

THE CAIRNGORMS CAMPAIGNER

Summer 2008

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IS DEVELOPMENT IN BADENOCH AND STRATHSPEY CLASSICALLY BAD MOUNTAIN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT?

"The owners of Aviemore Highland Resort are being urged by the Cairngorms National Park Authority to show them some respect," declared the Strathspey and Badenoch Herald of January 15 this year. "The Strathy" as it is more fondly known, is the lively and informative local paper of Badenoch and Strathspey, on the northern edge of the Park, and the dispute is about an asserted right of way between the Resort and Aviemore. It has gone as far as the Court of Session in Edinburgh, Scotland's highest civil court. Other editions of The Strathy report disputes with the Resort management. Two businessmen who ran local businesses on land owned by the resort were told there was no room for them in the new plans. A group of timeshare owners, the Dalfaber Action Group oppose aspects of the development.

But these are not the only disputes with developers. Up and down Badenoch and Strathspey, there is planning war. Local builders have opposed plans by Muir Homes to build 193 houses at Grantown on Spey. The local community at Boat of Garten has opposed another large development there, and 30 building firms object to the Local Plan as they fear major builders will monopolise housebuilding. *"Without a supply of small building sites to sustain local builders, their firms will undoubtedly falter and in some cases may fail,"* quotes The Strathy of January 2 of a spokesman for the objectors. A recent, web-based poll by The Strathy produced an 80% vote against large housing developments in the area. What is going on?

Intensive tourism development in many mountain areas is in crisis and much has been learned about good and bad tourism development. At a time when the National Park Authority is finalising its Local Plan to

guide development, it is worth asking, "Are these lessons be applied in the



The Four Seasons Hotel, Aviemore. An early example of inappropriate architecture, sited where it did major landscape damage.

Cairngorms?"

Once hailed as the saviour of remote mountain areas, tourism development has become increasingly controversial as its benefits become outweighed by the social, environmental and political damage of over-development or the wrong kind of development. As far back as the 1970s, viewing the crisis in the Alps, experts like Jost Krippendorf, Professor of Tourism at Vienna University, were warning declaring *"Tourism is its own worst enemy; in seeking to promote and exploit the industry's one great asset, the countryside and its inhabitants, it destroys it to provide cableways, hotels, second homes and all the amenities of urban life."* "There is no other area of planned human activity," he declares, *"where the cardinal principles of conservation are of such overriding importance!"*¹ He developed his ideas fully in his famous book, "The Holiday Makers."² The two key issues were well summed up by Brugger and Messerli in their paper "The Problems" in a volume that reviewed lengthy experience of

IS DEVELOPMENT IN BADENOCH AND STRATHSPEY CLASSICALLY BAD MOUNTAIN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ? *contd.*

tourism development in the Swiss mountain regions³. These they describe as *Autonomy Versus Dependency*, and *Economy Versus Ecology*. Their key questions focus on the environmental, political and cultural carrying capacity of mountain regions for development.

Regarding economy versus dependency, they point out that the greater the scenic, wildlife, and adventure potential of the landscape, the greater is the local and external desire to develop it and it attracts large scale investment that does not come from within the area. *"This, in turn, leads not only to a clear dominance of external over local interests, but as well to the danger of political impotence and cultural erosion. Many communities are surprised by the effects of tourism development. Local agencies and local political power may be too weak to carry out autonomous policies and local identity is undefended."* In short, local communities lose control over the tourism development originally intended to benefit them.

Regarding economy versus ecology, they are referring to the well established tendency for tourism development to overdevelop and irreversibly damage the environmental resource it is based on and which Krippendorf referred to so strongly. *"Areas with the finest landscape, flora and wildlife have the greatest potential and these have the most balanced ecology,"* they point out, continuing, *"The market mechanism destroys its own resource. True costs are only visible in the long run, they accumulate, and the damaged resources are not replaceable."*

Alongside this has arisen the "hard tourism versus soft tourism" debate. By hard tourism is generally meant investment in large-scale developments like Aviemore Highland Resort, timeshare and holiday homes, and by soft tourism is meant development focused on small scale, locally owned, hotels, farm accommodation, bed and breakfast, etc. The contrast between areas of the Alps in this respect is revealing. Bernard Debarieux⁴ compares French with Swiss and Austrian resorts. In the French resorts, second home ownership is dominant. In Swiss and Austrian ones, government encouraged accommodation to be in small hotels or bed and breakfasts etc. Thus large French resorts often have twice the number of bed spaces (35,000-40,000) of equally large Swiss and Austrian ones (often much fewer than 20,000). As a result, annual occupancy in bednights in establishments in a French area like Savoie is only 48,

but in the Austrian Tyrol averages 114. Further, much more of the money spent on the soft tourism accommodation is spent locally than with the hard tourism. Other studies have brought out the massive negative implications the French approach has in its scale of construction of buildings, roads, services, their local direct environmental impacts on landscape and ecological resources, their damaging social and economic impacts and, their wider effects on carbon dioxide emissions and hence climate change.

Are parallel scenes now gradually unfolding in Badenoch and Strathspey in the Cairngorms National Park? Are such insights being applied?

