

**PROPOSAL TO PERMIT FUNICULAR PASSENGERS TO LEAVE THE TOP STATION  
OF THE FUNICULAR RAILWAY AND WALK UP CAIRN GORM  
(318 Words)**

At present, as most CC members will know, people arriving at the top station of the funicular are not permitted to leave the buildings and associated outside viewing platform and, for example, climb to the summit of Cairn Gorm on foot. People who have walked up Coire Cas can do this. This rather unusual arrangement is the result of the tension between the requirement to permit large numbers of people to use the funicular to reach higher altitudes and the need to protect the plateau areas beyond. These areas are within the Cairngorms National Nature Reserve and were subject to spreading damage by the numbers of people going there after arriving near the summit by chairlift. In order to obtain European funding, a legally binding agreement was signed to install a "closed system" to protect the vulnerable areas. The company, Highland Council, and Scottish Natural Heritage are signatories to this agreement but not the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA).

A small minority of local people have urged that this arrangement be changed to increase revenue to a hard-pressed company, which is losing money, and permit people to leave the upper buildings and walk on the mountain. A briefing paper was prepared for a recent meeting of the Board of the CNPA for consideration of the situation. The paper did not recommend that alteration of the arrangement be actively considered but that the situation be monitored, and that seems to have been the conclusion.

Media interest was stirred however and the CC convenor went on radio and TV in Scotland explaining the CC's position – namely that the arrangement was there to protect vulnerable and previously damaged areas. If someone could produce a magic formula whereby large numbers of people could be released onto the mountain and the old proven and serious problems not recreated, then the Campaign would be interested. Given however, that numbers of people who knew the area and the problems well spent a lot of time trying to think of a better alternative, that seems unlikely.