



Press Release

29 July 2016

For immediate release

Mountaineers help JMT over legal costs

Mountaineering Scotland pledges cash to help with legal fees for highland wind farm fight

Scotland's mountaineers have pledged to help a conservation charity meet its legal costs in a failed challenge to a wind farm which will despoil a huge area of cherished wild land.

Mountaineering Scotland – formerly known as the Mountaineering Council of Scotland – has said it will donate £5000 of its members' funds to help with legal costs faced by the John Muir Trust after challenging the controversial Stronelairg wind farm in the Monadhliath Mountains (Gaelic Monadh Liath).

It follows a drawn out legal battle in which the JMT succeeded in having a Judicial Review dismiss the planning permission granted the project. However Scottish Ministers appealed the findings of the Judicial Review and in the last week it was overturned by the Inner House judges, opening the way for the development to go ahead.

David Gibson, Chief Executive Officer of Mountaineering Scotland, said: "There have been many legal arguments made about this – the Judicial Review sought by the John Muir Trust agreed that Scottish Ministers had not followed proper planning process when they approved the development, and that has now been overturned by the Inner House judges.

"But regardless of the fine points of the law, once again the winner is big business in the form of SSE. The real loser is Scotland's wild land as this development, which has a footprint the size of Inverness, will cause massive environmental and visual damage to a much-loved area. And at a time when we're hearing so much about democracy, this decision was taken in the face of opposition from the Government's own advisers – Scottish Natural Heritage – as well as the Cairngorms National Park Authority, ourselves at Mountaineering Scotland, the JMT, and three out of four local councillors. Not to mention the fact that objectors outnumbered supporters of the application by fifteen to one."

Stuart Brooks, JMT Chief Executive, thanked Mountaineering Scotland for its support during the Stronelairg battle. He said: "Thank you very much for all the support you've shown us over the last couple of years on Stronelairg – it's very much appreciated and has helped us enormously. The offer of £5,000 is also extremely welcome. The final costs of the Stronelairg campaign will not be known for a few months, once the opposition have declared their final costs and the courts have decided

the final liability to the Trust. Whilst we cannot be sure, there is a strong likelihood that at that time we will need to appeal widely for further support.”

Helen McDade, Head of Policy with JMT, said: “It’s incredibly heartening the support people are showing but Mountaineering Scotland have been real stalwarts and partners on this.”

Ends

Notes for editors

Images for this press release are downloadable here:

www.mcofs.org.uk/assets/david_gibson_mcofs_chief_officer.jpg

David Gibson, Chief Officer of the Mountaineering Scotland

Further information

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About Mountaineering Scotland

- Mountaineering Scotland is the new name for the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS), which acts to represent, support and promote Scottish mountaineering. Mountaineering Council of Scotland remains the registered company name.
- Mountaineering Scotland is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland’s mountains.
- Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 13,000 members representing hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers.
- Mountaineering Scotland also acts for 80,000 members of the BMC (now Climb Britain) on matters related to landscape and access in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland’s landscape and access work is supported financially by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC
- The MCofS is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and incorporated in Scotland. Company number SC322717.
- The Mountaineering Council of Scotland, The Old Granary, West Mill Street, Perth PH1 5QP