How Nicola Sturgeon destroyed Scotlandâ??s landscape â?? the Lochan na h-Earba pumped storage hydro scheme

Description



Site investigations at Lochan na h-Earba. Photo credit Laggan Community Council Facebook Page

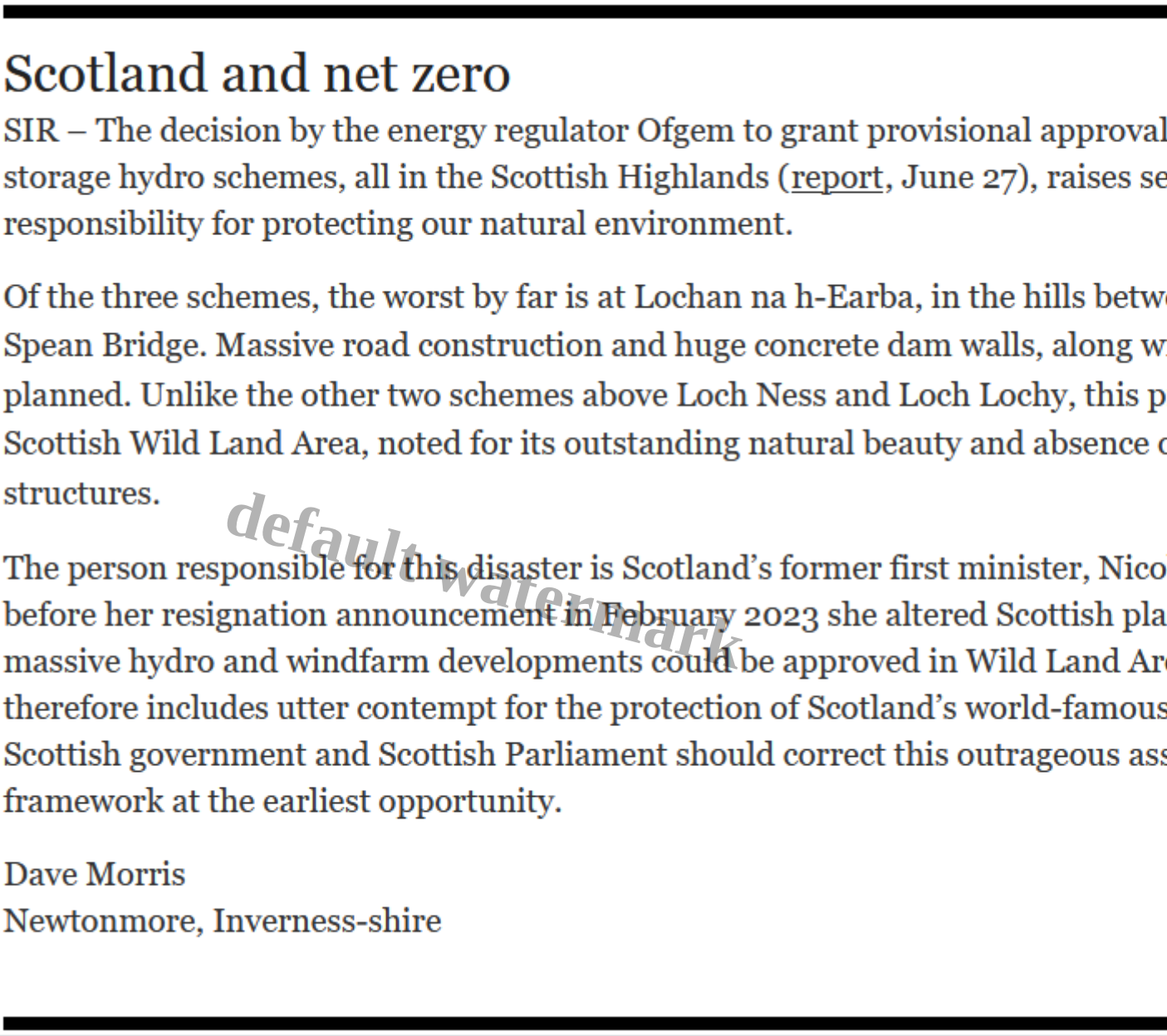
Just before she resigned as First Minister in March 2023 Nicola Sturgeonâ??s Scottish Government pushed through the Scottish Parliament what were described as â??radicalâ?• changes in planning policy. This included giving the green light to any renewable developments, of whatever scale, that would help to meet UK renewable energy targets, emphasising that Scotlandâ??s 42 Wild Land Areas were now open for such radical change.

