

Pressure and diversity on Cairn Gorm

Description



Summit of Cairn Gorm Photo Credit author

Morag and I went up Cairn Gorm Thursday 6th August via Windy Ridge and down the Fiaccaill of Coire Cas, all in glorious weather. We started out just after 10.30 but even so met numerous folk going up on Windy Ridge and, even by that time, others coming down. On the whole route we met, Morag reckons, about a hundred folk, with many at the summit which saw a constant through traffic. You could see people in numbers going round and down via the Fiaccaill of Coire an-Sneachda and other routes.

The photo includes one mountain biker who was on his way to Etchachan and en route to Braemar. Two other bikers at the summit were going back down the Coire Cas track. There was a snow boarder (In the picture) and a cross country skier en route to a surviving snow patch in Glen Avon. Along the way we encountered groups of young guys backpacking in to wild camp at Etchachan etc. A major and very enjoyable component were families out and up to the summit with 2-3 small kids who were having a great time and full of energy!. My wife pointed out, rather worryingly, that, at 82, I was clearly the oldest person among the lot by a good margin.

Although the pressure by those on foot on Cairn Gorm is a worry, it was clear many people were having a really good time. The views were terrific. It was an intriguingly diverse set of people and included folk of African origin and quite a few clearly of Asian origin. We had nice chats with quite a few of them and they were UK visitors rather than residents, part of the fascinating “*internationalisation*” of the Scottish hills. In recent hill outings we have met French, Swiss, German, Polish and Czech.

When we got down, although the funicular is hors de combat, the upper car park was nearing full. (On the way up, the Ciste car park had various overnight vehicles and cars). Down at Loch Morlich, it was unreal. Every car park was jam packed. Cars were parked nose to tail along the side of the road on the loch side for, we reckoned, one and a half miles!!! How do you distance yourself on that beach with that density of folk?

What this brought home to me was the sheer folly of Highlands and Islands Enterprise developing a masterplan for Cairn Gorm separate from planning for the lower half. Glen More needs one unified plan from the summit to the boundary on the road to Aviemore.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. Cairn Gorm
2. HIE
3. Tourism
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