

Update on the Pitmain estate telecommunications mast and track planning applications

Description

Following my post about the Pitmain Estate's proposed telecommunications mast on the Corbett, Carn an Fhreicheadain ([see here](#)) I contacted the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) about the application and took the opportunity to ask what was happening with the proposal to create new roads linking the estate to Glen Banchor ([see here](#)). At the end of the week I received a very helpful reply from Gavin Miles the Head of Planning (quite a contrast to the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority's refusal to respond to concerns about planning issues).

The Carn an Fhreicheadain telecommunications mast

Gavin apologised that the letter the CNPA had published on their portal saying they would not call-in the application had been a mistake. (As I explained in my post they have no power to call-in applications just outside their boundary even if deliberately placed there by unscrupulous developers). Moreover, the CNPA had commented on the application as they believed it did raise issues for the CNPA. That response has now been published on the Highland Planning portal and I am very pleased to report that it basically repeats most of the points the CNPA made about the poor quality of the application of the original application and its likely impact on wild land. The CNPA therefore, in this case has acted to protect wild land contrary to what I suggested in my post (I have updated the post to reflect this).

In the last week a number of people have commented on the application which is brilliant. To add to the arguments against this mast it is worth making two further points:

- The historical context to the argument that the mast is needed for health and safety purposes and to guests to use their mobile phones is that much of the land in the Highlands has been managed for sporting purposes for 189 years now without any need for this stuff. In effect the application for the mast reflects cultural changes and is not based on need (leaving aside the point that Savills has still not explained why Pitmain could not give their staff satellite phones).
- And as soon it is accepted that estate staff, shooters (or hillwalkers for that matter – though this is not a mast for public use) have a right to use their phone when on the hill, the logic is that wherever an area, whether designated as Wild Land or not, is outwith the current public telecommunications coverage it is acceptable for landowners to install a telecommunications mast. If Highland Council allows this application to go ahead, it will set a precedent for landowners installing mast on every hilltop around the Cairngorms National Park boundary (I am indebted to Dave Morris for making this point).

If you want to comment on the application you can do so here ([see here](#)).

The proposed Glen Banchor-Pitmain hill road

There have been no further documents published on this proposal to create a new 4.83km private road behind Newtonmore since the CNPA's landscape adviser commented on the application on 16th February:

"As discussed [with the planning officer] last week, it's not possible to assess the full effects of this proposal at this stage on the National Park landscape due to insufficient information submitted".

Gavin Miles has confirmed that because of this planning staff have asked Pitmain Estate to submit further documentation and have extended the deadline for doing so until November.

Planning – Application Dates

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2022/0010/DET | Construction of 4.83 Km of forestry track; upgrade of existing sheep dog trial track; and alterations to Glenbanchor Road | Land 760M NW Of Riseley Cottage Glen Road Newtonmore

[Track](#) [Print](#)

Details	Comments	Constraints (7)	Documents (72)	Related Cases (0)	Map
Summary	Further Information	Contacts	Important Dates		
Application Received Date	Mon 10 Jan 2022				
Application Validated Date	Mon 10 Jan 2022				
Expiry Date	Tue 15 Feb 2022				
Actual Committee Date	-				
Latest Neighbour Consultation Date	-				
Standard Consultation Date	Tue 25 Jan 2022				
Last Advertised in Press Date	-				
Last Site Notice Posted Date	-				
Agreed Expiry Date	-				
Decision Made Date	-				
Permission Expiry Date	-				
Environmental Impact Assessment Received	-				
Determination Deadline	Wed 09 Mar 2022				
Temporary Permission Expiry Date	-				

Screenshot 25th September

Unfortunately, you would not know about the extension to planning timescales by looking at the planning portal (I spent a fruitless 15 minutes checking various sources wondering whether I had missed something before emailing the CNPA)

While development interests have for 20 years or more been lobbying both the UK and Scottish Parliaments to speed up planning processes, often accompanied by a spurious claims that the time it takes for applications to be determined costs jobs, the main reason for protracted planning processes is almost always the responsibility of the developer rather than planning authorities. These delays are another way developers manipulate the planning system: where there is an initial furore in response to

an application, one tactic is to slow down the whole process in the hope the public will forget. This application appears a case in point.

By mid-February there had been 19 objections to the new road but in the seven months since all those objectors appear to have been left sitting in the dark. If the required documents are ever supplied, Pitmain estate should pay for the application to be properly re-advertised the public given time to comment on any new documents they have submitted.

Meantime, in cases such as this, it would be helpful if the CNPA published any new timescales it has agreed with developers (easier said than done as I know there are too few staff and they are overstretched).

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. hill tracks
3. landed estates
4. planning
5. wild land

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