

Reasons for the funicular failure (2)?

Description



HIE has so far refused to disclose any the information it holds which might explain why the ancon bearings that support the funicular are out of line

Following my post on 28/2/2019 about the ADAC Structure and COWI reports on the funicular ([see here](#)), this post shows how Highlands and Islands Enterprise are deliberately trying to cover up and hide information about what has gone wrong with the Funicular on Cairngorm.

I sent an FOI request on 03/10/2018 for two other reports on the funicular, the Condition Report Funicular Railway, Cairngorm Mountain, dated July 2018 and the Ancon Bearings Report of August 2018.

On 31/10/2018 HIE replied:

“HIE have not been issued with any further condition reports regarding the Funicular railway since January 2017, although we are aware that a condition report was undertaken by ADAC in July 2018”.

The implication here is that HIE had seen a copy of the report, but did not actually have a physical copy for their records, that being retained by Cairngorm Mountain Ltd.

When Cairngorm Mountain Limited went into administration and was subsequently bought by HIE, they became the owner of these reports as part of the assets transfer.

On 17/12/2018, I re-applied for the reports and was informed on 17/01/19 that HIE did not have them “*at the time of my request,*” which is allowable under FOI legislation.

I again applied for the reports on 28/01/2019, assuming that there could be no denial of them being held as HIE/ CMSL had by then owned the business for a couple of months. The reply came back on 31/01/2019 that, as had already been stated, HIE did not hold the reports I was requesting.

A review of this decision by Mrs C. Wright, CEO of HIE, was then requested on 06/02/2019, to which I received a reply on 07/03/2019, **FIVE** months after my initial enquiry.

Briefly her reply says;-

(1) “*On review we have identified that HIE does in fact hold both reports. The Ancon Bearing report was held at the time of your original request, (17/12/2018), and we have since obtained a copy of the condition report from July 2018*”.

(2) HIE’s investigations in relation to the Funicular Railway are ongoing and as such “*the information is exempt from disclosure at this time due to it’s intention to publish it within **12 weeks (as of 07/03/2019)***” . At present the COWI engineers report is the subject of “a peer review”. When this is concluded HIE then intend to release all the reports together.

Most people will remember that when the Funicular Response group was set up, HIE said it would do everything possible to support local businesses and yet here we are six months later and they are saying it may be another three before we find out exactly what the problem, and therefore solution, is. In this time over £2m of public money has been thrown at a business which is totally unsustainable.

People with far more knowledge of the situation than me, have been warning for over twenty years of the dysfunctional management strategy employed on Cairngorm, resulting in the current state of affairs, and while HIE is quite happily paying out taxpayers money to pay wages, the hire of generators, diesel fuel, etc., there must be a lot of businesses in Aviemore and surrounding villages who are struggling with the lack of trade and information. In fact, so much of HIE’s budget is now being allotted to Cairngorm, what is happening to others in it’s portfolio?

What needs to happen now

Instead of committing more of its budget, is it time for HIE to put a hold on the open-ended cheque book, a phrase used in the Audit Committee report into the Funicular, that is keeping the Cairngorm business open until it can come up with a sound, financially viable business plan much as any normal business would be required to produce?

Is it also now at a stage where the Scottish Government should convene a Committee of Enquiry to investigate the way in which HIE has managed the business of Cairngorm Mountain since the Audit Committee report of 2009 and also the way in which it handles FOI requests?

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. Cairn Gorm
2. Freedom of Information
3. funicular
4. HIE
5. Local communities
6. secrecy

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