

CairnGorm Mountain Parking Charges: Vol 3

Description

The compulsory parking charge scheme at Cairn Gorm, introduced by Natural Retreats in June 2018 was dropped in September of that year ([see here](#)). There was no point in continuing to make parking charges compulsory when the Funicular failed and the number of tourist visits crashed. The number of skiers who visited Cairn Gorm last winter also fell to a historical low. Charging for parking would simply have led to even fewer numbers visiting the mountain, in both summer and winter. Fast forward to June 2019 and the Funicular remains out of action with no detail about any repairs far less a schedule that shows when it might reopen for passengers.

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It's with considerable consternation that we've discovered that compulsory parking charges are being reintroduced by Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd (CMSL) which is a wholly owned HIE subsidiary. The Parking Charges info was added to the sign last week.

The CMSL website was updated on 3 June with information about the compulsory parking charges:

"CMSL operates 3 car parks at CairnGorm" and "as from 1 June 2019 there will be a charge of £2 per vehicle to park there".

In keeping with the normal level of efficiency, the information was posted up on Monday 3 June but the charges were to be imposed on Saturday 1 June.

A discussion around parking charges would be welcome because the car park surfaces are in a dreadful condition, as reported recently ([see here](#)). However, concerns have previously been expressed about how the sums collected from parking were then used. Between the years 2013 to 2017 the sum of £43,380 was collected from voluntary donations. In 2018, it is likely that in excess of £50,000 was collected through compulsory parking charges. Sadly, there is no evidence of significant sums being committed to the car park surfaces and drainage from the sums collected.

Would it be unreasonable to expect that HIE/CMSL would have consulted local stakeholder Groups about their intentions? With the Funicular out of action then there is no real attraction on the hill and parking charges will likely be seen as a disincentive to visit

The website informs customers of the ways in which the parking charge money could be spent.

1. *Improved car park infrastructure and surfacing.*
2. *Ranger Service Contributions.*
3. *Environmental Projects.*
4. *Educational and interpretative Initiatives.*
5. *Drainage and increased protection for watercourses.*
6. *24 Hour toilet facilities*

This list is simply a regurgitation of the projects that the previous tenant, "Natural Retreats", said that they could spend the car park money on and we know how that ended.

This is not good enough. How are the paying public supposed to have any faith that their money will be spent in the ways suggested. The hill business will be continuing to rely on taxpayers money to pay the bills and there is understandable suspicion that the funds raised will simply be subsumed into revenue and never find its way to funding any of the 'fairy story' projects far less the car park surfaces. The public are entitled to demand openness, honesty and transparency.

When will car park infrastructure and surfacing be improved because it's desperately need now...not at some unspecified time in the future.

Why should contributions be made to a Ranger Service that's been in place for years and operated without any car park money?

Unspecified “*Environmental Projects*”. Details must be published...annually

Unspecified “*Educational and Interpretative Initiatives*“. We’re left to wonder just exactly what these might be.

“*Drainage and increased protection for watercourses.*” It is to be hoped that watercourses are already protected, if not SEPA should be knocking on HIE’s door. If improvements are required then the details should be published.

“*24 hour toilet facilities*”. A good initiative which has been badly needed for many years. The plans for this should also be published so that the paying public can see exactly when this will happen.

It does though just look like yet another smokescreen. Publishing a list of ‘projects’ without any specifics whatsoever.

A Master plan for the re-development of CairnGorm is being proposed by HIE and the car parks will have to be included in that. An HIE spokesperson was quoted in the Strathy on Thursday 30 May as saying: “*the views of local people will be very important in developing the Master Plan*”. Regrettably, there has been no consultation with respect to parking charges, just as there was no consultation about the development of an adventure Zone in the lower Cas Carpark prior to the submission of a planning application to Highland Council on 4 May 2019.

Locals and tourist visitors should be able to trust that the sums collected from compulsory parking charges will be committed to the car park surfaces and drainage. With the CairnGorm Mountain business continuing to haemorrhage public money at an alarming rate then the suspicion is that the sums collected will simply vanish into general revenue and be used to help to prop up the business.

What should happen now:

1. HIE/CMSL should inform their customers about their specific intentions for the car park money with detailed plans and time frames for each proposed project.
2. They should publish details of the sums collected, on a monthly basis.
3. Details of how the money has been spent should also be published.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. Cairn Gorm
2. HIE
3. natural retreats
4. planning

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