

To Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, Planning Department  
Mountaineering Scotland Objection to Benmore Farm Hydro Scheme 2017/0119/DET  
Submission to online Planning Portal

1) 14 July 2017

Conditional objection due to lack of access management plan: The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 requires that access rights should be respected by "taking access rights into account when planning and implementing any major land use change or development" (SOAC, 2005).

The proposed development will impact on those seeking to exercise their statutory right of responsible access to Ben More (1174m) and Stob Binnein (1165m), hills often climbed from Benmore Farm and other points on the A85 trunk road.

The development will use the existing track near Benmore Farm for initial access up the hillside, and we note that health and safety warning signs will be posted along the section of track used by hill-walkers. No other details regarding how continuing or alternative public access will be maintained either during or after construction have been provided as part of the planning application.

Given the popularity of this route we regard an access management plan to be an essential requirement. This should include a statement about how information will be communicated to walkers, the location and nature of clear signage including the need for directions to a particular or alternative route at car parks or other access points. The plan should include how staff undertaking construction and subsequent maintenance will be briefed regarding the rights of those taking access and any diversions that need to be put in place. It is assumed that all measures will adhere to industry-approved good practice guidelines with respect to managing work sites where people are exercising their access rights. This should include removal of warning signs when works are completed.

We will publicise revised access arrangements, assuming these are supplied to us and the alternatives fulfil all relevant guidelines and comply with the SOAC.

2) 19 July 2017

We made an earlier conditional objection to the application on the basis that there is no access management plan. We wish that objection to stand and in addition we now make the following objection based on our assessment of landscape and visual impacts.

The basis of our objection is the significant adverse visual impact of the scheme. We do not understand why the developer has not included any photomontages of the scheme post construction. Our assessment is that this is because the construction track, which it is proposed will be retained, will be significantly intrusive and adversely affect the experience of those visiting the area, especially those climbing Ben More and Stob Binnein, which are two of the most popular hills in the National Park.

We see no reason why the track should be left in place on completion and the developer has not put forward a reasonable case for its retention, nor any proposals for restoration and mitigation. In the event that planning permission for the scheme is granted, the associated conditions should clearly stipulate mitigation measures and follow the SNH guidance document "Constructed tracks in the Scottish Uplands". The planning authority should also ensure that effective measures are taken to enforce compliance with such conditions.

David Gibson  
CEO - Mountaineering Scotland