



THE MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND

The Old Granary
West Mill Street
Perth PH1 5QP
01738 493 944
(messages only)
hebe@mcofs.org.uk
www.mcofs.org.uk

9/9/09

energyconsents@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Sir / Madam

Section 36 Application for the proposed Cia Aig Hydroelectric scheme

Please accept these comments from the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS) on the Cia Aig Hydroelectric scheme proposal. We are recognised by the Scottish Government as the Representative Body for hill walkers, climbers and ski tourers. We have over 10,000 members and aim to represent the interests of all the 400,000 regular Scottish mountaineers on issues relevant to access to, and conservation of, Scotland's mountaineering environment.

The MCofS very much welcomed the opportunity to make scoping stage comments, and that our comments have been contributed in a proposal that primarily satisfies access and conservation issues of concern.

3.1.5

We note that there are plans to fell the forestry in the near future, and prior to hydro scheme construction. This does mean that the track will be more of a significant feature in the landscape than previously anticipated, and continue for upwards of a decade depending upon species replanted and ground conditions. This means that any widening or extension of the track will have a greater negative impact. For this reason, the MCofS would urge that extensions and widening be done with the least impacting design.

6.5.11

The MCofS is satisfied with the plan to segregate walker access and construction traffic on the basis that the diversions will be in "close proximity" to the existing access route, and at no stage will access be made more difficult than currently. If any sections are found to pose a difficulty for the segregation plan, an alternative solution could be to provide pedestrian "passing places" along the track at regular intervals. The MCofS would strongly object to any claim that access must be curtailed, but after assurances we are satisfied with the arrangements. This must be emphasised to contractors onsite as this is a very important access route for Munros, Corbetts and a right of way.

7.6.33

We note the anticipated slight adverse impact during construction and neutral during operation. The impact of the pipeline and temporary access track, between intake and pipe bridge, are particularly important due to lack of forestry screening after felling. These levels of impact are premised on rapid habitat recovery, which depends upon the methods of turf storage and track use followed in practice. Planning consent, if granted, must specify best practice for track reinstatement, and that this is monitored throughout for immediate feedback to contractors to ensure maximum speed of habitat recovery. Any post-construction mitigation work must be ensured to provide for the

circumstances that habitat restoration has not been achieved to a satisfactory level. The impact of this pipeline and temporary access track section has not been considered fully in the landscape and visual impact sections, but are relevant. This reinforces the importance of following procedures to ensure delivery of the neutral long-term impacts.

10.4.9

The site is part of an AGLV, which recognises that there is a limited capacity for this type of development. This means that landscape impact must be kept to a minimum if the development is consented, including reinstatement of temporary tracks and reduction of impact of upgraded tracks to return to previous or less impact. This is particularly important due to the anticipated felling which removes the screen of forestry from the development.

The MCoFS has received assurances that the public car parking will remain available at the same capacity, and we are satisfied with this. We would also like noted that as the road from Spean Bridge is primarily single track and a popular vehicular route to reach the mountains in the vicinity to the north of the development and further west. High density construction traffic days could pose a problem for visitors driving along the road. We suggest that congestion could be eased through advance information allowing for understanding and planning. It would also benefit traffic flow for both visitors and construction traffic. With sufficient advance notification, the MCoFS would be happy to disseminate information about particularly busy periods.

Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss these issues further.

Yours sincerely

Hebe Carus
Access & Conservation Officer