

## HIE's new Project Lead and the development of a new masterplan for Cairn Gorm

### Description

Thursday, February 6, 2020

# HIE creates new role for Cairngorm

HIGHLANDS and Islands Enterprise is recruiting for a new position at the agency's Inverness headquarters to help oversee improvements at Cairngorm Mountain.

The role running to December 31 next year will pay £54,796 per annum.

Part of the job specification involves overseeing the operational effectiveness of Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd.

The individual will also work with the wider Cairngorm project team in HIE, and play a key role in the delivery of the Cairngorm business case and masterplan to revive the fortunes of the resort.

They will lead on stakeholder engagement with Scottish Government officials and MSPs, communities, agencies and regulatory bodies as well as act as HIE media spokesperson for the business.

The job spec also states the winning candidate will "work closely with HIE colleagues to lead and oversee exemplary community consultation, liaison and engagement to support the long-term aspirations for the Cairngorm Estate."

An HIE spokesman said: "This position will take a leading role in co-ordinating HIE's work in relation to Cairngorm."

It is understood that it does not affect the job being carried out by Susan Smith, interim chief executive of operators CMSL who was seconded from HIE to fill the post.

Meanwhile public consultations on the Cairngorm masterplan start next week.

They are being held at Grantown Grammar School on Tuesday (4pm-8pm); Kingussie High School (Wednesday, 4.30pm-8pm); Cairngorm Mountain Day Lodge (Thursday, 10am-noon) and Cairngorm Hotel in Aviemore (Thursday, 3pm-8pm).

**“ This is a leading role in co-ordinating HIE's work in relation to Cairngorm. ”**

HIE spokesman

Article from Strathy 6th February 2020

Full details of the job vacancy can be found on the HIE website (<https://www.hie.co.uk/about-us/vacancies/cairngorm-project-lead/>)

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Questions raised by this new job advertisement include:

1. How has HIE been managing (or is it mis-managing) Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd and planning the future of Cairn Gorm for the last 18 months since the fall of Natural Retreats? If someone is needed, why now?
2. If this person will be getting almost Â£55k per year, what is Susan Smith (interim Chief Executive of CMSL) getting paid?
3. Couldn't this Â£55k of public money not be better used in HIE's core business of encouraging and supporting business growth throughout the Highlands & Islands?
4. Why does HIE need someone to 'oversee' the operational effectiveness of CMSL? In my thinking, Susan Smith should be responsible for this and she should report to the Board, or an Executive Director for her and CMSL's performance. Maybe my management principles are out of date.

5. The report says that, "The individual will also work with the wider Cairngorm project team in HIE. Work with is the key phrase (not lead). So who then is responsible for this so-called Cairngorm project team and what are they getting paid?"
6. To me this whole "structure" appears unclear and muddled with responsibilities poorly focussed - a recipe for further disaster, at taxpayers' expense.

I did think for a moment that maybe The Strathy had not been given a clear picture of this new post, but the job description on the HIE website confirms the report is accurate.

The public phase of the masterplan consultation is about to commence this week, after 18 months of dithering, delay and secrecy from HIE ([see here](#)). Yet part of this new job is stated by HIE to be to:

*"work closely with HIE colleagues to lead and oversee exemplary community consultation, liaison and engagement to support the long-term aspirations for Cairngorm Estate".*

Job interviews for this new post are scheduled for 10 March, so unless the successful applicant is already an HIE employee, it will be April at the earliest before this new post can be filled. It is my understanding that the public consultation phase of the masterplan exercise will be completed by then, and the masterplan consultants will have reported back to HIE. Just how is this Project Leader going to lead an exemplary community consultation, when the key part will be finished before they take up post? Yet again it's another example of HIE dithering and delay - if this new post was needed it should have been advertised and filled over a year ago.

To date, HIE's consultation approach has been secretive and desperately slow - and certainly very far from exemplary.

## What needs to happen now for the new masterplan

1. It's up to all of us to do all we can in the coming weeks to ensure the masterplan consultants get not just the strength of public feeling, but also the facts about HIE's failure on Cairn Gorm. (There are numerous articles on Parkswatch Scotland which demonstrate this failure and provide real viable and sustainable alternatives to repairing the funicular). It is understood that there will be a website link for members of the public who couldn't attend any of the public consultation events or who wish to supplement their views.
2. HIE and the masterplan consultants need to realise that local community consultation is one thing, but without a clear understanding of what the market wants and expects (through an objective and in depth market survey of visitors and potential visitors - both winter and summer) any masterplan for the future of Cairn Gorm is likely to fail.

## Category

1. Cairngorms

## Tags

1. Cairn Gorm
2. HIE

- 3. natural retreats
- 4. planning

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