

A revised plan for the future of snow sports on Cairn Gorm

Description



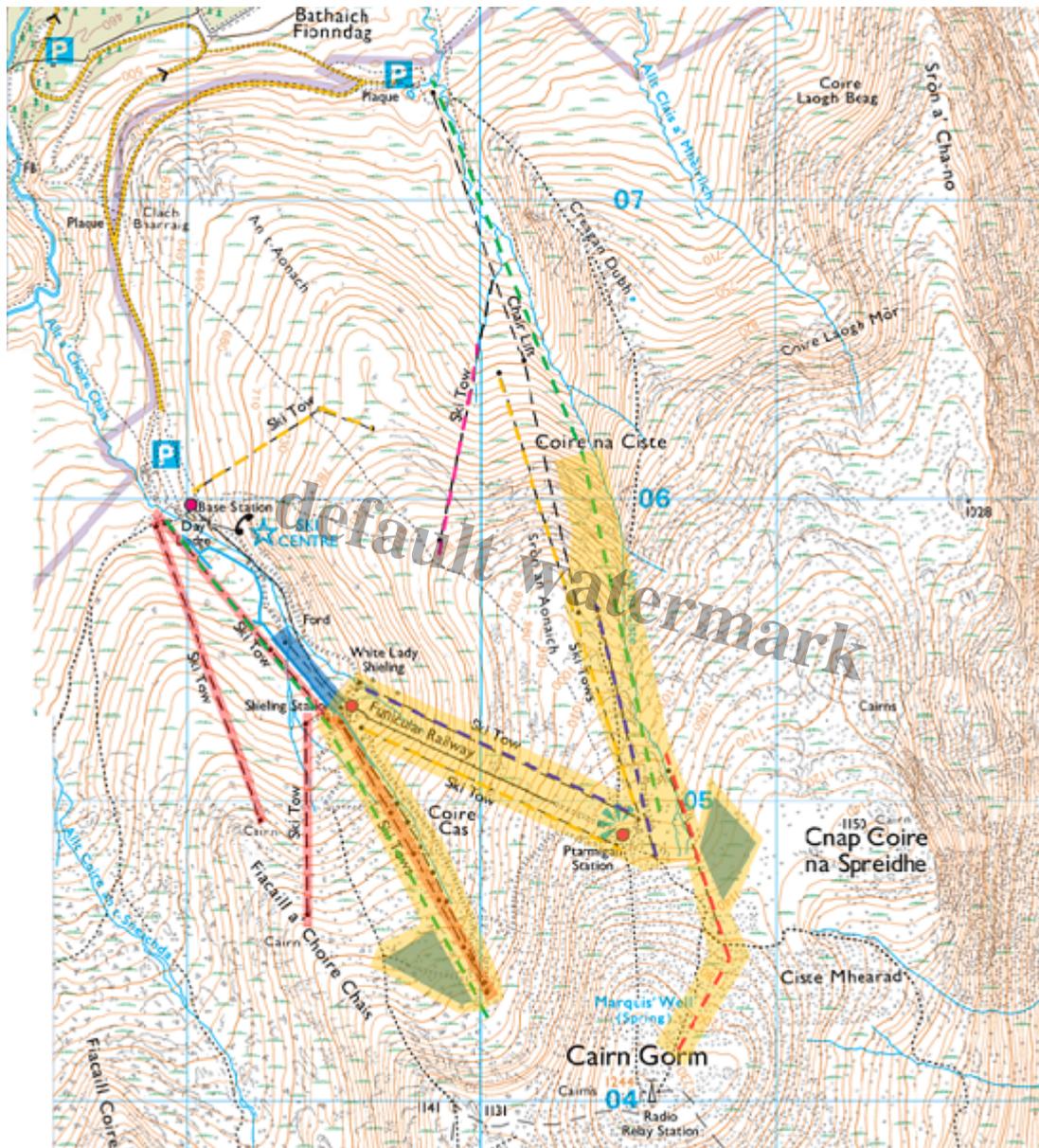
Photo 23/04/2016 Taken on my last, but hopefully not last ever, skiing day on Cairn Gorm.