In 1980, Donald Getz completed a three-year study of tourism development there⁵. He concluded that, to date, the benefits brought by tourism and related developments outweighed the problems and costs created. In contrast, at the same time, the situation caught the attention of Fritz Schwarzenbach, then a leading expert on Alpine development. He regarded Aviemore then as a classical example of bad tourist development. Getz, reporting his conclusions in the *Scottish Geographic Magazine*, warned *"Promotion of new developments in tourism and increased demand cannot be justified on the basis of benefits to the host population in Badenoch and Strathspey unless concrete measures are taken to disperse demand more widely. The continuing concentration of growth and visitors at and near Aviemore will have adverse ecological and social effects on that central portion of the district while depriving peripheral settlements of potentially life giving all-year jobs."*

He was wasting his breath! Aviemore Highland Resort has now lodged a planning application for the second phase of its development plans - a massive £80 million mixed use development comprising residential, retail, office, community, leisure and environmental improvements, roads, additional lodges and hotel extensions to create a new village centre including 60,000 sq feet of retail space, 40,000 sq feet of office space, 280 homes and a seven story block of holiday apartments. According to the Strath of Feb 2, Mr Gordon Fraser, deputy chief exec of Macdonald Hotels and Resorts, said *"The importance of this development in potentially creating up to 500 jobs over a five year period and creating a year-round economy for Aviemore cannot*

¹ Countdown to Destruction by Professor Jost Krippendorf in his address to the 1975 SNOW Conference.

² The Holiday Makers - Understanding the impact of leisure and travel by Jost Krippendorf, Heinemann Professional Publishing 1987 on, ISBN 0 434 91064 3

³ The Transformation of the Swiss Mountain Regions by E A Brugger et al, Pub Haupt ISBN 3-258-03377-3

⁴ Bernard Debarieux (1995) *Tourisme et montagne* Paris: Economica, Poche Géographien page 49

⁵ Effects of Tourism on the Host Population - A Case Study of Tourism and Regional Development in the Badenoch-Strathspey District of the Scottish Highlands by Donald Philip Getz - A PhD Thesis at the University of Edinburgh ZEMEDLSKA EKONOMIKA, 42, 1996(1):19-28

IS DEVELOPMENT IN BADENOCH AND STRATHSPEY CLASSICALLY BAD MOUNTAIN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ? *contd.*

be overstated. "This will generate future opportunities that will spread across the Highlands, consolidating the region as a major tourist destination" Alpine experience suggests the results will not be so beneficial at all.

Recent studies on the hard versus soft tourism discussion have included Badenoch and Strathspey⁶. Here, hard tourism is overwhelmingly dominant, due to the development of Aviemore. Daily spending by tourists accommodated in "hard tourism" development, it was found, is about twice that by those in "soft tourism" accommodation, but against that, operators of soft tourism "purchase less than a quarter of their inputs from outside the regional economy in both study areas, whereas this figure is much higher for hard tourist businesses." Partly due to this, soft tourism makes up for the difference in spend as it generates more jobs per unit of spend. Even more importantly, it is also known that quite small increases in local spend greatly stimulate the local economy. To this also can be added the profits of hard tourism go largely to distant shareholders and the control of decisions on development passes to the, usually distant, management of the large companies. Commenting on this hard tourism the authors say, "This industry was not the product of endogenous enterprise, and has been nurtured and developed by significant public sector investment, effectively creating an externally owned, enclave economy associated with tourism." The issue of economy versus dependency comes in clearly.

Alpine research showed how over-development of tourism damages communities. Once, for example, the number of tourist beds exceeds the number of resident beds by about 2:1, local people find themselves permanent strangers in their own community and community identity and cohesion erodes. Aviemore passed that ratio in the early 1980s!

The development of the global market for tourism has now placed strong pressures on the older mountain resorts in the Alps in an era of raised environmental awareness, forcing them strongly to rethink their values and address environmental and community issues. Recent publications⁷ describe initiatives like the "Green Villages in Austria." Tourism is an industry of fashions and these change. Alpine experience shows that resorts

that retain a strong traditional sense of place and amenity, like Grantown-on-Spey, are positioned to move on to a new tourism, but those that have developed, like the architecturally incoherent, concreted Aviemore, have great problems.

In the same volume as Brugger and Messerli, Schwarzenbach, then Europe's foremost problem analyst as well as an expert on Alpine tourism development, points out worrying aspects of how these problems develop. Tourism development, he points out, shows similar features to that found sometimes in natural ecosystems. There, self-accelerating cycles that can propel development either in growing or shrinking spirals. Looking at the analysis of tourism development in a range of Swiss mountain regions including Davos, Sass-Fe and Zermatt, he states, "The analyses show that the growth stages of tourist development are characterised by a stereotyped pattern of numerous expansive spirals which stimulate each other to the point they drag the development into a runaway phase accompanied by substantial risks." He adds, "The longer this goes on, the worse the disadvantages get and these are warning signals including the growing danger the whole system may be overturned." We might tag them as "vicious circles" where each stage of development drives the next. Schwarzenbach points out that they behave as if they were obeying internal laws and, once set in motion, are difficult to limit or control.

Are there such self-propelling processes driving tourism development in Badenoch and Strathspey? Are Aviemore and the drive to build holiday homes parts of such spiral? One suspects strongly they are. Looking further, one's eye lights upon the funicular development on Cairn Gorm. This seems a classic example of a self-propelling spiral. This is tackled further in this newsletter.

A key point from these connected insights is that bad tourism development damages both local communities and the environment and that is important to both the local and national interests. "Environmentalists" and local communities are often portrayed as in conflict in the Cairngorms but in reality they are dependent on one another for it takes their combined strengths to resist inappropriate tourism development.

