been â??developedâ?•. Natural Retreats needs to start consulting the local community, business, visitors, conservation organisations and other stakeholders and to support structures set up in the National Park before it does anything else.

default watermark

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. Forestry Commission Scotland
3. HIE
4. natural retreats
5. planning
6. public transport

Date Created
June 20, 2017
Author
nickkempe