

4th December 2015

Natural Retreats
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Dear Sirs

Proposed works at Cairngorm Ski Centre, Aviemore

Ramblers Scotland welcomes the opportunity to comment as part of the pre-application consultation on the further development of the Cairngorm Mountain Ski Resort. We are the representative body for walkers in Scotland and recognised by **sportscotland** as a governing body of sport. Our charitable aims are to promote walking, secure and facilitate access to land, and to protect the countryside. We have around 6,500 members in Scotland and 56 local walking groups, all run by volunteers, including a number based in and around the Cairngorms National Park.

Without a detailed planning proposal it is difficult to comment definitively. In principle we have no objections to proposals for the building in Coire Cas or the features included as part of those changes. However, we do have a number of concerns regarding those new elements listed as being introduced on the mountain within the red boundary shown on the accompanying map, such as mountain biking. We believe there are implications for conservation and safety in attracting a larger number of visitors to use the area, as this could lead to increased visitor pressure outwith this boundary. We would therefore encourage the developers to consider the appropriate management of visitors, in terms of ensuring sensitive habitats are protected and current erosion issues on the plateau are not exacerbated. We also would raise the need for a full assessment of any safety risks given the height of the mountains and the changeable weather experienced there, if less experienced walkers and mountain bikers are likely to be encouraged to leave the site and venture further afield without proper equipment.

In addition, we are aware through press articles of a growing call to open up the closed system at the top station of the funicular railway. Given that this is a legal restriction on based planning conditions flowing from the EU funding received to build the funicular railway, it would be a serious breach of such restrictions were the top station to be opened up. Walkers can already reach the summit if they are prepared to walk from the car park, unless as part of the guided walk programme offered in the summer.

We trust the above is useful and we would be very happy to discuss these issues further with you at any time, either individually or as part of a group organised by Scottish Environment LINK, the umbrella body for Scottish environmental organisations of which we are a member.

Yours faithfully

Helen Todd
Campaigns & Policy Manager