

Cairn Gorm – Corporate Gaslighting, Cock-up or Bullying?

Description

Two very interesting articles on Parkswatch by Alistair Bell ([see here](#)) and Drennan Watson ([see here](#)) go some way towards explaining some of what has gone on and is going on at Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd (CMSL).

Alistair Bell says skiers are partly to blame because nobody really questioned what was happening **until** the Save the Ciste campaigners started to realise things were not as they should be, but that is the whole point of gaslighting.

Unfortunately the “wait and see” attitude still prevails today. In an email conversation with a committee member of one of the groups represented on the Funicular Response Group (FRG) last week I got this as a reply:-

I take your points with interest. I do think however, that we have some very serious matters to address in detail on uplift costs and so forth. As soon after The Audit Scotland report is delivered is possibly the best way forwards.

Shall we stay in contact in order to be a constructive forum moving forward?

Will this be too late again?

Alistair Bell's letter warns us of this:

If bankruptcy is announced in 2020, I can only think of one phrase; mission accomplished. The main question remains unanswered; who killed skiing at Cairngorm? Gaslighting because it's insidious but extremely manipulative. By the time we realize we've been manipulated, we are conflicted, at odds with ourselves and each other, not sure if we remember even what damage has been done

Now we come to the worst part of the trilogy.

Corporate bullying!

The OED defines bullying as *“To hurt, intimidate or persecute a weaker or smaller person”*. The word person is used in the wider sense to mean one person, a group of people or business/ businesses and its/ their employees.

For example, an international company wanted to build new premises on land in a local village, over

which there is a public right of way, but an acquaintance of mine wrote an objection to the local paper and an action group was formed to get the proposals stopped. A while later I asked my friend how things were progressing and he told me he had been called into the office at work and told to drop his objections or there could be consequences for him (loss of his job) and his employer (loss of work). The international company, the council and the landowner were not very happy that the action group had caused enough problems to have the proposal for the new premises withdrawn!

Now let's take a look at the following emails, which were obtained through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request, about the beginner's area planning application ([see here](#)) at Cairn Gorm:

From: Grant Moir [<mailto:GrantMoir@cairngorms.co.uk>]

Sent: 10 September 2019 12:53

To: Susan Smith <susan.smith@hient.co.uk>

Subject: Planning - Confidential

CAUTION: This email was sent from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you know the sender and know the content is safe.

Susan

You will have seen that SEPA have objected to the planning application at Cairngorm Mountain. Further info (██████████) from planning has been in contact with (██████████).

The next Planning Committee is 11 October and papers go out on 4th October. We need to re-consider the application (if we have submitted the required material. They have 14 days to then say whether they are happy or not with the objection).

If the material was with us by this Friday we might still be able to get it to the October committee (if they are withdrawing their objection). If not then the next Planning Committee is 15 November. I realise it is a bit late or no time to do the work.

Happy to discuss
Grant

Grant Moir

Chief Executive
Cairngorms National Park Authority

From: Susan Smith [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: 10 September 2019 15:23
To: Grant Moir < [REDACTED] >
Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Planning - Confidential

Hi Grant

Thanks for your email and advice.

From CMSL's perspective, we believe that there needs to be some serious learning out of what a protracted and drawn-out planning process here for what seems to be a very simple grading and reinstatement work.

We are working on our response to SEPA and will undertake the necessary NVC survey which will be concluded to fit the deadline for you to get papers to your Board on 4 October 2019.

We have kept SEPA in the loop from the inception of our discussions on this matter. We attended the meeting but this was not possible due to staff holiday leave and it is hugely disappointing that we are in this situation.

Regards – Susan.

Susan Smith
Interim Chief Executive
Cairngorm Mountain

Mob: [REDACTED] | Reception: +44 (0)1479 861261

From: Grant Moir [[mailto:](#) [REDACTED]]
Sent: 10 September 2019 15:30
To: Susan Smith <[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: Planning - Confidential

CAUTION: This email was sent from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments sender and know the content is safe.

Susan

I don't control SEPA and what they object to or not.

I was a bit annoyed after the last funicular group about planning getting the blame and timesc around that were not accurate.

I realise it is a tough situation up the mountain but the CNPA has, and continues to be, very su

Grant

From: Susan Smith [mailto:[REDACTED]]
Sent: 10 September 2019 16:39
To: Grant Moir
Subject: RE: Planning - Confidential

Grant – I continue to appreciate your support, but there is clearly something wrong or misund a dialogue in March and it takes until October to get to a point of decision on a simple project off-line if would help.

Susan.

From: Grant Moir
Sent: 10 September 2019 16:58
To: 'Susan Smith'
Subject: RE: Planning - Confidential

Susan

I am about Thursday afternoon if you want a chat by phone.

Grant

In these emails Grant Moir, Chief Executive of the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA), says he *"was a bit annoyed after the last funicular group about planning getting the blame"*. This was referring to the time being taken for the beginner's area planning application to be considered.

Susan Smith, interim CEO of Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd (CMSL) and on secondment from Highlands and Islands Enterprises (HIE) replied to this, and notice there is no apology and still an aggressive tone, by claiming:

"there is clearly something wrong or misunderstood when we start a dialogue in March (2019) and it takes until October (2019) to get to a point of decision on a simple project".

The decision in fact was not made until the planning meeting on Friday 13/12/2019 **but** is this an attempt by S. Smith to circumvent the planning process by bullying?

With over 60 documents associated with the application for bull-doing of the beginners area, is that really *"a simple project"*? It would appear not, and was it taking so long because of inadequate preparation?

The following screenshot is from the minutes of the Funicular Response Group of Thursday 29/08/2019 explaining the comment by Grant Moir (GM):-

SS expressed some dismay with the pace of the planning process and a current application to CNPA could be considered more swiftly. GM was both the need for formal approval, and the timescale required for dilig

SS is Susan Smith.

The minute shows there were 18 people attending that meeting, 7 from HIE/CMSL while Grant Moir was the only attendee from the CNPA. Is it any wonder he was annoyed and maybe feeling intimidated or even threatened?

The whole point of Corporate Bullying is that as long as it is perceived as a possibility then it is an

effective threat against anyone, business or employees or the public, who may be thinking about disagreeing publicly with that corporation's operations.

When Natural Assets Investment Ltd/Natural Retreats were handed the hill business and started their own ski school there was concern amongst the local ski schools that they were going to be excluded from operating their businesses on Cairngorm. It didn't happen, but the threat was perceived and partially carried out when Cairngorm Mountain Ltd employed 50 ski instructors and ancillary staff. These very same ski schools have now supported the bulldozing planning application for the beginner's area on the lower slopes. Have they themselves been bulldozed? After all it's the same management structure that is in place only minus NAIL!

What needs to happen.

Drennan Watson concluded in his post that:

development from Cairn Gorm is a tragic misunderstanding. What it all shows is that if the diverse parties apparently opposed to one another had come together and pooled their knowledge and clout, this tragic mess could have been avoided.

If there is any hope for some sort of workable future for the sake of people on Speyside it would need these parties to come together and one clear condition – GET HIE OFF OF CAIRN GORM! Let it happen!

As long as HIE own CMSL there will be no "coming together" because of corporate bullying. The Cairngorm estate should be returned to Forestry and Land Scotland in a useable condition with HIE picking up the bill for all repairs and maintenance to bring it back up to an acceptable standard.

A national conference needs to be held as soon as possible to unite all parties and start the healing process.

LET IT HAPPEN!

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. Cairn Gorm
2. CNPA
3. conservation
4. Governance
5. HIE
6. planning

Date Created

February 7, 2020

Author

graham-garfoot