What a fantastic day! Snow, lots of it and in perfect condition, weather fantastic, but the customer service left a lot to be desired, including a train that didn't start running until after 09.30!

In January 2020 I wrote a post outlining a plan for snowsports at Cairn Gorm ([see here](#)). Since then some things have moved on, but back to the same old status quo with a repaired funicular due to re-open some time next year! So I have revised my proposals with the help of input from Messrs J. Cook and G. Pringle who had commented on my plan having spent a great deal of time and effort coming up with their own alternative. This, along with several other constructive ideas, was also ignored by the masterplanners hired by HIE to promote a way forward ([see here](#)).

(1) Key elements of plan â?? focus on core snow sports area for milder winters

The idea is move snowsports up the hill to areas where snow is more likely to last rather downhill as Highlands and Islands Enterprise is doing. This plan in line with the EKOS report of 2011 ([see here](#)).



KEY: Blue Dashed â?? New T-Bar; Green Dashed â?? New Chairlift; Pink Dashed â?? Relocated Fiacail Poma; Yellow Dashed â?? Existing Poma; Red Highlight â?? Removed Lift; Blue Highlight â?? Beginners area equipped with 80m magic carpet & in the case of the shieling, the fixed grip Poma tow.

Notes

- Cas/Car park Chair should have a mid-offload/mid upload located at the top of the Zig-Zags, 830m. Valley Station is located at 680m. Top Station located at 1,020m.
- Ciste/West Wall chair should have mid upload stations located at 650m and 800m. Valley Station located at 550m, Top station located at 1,060m.

- Graeme Pringle suggests a poma with a curve running from Ptarmigan to Summit (1,230m) and another two to replace the ageing T-Bars, thus only 2 chairlifts (6,000pph) and 9 drags (8,200pph) will remain. Easy to maintain only 3 types of lift.

This plan allows for a choice of three beginners' areas, giving more options when the weather is suitable:-

