

The bus service and parking capacity at Cairn Gorm

Description



The main car park, 9th March at 18.15. Judging from where vehicles were parked, it appears the car park must have been full earlier in the day. Photo credit Nick Kempe

The snowsports season on Cairn Gorm came to an end on Sunday 16 April 2023. It wasn't the best or worst of seasons, although the available parking capacity was exceeded on a number of occasions, particularly at mid-term in February.

During the course of the mid-term holiday in February, CairnGorm Mountain Scotland Ltd found it necessary to operate a shuttle bus service between the Ciste and Cas car parks. Mid-term is an exceptionally busy time period and it might have been expected that this service would be necessary. However, there was a lack of snow this year which curtailed the numbers on the hill. The Car park T-Bar, Ridge Poma, Daylodge Poma and the West Wall Poma were not able to operate due to the lack of snow during that peak trading period.

The as yet incomplete works to improve the upper Cas Car park and the newly laid out entrance/exit area has led to a reduction in the number of parking spaces.



Photo Credit: Alan Bratney. February 2023

The lower Cas carpark has also seen a permanent reduction in parking spaces due to the inclusion of kids adventure activities.



Climbers and walkers have been directed to the lower car park. Photo Credit: Alan Bratney February 2023

The result of the reduction in parking capacity in the Coire Cas car parks has meant that the hill business has to deploy shuttle buses even though the pistes are not busy.

An FOI request to CMSL revealed that the upper Cas car park should only lose 13 spaces when the car park upgrading works are finished (from 386 to 373 spaces). Adding in the loss of capacity from the lower Cas Car park does however mean that the hill business is less able to capitalise on the good snow conditions when the opportunity arises.

The halcyon days when over 30 buses, carrying dozens of people, would arrive at Cairn Gorm at the weekends are long gone ([see here](#)).



A frequent and reliable public bus service from Aviemore could help considerably.

Regrettably, such a service does not exist today, which is to the detriment to the hill business and the wider local tourism based economy. There is no service at all on Sundays and only two buses over the course of the day on Saturdays. the first of which (no 37) does not leave Aviemore until 9.25a.m. and the last is off the hill at 13.49p.m. On a Sunday THERE IS NO SERVICE! Even during the week, the first bus doesn't arrive in the Cas Car park until about 9.30am and there are just six buses per day.

CairnGorm Mountain Scotland Ltd has a section in their website entitled 'Getting here' which says this, under Bus Service: "Please be aware that the service is limited on Saturdays and there is currently no bus service on Sundays".

It is obvious that the lack of a public bus service can only be detrimental to Glenmore based businesses as well as to CairnGorm

There are proposals to ban vehicle parking along the side of Loch Morlich which would surely increase the usage of public buses, which also drop off and pick up passengers in Glenmore as well as at Cairn Gorm. A new bus can cost over £300K but anything would be better than nothing:



£4,995

+ VAT

Mercedes-Benz Vario 614D Twin Wheel Bus

2006 | Bus

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fitted with 3 point Seatbelts &
Wheel Chair Lift, in good order
throughout, Priced at £4995...

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The Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust have ambitions in respect of the provision of a local bus service. HIE should assist with the necessary start up capital funding – new electric buses? – and help the local community to further the service offered in the area for the benefit of tourists and locals alike. A bus would help employees get to work, instead of paying today's high fuel prices which is making it difficult for CairnGorm to recruit staff, and reduce carbon emissions in the National Park.



Five campervans in the photo, 8th March – there were more and all appeared to be staying the night
Photo credit Nick Kempe

Reduced parking capacity and greater reliance on shuttle buses strengthens the argument for providing customers with facilities within the Coire na Ciste car park. At the present time, there are no customer facilities provided there which makes for a very poor service offering. The Ciste building, which was thought to be fit only for demolition, is in fact generally sound and could be brought back to life, if the will was there to do that and provide customers with the service that they are entitled to expect.



A sound building going to waste since HIE's decision to focus facilities in Coire Cas. Photo March 2023

The Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust [AGCT] should be asked to take control of the Ciste car park, building and the Coire itself. These are virtually unused public assets which should be returning economic and other benefits to the local and wider communities.

The Cairngorm National Park Authority should be behind such Community Involvement. The aims of the National Park are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area
- To promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area
- To promote understanding and enjoyment [including enjoyment in the form of recreation] of the special qualities of the area by the public
- To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

All of these aims are ticked off by the AGCT gaining ownership of the Ciste side of the mountain and developing it accordingly.

The Board of Directors of CMSL and HIE, together with stakeholder public bodies such as Highland Council, the CNPA and Nature Scot could be working with the AGCT to bring about these much needed improvements.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. Cairn Gorm
2. CNPA
3. HIE
4. snowsports
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Author

alan-bratney

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