⁶ Tourism Strategies and Rural Development B Slee, H Farr and P Snowdon

⁷ Sustainability in Mountain Tourism –Perspectives for the Himalayan Countries by P East, K Luger, and K Inman, Pub Bookfaith India, and Studiendverlag Innsbruck-Vienna 1998

ACTION BY THE CAMPAIGN

EXTRACTION OF WATER SUPPLIES FROM LOCH EINICH AND MANAGEMENT OF THE RIVER SPEY

The Spey is heavily exploited for water supplies. Over 70% of its headwaters for example are diverted into two other catchments to be used for hydropower generation, and extensive development in Badenoch and Strathspey is increasing demands for domestic and commercial use. Flows must be maintained to permit migration of salmon and extraction has already caused some concern in this respect in a river that is a Special Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive partly to protect the salmon. An investigation of upgrading the water supply pipe from Loch Einich to Badenoch and Strathspey and also possibly increasing water extraction from the loch by Scottish Water (SW) has dragged on for years. In late October therefore, the Campaign, having heard that a study had been commissioned of the scope for increasing extraction from the loch wrote to SW asking several questions. These included a request to see a copy of the report, whether SW still intended to upgrade the pipeline through Glen Einich from the loch, and whether SW had moved to reduce the enormous leakage rate of 52% in the distribution system in the strath (beyond the pipeline). The Campaign also enquired about a new extraction point identified beside the Spey, near Aviemore and whether, if extraction there reduced flows in the Spey below a critical level, would water supplies taken for hydro power be reduced to maintain flows. Such an arrangement is already in place regarding extraction lower down the river.

Despite urgings, no reply had been obtained by mid March of the following year. A meeting of the Cairngorms Liaison Group agreed that water management was emerging as a central issue in the Cairngorms, and a letter urging a reply was dispatched to the Chief Executive of SW on the group's behalf by the Campaign. This produced results. SW stated that major work had been done in reducing leakage in the distribution system, In the past, it had been forced to extract more from the loch than its Abstraction Licence legally permitted. The study showed that, to increase the storage capacity of the loch would require a significant dam and the 17km of the pipeline running from it through Glen Einich would require major work. The environmental cost in a heavily protected site and the financial cost made SW look elsewhere for supplies, and they have struck on a very substantial underground aquifer at Kinkyle, south of Aviemore. SW has decided to extract from this aquifer and abandon the Glen Einich supply.

Is this the end of the long Glen Einich saga? Perhaps. Rivers flow underground – not just on the surface – and the aquifer identified is, ultimately, part of the flow of the Spey and extraction from it will, one way or another, affect surface flows in the Spey.

MEETING BETWEEN CAIRNGORMS CAMPAIGN AND THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

An important part of the work of the Campaign is involvement with the National Park Authority (CNPA). A meeting was arranged between Campaign representatives including the convenor, and the chairman, vicechair and a staff member of the CNPA (Murray Fergusson) to discuss issues of common interest. One initial topic was the respective roles of the two organisations. CNPA representatives asked how the Campaign saw its role vis-à-vis the Park Authority. It was explained that we saw ourselves as “critical friends” who would often be supportive of the Authority's efforts, but frankly and constructively critical where we did not. Among the issues put to the CNPA were the Campaign's concern at the lack of strategies for recreation in the park and also the lack of an initiative for the management and protection of the montane zone, which is the key resource that induced the formation of the National Park. These are issues the Campaign will be pursuing. The Campaign representatives also explained their continued objection to the housing policy of the Local Plan based as it included large scale development of holiday homes. It was agreed that communication between the two organisations needed to continue through such meetings and other channels.

OPPOSITION TO NEW BULLDOZED TRACK NEAR THE WATER OF AVEN

This quiet glen on the southern flank of the Cairngorms, is traversed by many people en-route up Clachnaben. It is outwith the National Park, comes under Aberdeenshire Council as a planning authority, and already is the site of one of the most badly eroded bulldozed tracks in the Cairngorms. Reports reached the Campaign of a new bulldozed being built there without planning permission. The Campaign immediately wrote to the planning authority requesting action, as did the North East Mountain Trust. We have received written assurance that action has been taken to suspend work and a proper planning application to be submitted. We await further developments.

ACTION BY THE CAMPAIGN contd.

CAMPAIGN'S SUBMISSION ON THE DEPOSIT STAGE OF THE NATIONAL PARK LOCAL PLAN

This is the plan governing development within the Park and is therefore important. There have been many alterations to the plan since its previous stage, which improve the protection of the Parks key natural and cultural assets, and the Campaign registered its support for this and for many of the policies on standards of development and protection of landscape, EU designated sites and archaeological sites.

Among the reservations we expressed however was the fact that, although Wild Land has now been incorporated into the Park Plan as an important element and the Development Plan must take note of this, wild land was excluded from the landscape features of importance listed. The Campaign formally objected to the lack of a policy on bulldozed tracks in wild land, although these are the chief threat to it. We also urged that SSSIs, which are designated on the UK basis and reflect the national interest did not figure strongly as protected sites.

We welcomed the recognition of sustainable use of water resources as an important issue, and the acknowledgement of the importance of the management of core montane areas of the park as the source of headwaters of important river systems but urged that, in water resources management, clearer links were needed between development control under the Local Plan and broader land management under the Park Plan.

