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Ms Lucy Prins
Planning & Building Standards
The Highland Council
Charles Kennedy Building
Achintore Road
Fort William
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7th November 2018

Dear Ms Prins

Installation of hydro-electricity scheme, including intake structure, buried pipeline, powerhouse, borrow pits, construction compounds, laydown and storage areas, bridge and access tracks, Land To West Of Allt Na Lairige, 7220M NW Of Station House, Corroul

Planning Reference: 18/04649/FUL

Mountaineering Scotland has assessed the proposal, for its operational phase, in terms of its likely effect upon mountain assets and mountaineering activities. This proposal creates built development deep in an area of Wild Land that has no other comparable features. **Mountaineering Scotland objects to this proposal** on grounds that it is a major civil engineering project in a sensitive upland location, a remote and undeveloped area, altering the landscape character of this part of the Wild Land Area and significantly reducing the wild qualities found on this river high in the uplands.

Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 13,000 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, intake weir and penstock route.

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. This assessment should be read in the context of this being an analysis from a mountaineering perspective.

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.

The Allt na Lairige proposal is an incursion deep into the Wild Land Area. It lies remotely, well beyond any existing infrastructure in an area that is untouched by significant built development. It lies within an area identified in the Highland-wide Development Plan as being of National Importance. Policy 57 of the HWDP states that The Highland Council “will allow developments that can be shown not to compromise the natural environment, amenity and heritage resource. Where there may be any significant adverse effects, these must be clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance”.

The electricity generated by this particular installation is not of national importance as other renewable power generation sources are available. The generation of renewable power is not necessarily site-specific, whereas the adverse impacts of any particular development are.

The importance of wild areas is demonstrated by Scottish Planning Policy (2014), Paragraph 200, that notes that wild land qualities are “very sensitive to any form of intrusive human activity and have little or no capacity to accept new development.” Paragraph 215 goes on to state that “development may be appropriate in some circumstances. Further consideration will be required to demonstrate that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation.”

The location for the intake weir lies well beyond existing built structures. From the north (Spean) side there is a good track to the Stob Ban bothy. This has been proposed as the main construction access route. Beyond that the path becomes much less of a feature in the landscape despite being marked on the map. This is the quiet side of the Grey Corries and a relatively unspoilt glen. Its value is therefore proportionately higher given the spread of development in other high glens in the region.

From the bothy to the environs of the shore of Loch Treig there is an area of land that demonstrates quite plainly its wild characteristics. Such wild landscapes that are accessible to walkers yet free from development are a diminishing resource. Civil engineering here would be a significant feature and impact negatively on the wild qualities experienced by hillwalkers and climbers. Once these qualities are lost or reduced it can be decades or more to recover to the previous state, if ever.

We urge The Highland Council to protect the wild land qualities of this area for future generations to experience and enjoy and to refuse permission for this proposed hydropower scheme.

Yours sincerely



Stuart Younie
CEO, Mountaineering Scotland