

The unrestored Beaully Denny access track at Drumochter on the Dalnacardoch Estate

Description



Looking south along the first part of the unrestored Beaully Denny access track. Its 4-5 metres wide, wide as necessary even if it could be justified. The Beaully Denny was bad enough but why this too?

At the end of August, after a stravaig over the east Drumochter hills, I looped back to Dalwhinnie through the Drumochter pass, the idea being to combine enjoyment with a look at the effectiveness of the restoration of the land along the Beaully Denny. Just beyond Dalnaspidal and hidden behind the A9 shelterbelt, I came across what can only be described as a track motorway on the Dalnacardoch Estate, an unrestored section of the Beaully Denny construction track which appears to have been

retained to facilitate intensive grouse moor management.



The track starts by the second pylon in the photo and is more or less hidden to people walking up A Bhuidheanach Bheag from opposite Dalnaspidal, although linked to the A9 there by an older and much narrower landrover track. It extends about 3km north past the Sow of Atholl (left of A9) to the summit of the pass and boundary of the Dalnacardoch and North Drumochter Estates.



The start of the unrestored section of Beaully Denny access track heading north. The first pylon is numbered GMI 157.

Originally, the intention was almost all the Beaully Denny construction tracks were to be removed entirely once the power line had been erected and the land restored to its original condition. The Scottish Government then agreed for several sections of track to remain permanently.

| | | | | |
|-----|-------|------------------|----------|--|
| 26A | FT149 | GYI / GMI I46 | 15/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |
| 26A | FT150 | GYI / GMI I47 | 16/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |
| 26B | FT151 | GYI / GMI I48 | 15/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |
| 26B | FT152 | GYI / GMI I49 | 15/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard – Litter pick for construction waste |
| 26B | FT153 | GYI / GMI I50 | 13/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |
| 26B | FT154 | GYI / GMI I51 | 10/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |
| 26B | FT156 | GYI / GMI I52 | 09/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |
| 26B | FT157 | GYI / GMI I53 | 08/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |
| 26B | FT159 | GYI / GMI I54 | 07/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |
| 26B | FT160 | GYI / GMI I55 | 07/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |
| 26B | FT161 | GYI / GMI I56 | 06/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |
| 26B | FT162 | GYI / GMI I57 | 06/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |
| 26B | FT163 | GYI / GMI I58 | 06/07/15 | Reinstatement of the soils is to an acceptable standard |

The pylons are numbered north to south

From the pylon numbers, it appears that the section of track is 26b. If so, according to the “Monitoring Report for 2016” supplied to me by the Cairngorms National Park Authority under Freedom of Information, this is NOT one of the “temporary tracks to be retained”.

Temporary Access Tracks

| Section | Temporary Tracks to be Retained | Pending T be Retain |
|---------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| North | 3,5,10,18 | |
| Central | 19,20,21,25A,25B 38,40,47 | |
| South | 51,54,55,56,58,64,69,71,72,9 6 | 95,97,103 |

| Section | Total Temporary Track Installed (km) | Length of Track to be Retained (km) | Revised Total to be Reinstated (km) | Actual t |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| North | 46.4 | 22.2 | 24.2 | |
| Central | 46.2 | 14.8 | 31.4 | |
| South | 52.0 | 26.3 | 25.7 | |
| Project Total | 144.6 | 63.3 | 81.3 | |



Moreover, unlike the tracks on the North Drumochter estate ([see here](#)), no application has been made to the Cairngorms National Park Authority to retain the track and they have confirmed they never approved it. The first question that needs to be answered is whether the Scottish Government has approved the track in secret and contrary to the policy position of the Cairngorms National Park Authority which has made its position very clear:

“I think we should make it very clear that the retention of sections of track associated with Beaulieu-Denny line will only happen in exceptional circumstances.”

(Eleanor Mackintosh, CNPA Convenor of Planning, statement to press after approval of retention of short section of construction track in forest at Kinlochlaggan).

If the Scottish Government has not approved it, the question is why have Scottish and Southern Energy failed to fully restore the land?

The failure of the track to meet approved standards

If the track has been approved, there are further questions as to whether the Scottish Government agreed to the retention of a motorway – a track which is twice as wide as necessary and which fails to meet other basic standards for good track construction as these photos illustrate.



Former laydown areas at the side of the track have not been restored



Track spoil dumped on moorland



Unused construction materials have been left on moorland – the moorland here is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest



The temporary construction bridge illustrates there has been no attempt to narrow the track on either



There are relatively few protruding culverts but more would appear if the track had been narrowed



The unrestored ground here is over 10m wide

For a track like this to be approved in a National Park would be a national disgrace but if not, the question is how and why is it being allowed to slip through the net?

The purpose of the track

It was quite obvious, jogging along the track, why the estate wished to retain it – and, at the very least they must requested SSE not to restore it.



Crow trap



Upturned peat turves serving as dispensers for medicated grit could be seen on both sides of the tra



Similarly stoat traps



Two more traps

Unfortunately my camera battery packed up just before the end of the track but this was marked by a line of grouse butts up the hillside.

Intensive grouse moor management is now under scrutiny as never before. How has this track, which impacts both on the landscape (while hidden from the A9 it would be clearly visible from the west Drumochter Hills) and on wildlife been allowed to remain in the National Park?

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. Freedom of Information
3. grouse moors
4. hill tracks
5. landed estates
6. restoration
7. Scottish Government

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Author

nickkempe

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