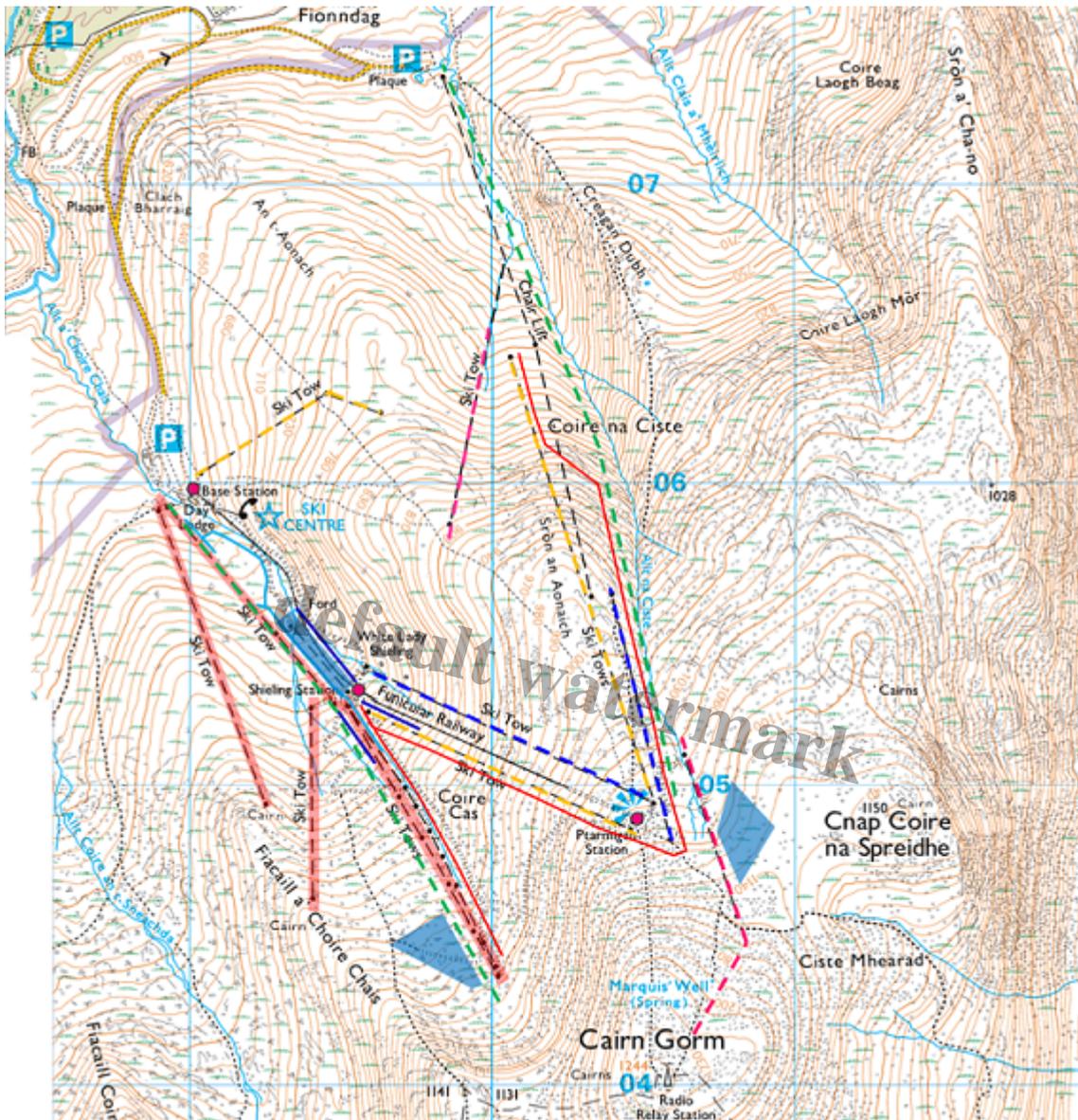
- (a) Below the Shieling where the new, underused rope tow was installed in 2018? Some of you will remember this used to be known as the Trainer Tow, because it was originally the beginners' area, ski hire being organised and schools meeting at the Shieling!
- (b) The Ptarmigan, obviously later on in the season when snow cover lower down is patchy, and,
- (c) The top of the Cas. Although this may seem a strange place for beginners, **IF** the recommendation of the SE Group report of 2018 for new uplift from the car park to the top of the Cas had been followed, then this would have been a far superior beginners' area than the current one on the swamp at the lowest part of the mountain. The only drawback is the lack of amenities, although with a little bit of thought something could be designed within the terminal itself.

But a fourth option may be available.

- (d) There are plans to provide a Britton Button style lift at the lower part of the White Lady, an area and tow suited to slightly more advanced snow sports lessons?

(2) Key elements of plan 'snow making

Having focussed on the uplift on serving the higher areas, much better use could be made of snow making machinery.

