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By email to: planning.olandi@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Ms A. Knox,
Planning & Building Standards
Argyll and Bute Council,
Kilmory,
Lochgilphead,
Argyll,
PA31 8RT

5 September 2018

Dear Ms Knox

**Construction of run-of-river hydro scheme: Land West Of Allt Easach Loch Etive
Argyll And Bute
Planning Reference: 18/01257/PP**

Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 13,000 members and is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers, mountaineers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland's mountains, and acts to represent, support and promote Scottish mountaineering. Mountaineering Scotland also acts on behalf of the 80,000 members of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) on matters related to landscape and access in Scotland, and provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.

Visual Impact of Construction Access Tracks

Mountaineering Scotland recognises that development activities will have impacts and accepts and encourages developments that work with the grain of nature and maintain the wild qualities of the landscape.

We have accepted many renewable energy developments in the Scottish hill country but are becoming increasingly concerned by the residual visual impacts of small hydro schemes throughout Scotland. This is generally from the alignment of penstock and construction access tracks and the detail and quality of post construction restoration. We are especially concerned where these proposals lie within areas of high landscape quality and where they are close to popular hillwalking and climbing areas.

This proposal lies within easy walking distance of a Wild Land Area and a National Scenic Area and within an Area of Panoramic Quality. The Loch Etive area is a very popular destination for hillwalking with a number of Munros, Corbetts and other tops with views readily accessible from the glen floor.

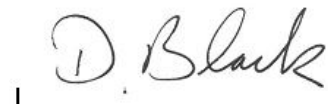
We are aware that the land around these proposed hydro power developments has been modified by plantation forestry, with associated surfaced forest tracks. These existing tracks provide access up the hill. The applicant recognises this and proposes using the existing

network, with short spurs off these to reach the proposed intake and powerhouse locations.

These proposed permanent tracks, even though scaled back to 2 metres as suggested, create additional visual impacts in the landscape over and above the existing road network. In a plantation situation, the penstock would remain in a wide tree-free corridor to prevent root damage to the pipe, and any additional tracks would be visually obvious from a distance. The route of the penstock would be flat and become grassed-over. This would be an obvious linear built feature in the surrounding landscape of high visual sensitivity.

We request that the Council ensure that the new maintenance tracks conform to the SNH Constructed Tracks in the Scottish Uplands guidance, and that the forest planting plan takes the linear penstock route into account and masks it within the new planting scheme.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Black". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small vertical line to the left of the first letter.

Davie Black
Access & Conservation Officer
Mountaineering Scotland