



MOUNTAINEERING SCOTLAND

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Lucy Prins
Principal Planning Officer
Planning and Building Standards Department
Highland Council
Fulton House
Gordon Square
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20 January 2017

Your ref: 16/05248/FUL

Dear Ms Prins

Objection: 16/05248/FUL Telecommunications apparatus, installation of ancillary equipment cabinets and fenced compound at land 1080M NE of Altachaorin, Glenetive

Mountaineering Scotland objects to the proposed development by EE, a division of BT Group, on the grounds of visual impact. We do so particularly with the aim of seeking protection for the integrity of the Ben Nevis and Glencoe National Scenic Area but also because of the significant adverse impact on the recreational and visual amenity of the glen, notably the sight lines through the unique landscape encompassed by Glen Etive.

Introduction

Mountaineering Scotland is an independent organisation with 13,000 members who are hill walkers, climbers and ski tourers. It was established in 1970 as the national representative body for the sport of mountaineering in Scotland. We are recognised by the Scottish Government as representing the interests of mountaineers living in Scotland. We also act in Scotland for the 80,000 members of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC), which fully supports our policy relating to landscape related issues in Scotland and contributes direct financial support to our policy work.

Rationale

Our assessment is that the masts, 2 metre fenced compound and equipment would be unnecessarily visually intrusive in an unspoilt area within the NSA. The application, which seeks to site the masts and other infrastructure at high spots adjacent to the road, is an unnecessarily expedient option.

This expediency is entirely at the expense of the visual amenity of the landscape and would be detrimental to visitors' experience of the glen, with its outstanding wild views. A further consideration is that visitors' expectations concerning the glen have been raised through the promotion of the glen by tourism agencies.

If the development proceeds, the result would be an otherwise largely unspoilt landscape and visitor experience rendered rather ordinary by unsightly masts sited on high spots along the road.

It is clear that a number of alternative options for the location of this and the other masts, away from the centre of the glen and located on the hillside, could be utilised, as advocated by SNH in their advice to EE.

Such locations would result in the developer being able to build the masts but the backcloth of the hills would render the visual impact less severe in such a sensitive area.

Conclusion

Our policy to date relating to mobile phone infrastructure has been to accept that such developments are necessary but that their visual impact is mitigated by proximity to a backcloth of vegetation on hillsides.

This proposal is the first for mobile phone infrastructure to which we have objected.

As an organisation representing those who enjoy a range of outdoor recreational activities, we recognise the importance of effective mobile telecommunications, especially in the context of safety in the hills. However, we believe that in the case of this proposal, that viable alternatives are available to the developer and that the present application is simply an expedient option which will severely impact the visual amenity of the glen.

Under the circumstances we object to the proposal and would urge EE and BT Group to think again.

Yours sincerely

David Gibson
CEO
Mountaineering Scotland