Most strongly, we maintained our objection to the housing policy in the Plan. Over the period covered by the plan, the total housing allocation for the considerable areas of Morayshire and Aberdeenshire within the Park is 281 but in Badenoch and Strathspey, it is 1569 and mostly this is for large scale development of holiday homes. A major reason for this is the need to provide for affordable housing in the Park as some of the homes thus built by developers must be as affordable housing for local residents. This last is a pressing problem, but this is not the way to solve it for reasons we discuss in the lead article in this newsletter.

CAMPAIGN'S RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CORE PATH PLAN

Recent legislation on access in Scotland requires a network of "core" paths to be mapped and created around and between communities. This is the plan for

such which covers the whole park and, as such, justified a detailed response by the Campaign. In its comments, the Campaign said, "We applaud the efforts that have produced such a comprehensive and positive document. We have looked through the Final Draft Core Paths Plan and would suggest the following comments which include both statements of support and objection which we hope will be useful in adopting this plan." Space limits us to mentioning just a few of the Campaign's comments but they included pointing to the lack of an overarching recreation policy which made interpretation of many of the guiding policies difficult and the Campaign objected to the lack of a whole area picture of provision for cycling, specific abilities and horse riding to allow assessment of the adequacy of the network.

In general, the Campaign felt the need for clearer exposition of aspects such as "high quality" paths which should not simply mean highly engineered. As examples, many routes that followed natural lines for example may well only be maintained in short sections to protect vulnerable ecosystems. Similarly, provision for handicapped people was important but it had to be in the context of provision for adventurous walking for the fit.

GOVERNMENT'S FIVE YEAR REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARKS IN SCOTLAND

The Campaign is currently preparing its response on this.

CAIRNGORMS CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

The basic restructuring of the Campaign's website has now been completed by our consultants Sitecut and the content of it is now being created ready to load on to the site, after which it will be fully active.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF THE CAIRNGORMS CAMPAIGN AS AN ORGANISATION

This is now at an advanced stage and will be put to the membership at the AGM this September prior to the Campaign seeking funding for a development officer.

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Talking Point

"A new report has again highlighted the disgraceful level of illegal animal poisonings which have been taking place in Scotland", states a news release in the Scottish Government's website. The report, published by the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency (SASA), shows it dealt with 190 cases of suspected poisoning using pesticides in 2007. This is a record high since statistics were first listed in 1997. More than 50 of the incidents related to birds of prey. "Once again, I have been presented with information that presents a stark picture of crimes against Scotland's unique natural heritage," said the Minister for the Environment Michael Russell.



End of a red squirrel

A recent report by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) examines the specific case of the golden eagle, and brings out evidence of particular relevance to the Cairngorms. It points out that, "In the Cairngorms Massif, for example, as few as 10% of subadult eagles may survive to breed.", and addresses the question "why?" The evidence is collectively damning and deliberate illegal persecution, almost entirely by poisoning, is the cause, especially on

grouse moors. The report concludes, "Undoubtedly the highest priority of all is the need to address the illegal persecution which continues to affect golden eagle populations in the eastern and southern parts of the species' Scottish range. There can be no more urgent task than to eliminate this blight on the population of this majestic bird which, perhaps more than any other creature, is valued as a symbol of wild Scotland."

QUICK QUOTE

From "With a Gun to the Hill – Thirty Years of Sport in the Highlands of Scotland" by Stephen M Pilkington Pub Herbert Jenkins Ltd 1948

"One day I may set foot on Inchrory again; but I do not know the present owner and hear that he does not approve of strangers on his ground, for which who can blame him – not I anyhow, in these days when half the forests in Scotland are in a fair way to be ruined by hikers, who set moors on fire with their supposedly burnt out campfires and cigarette ends and litter the place with paper and empty cigarette packets."

But it is not just golden eagles that are being illegally poisoned and persecuted. SASA's report lists victims including other birds, badgers, foxes and even pet cats and dogs. The RSPB's report on raptor persecution shows the

problem extends to buzzards, peregrines, kites and hen harriers. Buzzards, the report states, are routinely picked up illegally killed by means other than poisoning, and previous reports have demonstrated the widespread illegal persecution of kites after their reintroduction into Scotland. "Poisoning is the most insidious form of this since kites' feeding behaviour makes them extremely vulnerable to poison baits. Indeed, in 2006, five birds were found poisoned, all in the north of Scotland. As in previous years, game shooting interests are strongly implicated in these deaths", states the report.

Poisoning, mainly using the extremely toxic pesticides carborfuran and alphachlorase, banned since December 2001, is a particularly destructive form of persecution. Placed on dead animals, usually mountain hares, it can kill harmless carrion feeders like kites as well as the intended victims. Even birds feeding on birds thus killed by poisoning can, in turn, be killed. Once hunting territories are vacated through poisoning of the resident eagles, new ones move to occupy it and are in turn poisoned, and a "sink effect" is initiated draining the species' population. Only a small fraction of illegally killed animals is ever found and hence a glance at the RSPB map of the known instances shows that the practice is widespread and cannot simply be the work of a small irresponsible minority. Grouse moors are the chief focus of the problem and, judging by the identity of those brought to court and other evidence, gamekeepers are by far the main perpetrators and are, it seems, simply deciding they are above the law.

However, it is not just the illegal persecution of wildlife that is of concern but the scale of use of legal methods of trapping. One retired gamekeeper who gatecrashed a course for keepers financed by the Cairngorms National Park Authority contacted the Campaign horrified at what was being

This Sp



Distribution of Poison

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Source:- Persecution -
Persecution in Sco

Talking Point

Sporting Life

promoted. Techniques like saturation snaring, under which large numbers of snares are set in one area, are now being practiced and traps and snares seem to be increasingly common at least in the eastern Cairngorms. These can be very indiscriminate in what they catch, as the pictures of the red squirrel show.



