



online response on Cairngorms National Park Authority planning portal

10 January 2019

**Upgrade to existing hill access for vehicles, including sections of new track construction, and repair and improvements to existing track, between Allt Ruighe na Riog and River Dulnain, Balavil House Kingussie Highland PH21 1LU**

**planning reference 2018/0400/DET**

Mountaineering Scotland **objects to this proposed track for vehicular access**. This particular route runs through deep peat and is in a Wild land Area. Approval of the track will lead to a major visual intrusion into the heart of a wild land area.

Proliferation of unnecessary tracks is a major landscape issue addressed in the in the Park's Partnership Plan 2017-2022: *there is a presumption against new constructed tracks in open moorland*.

The wild qualities of the landscape here are a nationally important asset as noted in SPP and NPF3. The benefits of this track accrue only to the landowner.

The Wild Land Assessment document acknowledges that it is "likely to have a negative effect on some of the wild land qualities" yet dismisses this objective statement with a generalised comment that this is not significant at the WLA scale. The WLA scale would require it to be seen from a distance.

Hillwalkers are sensitive to negative impact on wild qualities, walking through the landscape slowly and absorbing the experience at a local scale. Localised effects within the study area are therefore significant.

There is an existing network of tracks nearby leading over the watershed to the River Dulnain, as acknowledged by the applicant. There is little recognition in the Assessment document of the cumulative impact of a series of tracks. An assessment of the extent of tracks allowing access to the River Dulnain is an essential requirement to place this proposal into context in the landscape.

A track of this design is unlikely to blend in with the landscape. Evidence from existing nearby tracks show the likely outcome from track construction in this sensitive environment.

The Cairngorm National Park Authority is well placed to take a lead to support landowners to share the existing network of tracks to access the hill country and encouraging different ways of minimising ATV damage in sensitive landscapes, without constructing new roads.