

Cairngorm Advisory Group

NOTE OF MEETING

Glenmore Lodge, Aviemore
and online

Thursday 10 July 2025
10.30 – 12.30



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Note of meeting

Present

Alistair Dodds	Chair, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (Chair of meeting)
Bill Lobban	Convenor, Highland Council (Advisory Group Co-chair)
Eilidh Macleod	Aviemore Community Council
Mike Gifford	Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd
Lee Bevins	Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd
Jim Cornfoot	Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd
Lee Irwin	Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd
Lesley McKenna	Cairngorm Mountain Trust
Gavin Miles	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Peter Dennis	Highlands and Islands Enterprise – Project Manager, Construction
Chris Roberts	Highlands and Islands Enterprise – Head of Communications
Ghilleann Macleod	Highlands and Islands Enterprise – Senior Project Manager
Stephanie Andrew	Highlands and Islands Enterprise – Inner Moray Firth team
Alistair Todd	Mountaineering Scotland
Catriona Davies	Mountaineering Scotland
Debbie Greene	NatureScot
Johnnie Grant	Rothiemurchus Estate
Mark Blyth	Scottish Ski Club
Euan Baxter	Snowsport Scotland
Iain Ramsay-Clapham	Snowsport Scotland
Chris Taylor	VisitScotland
Jason Martin	VisitScotland

1	Welcome and apologies
	Alistair Dodds welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Mike Gifford of CMSL and Peter Dennis of HIE, who were attending the advisory group for the first time. Apologies were noted from: Euan Baxter, Kirsty Bruce, Rachel Davies, Chris Donald, Paul Dzialdowski, Alice Fogg, David Frew, Lewis Hannah, Paul Hibberd, Audrey MacIver, Carol Mackintosh, Malcolm Macleod, Craig Mills, Grant Moir, Shaun Roberts, Claire Smith and Duncan Swarbrick.

2	Note of previous meeting
	The note of the meeting held on 4 December 2024 was approved.
3	Matters arising from the meeting note
3.1	Centre for the Mountain Environment At HIE’s request, Turnberry had agreed to chair a short-life working group to review the proposed Scottish Centre for the Mountain Environment / day lodge replacement, one of the key strategies in the Cairngorm Masterplan. The working group would be advisory, not a decision-making body. • Action: HIE will circulate a note inviting CAG members to participate
3.2	Vehicle parking Bill Lobban reported that the Highland Council had made good progress towards introducing a common parking charge in the Glenmore Corridor (with the exception of Glenmore Visitor Centre). Parking meters had been installed and a deal agreed with Forestry and Land Scotland.
3.3	Traffic management – plastic bollards As no representative from the Highland Council was present today, it was agreed that an update on the issue of the negative visual impact of plastic bollards on the roadside by Loch Morlich would be carried over to the next meeting. • Action: THC to investigate and report back.
4	Cairngorm funicular update
	Peter Dennis delivered an update, noting that the Cairngorm funicular had returned to service in late February 2025 – around two months later than expected – following completion of all safety-related remediation works by Balfour Beatty. The service had been withdrawn again for three weeks in May to enable scheduled annual maintenance to go ahead alongside works to address non-urgent matters relating to the long-term durability of the funicular structure. Remediation works had then continued in the evenings for a short period. Some minor remediation issues were still to be addressed by Balfour Beatty and a programme was being prepared. Alistair Dodds observed that the funicular’s return to service was very welcome and expected to have a positive impact on the mountain resort and local economy.
5	Cairngorm Masterplan developments
5a	CMSL Chief Executive
	Mike Gifford introduced himself as the new CMSL Chief Executive, having started in post just three and a half weeks earlier. Mr Gifford was experienced in skiing and mountaineering and had spent 15 years working with Sport Aberdeen, where he had run three different sports centres. He was looking forward to working with all the organisations represented on the advisory group and keen to engage with a broad range of stakeholders in the coming weeks and months.

	Members welcomed Mr Gifford to the advisory group.
5b	Cairngorm Mountain update
	Jim Cornfoot delivered a presentation on recent activity at the mountain resort. While it had been a particularly dry winter, the return of the funicular had enable skiing at high levels through to Easter. CMSL staff had also made use of dry periods to replace snow fencing. These conditions reinforced the aim of the Cairngorm Masterplan to broaden the range of activities available at the resort, while continuing to maximise opportunities for snowsports in more favourable winters. Several new features had been well received by customers, including an extended viewing platform at the Ptarmigan, landscaping improvements, upgraded pathways and a new playpark. The tubing slides and jumping pillow were proving very popular with younger visitors. Mountain carting had resumed in the summer. Re-seeding had been hampered by poor weather but was progressing and extensive tree planting had taken place in Coire na Ciste, led by the Spey Catchment Initiative. These were mostly willows and had been planted in areas that were not used by skiers. In response to a question, CMSL confirmed that the resort would open for skiing as soon as conditions permitted, noting that the promotion of a fixed date for the start of winter season only related to planned Snow Factory operations. Plans were under way to trial supervised public access to paths around the plateau and HIE would shortly publish a comprehensive review of the visitor management plan that had been completed by independent consultant Walking the Talk. • Action: HIE to publish the review of the visitor management plan on its website.
5c	Cairngorm toboggan
	Colin Matthew outlined CMSL's proposals to introduce a mountain toboggan ride, subject to planning and funding approval. Detailed plans were currently being finalised for submission to the planning authority. Running along a 3km loop, the track would be removable, able to be installed in less than two weeks, taken down in one week and stored outdoors. CMSL was looking at a pricing structure that would pay back investment in three years. The attraction was intended to strengthen the year-round offering at Cairngorm and would be complementary to existing activities in the local area. While CMSL was keen to progress a planning application as quickly as possible, it was recognised that due diligence on the company's funding application to HIE and procurement of a supplier would require time.
6	Glenmore corridor
	Gavin Miles updated the group on CNPA's approach to enhancing the Glenmore corridor. The parking situation had improved since the Highland Council had taken over responsibility, including painting double yellow lines to prevent dangerous parking near the entrance to Cairngorm Mountain.

	Forestry and Land Scotland planned to expand the car park at Loch Morlich, using funding from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure fund. EV charging points were to be introduced at the Glenmore Visitor Centre and improvements to cycling and pedestrian links on the hill were in hand. In discussion, Mike Gifford clarified that a £25 overnight parking charge at Cairngorm Mountain applied only to motorhomes and that mountaineers and hillwalkers could park their vehicles for £5. Overnight parking in the Ciste car park and at the lochside remained free.
7	Other partner updates
	VisitScotland Chris Taylor informed the group that Scotland's tourism sector had seen a large growth in international visitors in 2024 and 2025, but the domestic market was still constrained. While the percentage of people booking accommodation had risen, numbers who were eating out had declined. From an international perspective, Scotland was seen as a premium destination, albeit one that was relatively expensive. The Chair thanked Mr Taylor and noted that the Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust expected to deliver an update at the next meeting of the advisory group.
8	Any other business
	All participants were invited to contact HIE if they had any items they wished to put on the agenda for the next meeting. The Co-chairs thanked everyone for attending this meeting and Glenmore Lodge for hosting. Bill Lobban noted that this would be Alistair Dodds' last meeting before retiring as Chair of HIE and paid tribute to his leadership. Alistair Dodds thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions and closed the meeting.

Chris Roberts
10 July 2025