

Highland and Islands Enterprise's funicular railway – the Xmas pantomime continues

Description



Funicular passing loop with scaffolding and workers 19th December – Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd webcam

As predicted on Parkswatch ([see here](#)) the funicular will not be re-opening for the end of December “as hoped” because Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) still need to prove the repairs undertaken by Balfour Beatty have made the railway structure safe. HIE did not announce the news until Xmas Eve ([see here](#)). Until then the evidence suggests they had been hell-bent on trying to short-cut health and safety processes:

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A day later, on 20th December, the scaffolding had been removed from the funicular structure allowing tests to commence

Why remove the scaffolding when the news release states “further work is required in some areas”?

“Contractor Balfour Beatty has substantially completed an extensive remediation programme to strengthen the 1.8km viaduct, however detailed inspections have shown that further work is required in some areas.”

Moreover, why remove the scaffolding when HIE is not even sure of the “scope and nature of the outstanding works”?

“Cairngorm Estate owner Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), along with the contractor and consultants, will review the scope and nature of the outstanding works early in January, with a view to bringing the funicular back as early as possible in the new year.”

The chances of the funicular now being declared safe before the end of February appear minimal. Probably the most revealing line in the news release is:

“At the same time, HIE will maintain ongoing dialogue with Health and Safety Executive”.

HIE have not, so far as I am aware, publicly revealed before that they were in discussions with the Health and Safety Executive about the funicular. So why are they now getting involved unless Balfour Beatty have breached the health and safety at work regulations?

HSE’s involvement will have implications for HIE’s consultants, SEQUS, who are responsible for the safety case and LECS UK, the regulatory inspectors, who act for the UK Department for Transport. So why does the news release not mention their role?

The key issue here, which HIE has never explained, is how seven months after the repaired funicular structure was signed off as safe in January 2023, it had to be closed again for safety reasons. The basic problem is the the design was never fit for purpose and the whole structure appears to be cracking up. No sooner has one set of safety issues apparently been addressed than new issues appear, hence why “further work is required in some areas”.


There was no mention in the news release about what HIE intended to do to recompense people who had bought Early Bird Season passes under the mistaken apprehension that the funicular would be re-open for this winter season:

Early Bird Season Passes Sold Out

Our early bird season passes have now sold out. Once conditions allow further season passes may be released for sale.

You can also purchase day passes subject to availability.

These will go on sale soon.



Season Pass Prices – Winter 2024-25

Season Pass Prices	Early Bird to 13/12/2024	Full Price from 14/12/2024
Adult (18-64 yrs)	£358	£571

At least HIE have stopped selling full price passes but that is another problem they will have to sort out in the New Year.

Category

- 1. Cairngorms

Tags

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