

Why is HIE proposing to repair the funicular when it is failing to repair basic infrastructure?

Description

The Scottish Government will soon be asked to support Highlands and Islands Enterprise by approving the use of the considerable public funds that will be required to facilitate the repair costs. A figure of between £10-15m has been quoted. The public are entitled to expect that government ministers will be in possession of **ALL** of the evidence so that they are fully informed before making their decision.

Parkswatch has previously published a number of articles that have shown how the business' assets have deteriorated over the last 20 years. This coincides with the time that funicular railway has been in operation.

1. The carpark surfaces and associated drainage are all in a very poor state of repair. ([see here](#))
2. The Daylodge building exterior and the associated pathways, steps and walls have been largely unmaintained ([see here](#)).
3. The artworks at the side of the upper Cas carpark is falling to pieces having been unmaintained since it was all constructed around 2005 ([see here](#)). [Ed HIE have since taken some action to address the Health and Safety issues].
4. HIE provided their incoming tenant, Natural Retreats, with £1.7m in 2014 to address a backlog of maintenance issues to buildings and the uplift infrastructure. How the money was spent is unclear but the issues weren't fixed.
5. HIE had to step in to enable the renewal of the vehicle fleet. 3 New Lynx skidoos, a New Mercedes 4-wheel drive Unimog and a new Kassbohrer were provided.

(On top of these maintenance renewal issues, almost £1m was provided to enable the purchase of an SF200 Snowfactory and 8 Techno Alpin TR8 Snowcannons).

Further expenditures are required to repair the uplift infrastructure. For example, the loading area at the West Wall Poma is in need of attention and the control hut there should be replaced.

HIE should be fully aware of the impact of the maintenance failures at Cairn Gorm. Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd, HIE's subsidiary tasked with running the Cairngorm Mountain business recorded in their Board meeting minutes from 18th November 2019:

"The Board agreed that the main priority is a new Daylodge Building and the Board will raise this with HIE" and, from the Board Meeting Minutes on 10 May 2019 "the poor state of the Ptarmigan Building is a concern"

How is a new Daylodge to be financed? Yet more millions of pounds would be required and the Ptarmigan Building continues to deteriorate further.

Further evidence

The fact that the hill business has consistently failed to generate sufficient profitable revenues to enable the necessary and ongoing maintenance of its assets and of HIE ignoring the need to do so is further evidenced by the condition of the drainage channels/gullies

The following pictures were taken on 20th August and they show the very dilapidated condition of the drainage gullies and channels in the lower Coire Cas car park and along the side of the link road with Coire na Ciste.



Lower Cas Car park. A drainage channel coming down from the upper car park.



Lower Cas Car park Drainage Gully



Lower Cas Carpark: Drainage Gully.

default watermark



Lower Cas Car park: Drainage Channel with collapsing side walls.

default watermark



Lower Cas Car park: Drainage Channel that has collapsed



Link Road drainage channel. Unmaintained and as a result starting to fall to pieces.



Link Road Drainage channel with trees and other vegetation that have been growing in there for yea

default watermark



Link Road Drainage Channel: Choked with vegetation.

default watermark



Link Road Drainage Channel: falling to pieces.

default watermark



Link Road Drainage Channel: In a state of collapse.



Link Road: Drainage outflow gully. Completely overgrown – eventually this could undermine the road



Link Road: Drainage outflow gully. Completely overgrown.



The pictures reveal the fact that maintenance has not been undertaken for many years and a considerable expense will be incurred to make it all good.

Repairing the funicular will simply place the Cairngorm Mountain business back into the same position it was in prior to the funicular failure with all of the same inefficiencies and lack of passenger numbers. It will not address or solve all the other issues that require attention at Cairn Gorm.

Customers have already decided the fate of the Cairngorm Mountain Funicular Railway by failing to use it. Repairing it with public money will be an outrage that the public will not easily forgive, particularly under the present circumstances. The public purse should not support vanity projects that do not provide a return on the investment made.

Strathspey has been extremely busy this summer, busier than ever before. Nobody came to the area for a ride up/down on the funicular. It is clearly not required as a summer attraction and snowsports enthusiasts have made their views known about its usefulness in winter too...by going elsewhere. Since the funicular, Cairngorm's share of the Scottish snowsports market has collapsed despite it providing the highest altitude runs in Scotland..

What should happen now

The Scottish Government Cabinet Ministers and all MSP's should take due note of the present condition of the Cairngorm Mountain Business. The final bill to modernise this business and put to rights all of the many dilapidations will run into tens of millions of pounds. Please think very carefully about just exactly why this untenable situation has arisen. Why has this business been unable to pay to maintain its assets over the last 20 years?

The Funicular Railway isn't an asset. In fact, it is quite the opposite, being a considerable liability to the hill business. It must be removed as a first step to developing a sustainable mountain business..

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. Cairn Gorm
2. funicular
3. Governance
4. HIE
5. Scottish Government

Date Created

August 22, 2020

Author

alan-bratney

default watermark