

Why Highlands and Islands Enterprise is selling funicular tickets on the cheap

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LOCALS CAN
ENJOY A TRIP
FOR JUST £1*

RIDE THE RAILWAY

The funicular is currently closed for maintenance between 3rd and 9th November. This is the fourth time this has happened this year. As Graham Garfoot explained last week ([see here](#)), this is a portent of things to come. The complex tensioning system for the brackets which are holding the funicular structure together will require regular monitoring and maintenance to prevent the structure failing catastrophically. This regular maintenance does not come free. What then is the justification for Cairngorm Mountain offering highly discounted tickets (normal adult price £19) for two and a half weeks after the scheduled re-opening?

The discount makes little business sense if it is intended attract customers back to the funicular after a period of maintenance. For example if in future there were three maintenance closures a year of seven days each followed by two weeks of discounted tickets that would effectively represent nine weeks lost income. No normal business could afford to do that and, while HIE does not have to worry about balancing the books at Cairn Gorm because of the endless flow of public money, I and my fellow campaigners do not believe that explains this discount offer.

Yesterday we submitted evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit Committee (PAC)'s very welcome Inquiry into the Cairngorm funicular railway ([see here](#)). Our evidence has been published on the Scottish Parliament website ([see here](#)) and our main submission will be published on parkswatch next week. The crucial point to appreciate just now is that the PAC has taken up the invitation of HIE's Chief Executive, when to give evidence to the PAC on 17th September. The PAC will be visiting Cairn Gorm on 17th and 18th November which just so happens to be right in the middle of the discounted ticket offer period!

While HIE has for many years now conspicuously failed to publish accurate figures for the number of funicular users, summer and winter, it appears to know visitor numbers in November are hardly likely to impress MSPs. A deserted funicular could undermine all HIE's claims about the value of the funicular to the local economy. Hence the discounted tickets. I doubt that in itself will be enough to attract sufficient people to impress MSPs in the middle of November. Perhaps other initiatives will be needed - a few school trips on the day, encouraged by the £1 tickets for locals with buses paid for by HIE?

The special price for local people, however, also appears to be a shameless attempt to silence local criticism of the funicular. How could any of the local organisations invited to HIE's roundtable with MSPs possibly criticise an organisation that has just offered cheap rides to local people? Needless to say parkswatch has not been invited. This provides another example of the corporate gaslighting process which was described on parkswatch almost six years ago ([see here](#)).

At the end of our submission to the PAC on the funicular we make six recommendations, the first of which is the Committee should:

- *Require HIE to provide facts and figures about all the capital and maintenance/running costs of the various attractions at Cairn Gorm, including the funicular, since 2014, the numbers of visitors using them and the income generated.*

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. funicular
2. HIE
3. scottish parliament

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