

Reasons for the funicular failure?

Description



Evidence now shows that the problems with the Ancon Bearings may have first come to light in 2016

[This post was sent as a letter to the Badenoch and Strathspey Advertiser, which has been providing excellent coverage of the funicular failure, and should appear in that paper today]

In March 2018 I applied to Highlands and Islands Enterprise under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act for the ADAC Structures report into the funicular dated 06/01/2017. This was refused by HIE, but subsequently, after another request, it was released on 18/09/2018. The examination that formed the basis of this report was actually carried out in AUTUMN 2016.

Parkswatch has covered how the ADAC reports reveal serious failures by HIE and Natural Retreats in the management of the ski lifts on Cairn Gorm ([see here](#)). I have been re-examining the report in the light of the shutdown and noticed this comment about the funicular in para. 2.4 of the Executive summary:

“The problem manifests itself as excessive deflections, leading to cracking which will ultimately reduce the design life of the structure”, and “further detailed investigations would be required”.

How exactly did the engineer notice these “excessive deflections”?

(a) Movement in the beams carrying the rails. Not really likely as with the kind of movement seen by the naked eye you would expect the ends of the beams to be grinding away.

(b) Movement of the piers. Again the movement would have to be quite significant to be observed by the engineer.



Example of bearing designed only to allow longitudinal movement – along the groove

(c) Movement of the Ancon bearings. These are the supports on top of the piers and support the whole track. The bearings on one side are so manufactured as to only allow longitudinal movement. The bearings on the opposite side allow longitudinal and more crucially lateral movement. In my opinion, although I am not a structural engineer, this leads me to believe that what he noticed was an unusual wear pattern on these bearings.

In regard to the second part of his quote, *"further detailed investigations would be required."* HIE have said that the next reports for the Funicular are from July 2018 and those on the Ancon bearings date from August 2018. If that is correct then it took OVER TWO YEARS before those detailed investigations were actioned. Two years in which just maybe repairs could have been made, or if that was not feasible, then the Ciste chairlifts could have been brought back into service, as a cheaper option while the Funicular was repaired, and which would at least have reduced the impact on the Speyside economy.

HIE have now had the COWI report into what has gone wrong for over two months and yet still no word for all those whose livelihood depends on the success of Cairngorm and the tourism it generates.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. Freedom of Information
2. HIE
3. natural retreats

4. Tourism

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