

Cairngorm Mountain's mismanagement of car parks and car parking

Description



Photo credit Alan Bratney

Following the end of the 2021/22 Snowsports season, Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd (CMSL), the company owned and controlled by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, has reimposed mandatory parking charges for the Coire Cas car park. The only difference from before being that the charge has

been increased by no less than 50%.

Customers' reaction can be judged from the numbers avoiding the charges by parking on the verge at the side of the down road (above). There were 53 vehicles parked there at around noon on Saturday 7 May with similar numbers on Sunday 8th May 2022.

Customers, essential to the future of the hill business, whoever is running it, have made their views about the parking charges clear. CMSL/HIE would do well to heed the warning. This is a business that certainly cannot afford to further alienate its prospective customers.



The entrance signs showing that the charge is now £3 and the new barriers approved by the Cairngorms National Park Authority in 2020. Photo credit Alan Bratney May 2022.



In previous years voluntary donations of £2 were requested. Photo credit Alan Bratney.

CMSL Management's attempts to justify these charges are highly questionable. They claim that the money collected will be used to finance improvements to the car parks and other projects. These are the same 'fairy stories' used to justify the charges in the past which parkswatch has covered previously ([see here](#)). Little to none of the money collected in from mandatory charges and donations in previous years has been used to finance improvements to the car parks or for other 'projects' although the car park is in an undeniably dreadful state.



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The view of the Coire Cas car park as you approach the entrance. Photo credit Alan Bratney.

Customers are aware of what has been going on and there are obviously those that are not prepared to provide any further funding to CMSL by paying for parking.



Your 'view' as you wait for the entrance barrier to rise. Photo credit Alan Bratney.



Broken drainage channel cover. Photo credit Alan Bratney.



Breaking up everywhere. Photo credit Alan Bratney.

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Surface is crumbling away....many years of deterioration. Photo credit Alan Bratney.



The barriers at the edge of the car park with the lower Cas car park below. Photo credit Alan Bratney



It is no better on the way out. This is the impression that customer take with them as they leave. Photo credit Alan Bratney.

Just a few pictures convey the dilapidated condition of the Coire Cas carpark. The paying public are entitled to ask just exactly what is going on here? What has happened to the considerable sums donated and paid in over previous years.

Asking customers to pay £3 to park in Coire Cas and then pay outrageous prices in the café is madness.



£8 in total just to have a roll and bacon – arguably the most expensive in Scotland

Little wonder that there were just four other customers in the café last Sunday. Cobbs cafe down in Glenmore charges just £3 for a bacon roll.

It would have been much more sensible to introduce a parking scheme that sought to encourage people to patronise the hill business. As it stands today, those who want spend money in the café/shop or on tube slides are being asked to pay to spend their money. No supermarket would do this. Those who just park and possibly use the toilet facilities pay the same parking charge. Why not reimburse the parking charge to those that contribute by spending their money?

On the other hand there is a very strong argument that as taxpayers we have all contributed quite enough to CMSL already and parking should remain free to all and be a public good.

Remarkably, the introduction of mandatory parking charges have not been mentioned at any of the Cairngorm Advisory Group meetings. Minutes of their meetings, which are published on HIE's website ([see here](#)), contain no references to something that is highly controversial. It seems that the advisory group is impotent and is simply yet another HIE front.

3.1 The group’s membership is intended to invite representatives from a broad range of stakeholders to make an advisory contribution to HIE’s management of Cairngorm Estate. Membership will be kept under review and will aim to be as inclusive as possible. HIE has identified the following constituencies of stakeholder interest and the corresponding organisations:

| Stakeholder group | Organisations |
|--|--|
| Local community | Aviemore and Vicinity Community Council Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust |
| Local third-sector community organisations | Voluntary Action Badenoch & Strathspey |
| Business community of Badenoch & Strathspey and local DMO | Cairngorms Business Partnership |
| Winter and mountain sports and activities groups | Cairngorm Mountain Trust Scottish Ski Club Mountaineering Scotland Disability Snowsports UK Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland |
| Neighbouring landowners | Rothiemurchus Estate Forestry and Land Scotland Mar Lodge Estate (NTS) Abernethy Forest Estate (RSPB) |
| Public bodies concerned with sports and outdoor activities | Sport Scotland (Glenmore Lodge, Scottish Avalanche Information Service) Snowsport Scotland |
| Other public bodies | The Highland Council Cairngorms National Park Authority NatureScot VisitScotland |
| The resort operator | Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Limited |

Extract from CAG terms of reference downloaded 13th May <https://www.hie.co.uk/media/11193/cag-terms-of-reference.pdf>

The members of this group ought to be considering the advisability of being associated with the ongoing Cairngorm debacle that they clearly can’t influence meaningfully.

Recent revelations ([see here](#)) have shown that the hill business is on the edge of closure with high level Scottish Government discussions having taken place about the advisability of committing further public funding. The costs of repairing the funicular are way beyond the budgeted forecasts and nobody can have any faith whatsoever in HIE’s claims about the hill business returning economic benefit to the local and wider economy. That will certainly not happen if managerial incompetence continues to

chase customers away, as is the case today.

What should happen now.

Immediate steps should be taken to hand the business over to the Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust [AGCT]. That assumes that they could be persuaded to take control if suitable guarantees were contractually put in place. They have shown their commitment to the local community and publicly proved that they are a talented, hardworking group that make a success of what they do ([see here](#)).

The funicular railway, if repaired, should be leased to the AGCT at a very nominal annual cost but with a break clause in the lease should it breakdown again as seems likely. HIE must retain liability for all maintenance and capital item replacement costs.

HIE and the Scottish Government must also provide the capital funding to bring the entire business/area to a modern and acceptable standard.

The CMSL Board of Directors ([see here](#) for list), who will have sanctioned the car parking charge debacle as well as the failing Campervan Park – which unbelievably was re-opened on 1st May in the middle of the holiday weekend (what other tourism business would be so stupid?) – should all resign. Directors from the AGCT can then take over and get on with turning the hill business around.

Category

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