



THE MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND

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Enterprise, Energy and Tourism Directorate
Energy and Telecommunications Division
Victoria.wallace@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Ms Wallace

SCOPING OPINION REQUEST FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36 APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED HYDROELECTRIC GENERATING SCHEME AT CIA AIG, NEAR ACHNACARRY, HIGHLANDS.

Mountaineering Council of Scotland Response

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCoS) is the representative body for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers and we aim to represent the interests of all mountaineers. As the only national representative body of the sport of mountaineering in Scotland, we have 10,000 members, with 127 Scottish hill walking and climbing clubs affiliated. Our quarterly magazine *The Scottish Mountaineer* has a circulation of 15,000, and our website attracts huge interest in both Scotland and abroad. We are financed by membership subscriptions and we receive investment from SportScotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the British Mountaineering Council.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the requirements for the content of the Environmental Statement in connection with the Cia Aig Hydroelectric Scheme. The following is an explanation of issues mountaineers consider to be of high significance in this important area for quiet recreation and high quality landscape.

1. Analysis of Environmental Impact Including Methodology

Landscape and Visual Assessment

3.2 Consideration of the landscape impact should include an impact assessment from popular hill walking routes.

Recreation and Access

3.12 The visual intrusion of the access track is potentially significant not just from roads and settlements, but this area is a very popular and economically benefited by upland recreation. The Environmental Statement should consider the landscape impact from the popular hills above the development location; such as Beinn Bhan to the south west, Meall Odhar and Meall an Tagraidh to the north-east, Geal Charn and Meall Coire Lochain and Glas Bheinn to the north-west and Meall Coire nan Saobhaidh to the north.

3.13 The implications for access both during construction, operational and decommissioning phases should be considered in detail. The path up Gleann Cia Aig is the primary access route for the hills mentioned in 3.2 that lie north of the Loch Arkaig road. The implications for this are noted in the Impact Assessment at 3.3.10, stating "temporary loss of amenity resulting from construction traffic and pipeline construction close to the route used by walkers." Specific assurance is needed from the developers that access can continue up the line of this track throughout the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. A lack of such assurance has caused longterm access problems for walkers in another Highland hydro electric development site, and avoidance of this needs planned for at the first opportunity in this development. The commonly followed route for the above mountains follows the footpath from Gleann Cia Aig waterfall north to NN 180894 where the only route through the forestry is along the track until NN 183911, when a path can be rejoined to the bridge at NN 187928. Sometimes the Abhainn Cia-aig is further followed north –east to Carn Bealach. The existing bridges across the Abhainn Cia-aig should also be retained. Access along this line must be maintained, or an alternative provided along the same route if there is envisioned to be a problem with shared access for construction traffic and structures. MCofS are happy to be consulted on the details of what is a viable alternative. A requirement for walkers to take a different route is not an acceptable "alternative."

3.14 Disruption to the parking location at the waterfall would have significant impacts for access and recreation. The car parking location for hill access is the Gleann Cia Aig waterfall car park. This includes all the hills mentioned in section 3.12, and especially the popular Meall na h-Eilde and Geal Charn, and occasionally Meal nan Teanga and Sron a'Choire Ghairbh,.

These above issues need included in the Environmental Statement as potentially significant impacts. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss any of these points.

Yours sincerely

Hebe Carus
Access & Conservation Officer