

Cairngorm Mountain Clear Up Project

Description



Demolition of lift tower in Coire na Ciste – the cleanup was used as an excuse to destroy potentially re-usable lift infrastructure ([see here](#)).

In August of 2017 HIE initiated a clean-up operation on CairnGorm Mountain. A number of environmental groups had campaigned for this action for years and with over 12 months having elapsed since the commencement of the clean-up, it is time now to examine the results and the value for money obtained for the input of 267,000 pounds of public funds

The project brief ([see here](#)) produced by HIE has this to say:

The purpose of this project is to remove all redundant ski lift infrastructure from the Cairngorm Ski Area. This includes the steel structures and towers, concrete structures, old safety circuit cabling, ski matting and redundant/damaged post and paling snow fencing.

The project will be divided into 7 work site areas and there will be a pre-construction information document and a site area document issued for each area.

Aonach Poma lift line.

Coire na Ciste Chairlift lift line.

West Wall Chairlift Lift line.

White Lady T Bar lift line.

Fiacail T-Bar lift line

M2 ski run snow fencing

Coire Laogh Mor ski run snow fencing

Cairngorm Mountain is situated at the heart of the CairnGorm National Park and as a result is very much under scrutiny of many of its stakeholder and public interest groups. As a result, this project will demand the highest standards of work practices and environmental awareness possible.

This post will concentrate on examining the work done on the Coire na Ciste Chairlift Lift Line and Aonach Poma loading area.

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The former lift towers in Coire na Ciste have been completely removed

Steel Structures and Towers: These have been completely removed from the mountain and there is no evidence of anything having been left behind. The Coire na Ciste carpark is a different matter though and there are many many pieces of splintered wood and metal shards that await the tyres of unsuspecting vehicle owners.



Photo Credit Alan Bratney



Photo Credit Alan Bratney

Concrete Structures

On the line of the Coire na Ciste Chairlift the concrete structures were the chairlift tower foundations.

The brief has this to say:

“It is proposed that all concrete structures will be broken out to approximately 200mm below surface and following the profile of the terrain. Reinstatement will include using soil, turfs boulders, gravel and heather materials from surrounding areas and re-landscaping as in the surrounding areas”

There is multiple evidence that this has not been satisfactorily done. Concrete has not been broken out to 200mm below surface and several of the old tower foundations are clearly identified as mounds that are significantly higher than the surrounding ground. Exposed concrete can be seen and there are steel shards and wood that remain at the site of the Aonach Poma loading area.

The reinstatement, such as it is, has been done merely by a machine ripping out turves placing them on top of the old foundations. The resultant damage has had no remedial work done whatsoever.



Exposed concrete which has not been broken out to 200mm below surface. Photo Credit Alan Bratt



Concrete coverage: Note how the vegetation has died. Photo Credit Alan Bratney

It's very clear that there are tower foundations that remain higher than the surrounding ground.



Photo Credit Alan Bratney



Photo Credit Alan Bratney

Steel Shard, wood and cable not removed just buried. Someone had clearly been there making checks

before us. They had removed turves to see underneath but we kindly replaced them



Photo Credit Alan Bratney

Ripped out turves and no reinstatement work done



Photo Credit Alan Bratney



Photo Credit Alan Bratney

The quality of the job is of an unacceptable standard with concrete not ground out and with vegetation simply dumped on top to cover up the remains of the concrete foundations. The dumped vegetation

has died because it has nothing to root into and the areas from where it was ripped out have had zero reinstatement work done.

How about removal of old cabling?



Photo Credit Alan Bratney



Photo Credit Alan Bratney

There are multiple points where cabling is on the surface and others where sandbags have been used to cover the exposed cable.

How about ski matting?



Photo Credit Alan Bratney



Photo Credit Alan Bratney

These section of ski matting have been used to bridge wet areas but they are clearly foreign to the area, have no place there and should have been removed.

How about redundant/damaged paling snow fencing?

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Photo Credit Alan Bratney

The evidence speaks for itself.

HIE committed public funds to this project and hard questions must now be asked about the value for money that they obtained. We might also question the fact that HIE are content to commit public money but to then fail to check up on the standard of the work done for the money they paid. Time that HIE asked the Cairngorms National Park Authority and SNH to provide an independent ecological report on the standard of the works.

It is abundantly clear that their Cairngorm clean up project has not delivered the required result which is a significant disappointment for everyone who campaigned long and hard to bring it about but more importantly, it has not enhanced the environment on CairnGorm at all or been carried out to agreed conservation standards.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. Governance
2. HIE
3. natural retreats
4. restoration

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