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By email to: [eplanning@highland.gov.uk](mailto:eplanning@highland.gov.uk)

FAO Laura Stewart, Case Officer

25 January 2019

Dear Ms Stewart

**Construction of a run of river hydro scheme, including intake, buried pipeline, turbine house, outfall, grid connection & access track. Land 1100M SW Of Glencoe Caravan and Camping Site, Glencoe.  
Planning Reference: 18/05750/FUL**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this hydropower proposal

Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 14,000 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 a National Scenic Area. The Glen Coe 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.

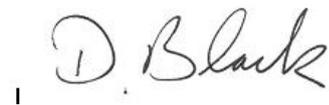
We are aware that the land around these proposed hydro power developments has been modified by plantation forestry, with associated surfaced forest tracks. These existing tracks provide access up the hill. The applicant recognises this and proposes using the existing network, with short spurs off these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

These proposed permanent tracks, even though restored back to 2.5 metres as suggested by SNH, 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 note from the documents supplied that the forest land is to be restructured to create a downy birch/Scots pine landscape. This tends on maturing to be a more open landscape than a softwood plantation and will be more in keeping with the NSA landscape. Tracks will therefore tend to be more noticeable in this NSA. We request the Council to stipulate in planning conditions that maintenance access tracks, post construction, be reinstated to a footpath width, or at most, wide enough for a quad bike, at a width of 1.5m. This would be sufficient to allow access for cleaning the intake screen without creating unnecessary tracks in a sensitive designated landscape.

We also request the Council to ensure that intake weir infrastructure is appropriate for the setting. Standard civil engineering finishing of tubular steel railings and bright blue pipework is inappropriate in this setting and we trust that the Council will ensure that finishings more suited to urban settings are not left in this upland location.

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**