

Cairn Gorm, the campervanning opportunity and HIE's lack of enterprise

Description

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Screenshot credit Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd webcam

Highlands and Islands Enterprise's consultation on its draft vision for a masterplan at Cairn Gorm ([see here](#))

closed on Monday. The next day, at 8.45 a.m on a wet Tuesday morning in mid-September, how many campervans could be seen in the Coire Cas car park? The numbers were probably higher than normal as the more popular Coire na Ciste car park had been closed to allow helicopter operations.

The business opportunities are obvious. The costs of installing electric hookups and re-opening the toilets in Coire na Ciste could repay the investment in a season, a far better investment than repairing the funicular which has never paid for itself. With this number of campervans, there is clearly sufficient baseline demand to keep the cafe – and the bar – open in the evenings, which in return could provide a service to walkers returning from the hill. A virtuous circle. Yet instead of articulating a vision for basic visitor infrastructure at Cairn Gorm, the masterplan consultation confined itself to asking whether provision could be made for campervans, while leaving the Coire na Ciste car park in its entirety out of the masterplanning area.

There is also, however, a wider opportunity about the management of visitors in Glen More as a whole. The Cairn Gorm car parks, whether you love them or hate them, could play a key role in relieving pressures on the glen below.

	Tues 14th	Wed 15th	Thurs 16th	Fri 17th	Sat 18th	Sun 19th
Loch Morlich Side	17	19	23	34	34	18
Allt Ban Carpark	0	1	1	1	1	1
Hayfield	0	0	3	6	6	5
Allt Mor Carpark	4	4	5	4	6	5
Sugarbowls	6	1	2	5	5	2
Ciste Carpark	11	11	12	34	35	20
Cas Carpark	0	4	1	6	8	3
Totals	38	40	47	90	95	54
	Tues 21st	Wed 22nd	Thurs 23rd	Fri 24th	Sat 25th	Sun 26th
Loch Morlich Side	11	11	14	16	16	14
Allt Ban Carpark	1	0	1	2	2	1
Hayfield	4	0	4	2	0	2
Allt Mor Carpark	4	4	5	5	0	0

Sugarbowd	0	0	0	2	0
Ciste Carpark 13	11	13	16	16	11
Cas Carpark 2	5	6	1	2	2
Totals 35	31	43	42	38	30

Data from Save the Ciste campervan survey conducted in August. A similar survey was taken the year previously.

The photo and the data suggests that the number of campervans staying in Coire Cas has significantly increased since August, possibly as a result of Forest and Land Scotland restricting overnight parking in the glen below.

Aside from parking, Glenmore campsite (currently and unjustifiably closed) has, in recent years, become increasingly used by campervans, removing spaces for campers. Providing facilities for campervans up the hill would help create more space for tents from Spring to Autumn. While at present the Glenmore campsite is a far more pleasant place to stop off, if the car parks were landscaped – the ugly expanses broken up with native trees – and facilities provided, they could become very attractive, with great view out over Glen More. £15 a night for toilet, shower and hook-up – Glenmore campsite charged a minimum of £22.50 mid-season without hookups when last open – would bring in significant income to Cairn Gorm. Unfortunately, no consideration was given to such ideas in HIE's draft masterplan for Cairn Gorm. A vision without any vision or enterprise.



Sign erected at entrances of Coire na Ciste car park in August

Until that changes, the current incoherent approach stupidities will continue. HIE's Planning Application for car park barriers ([see here](#)) earlier this summer was submitted on the basis that charges would only be levied during the day, not at night. That is probably the opposite of what needs to happen. There is an argument that parking should be free in the day – to encourage people to use the car parks and not the roadside verges – but that charges could be levied overnight in return for facilities being kept open for use. Instead, following its attempt to re-introduce charges in Coire Cas ([see here](#)) HIE is now also trying to charge for nothing at Coire na Ciste. It has still to explain where all the charges levied by Natural Retreats went ([see here](#)) It certainly wasn't spent on the car parks.

Category

1. Cairngorms

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1. Cairn Gorm
2. HIE
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