

The landscape impact of the Beaully Denny in the Cairngorms National Park

Description



The view from the west (Creag Ruadh)

I have looked down on the section of the Beaully Denny which runs between Feagour, in Strath Mashie, to the A9, just north of Dalwhinnine, from two different viewpoints in the last week. Much of this section looks even worse than the scar which disfigures the Drumochter ([see here](#)).

Before the Beaully Denny, the powerline traversing the Corrieyairack passed just south of Laggan and, from there, headed almost due east to the A9 before turning south. The new Beaully Denny cut the corner through an area of fairly wild and unfrequented country within the Cairngorms National Park.

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The view north from the Meall nan Eagan, on the south west boundary of the Cairngorms National Park

It is hard to believe that the temporary construction track needed to be this wide but five and a half years since the powerline went live, the stated intention to restore the ground to how it looked before has clearly failed, and the spin on the SSE website ([see here](#)) shown to be just that, spin:

“The Beauly-Denny project had unique conditions associated to its Section 37 consent that required the undergrounding or complete removal of lower voltage overhead. These conditions were imposed upon the project to help reduce the overall visual impact of overhead lines in specific areas including the Cairngorms National Park. The final stages of the Beauly-Denny project required the dismantling of over 600 old towers and reinstatement of access tracks created at the beginning of the project, a

significant undertaking which required care and attention.”

The first part of the problem is that SSE, which claims to care for the natural environment, failed to show due care and attention when constructing the access tracks, hence the terrible scars.



Closer view of a section between two towers with Creag Doire na h'Achlaise behind. Note the compaction and erosion below the right hand tower.

The second part of the problem is that none of those responsible for mitigating the destructive impacts

of the Beaully Denny development on the natural environment (the Cairngorms National Park Authority, Nature Scot, the Scottish Government and the European Union ([see here](#)) have not been prepared to hold SSE to account. The reams of paper setting out mitigatory measures and the assertions to the Public Inquiry that the environmental impacts would be minimised have all been proven to be worthless.

Sadly, money is valued far more than landscape. The short explanation for these photos is that our politicians and public authorities have allowed SSE to sacrifice the landscape to boost profits. Their hope appears to be that nature will, in time, cover up the damage. The photos suggest that may take much longer than the lives of those responsible. Plants will, of course, re-colonise the lines of the access roads over the next few years but the new mineral soils created by the construction work will then support visibly different vegetation communities. The marks on the ground and in the vegetation left by the “temporary” access tracks may well outlast the powerline itself. The Cairngorms National Park Authority, which has a legal duty to protect the landscape, should be very concerned.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. landscape
3. NatureScot
4. planning
5. restoration
6. Scottish Government
7. SSE

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