

By email to: eplanning@highland.gov.uk

Ms Jennifer Mair
Planning Officer
The Highland Council

14 March 2023

Dear Ms Mair

Erection of 25m high telecoms tower, antenna, equipment cabins, compound and formation of access track in woodland within Sherramore, Glensherro Lodge Laggan.


Planning Reference: 23/00818/FUL

1. Mountaineering Scotland **objects** to the proposal under the Shared Rural Network initiative for a new telecommunications mast at Meall an t-Sithein, south of Glensherro Lodge, Laggan, due to lack of detail provided by the applicant on the potential visual impact of 1.5km of new track construction.
2. Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with more than 15,000 members and is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers, mountaineers and snowsports tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland's mountains. We represent, support and promote Scottish mountaineering, and provide training and information to mountain users for safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.
3. Our interest lies with potential effects on mountaineering interests, specifically in this case the visual impact on landscape of the proposed 1.5km long installation access track.
4. The proposed construction access track would be situated on a steep south-west facing slope, with potential for high visibility from nearby summits to west and south, including the Munro Carn Liath and its eastern Top, Stob Coire Dubh. There is also potential visibility from the A86.
5. We find that there is inadequate information in the Design and Access Statement to properly assess visual impact. A full construction method statement is required that states construction and restoration specifications.
6. The information required to properly assess this track proposal would include a commitment that contractors would adhere to the guidance offered in the SNH report Constructed Tracks in the Scottish Uplands.
7. Criteria that would assist assessment of potential impact would include:
 - The design of the proposed route to the installation site, including drainage measures, bank cutting and land forming;
 - The source of crushed stone used, and location of any borrow pit required to supply this – imported stone aggregates may have a different chemistry than the surrounding rock, leading to obviously different vegetation growth;

- Track width required for installation;
- Specific track width required for infrequent maintenance access;
- Restoration techniques, including preparation and turf storage if required for edging on a restored track;
- A requirement for sowing a central vegetated strip to reduce the visual impact of the raw stone and aid vegetation regeneration. Natural revegetation is often slower than expected than in lowland areas, due to the exposed nature of the terrain and the poor soil nutrients to aid vegetation colonisation of raw stone. There is a legacy of run-of-river hydro tracks in Highland that amply illustrate this point.

8. Mountaineering Scotland **objects to this proposal** until such time as the applicant can demonstrate through a Construction Method Statement that the proposed new access track will have no adverse visual impact on the landscape as seen from nearby summits.

Yours sincerely



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Mountaineering Scotland

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