



The Granary
West Mill Street
Perth PH1 5QP
Tel: 01738 493 942

Ms Charlotte Wright
Chief Executive Officer
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
An Lòchran
10 Inverness Campus
Inverness
IV2 5NA
Scotland

17 December 2018

Dear Ms Wright,

CairnGorm Mountain - roads and car parks.

I am writing to you in relation to the recent decision to place CairnGorm Mountain into administration, and the uncertainty that arises from this situation.

Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 13,000 members and is the nationally 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.

Firstly, I would like to say that Mountaineering Scotland is deeply concerned with the current situation regarding the CairnGorm Mountain ski resort, and we hope that it will be resolved for the benefit of the local community and for everyone who enjoys access to one of Scotland's renowned mountain ranges.

I understand that it may take some time until another operator for is found, and in the short term, we are writing to seek reassurance from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, as owners of the estate, that the ski facilities will remain open through the winter season and the road and car park will be accessible to the public.

Our interest and concern lie with those walkers, climbers and ski tourers who want to take access to the mountains through and beyond the managed resort. The maintenance of the access road and car parks is essential for the continuing enjoyment of outdoor recreation, and we hope that you will continue to keep these facilities open through the winter for the benefit of the public.

Secondly, a related issue on which I would also appreciate some clarity is the mandatory car parking charges that commenced this summer after a period of voluntary donation. Is this mandatory charge to be maintained over the winter season, or is the intention to revert, preferably, to the voluntary donation scheme?

Many of Mountaineering Scotland's members have no objection to a reasonable charge for parking if the funds raised are reinvested in the parking infrastructure, paths and environmental improvements. This was not obvious in the past and I wrote to the General Manager of the resort in September seeking clarity on how the previous revenue had been spent, and what priorities were to be given to using the income from the compulsory scheme. I received a response which failed to answer to my questions, and was disappointing given that the company has been in receipt of substantial public funding from HIE.

We are also aware that Natural Retreats had agreed previously to consult Mountaineering Scotland before introducing the compulsory charge but unfortunately this did not happen.

Whilst I appreciate there are more pressing concerns in relation to the funicular and ski uplift it would be very helpful to understand if there is an investment plan in place, to improve the car parking and basic infrastructure as a result of these charges (if they are to be retained), and any indicative timetable for delivering this plan?

We would be very grateful for your assistance in clarifying these points as it will be helpful in responding to queries from our membership and from other members of the public with an interest in these issues. Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this letter and the questions we have raised on behalf of our members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stuart Younie". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Stuart Younie
CEO, Mountaineering Scotland