Bird of Prey Incidents 1987 to 2005

- A Review of Bird of Prey Incidents in the Cairngorms, Highland 2006, by RSPB

At the root of the problem lies the Highland sporting estate. Persecution of eagles and harriers at least can be claimed to have a logical basis, as these predate grouse as part of their range of prey, but buzzards and kites present no significant hazard to grouse or pheasants. Much of the persecution has no rational basis. It reflects simply the notorious horizontal learning curve of many Highland sporting estates. Statements are often made about the economic importance to the Highlands and Islands of sporting estates as a landuse. But sporting estates are not a landuse or, for that matter, a legal entity. The landuse is recreational hunting, which is organized in different ways in different countries and creates employment however it is organised. Sporting estates are simply a "social construct." They derive their

culture and values from the merging of two cultural strands. One is the Norman hunting tradition with its 1000 year history and emphasis on hierarchy, privilege, and special status accorded to the hunters and to certain hunted species. The strand other is some largely bogus Celtic mythology stemming from the Scottish Romantic Movement. Collectively they form "Balmorality".

Landseer's picture "The Monarch of the Glen" epitomizes the concept, with a highland landscape dominated by the posed portrait of a commanding red stag, standing proudly - in Richmond Park where he painted it. If Victoria and aristocrats like the Duke of Gordon and Richmond led the way, buying large areas and building baronial piles, the nouveaux riche of the industrial revolution were eager to follow and ape their "betters", blending it with displays of



Traps and snares can be too indiscriminate in what they catch.

conspicuous consumption. The trend continues. The Sultan of Brunei has bought Inchroly Estate and spent lavishly on the hunting lodge, and a Herr Schwarzenbach, a financial adviser, has bought land on Loch Ericht and built a fine granite pseudo castle, each stone precut to size in Portugal. Symbolically, they then didn't fit when they arrived! Glen Feshie has had three Danish owners in a decade. "It is an offence to the dignity of the deer" protested a representative of the Scottish Gamekeepers' Association on TV at a demonstration on the hill against the Deer Commission's cull of excessive deer numbers in Glen Feshie.

Historically keepers on sporting estates systematically drove sea eagles, golden eagles, kingfishers, ospreys, peregrines, wildcats, martens to extinction or near extinction in the Highlands and Islands, as faithfully recorded in estate records and in the writings of keepers and "sportsmen." Sportsmen like St John aided this by the taking of eggs. Only the efforts of conservationists have restored species that have then become icons of the area, important to its chief industry, tourism and hence of major economic value. The RSPB's osprey site at Boat of Garten alone has attracted well over a million visitors and annually obtains the

QUICK QUOTE

From "With a Gun to the Hill – Thirty Years of Sport in the Highlands of Scotland" by Stephen M Pilkington Pub Herbert Jenkins Ltd 1948

"In the afternoon, Dad, Uncle George (The late Lord Lloyd), Cecil, Jim and I shot the snipe bog. We killed sixteen snipe, a duck and fourteen rabbits, which entirely dispersed the gloom which had descended on us in the morning at so drastic a confirmation of the reports upon the grouse."

Talking Point contd.

area free publicity of the kind the tourism authorities could not buy!

As Wightman's research showed, the reasons for owning a Highland estate include owning a "private kingdom", status, seclusion, and capital investment as being as important as hunting. In fact they are often more important. He also pointed out that many owners visited their estates infrequently. We should be quite clear what such estates are, no matter how large. They are simply holiday homes! A sizeable and increasing area of the Cairngorms National Park, the "Park for All the People", is in fact owned and/or managed as holiday homes for a very, very, few people indeed, many of them not even UK citizens.

Is this an acceptable basis for widespread destruction of wildlife within a National Park? The situation is worsening. A fashion is now growing to put deer fences and electric

fences around entire grouse moors and then to kill all deer within the fence to reduce tick populations that spread disease to grouse. Now, mountain hares are being killed within the fences and outwith them for the same reason. Where does it stop?

"It is absolutely clear that this kind of incident must stop. Using pesticides to poison an animal is cruel, illegal, and in the case of pets, very upsetting for owners.", said the minister commenting on the SASA report, *"We must be absolutely clear that the abuse of wildlife is a crime, and it is a crime that the Scottish public will no longer tolerate."* If government's statements are matched by action than things may look up for Scotland's persecuted wildlife, but perhaps the minister and the Park Authority should look also at social construct that lies at the root of the problem.

¹ Commissioned Report No.193 A conservation framework for golden eagles: implications for their conservation and management in Scotland (ROAME No. F05AC306) 2008

² Persecution – A Review of Bird of Prey Persecution in Scotland 2006

³ The Cultural Politics of Hunting: Sporting Estates and Recreational Land Use in the highlands and Islands of Scotland. A Wightman et al pp 53-70 Culture Sport and Society Vol 5 No 1 Spring 2002

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

HELP US FIND A NEW NAME FOR THE CAIRNGORMS CAMPAIGN!

For a large part of its early years, the Campaign focused on opposition to the construction of the funicular railway on Cairn Gorm. In the last five or more years especially it has been active in many topics like promoting the safeguarding of woodlands and forests, responding to consultations on the National Park Plan and the Development Plan, protection of water systems and many others. This wider focus, which is reflected in the Campaign's development plan, has led the management committee to look to a new name that reflects that change.

