

The CairnGorm Mountain car parks – HIE's continue failure

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The sign at the entrance to the upper Cas Carpark is once again exhorting visitors to make a donation
Photo credit Alan Bratney

Parkswatch previously published information about the amounts collected from Voluntary Donations at the Coire Cas car park between 2013 and 2017 ([see here](#)). HIE were asked to detail how that money had been spent and although they *'did not have that information'* they asserted *'funds were committed to car park maintenance and other projects'* We are left to wonder just how HIE were able to say how the funds were spent without having that information. Regrettably, as my photos from a recent visit show, there is no evidence of any significant sums having been committed to the car park surfaces or drainage although I am happy to concede that snow clearing does come at a cost.

In 2018, the then tenant, Natural Retreats, introduced a compulsory parking charge scheme which operated between June and early September. Natural Retreats produced a list of 'fairy story' projects (see link above) that they claimed the parking fees could support. The car park surfaces, in all 3 carparks, were in such a poor state by 2018 that it was clear that the proceeds from the compulsory parking charges would have to be committed to the car park surfaces and drainage for several years into the future. It was obvious that the 'fairy story' projects were just that...fantasies that were designed to make it all look good and a smokescreen which made the charges seem like an attractive proposition.

As we now know, not a single penny out of the tens of thousands of pounds collected was ever spent on the car park surfaces far less any of the other projects. Natural Retreats departed the scene at the end of November 2018, leaving the car park surfaces and drainage in a far worse condition than they found them when they were handed the lease in June 2014.

HIE for their part were conspicuous by their absence. They permitted their tenant to introduce a compulsory charging scheme but didn't monitor what was happening to the sums collected.

We are now left with a situation where the car parks are a tourist embarrassment, a further blight on the reputation of Cairn Gorm, and any visitors will be astonished at what they see there.



Visitors are met with clear signs of decay and dilapidation as they approach the Daylodge. Photo Credit



A broken/choked drain at the top of the car park. Photo Credit Alan Bratney

The rainwater cannot get through the broken and choked drain and down into the lower Cas Car park and hence to the burn. Instead, it flows down the edge of the car park and washes away the hardcore in the process

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The choked/broken drain and the rainwater flowing down the car park. It's right next to the brand new



The edge of the upper Coire Cas car park nearer to the entrance. Photo Credit Alan Bratney



Does HIE believe this is fit for parking? Photo Credit Alan Bratney



Almost a full-sized burn here with considerable erosion.....not fit to be used for parking. Photo Credit Alan Bratney



No drains to collect the rainwater so it flows downhill gathering volume and causing unnecessary damage



The roadway itself is crumbling away. Photo Credit Alan Bratney



No attempt made to sweep up the debris....the same as around the Daylodge .Photo Credit Alan Br

The pictures do not lie. The car park roadway and the parking areas in the upper Cas car park are in a dreadful condition.

The lower Cas car park isn't fit to be driven over and it has suffered from the same rainwater erosion

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Lower Cas car park, no drainage and no surface left. Photo Credit Alan Bratney

HIE permitted their tenant's non-adherence to the maintenance terms in the lease agreement – the car parks were supposed to be kept in good condition. The public purse is now likely to have to foot the bill for the considerable repairs that are urgently necessary prior to the next winter season.

One wonders where all the money is going to come from?

- >£4.5 million for the Funicular repairs. HIE are keeping it a secret but putting it out to tender Europe wide suggests a bill of at least 4.5m.
- Add on £2.5 million to extend and refurbish the Ptarmigan (which the CNPA Planning Committee approved last week [\(see here\)](#)).
- Extensive works are also required around the Daylodge [\(see here\)](#)
- The car parks will certainly swallow >£1 million if the job is thoroughly done and landscaping in accord with the natural environment will cost even more.

There are further replacement works that are required to ski infrastructure on the hill and parkswatch will highlight these soon. The Ciste base station building has to be demolished and partially rebuilt and the mountain clean-up work in Coire na Ciste wasn't completed to the specification and will need to be revisited.....the list goes on.

What should happen now

It is highly unlikely that HIE will pursue Natural Retreats to establish HOW the car parking charges they collected were spent. Such legal action would risk revealing rather a lot of dirty linen.

The Scottish Government must waken up to reality. HIE, as an organisation, has become – to the individuals within it – more important than the communities and the people it was set up to serve. HIE have not demonstrated competence over almost the last 20 years of involvement at Cairn Gorm and they also suffer from public sector bureaucratic paralysis – incapable of making decisions without employing expensive consultants to tell them what to do and cover their collective back. They cannot be trusted to look after Cairn Gorm. The many issues that have led to the destruction of the hill business should be a matter for a parliamentary enquiry before they waste any further public money.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

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2. Freedom of Information
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