

The funicular failure (3)

Description



One of the misaligned bearings on the funicular – we are STILL awaiting the report into what caused this

On **19/02/2019** I applied to Highlands and Islands Enterprise, under a Freedom of Information request, for the **ADAC Structures** report into the Condition of the Funicular Railway from November 2015, ([see here – 6.5MB file](#)). I subsequently received this on **May Bank holiday Monday, 06/05/2019**, at 09.31. This was five days after the Big Breakfast organized by HIE with regard to Cairngorm Mountain and the future. Cynics may suggest that the timing was arranged so that its contents would not be available in time for the Q. & A. session held at the Breakfast.

Campaigners thought initially that the problems occurring with the Funicular outlined in the **ADAC Structures** report of Jan 2017 had only become apparent by the survey which formed the basis of that report. However that is not the case.

In the **Executive Summary** of the **2015 report**, [para.2.1](#), it stated:

“In broad terms the writer was concerned with the general condition of the Funicular Railway given its relative young age.”

When the engineer first commented about the condition of the Funicular, it had not reached its 14th anniversary, which was just over 1/3rd of its expected lifespan.

2015 report Para.2.3 :

“There is particular concern around the insitu concrete linking the precast concrete beams over the piers. There is concern that this may not be working effectively...”

Fast forward to Jan. 2017, para.2.1 *“in broad terms etc.”*, and para. 2.4 *“There is concern that there is a project wide problem with the beams....”*

2015 report para.4.8.4

“There is a partial walkway along the length of the railway for inspection and maintenance. It would appear that the components to complete the walkway are on site and lying on the ground. It would make inspection and maintenance work significantly safer and easier if this walkway was completed. There are a number of loose retaining clips on this walkway. These should be secured as they present a trip hazard. IT IS MY RECOMMENDATION THAT THIS WORK IS CARRIED OUT”.

Fast forward to Jan 2017 para.5.8.3 word for word the exact same recommendation.

As far back as November 2015 **ADAC Structures** was reporting major structural and health and safety problems with the Funicular and yet HIE employees, including the then Head of Infrastructure Mr K. Bryers, who had copies of these reports, apparently did nothing to make their tenant, “Natural Retreats”, comply with the maintenance terms of the lease.

If you read my last post on the Funicular ([see here](#)) you will see that Charlotte Wright, Chief Executive Officer of HIE, said that the full **COWI** report (into the current problems) would be released within TWELVE weeks of 07/03/2019. Well that should have been on 30/05/2019, so 15 weeks later and all we have had from HIE is excuses as to why it has not been released. HIE are fully aware of the magnitude of the problem, as are some of the staff at the Highland Council and Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd. (Bill Lobban, local councillor and Convener of Highland Council was appointed a Director of CMSL in January 2019).

I am now going to stick my head above the parapet and make a prediction.

When **HIE** said that the **COWI** report was being delayed by poor weather, a few people, including myself, were of the opinion that the Funicular would not run for either the winter of 2018/19, summer of 2019 or even possibly the winter of 2019/20. My opinion now, in light of what is not being said by **HIE**, is that if it is repairable it will not even be operational for the 2020/2021 ski season, or, if it has to be removed and new uplift installed who knows how long that will take! Remember the **SE Group** report into new infrastructure for Cairn Gorm was for a timescale of 1 to 5 years for phase 1 i.e. 2023/24, and 5 to 10 years for phase 2 i.e. 2028/29. I sincerely hope that I am wrong in these conclusions.

The implications for everyone in Aviemore and the surrounding area are disastrous, e.g. tumbling

house prices, unemployment increasing, businesses failing etc. It also means that the public confidence in the ski area will also take so much longer to return. The only people not affected by the Funicular closure are HIE and the staff at CMSL whose wages are taxpayer funded.

What should happen now?

HIE need to come clean with a timescale of when they expect work to start on the funicular or its replacement sooner rather than later.

Residents and businesses in Strathspey also need to come together to form a new group to work on a new vision for the area, without reliance on the mountain business, promoting what IS available and attractive about the area, and there is so much. The involvement of any member of the **Funicular Response Group** should also be avoided as they are far too controlled by HIE. At the very least, advertising in national press, e.g. The People's Friend etc., and maybe even tv adverts are necessary, all of which HIE should pay for considering this disaster is of their making, after all they have given the A&GCT £90k.

There is now a new group formed in Grantown-on-Spey, The Campaign for a Better Cairngorm [subject of forthcoming post, ed] who may provide an opportunity to do this and will hopefully help to put pressure on HIE to speed things up.

We have all waited long enough.

Category

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