However, finding that name is difficult. The Campaign needs to retain its radical edge and willingness to firmly oppose unsustainable developments, but also lead forward in a constructive, holistic manner. It needs a name that reflects this. "Friends of the Cairngorms" has been suggested, but there is already a "Friends of Cairn Gorm" run by Cairngorm Mountain Ltd, and a "Friends of Rothiemurchus". Clearly, the name must have the word "Cairngorms" in it.

So we are asking members for their suggestions. Send your suggestion to admin@cairngormscampaign.org.uk or by post to Cairngorms Campaign, PO Box 10037, Alford, AB33 8WZ.

A bottle of the finest Speyside whisky from the Cairngorms will go to the best suggestion!

IN BRIEF

Review of National Parks and Critical Report on Governance and Management of Scotland's National Parks

Government is carrying out the five year review of national parks in Scotland, in two stages. The first, looking at organisational issues, is ongoing. The second will look at the operational aspects and will take place in the autumn. As part of the first stage, Professor Neil Kay, a Professor of Economics at Strathclyde University was commissioned to write a report for the government recommending that the two park authorities be ended as separate quangoes and taken back into Scottish Natural Heritage. In the Scotsman of 8 March he is quoted as saying, "Leaving them as the clunky cumbersome, formal and bureaucratic muddle these park authorities have become would do no-one any favours, particularly the public interest they are supposed to serve." The Campaign will be consulting with other NGOs on its response to this review.

Creation of COAT

The Upper Deeside Access Trust, which has been creating local core paths networks, has been changed to become the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust on 25th April, and now covers the whole National Park. The Campaign will be an affiliate member.

Extension of the Cairngorms National Park to Include Atholl Area

The southern boundary of the Cairngorms National Park

is to be extended to include Blair Atholl and also some parts of Highland Perthshire. Given the landscape and other qualities of the area, and its natural coherence as part of the Cairngorms, its initial exclusion puzzled many people. The Campaign supported this extension and, along with other NGOs, supported the local voluntary group PARC (Perthshire Alliance for the Real Cairngorms). The Campaign has already been informed by Scottish Natural Heritage that it is to review and recommend exactly where the boundary is to be placed, and we will make our views clear.

Snaring Legislation to be Introduced

The Campaign responded to government consultations on snaring of animals and supported an outright ban on grounds that snaring was often abused by keepers leaving animals to suffer over long periods, and was too indiscriminate in the species caught. Government has decided against an outright ban, on grounds that snaring is necessary for various reasons. Instead, the law will require the compulsory fitting of crimped safety stops to prevent the noose closing too far around an animal and inflicting damage. ID tags on snares, "will allow identification of their owner by the authorities, but will not allow identification by casual passers-by." Among other requirements, the law will "prohibit the setting of snares on posts, over water courses, on planks or fences as this can cause unnecessary suffering.", and "will specify that areas where snaring is taking place are clearly marked with signs." These at least are improvements on the current situation.

Harvey's New Map of the Cairngorms and Lochnagar (£12-95)

*Harveys' map was launched at a joint meeting of the North East Mountain Trust and the Cairngorms Campaign as which Irvine Butterfield presented a slide show on the Grand Canyon and Sue Harvey introduced the map. Proceeds from the evening were divided between the Trust and the Campaign. Below, **George Allan** of the Trust and the Campaign reviews the map*

When all we had was the O.S. one inch maps, which showed us the tops but not the cliffs we might fall over, and Poucher, we had every excuse to get lost. Now we have maps of all shapes and sizes, hard copy and virtual, and more guide books than you can shake a walking pole at. How does Harvey's and the B.M.C.'s new map of the Cairngorms fit into this cornucopia? At 1:40000, it sits between the O.S. Landranger and Explorer maps. Designed for hill-goers, with coloured contouring accentuating the hills, it includes a wealth of information, illuminating [glaciation and geology] and of practical value [compass work, first aid and campsites etc]. The cliff diagrams are only likely to be of use if we have dropped the guide and those set on climbing Dierdre of the Sorrows will know where it goes anyway. V. diff leaders approaching Hellfire Corner might get a small fright, grade 4 climbers a bigger one but these are minor errors. Bothies are marked but not highlighted as such, which will please many, but, in our information age, trying to keep their locations under the radar is a lost cause. The map is made of polyethylene, lighter than laminate, which Harvey's claim is tear and water proof. Not completely so, suggests one web commentator, but many might be tempted to sit on it at the lunch stop, it looks so tough. Cost-wise it compares well with the competition. It really is an excellent product and a worthy addition to Harvey's mountain series. All this information takes us back to the beginning. Now we know everything, hasn't a little of the mystery evaporated? However those of us who feel that way might want to follow Jock Nimlin's example- he is reputed to have forsaken maps, considering them to be unethical!.

AROUND THE CAIRNGORMS

The map shows the Cairngorms region with various locations and rivers labeled. The rivers shown are R. Spye, R. Avon, R. Don, R. Dee, and R. Garry. Locations include Granttown-on-Spey, Tomintoul, Cargaff, Ben Avon, Cairn Gorm, Cairn Toul, Braemar, Lochnagar, Cairnwell, Spittal of Glenshee, Beinn Dearg, Beinn a Ghlo, Blair Atholl, Carr na Cairn, Newtonmore, Aviemore, and Aboyne.

