



Press Release

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For immediate release

Private profit or environment? Climbers call on National Park Board to reject gold mine in wild land area

Directors of one of Scotland's two National Parks are being urged to live up to their duty to protect it.

The Board of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park will hold a special meeting on Tuesday next week – 27th February – when the Director of Rural Development and Planning will recommend they approve a planning application for a gold mine at Cononish, near Tyndrum in the central highlands.

Mountaineering Scotland, which objected to the plans, argues that the mine will be an expansion of an already significant industrial development in a National Park and designated Wild Land Area, which would see industrial buildings and more than half a million tonnes of mine waste dumped over 9.7 hectares of hillside in an area where the surrounding upland areas are considered to be some of the wildest in the entire National Park.

Aftercare of the site will be significantly reduced too if the plans are approved. Previously granted permission for the mine, which has expired, included a 20-year aftercare period, while the current application promises care for just five years.

David Gibson, Chief Executive Officer of Mountaineering Scotland, said: "The main purpose of a national park is to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area for the nation. If the Board approves this application they will clearly demonstrate that they put private profit before the environment and the interests of the people of Scotland. Some jobs may be created if the mine is successful, but the proposals are generous in their estimates of employment opportunities and provide little evidence for their optimistic projections, whilst recognising that there will be a negative impact on tourism spend and related employment."

He added: "The National Park report recognises that the large, industrial-scale processing building and waste heaps will have a significant effect on the landscape and wild land area and on the experience of those using the hills, but fails to recognise this adverse impact would last for more than a generation."

Mr Gibson refers to comments from Park Authority planning officials which he says lack conviction that restoration after mining operations would be successful, citing phrases from the report such as: '...providing there is successful restoration' and '... will be dependent on the successful restoration'. He said: "These comments suggest officials lack confidence either that the developer will meet their

restoration obligations, or that they can enforce planning conditions effectively if the developer fails to meet them.

“So, what happens if restoration is not successful? The developer has requested a reduction in the aftercare period from 20 years to five years, which demonstrates either a lack of appreciation of the impact of mining waste on the environment or that regeneration is unlikely to be successful in only five years. Perhaps they assume that they can escape restoration obligations due to the shorter time scale.”

“The impact on the visual amenity of this important glen would be devastating. In addition to the buildings we’re talking about waste spread over an area more than nine times the size of the pitch at Murrayfield.”

Mr Gibson said: “We do not agree with the claim that to build the increased waste into ‘morainic’ type features will diminish the impact, because there are no similar natural morainic deposits at this location and they are unlikely to appear natural. In addition, there is an assumption that vegetation cover for these features would blend with the surrounding areas. As the mounds will be of very different material to the surrounding area there is no evidence or guarantee that the vegetation will grow, grow well, or even grow at all.

“Planning permission was originally granted on the condition that waste would be limited, specifically because of the visual impact. We see no circumstances in which a major increase in the waste to be deposited on the hillside would not affect the visual amenity, and this together with the buildings, as the developer has rightly stated, would adversely affect the amenity of the area and see a reduction in the number of visitors and probably in tourism employment.”

He concluded: “We are appealing to the board to uphold the integrity of the National Park and that of the Park Authority by rejecting this application.”

Ends

Notes for editors:

Image: http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/David_Gibson_-_August2015.jpg

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About Mountaineering Scotland:

- Mountaineering Scotland is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland’s mountains.
- Mountaineering Scotland provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.

- The Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 14,000 members representing hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers, funded through a combination of membership subscriptions, non-governmental grants and investment from sportscotland, which supports public initiatives and services in mountain safety, mountain training and the development and promotion of mountaineering activities.
- Mountaineering Scotland also acts for 75,000 members of the BMC or British Mountaineering Council on matters related to Landscape and Access in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland landscape and access work is supported financially by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC
- Mountaineering Scotland has launched the ClimbScotland initiative to encourage young people to participate in climbing and support their progression. It offers a dedicated website and a development team, which will introduce young people to climbing at schools, climbing walls and via youth organisations with a range of activities and events, while developing kids clubs and providing specialist support to parents, volunteers and teachers.
- Mountaineering Scotland is the national governing body for sports climbing. It offers pathways to climbing coaching, organises and promotes a range of regional and national climbing competitions, and manages the Scottish climbing and bouldering teams. It contributes to the management of the GB teams with the ultimate aim of seeing a Scottish athlete achieve a podium position in the Olympic Games.
- The MCofS is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and incorporated in Scotland. Company number SC322717.
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