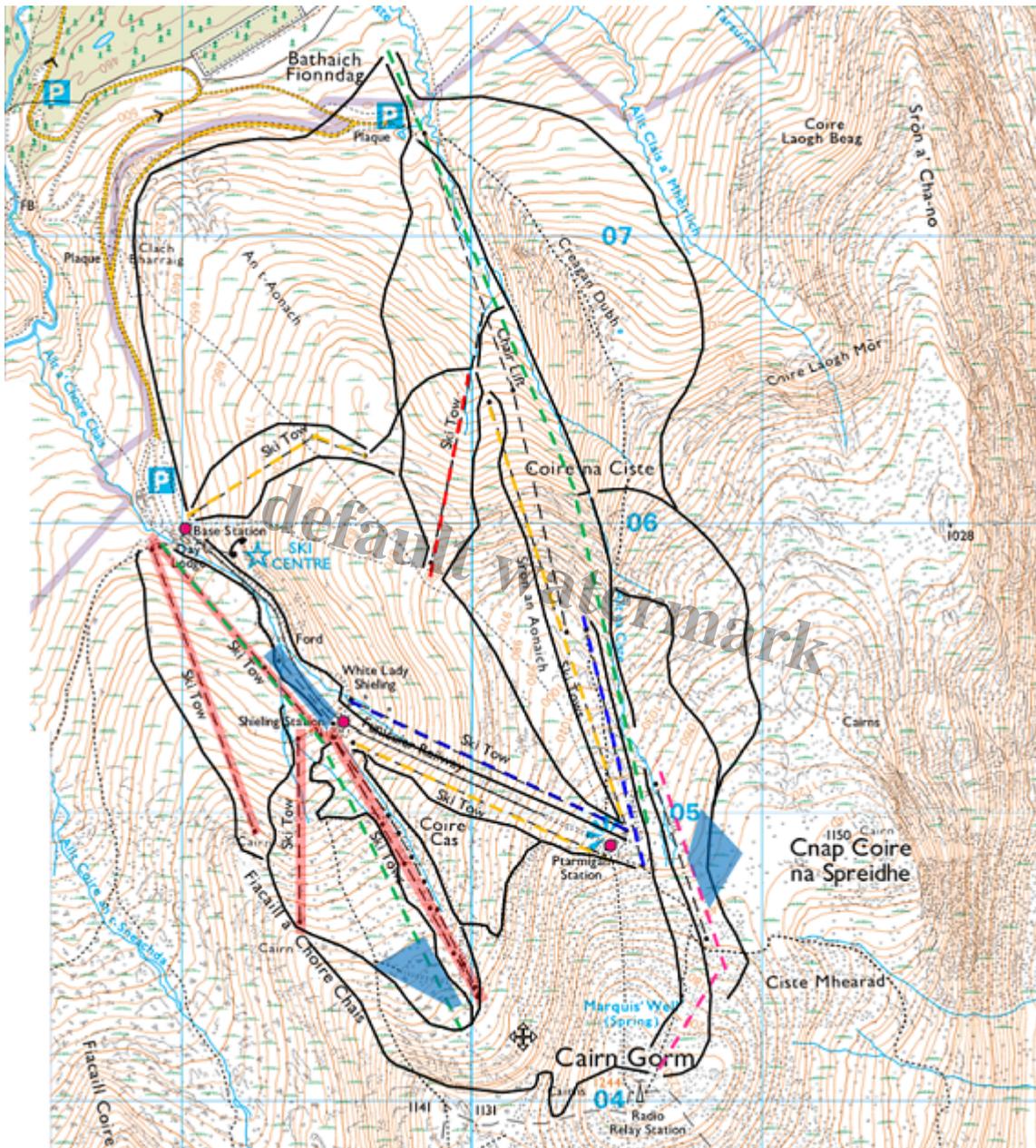


Key, as above plus: Red Line ??? Snow making utilities, hydrants every 50 ??? 100m; Blue Line ??? Snow Factory Ducting

The long zig-zag red line shows where water hydrants could be placed to provide adequate snow cover for a longer snow sports season. This would also be the line for the electricity supply to power the thirteen existing snow cannon. Having multiple feed points would enable maximum use of the existing mobile snow cannon without having to buy more.

The snow factory, as I said in my last post ([see here](#)), should be positioned near the Shieling in a position where it can cover several of the lower areas as required. It is easier and more economical to push and spread piles of manufactured snow downhill than up. How many of you watched the Beijing winter Olympics? None of the snow was natural, all manufactured using snow cannon, showing what can be achieved with a bit of effort and imagination.

(3) Key elements of plan ??? revised piste map



Key as above plus black lines for pistes

Added to the next map are black lines showing all the possible ski runs when there is maximum snow cover. In leaner conditions runs would be restricted to the higher areas. The addition of a tow to the top of Cairn Gorm would add options when the top of the mountain is snow covered (as in my photo above).

This is not the only example out one of the many ideas that have been put forward, free of charge, by snow sport enthusiasts to try and improve the situation on Cairn Gorm. Yet HIE continually ignore those with an interest in the mountain instead employing various consultants at a cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds to end up with what? Something that no one wants and lose buckets more money.

Conclusion

Recently HIE announced it had commissioned yet another study ([see here](#)), this time to look at the potential for fancy, expensive geo-thermal electricity generation for Cairn Gorm which is unlikely to be economical when there is so much free running water on Cairn Gorm suitable for a hydro scheme. It's about time that the Scottish Government reigned in HIE's continuing mis-management and waste of public funds and forced them to look at more economical, sustainable and sensible alternatives.

Category

1. Cairngorms

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