News items connected to the map:

- Local group campaigns for Dava area with Lochindorb to be taken in to the National Park** (points to Granttown-on-Spey)
- Granttown-on-Spey Community Council oppose planning application by Tulloch Homes to build 193 houses in the town** (points to Granttown-on-Spey)
- Local Community opposes building of 80 houses in a pinewood at Boat of Garten that is important to capercaillie** (points to Aviemore)
- Aviemore Highland Resort lodges planning application for £80m development in Aviemore** (points to Aviemore)
- Local conservationists point to unnecessary damage to protected species by new cycle path in Rothiemurchus** (points to Braemar)
- British Mountain Bothies Association installs revolutionary new toilet based on a geotextile bag that works like a mini-septic tank at Corrou Bothy** (points to Blair Atholl)
- Scottish Natural Heritage announces intention to consult on a new management plan for the nature reserve at Loch Kinnord** (points to Aboyne)
- Scottish Natural Heritage persuades Invercauld Estate to adopt the muirburn code after highly damaging muirburn by it in Upper Glen Gairn** (points to Braemar)
- Mountain biking trails being established on ski development at Glenshee (and the Lecht ski development)** (points to Spittal of Glenshee)
- Minister announces National Park to be extended to include Blair Atholl area.** (points to Blair Atholl)

IS THE FUNICULAR OPERATION IN A SCHWARZENBACH SPIRAL?

Our lead article on tourism in Badenoch and Strathspey, described Friz Schwarzenbach's analysis of the problems of tourism development as being driven, often into disaster, by self-accelerating cycles. It posed the question – Is the funicular operation such a cycle? From the outset, the funicular's costs exceeded expectations, and income fell well short. This continues – with taxpayers' money by far the greatest share of the costs and losses.

The funicular was to be built by the Highlands and Islands Development Board (now Highlands and Islands Enterprise, HIE), and operated by the Cairngorm Chairlift Company Ltd, (now Cairngorm Mountain Ltd, CML), an independent private company owned by a charity. CML would pay a commercial rent for the use of the funicular over a 30 year lease enabling HIE to pay interest on and repayments of the borrowings it incurred on construction.

The capital cost of constructing the funicular greatly exceeded the original estimates, eventually costing HIE over £16.8million (plus £2.7m from the European Union). HIE will have since been incurring significant costs of repairs and maintenance. Problems emerged for CML very quickly after the opening, so HIE purchased CML's buildings for £3.6m to give the company some "working capital." In other words, CML had run out of money.

The annual rent originally promised to HIE, to provide a commercial return on construction costs and use of the land etc, was £849,000 per annum. Even if paid, this would not have met the funicular's actual costs. This rental could not be met, was reduced to £500,000, then to £400,000 and then to £100,000 as the CML's financial situation worsened. In the last few years, the rental seems to have disappeared completely, leaving HIE with no income at all to match its costs and liabilities on the funicular and management of the land. Despite paying nothing for use of the funicular, CML's last published accounts for 2006-2007 show accumulated losses of over £5.6m, and a net loss for the year of £262,553 - more than four times the combined modest profits of the preceding two years.

These accounts show further heavy subsidies to CML, without which its losses would have been even greater, and it would otherwise have been unlikely to have

survived. CML received a loan of £1million from Highland Council, which has waived all interest, and HIE Moray injected £450,000 for preference shares on which no dividends have been paid. CML also had a loan of £2.5 million and an overdraft of £1.3 million from the Bank of Scotland on which it paid aggregate interest of only £67,000, an overall rate of less than 2%. The losses increased the overdraft by £263,000 during the year. The scale of hidden public and other subsidy is massive!

The CML accounts state that, after renegotiating its facilities and interest payments etc, *"Accordingly, the directors believe that it is appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis."* Although strictly true within accounting rules, this statement seems to confuse economics with fantasy.

But what to do? HIE is bound to remove the funicular (and all its concrete foundations) if the project fails. Consultants have informed HIE it would cost tens of millions of pounds. This would blow a large and perhaps fatal hole, not only in HIE's already reduced budget, but in its political credibility. HIE is trapped in one of Schwarzenbach's self-accelerating cycles. HIE has bought CML, but this does not solve the problem.

CML's debts have now been "squared" for it by HIE, which means the £1m interest free loan of taxpayers money from Highland Council has been converted to a "grant" (a euphemism for a loss). What costs to the taxpayer were involved in "squaring" the remaining £4.5m is as yet unclear. CML is now a wholly owned subsidiary of HIE and a holding company will operate the facility, which is apparently to become *"Scotland's centre for mountain environmental education"*, which will require more millions of public money to be invested, which will then --?

HIE cannot let its flagship project be seen to fail, even when it already has. At each step along the way, it is driven to the next one at public expense. It is in a hole it dug for itself and jumped into, and it cannot stop digging. So the system will probably self-propel itself along the cycle to disaster unless there is outside intervention - and only central government can now do that!

"QUICK QUOTE"

From Public Perceptions of Wild Places and Landscapes in Scotland Commissioned Report No 291 by Scottish Natural Heritage (ROAME No F06NC03) 2008. The Importance of Wild Places in Scotland to the General Public

91% of Scottish residents (96% of Cairngorms National Park residents) think it is important for Scotland to have wild places. Only 6 out of 1304 people interviewed thought it was not important. Wild places were seen as important as part of Scotland's culture and heritage, for wildlife, nature, the environment and tourism. Wild places contributed to the health and wellbeing of those who visited them, helping them to be relaxed, calm and content and at peace. 50% thought wild places were under threat and about 60% thought action was required to protect them.

