



## The Mountaineering Council of Scotland

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Adam Gough  
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12 November 2015

Dear Mr Gough

### **Cairngorm Ski Area**

Thank you for your letter dated 18 September and the opportunity to comment on future proposals for the redevelopment of the Cairngorm Ski Area. As a general observation, we found the 'full description' in your documents to be relatively sparse and no doubt further and more detailed plans will be made available in due course. We do not offer specific comment on the skiing facilities as our members are predominantly interested in ski-touring, although some would find improvements to the current facilities of benefit when using the area to access the plateau.

### **Base Buildings and Car Park Area**

This is an already developed, built-on area and the proposal states that the two existing buildings are to be replaced. The new buildings will sit partly on the footprint of the old ones and partly on the current car park. Quite how the total footprint and building elevations compare with the present is unstated, but one of the stated aims is to deal with 'capacity issues' so we assume the new buildings will be bigger.

The online presentation of designs indicates a lot of glass in angular, concrete-clad, flat-roofed buildings and we find the proposed design of the new day lodge to be overbearing. We recognise that the existing facilities are dated but believe that any redevelopment must be in keeping with the mountain setting and not to its further detriment.

In general terms we believe that Natural Retreats must strive for better stewardship of the ski and car park areas, many parts of which, during those periods without snow cover, resemble a building site with the associated clutter and lack of even basic landscaping.

We note that there are proposed improvements to the car park in terms of landscaping; whilst this is desirable we would expect no change to the present voluntary donation scheme for parking charges.

### **Climbing Wall**

We note that the visualisation includes a picture of a large climbing wall. As Scotland's national governing body for Sport Climbing, we would be interested to have full details of the proposal in order that we may offer comment concerning the proposed specification of the wall and its potential viability.

## **The Mountain**

We make no apology for repeating previous comments concerning the need for improved stewardship and believe that improvements would be to the benefit of both visual amenity and the economic viability of the entire mountain and visitor experience.

The planned artificial ski slope appears to be close to the new day lodge, uphill to south or east, and based on the information to hand we have no comment to make on this part of proposal.

However, some of the other mountain developments such as improved signage and increased snow fencing would intensify the present sense of clutter, especially when there is no snow and we would require more detail in order to assess potential visual and environmental impacts and to comment more specifically.

## **Conclusions**

We hope that you will find these initial comments helpful. However, even with the extra information on the website, our comments are limited in nature because the plans are not very specific. In principle, we are unlikely to have an objection to redevelopment in the base area, on the proviso that it is of high quality and sympathetic to the mountain setting.

We have concerns that some of the proposed 'mountain area' elements will add to the existing unappealing clutter and could increase the potential for greater access to the plateau, with consequent environmental impact.

We would be pleased to offer comment and advice concerning any planned climbing wall development.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Gibson', with a horizontal line underneath.

**David Gibson**  
**CEO**