Beyond the funicular (3): the Lecht â?? Harrier Quad

Description

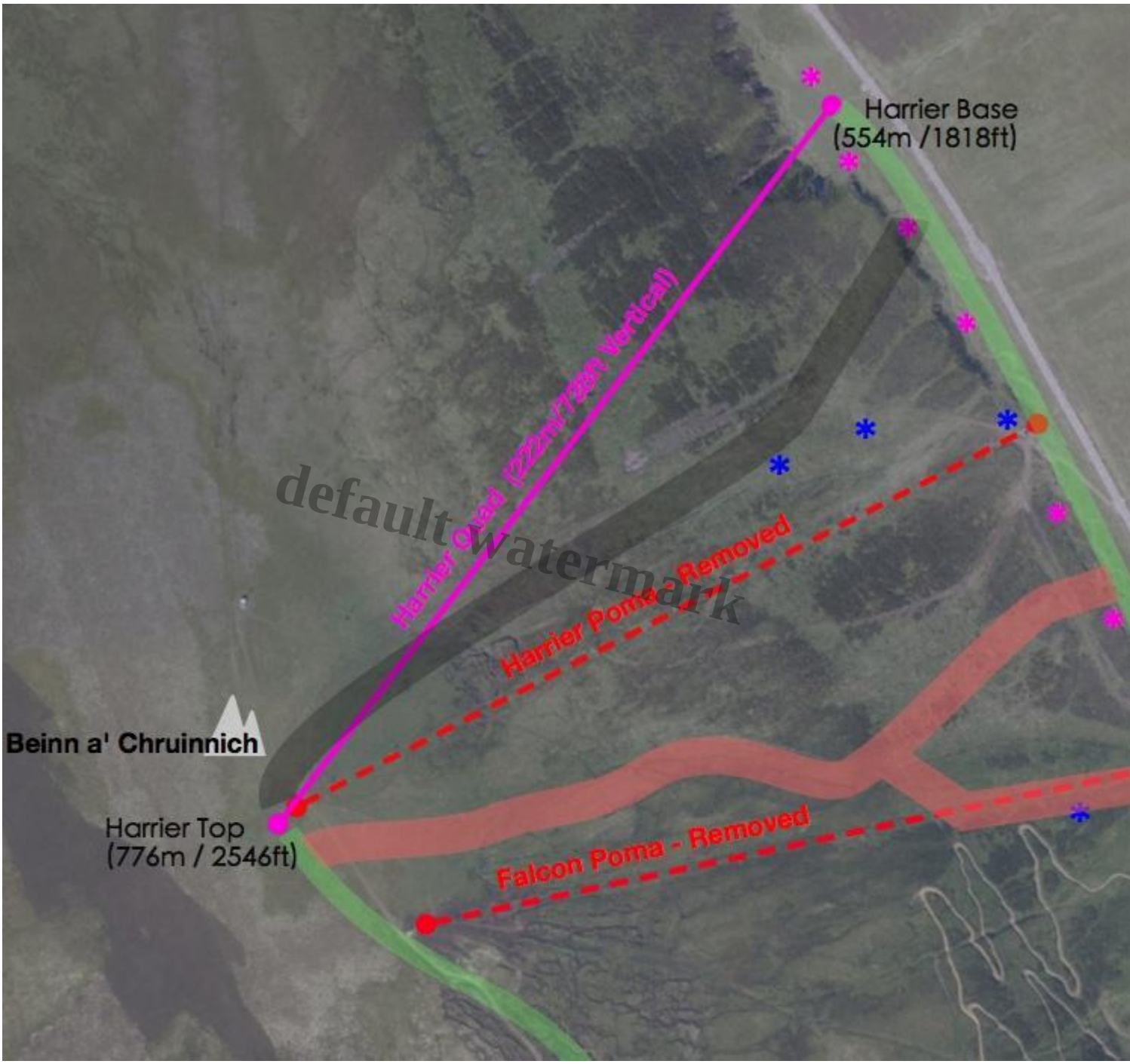
(This is the third of four posts â?? see here and here â?? on alternatives to HIE proposals to repair the funicular that would have far greater benefits to snowsports in the Cairngorms and Scotland as a whole)

Proposal

A new medium speed quad chairlift with loading carpet which would replace the Harrier and Falcon Pomas and provide access to the full spectrum of terrain with green, blue, red and black runs served.

Details

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The drive station of the new chairlift would be a short distance north west of the foot of the Harrier Poma on a wider area of flattish ground. This would give more space for the lift-station and increase skier / boarder circulation space around the terminal, to account for the fact it will serve a broader range of rider ability than the Poma.



Fall-line fencing catching snow on the Harrier Black, but nothing then links back to the Poma. Photo taken in lean snow conditions in January 2012.

In the vicinity of the new lift, snow fencing would be slightly reworked closer to the fall-line, thus more effective at trapping snow on the steeper slopes, to form the Harrier (black) and Falcon (red) runs. Both would tie into a green trail from the cafe running parallel to the A939 at the base of the valley forming the Lecht Pass.

This proposal requires a modest associated increase in snow making capacity along the route from the Cafe to the Quad chair to fully realise itâ??s potential. Some regrading of the slope below the A939 may be more desirable than utilising the existing fenced route south west of the stream as there will be occasions where snow can be blown off the road onto such a route.

Though the elevation of the lift drive station is low at just 1818ft, it is situated deep in the Lecht Pass which runs on a south-east to north-west axis and thus is very well protected from the prevailing south-west winds. Minimising ablation becomes a significant part of the equation when considering modern air/water snow making systems.

Unlike the existing surface tows, where their placement was constrained by needing to remain close to the steep fall-line, a chairlift could cut across the slope allowing the lift line to start at the lower / wider base area but still reach the summit.

Future linked development

Once the Harrier and Falcon Pomas have been replaced, the parts in the best condition could be re-used to contribute to extending the Buzzard Poma across the A939, by constructing an artificial tunnel /

slope across the carriageway.

It would thus be possible to ski to the Buzzard Poma from the cafe and repeatedly switch from one side of the snowsports area to the other without requiring to unclip and walk down to / up from and cross an A road.

The reason the Buzzard Poma starts at the location it does is due to the former high voltage transmission line under which the Poma was not permitted to pass. This line has since been removed as part of the Beauly â?? Denny upgrade project in the Cairngorms.

Scheme benefits

The proposal for the Lecht would enable the full terrain on the main side of the road to be served by just 3 principal main lifts, the Eagle Poma, either the Grouse Poma or Snowy Owl Chair, plus the new Quad.

The new quad would also open up a green run on the floor of the valley creating a long winding loop giving excellent progression from the nursery slopes, something not possible with the existent steep Pomas.

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Combined with the Buzzard extension, this would make the Lecht significantly more attractive to a wider range of customers and break the chicken and egg situation of the Harrier and Falcon rarely running, because they donâ??t get used when they do, but people not going because they donâ??t run.

It would also serve to reduce some of the pressure on Cairn Gorm in the short to medium term, while longer term schemes are put in place, but still encourage skiers and boarders back to Strathspey.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. HIE
3. outdoor recreation
4. skiing

Date Created
August 5, 2020
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