CAIRNGORM STORIES

A WEIRD ENCOUNTER

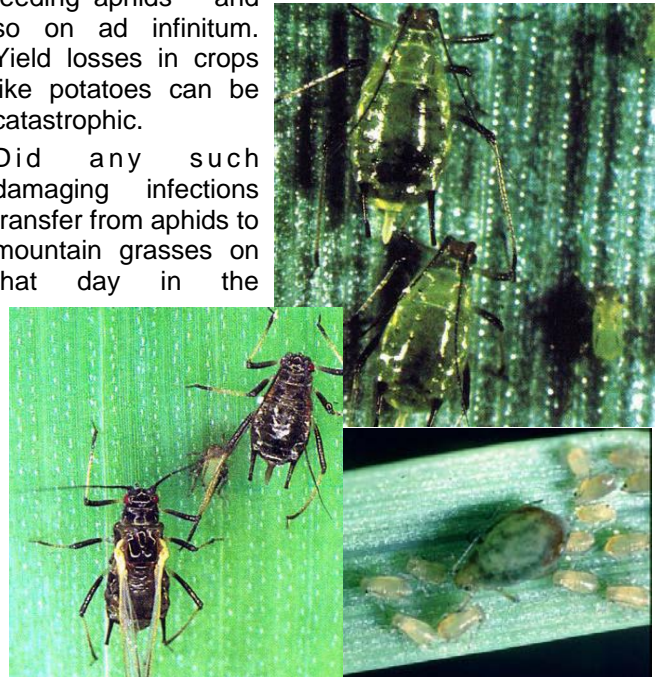
The 27 July 1982 was an unusually calm day in the high Cairngorms with still air or light breeze of variable direction under a thin cloud cover above the mountains. Moving between Cairn Gorm and Ben Macdui that day was Adam Watson. As the foremost ecological expert on the Cairngorms he had spent many days there. Like many of us who have spent much time in mountains, he must have come upon unusual scenes – but not like the one that day! It was nothing strikingly spectacular, like a huge lightning storm, but looking around he saw a thin scum on every pool and stream in the area, and visible on every snow patch – but what was it? Closer inspection showed it was a film of small insects! On the edges of pools and snow patches there were so many they were 2 cm deep (over $\frac{3}{4}$ an inch)! They were aphids, commonly called greenfly although some species can be black or red, and they were a long way from the lowland fields and gardens where we commonly see them. Aphids are small – usually only a millimetre or so long, yet they covered the ground between Cairn Gorm and Ben Macdui – in places so thickly that the colour of moss clumps could hardly be seen, with so many taking off at one time Adam Watson could hear the sound of their wings. The phenomenon was not confined to this one area. His enquiries revealed that huge numbers were encountered on the same day at Killiecrankie in Perthshire, far to the south, and on the 28th they were found in some numbers in Glen Geusachan and above it and on the 29th and 30th clouds descended on Inverness. Unbeknown to him huge numbers had descended on the Isle of May on the 24th. Even within the Cairngorms, the numbers involved must have been staggering and certainly many trillions. Where had they come from?

Identifying the species provided some answer for they were aphids that bred over summer on grasses and cereals. Small insects can blow in the wind for many miles and they may have come from fields far to the south. Swarming in insects is not confined to locusts. Aphids can rapidly breed to huge numbers – during their development for example, they can produce many young without sexual mating. Adverse conditions can then induce mass migration and, in July 1982, as Adam Watson pointed out in his description of the event, dry warm weather had caused grass growth to stall and cereal leaves to ripen and yellow early. Aphids feed by inserting a hollow proboscis like a hypodermic into the phloem, the plant system that distributes the “food” made by plants photosynthesising, and letting the plant pump the nutritious sap into them. There is often more than the

aphid can absorb, and the excess is exuded at their rear end as “honeydew” rich in sugars. Here it forms a food for ants and bees and, incidentally, can descend as the annoying sticky mess on your car if you leave it parked below an infested tree. A long dry period would remove their food supply as plants became increasingly less active in growth, inducing a swarming. Blowing on the wind is a chancy way to seek further food supplies and trillions must have died in the high Cairngorms where feeding is scarce and hazards many.

Such mass migrations have implications for our own food supplies. Descending on crops in huge numbers they can damage yield. Counts of aphids in special traps in east and northeast Scotland showed swarms did arrive in Scottish cereal crops and grass fields – but too late to affect yield. Aphids and their relatives have one other way of affecting our food supplies. Many have evolved a subtle relationship with certain viruses that can infect and multiply in both the plants fed on and the aphids, often passing on to the eggs and young of the aphids. Aphids transmit viruses through their feeding. This can produce widespread infection of many crops, which in turn infect feeding aphids – and so on ad infinitum. Yield losses in crops like potatoes can be catastrophic.

Did any such damaging infections transfer from aphids to mountain grasses on that day in the



Cereal aphids - Adults are a millimetre or so long. Imagine the numbers it took to cover many square miles/km

Cairngorms? It would be difficult to answer that question or even assess the likelihood of it happening but it is a possibility we cannot rule out.

Quick Quote from Clac Dian

Magazine of the Cairngorm Club July 2008

“With £4500 from the Cairngorms National Park Authority through its Community Investment Programme, a new Cairngorms Hostels website

www.cairngormshostels.co.uk has been launched, with 19 independent hostels in the area giving travellers a wide choice of affordable places to stay.”