The new bus service to Cairn Gorm is welcome but will it be enough?

Description

My post on The bus service and parking capacity at Cairn Gorm (published on Saturday 22 April 2023) received a number of comments on parkswatch and on the Save the Ciste facebook page. Parkswatch is indebted to those who took the time to point out the difficulties and costs associated with the provision of a better bus service and to those who made suggestions as to how it could be financed. There was general agreement that the existing service is very poor and needs to be much improved, going forward.

What I had not realised when drafting the post on 21st was that same day the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) had issued a news piece (see here) about how they were installing travel counters in the Glenmore corridor to inform a number of transport projects being financed through the Heritage Horizons project. I also learned that the CNPA commissioned consultants Stantec Ltd, in 2022, to examine sustainable transport options for the Glenmore Corridor. Consequently, it seems likely that Stagecoach will introduce an improved bus service sometime in May.

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So far the new improved service has received very little publicity. The CairnGorm Mountain website, for example, says nothing about the new service on its Getting Here page (see here) but still claims Cairn Gorm is well connected by public transport while directing visitors to the Stagecoach website showing just two services a day!

It might have been expected that some awareness raising publicity could have been undertaken in advance of the service going â??liveâ??. Back in 2009 the Cairngorms National Park Authority published a study on how to develop more sustainable transport in the Badenoch and Strathspey corridor (see here) which included this pertinent comment:

A significant proportion of visitors to the Cairngorms National Park are not aware of all available public transport options. While there are a variety of sources of information available, there is no overall communications strategy for promoting sustainable modes of transport.

Quite! Parkswatch is pleased to discover that some improvements in public transport to Cairn Gorm are in the offing and to provide some advanced publicity. Well done to those involved in getting things moving in the right direction.

While we very much hope that the â??newâ?? service will prove to be a winner we do have concerns about the ability of organisations like HIE and Stagecoach to work together to ensure the service in Glenmore is designed around the needs of those who work there, tourists and outdoor recreationists. For example, we suspect a service would need to be 1/2 hourly to attract people away from their cars (so people donâ??t have to wait too long at the end of their walk, bike ride etc) and we wonder about the practicalities of fitting bikes into the lower deck instead of fixing bike racks to the back of buses as happens all over Europe.

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Flixbus, the continental equivalent of Stagecoach, appear to fit external bike racks as standard. Photo: Lyon bus station, August 2022

Further comments on the proposed new service [Ed. or about wider public transport needs in the National Park] would be welcome.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. Cairn Gorm
2. CNPA
3. HIE

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