

## HIE's incompetent management of the Cairngorm Mountain business gets worse

### Description



Lone snowboarder on beginner's area Monday with three people visible on magic carpet behind

On the evening of 28th February, HIE's fully owned subsidiary Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd (CMSL) announced it was moving to a five day week and would not be operating on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. This decision was met with disbelief by snowsports enthusiasts, particularly those who had bought season tickets, but also affected CMSL's ability to make proper use of its snowmaking equipment and in the warm period before last weekend the beginner's area by the Day Lodge looked as though it might disappear completely. Just in time, temperatures dropped on Friday with a cold week forecast before Easter.

**Four** minutes before closing on Monday CMSL announced that the beginner's area was open again, closing time being 16.30!

# Mountain Report

**Last updated 25/03/2024 16:26pm**

Further snow fall on the upper mountain has improved the runs.  
Lower beginner's area open with new factory snow and soft fresh snow on top.

**Snow Level:** 500m

## News from the Slopes

Afternoon all.

Just a reminder that the site and all facilities with the exception of the Base Station toilets and car park will be closed.

Next update will be Wednesday afternoon and we will re open for snow sports on our learners area and upper slopes from 9.00 am on Thursday.

Cheers

Ops 1

However, earlier in the day adult tickets for "expert skiers" were being sold for four lifts (the two magic carpets, the MI Poma and Ptarmigan Tow) for a cost of £30! At 16.00 148 (out of the 150) tickets were being advertised as still being available. No doubt price was a factor along with the long walk to access these lifts.

The next screenshots from the CMSL website are from yesterday, Tuesday 26/03/2024, which turned out to be a beautiful day and perfect for snowsports:

**Updated Opening Hours: We are open Thursdays to Mondays from 9:15am - 4:30pm (on Tuesdays & Wednesdays) for the month of March. As of 1st April we will be open from 9:00am - 4:00pm.**

 -6° Light snow

The next two screenshots, taken the same day, clearly show **six** snow cannons, not one of which is working, despite the low temperatures and high humidity.

SunKid 2024-03-26 09:42:56



View from near Shieling with the sunkid rope tow, installed to provide a beginners slope, on the right (green)

Cottamsway 2024-03-26 13:47:47



There is a seventh snow cannon near the Poma's lifts hut which can't be seen in the screenshot because of the poor visibility

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) funded the purchase of 13 snow cannon to assist the business's operation when the funicular was declared unsafe to operate. As far as I am aware they are all in working order, and yet while there are now perfect conditions for snow-making on Cairn Gorm AND there is a holiday period coming up, the workforce who should be doing everything they can to make this period economically successful have been sent home. The reason is the management team



only focussed on saving costs, which they claim is partly due to lack of demand.

The truth is there is no demand because:-

- (1) CMSL are not utilising every piece of equipment bought for them (including the snow factory), and
- (2) CMSL cost reduction programme takes no account of conditions on the mountain and whether there is new snow!

It's not just the management team who are responsible for this. There is also a board of directors who seem quite happy to take their annual remuneration without any regard to the interests of snowsports enthusiasts.

The problem is compounded by the fact while there is plenty of snow in the Ptarmigan Bowl, with the funicular broken and no alternative uplift, "a demanding 30 minute walk" is required up to access the M1 poma or Cas tows. Moreover, if there is insufficient snow below the Shielling, there is the same

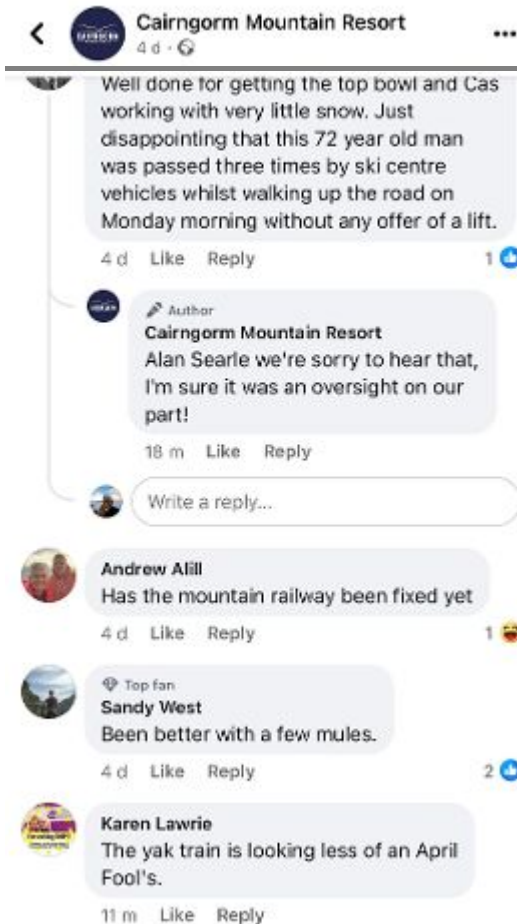
Being able to ski back down to the Day Lodge would make a as at Glen Coe, would be far better.



1(S)L Facebook page:-

One long term customer expresses his unhappiness with the

current situation, and then, this response from CM(S)L!



What CMSL should have said was that “*due to Health and Safety*

*rules we are not allowed to carry anyone but staff in or on company vehicles*” but they couldn’t because it isn’t that long ago that someone from The Pine Marten Bar and Scrán posted on FB that he had “blagged” a lift on a skidoo!!

The real question is what has happened to the cabin that was bought to be fitted to the back of a Piste Basher so that customers could be ferried up the mountain? It was seen earlier this season but is it now redundant and lying somewhere rusting away? Or is it only being used to ferry staff up to the Ptarmigan restaurant?

But with the track snow free, perhaps the Chief Executive Susan Smith could have organised other transport ferry customers up to the MI from her reserved parking place right next door to the snow factory? That might have helped persuade more people to visit the mountain than the two who apparently bought day tickets on Monday.

This isn’t just about the failings of management at CM(S)L. If HIE had any concern over the finances and opportunities currently being squandered by their subsidiary and it’s CEO why have they not stepped in to improve the situation? It would appear to be because they are responsible. From the day in 2018 when HIE bought CML off the administrator for TWICE for what they sold it for in 2014, providing 100% funding for any projects, guaranteeing all full time staff their jobs and appointing a CEO with no qualifications in the operation of a ski resort, the Cairn Gorm Mountain ski resort has gone from

one disaster to the next.

Where will it all end? If something isn't done soon we will be lucky if the best located ski resort in Scotland is still in operation in five years time.

### **Category**

1. Cairngorms

### **Tags**

1. Cairn Gorm
2. HIE
3. snowsports

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