

## Cairn Gorm – the environmental impacts of HIE's developments

### Description

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Note how the steep sides of the tube slide by the bridge have already started to erode

On Sunday evening I went up to take a look at Cairn Gorm, the first time since the repair of the funicular started. I got a photo of the construction ([see here](#)) of the tube slides before the rain started. The steel support structure for the slides, referred to in the planning application, appear to have disappeared

As discussed in our phone conversation it is our intention to construct the structure in wood to match the handrails.

I hope this covers condition 3, if you need any further info you can contact me.

Thanks,

Jim

Extract from email 2nd June in response to CNPA planning condition requiring details of finishes to be submitted.

The steel supports were also referred to in this email from Jim Cornfoot of Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd to the Cairngorms National Park Authority just six weeks ago. In place of steel supports the tube slides have been placed on a pile of what appears to be excavated glacial till. There is no indication on the planning portal that the CNPA Planners have agreed to this or how Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd intend to “finish” the sides. These appear far too steep to “restore” with vegetation. It’s hard to see how wood “to match the handrails” on the bridge, will be much use here but perhaps I have missed something?





Piste machine on a new raised platform.

Across from the bottom of the tube slides, the “further works” in the Coire Cas car park referred to in my post of 2nd July, turn out to be a wooden memorial to downhill skiing at Cairn Gorm. This doesn’t appear to have had planning permission either. But it provides an initial indication of the other “attractions” CMSL is planning for the activity area it proposed in its new masterplan for the hill.





As we left the car park, the new beginner's area Highlands and Island Enterprise had created above the snow machines – the ground was smoothed to make the artificial snow go further – was already pouring with water when it started to rain. It appears that Parkswatch's prediction ([see here](#)) that the development would increase water run off and risk of flooding is correct. Instead of a bog, which absorbs water, HIE and CMSL appear to have destroyed much of the water holding quality of the peat and in doing so have instigated the creation of new watercourses.





The lesson, which also applies to the funicular repairs, is that you mess with the hydrology of slopes in the mountains at your peril. On our return, by which time the rain was very heavy and it was too wet for photos, one of my companions noted that a culvert that had been installed under the slope was bone dry. Another indication, perhaps, that the works have resulted in more water now flowing over the surface. Not much good either as a base for artificially created snow or skiing!

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Photo credit Cairn Gorm companion

Keeping to the water theme, walking back down from the shieling, the hill road was awash with water and eroding fast. There had been reference in the funicular repair planning application to the need to improve this road for construction traffic and you can see that below the fence and alongside it that new surface material appears to have been added. Whatever its origins, the surface is now eroding fast. Unfortunately the CNPA agreed that none of the access tracks required planning consent so they now cannot do anything about this except ask politely and that, as everyone should know by now, gets you nowhere with HIE.



Photo credit Cairn gorm Companion

While a silt trap had been installed below where the stream flowed off the road, it was obviously ineffective..

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Photo credit Cairn Gorm companion

The stream was full of silt, being washed down into the Allt Mhor, which drains Coire Cas. This is part of the River Spey Special Area of Conservation, supposedly the strongest level of protection that can be applied to a river system. In other planning applications – such as the Gynack overflow AT Kingussie – the CNPA has been keen to reduce the risks of silt being washed into the Spey SAC, but at Cairn Gorm the repair of the funicular appears to have been put first, whatever the environmental cost. Whether the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, who are also supposedly trying to stop silt being washed unnecessarily into rivers, are prepared to act remains to be seen.





More of HIE's dirty water. Photo credit Cairn Gorm companion.

While none of the very poor environmental management featured in these photos should have been allowed to happen on Cairn Gorm, the damage unfortunately pales into insignificance compared with the environmental destruction being caused by the repair of the funicular. I will cover that in a separate post.

### **Category**

1. Cairngorms

### **Tags**

1. Cairn Gorm
2. CNPA
3. HIE
4. hill tracks
5. planning

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### **Author**

nickkempe

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