Step forward every developer of wind farms and pump storage hydro schemes, from multinational conglomerate to corporate cowboy. At a stroke Sturgeon destroyed the work of her predecessor, Alex Salmond, who balanced the landscape impacts of renewable energy developments with the introduction of Wild Land Area (WLA) notifications to safeguard the best of Scotlandâ??s natural beauty from such industrial scale development. Salmondâ??s WLA initiative had put Scotland at the forefront of European efforts to protect wild places and wilderness values across the continent; all squandered by Sturgeonâ??s love affair with corporate interests and their UK government allies.



New track as part of preparatory works for Lochan na hâ??Earba scheme. Photo credit Laggan Community Council Facebook Page

The latest example of Sturgeonâ??s folly, and an indelible stain on her diminishing credibility and reputation, is the recent announcement by the UK energy regulator, Ofgem, of provisional approval for the Lochan na h-Earba pump storage scheme between Dalwhinnie and Spean Bridge. This will have a massive impact on the Rannoch â?? Nevis â?? Mamores â?? Alder WLA (see here for map and description). Despite being described as the most massive hydro scheme to be built in the last 40 years in the UK, the project was never subject to public inquiry where lawyers could have tested the validity of the developerâ??s claims against the undoubted damage to Scotlandâ??s natural beauty. The Earba scheme is one of three granted provisional approval by Ofgem, but is far worse than the others two, above Loch Ness and Loch Lochy, neither of which will impact any WLAs.



Scotland and net zero

SIR – The decision by the energy regulator Ofgem to grant provisional approval
storage hydro schemes, all in the Scottish Highlands (report, June 27), raises se
responsibility for protecting our natural environment.

Of the three schemes, the worst by far is at Lochan na h-Earba, in the hills betw
Spean Bridge. Massive road construction and huge concrete dam walls, along w
planned. Unlike the other two schemes above Loch Ness and Loch Lochy, this p
Scottish Wild Land Area, noted for its outstanding natural beauty and absence
structures.

default watermark

The person responsible for this disaster is Scotland's former first minister, Nico
before her resignation announcement in February 2023 she altered Scottish pla
massive hydro and windfarm developments could be approved in Wild Land Ar
therefore includes utter contempt for the protection of Scotland's world-famous
Scottish government and Scottish Parliament should correct this outrageous ass
framework at the earliest opportunity.

Dave Morris
Newtonmore, Inverness-shire

Letter published by the Daily Telegraph

My recent letter, published by the Daily Telegraph in response to the Ofgem announcement, summarises the problem. The original article (see here) stated that even from the representative body for such developments in the UK have concerns about these prospective hydro developments. It reported Kate Gilmartin, from the British Hydropower Association, as saying:

â??These schemes are major civil engineering projects, and it would be wrong to pretend they have no impact. They must be assessed rigorouslyâ?¦â?¦. The test should be: Is the impact understood, minimised, mitigated and outweighed by the long-term public benefit?â?•

It is obvious that alternative pump storage schemes can be developed above Loch Ness and Loch Lochy without the serious damage proposed for the WLA where Earba is located. And without setting a precedent for further damage to any one of Scotlandâ??s other WLAs through misguided renewables

developments.

Two conclusions can be drawn from the Earba fiasco:

Firstly, the Scottish Government and Parliament must amend the planning rules, asap, to prevent large scale renewables developments taking place in WLAs and avoid future mistakes like Earba.

Secondly, if Earba goes ahead throughout the construction phase, over several years, there will repeated publicity to demonstrate the adverse impact of Ofgem decisions on Scotlandâ??s wild places. There could be no better evidence, for anyone who loves the outdoors and its natural beauty, why an independent Scotland, freed from the control of corporate interests and UK organisations, is the best way forward.

The Laggan Community Council Facebook Page has a useful summary of what is happening at Lochan na h-Earba and further photographs (see here).

Category

1. Other parts Scotland
2. Policy
3. Uncategorized

default watermark

Tags

1. planning
2. Scottish Government
3. wild land

Date Created
July 3, 2026
Author
davemorris