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The Planning Officer,  
CNPA,  
The Square,  
Grantown on Spey

Dear Sirs,

2016/0295/DET Retrospective planning application to retain a ski area access track,  
Cairngorm Mountain.

The Cairngorms Campaign has a wide ranging remit in that it values the natural heritage and seeks to secure and enhance the natural environment and also encourages and educates others to enjoy and understand the special values of the wider Cairngorms area. As such we act to safeguard the interests of the informal, non-commercial participants who enjoy their recreation in the area. We are a voluntary membership organisation encompassing the wider Cairngorms Area, in fact the only voluntary conservation and recreational charity to be specifically limited to this area.

We **object** to this retrospective planning application on the following grounds.

1: The original planning application wrt removal and replacement of the Shielling Tow specifically required reinstatement of the surfaces disturbed by the removal of the original tow, and the replacement rope tow. There was no mention of the need for a temporary road.

2: The method statement required terram matting to protect the underlying vegetation, and standard techniques to segregate and safeguard vegetation, and excavated materials such as top soil, subsoil and underlying bed rock. The evidence on site shows that these methods were not employed.

3: The orientation of the track in its current state running directly down the fall line of the hill will be a source of erosion given the well established poor nature of soils overlying granite, the shallow soil depth, the mobile underlying granite stoney subsoils, and the erosive power of runoff from snow melt and frequent rain fall events. The photographs in the recently submitted ecological assessment by the CNPA Ecologist shows clearly unvegetated parallel track marks running directly downhill. Cross drains and silt traps have had little success in the past, and these old methods have been shown to be inadequate on Cairngorm.

4: The importance of protecting vegetation and soils has been repeatedly demonstrated for over 50 years on Cairngorm. Vegetation below the track edges will be covered by gravelly sediment and consequently lead to further instability in the adjacent slopes. These are well established events on Cairngorm within the leased ski area and are referred to in numerous previous soil surveys and in reports on failed attempts to stabilise slopes to allow revegetation using various stabilising media. The

landlord HIE (and its predecessor the HIDB) will have an archive of information to inform Natural Retreats in suitable and unsuitable restoration techniques. (If needed we can submit a list of references!). We object that the Planning Conditions did not sufficiently protect the surfaces and the enforcement actions did not ensure proper good practice was followed. Poor practice is not a justification for allowing an unstable track to be left; proper planning controls should require competent reinstatement, and as such this application is irrelevant.

5: Given that the **Four Aims of the National Park** give primacy to the protection and enhancement of the Natural Heritage value when there is a potential conflict with any of the other aims, and given the paucity of the ecological assessment, the ecological considerations appear to have been bolted on as an afterthought, ie after the track construction has been completed. We object that this primary aim has not been given due priority. The track should be reinstated and the retrospective planning application refused.

A competent and informed ecological assessment should have been used in the earliest design stages, but there is no evidence that this has been the case; by this we mean at the initial planning application stage. We conclude that this development has not followed planning and Park guidance. Given that a development within the highly prized montane environment of the National Park should be following the highest and most rigorous planning and construction standards possible, we consider that permission should be refused, as the natural heritage and ecological considerations are inadequate and the track is showing it self to be prone to erosion and sediment run off.

6: The shame is that this is within a nationally important area that has the highest levels of protection for its landscapes of any where in the UK and is renowned for the protected habitats and wildlife in the vicinity. The leased Ski Area is wholly within an area designated for its landscape value, a National Scenic Area, with the snow fences, existing road ways and the funicular there are already prominent linear lines running up and down the hill, that are noticeable as far away as the A9 at the Slochd and the adjacent hills. A high quality natural landscape is an important characteristic that underpins the local tourism trade. This track is yet one more geometric feature in the landscape that has been shown to reduce and undermine the important wild land quality.

In conclusion we consider that our planning system within a National Park must be strong enough to protect the wider public interest. Any developments should be hard won and planned to the highest standards, having a proper regard to their proposed location and its special characteristics. We hope and urge that proper regard be given to the evidence that developments which undermine the wild land quality values should be presumed against, and that in all cases planning conditions should be rigorously enforced.

Yours faithfully,

On behalf of the Cairngorms Campaign