Nick Kempe’s notes for address to LLTNPA Board on Cononish

I speak as someone who:

* Has recreational experience of area, walking, running, ski touring over these hills many times and have climbed the Eas Anie
* Has researched human and natural history of Strathfillan for a book I am writing on West Highland Way
* Has served as a Board Member on SNH

As a person with experience of Boards and a critic of the National Park, I welcome the more open way the LLTNPA has operated since James Stuart became convener and hope you will give what I say serious consideration.

The Committee Report claims the Principle of Development is established BUT

* The Development is not in the Local Development Plan
* Government Policy has changed on wild land so that Planning Authorities must “demonstrate that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation” AND SNH Wild Land Area have coming into being
* And the previous planning consent lapsed early in February.

So, you need to look at this application in terms of the Park’s policies and the Committee Report makes two specific points which show the development would be contrary to these:

**“During the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the mine, years 1-17, this development will be contrary to the Local Development Plan as it will not safeguard, protect or enhance the Landscape, Visual Amenity, Wild Land, Special Qualities, Recreation and Access. “**

**“New mineral extraction sites shall only be supported where the material to be extracted is required to facilitate the enhancement and maintenance of the National Park’s built environment or, where it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding national interest and there is no reasonable alternative source outwith the National Park.”**

Your officer’s assessment is right to conclude that there is no overriding national need for a gold mine.

However, the report then goes on to claim the mine is justified because of its socio-economic benefits

The main benefits claimed are jobs:

62 jobs (37) at £32,500 for ten years

* Some of these may never be based anywhere near the National Park (e.g processing the concentrate)
* 14 skilled jobs on higher salaries likely to be in a position to buy houses. But there are just 2 houses to buy locally so house prices likely to be driven up
* Without local housing, most of these people are likely commute, as per David Bell report 2011 which showed many people commuted into the Park to work due to a shortage of accommodations
* In terms of the unskilled jobs, in 2011 there were 12 unemployed people in the four census areas around mine. Other people locally employed might apply to work in the mine if better paid but their jobs will then need to be backfilled
* So a reasonable guess is c35 unskilled jobs will need to be filled or backfilled from outwith area
* There is nowhere for them to stay
* The Tyndrum planning charrette in 2014 clearly identified need for housing in village if the mine went ahead but this never appeared in the Local Development plan. Workers will either live in caravans or commute. Neither is sustainable social and economic development and the impact on the local community, where infrastructure creaking, should have been assessed

**“The proposal is considered to support the fourth National Park aim due to the economic contribution the proposal could make to the area.”** NOTE that officers say the Park COULD not WILL help the local area.

Scotgold, unlike the Scots Mining Company in the 18th Century, don’t propose to supply housing. Scotgold is proposing to give £490k voluntarily to Strathfillan Community Development Trust over the course of the mine – this is not a material consideration but to put this in context the mine’ Chief Executive on his current salary will earn double that over ten years and average detached house price in Stirling last quarter was £301,221. The contribution will therefore do nothing to address the real pressures on infrastructure the mine will bring to the area.

Scotgold is proposing a small increase in contribution to the Greater Cononish Management Plan of £425k instead of £325k as previously agreed to fund the environmental improvements which staff claim say will lead to an improvement in the area as a whole and which is why staff claim the Sandford Principle (which puts conservation first) need not be applied. You could crowd fund this sum of money to “improve” the land outwith the wild land area without any need for the mine to go ahead.

This mine is mainly for benefit for one person, Nathaniel Le Roux, a millionaire international metal trader who now appears to own majority Scotgold shares. The issue before the Board is whether you put the interests of this individual or the National Park first.