



THE MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND

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1/7/10

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Dear Ms Sweeney

Cononish Goldmine Proposal 2010/0017/MIN as Revised– MCofS Response

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS) does not view the substantive project amendment in the revised application warrant withdrawal of any of the concerns expressed in the original comments dated February 2010, including those regarding the TMF. We wish those comments to be regarded as applicable to the revised application, albeit the revision changed the presentation of the development and altered the section numbers etc.

18.4.5 Recreational Users

The MCofS does not believe it is appropriate or indeed right to write-off the views of the majority of people that will at first-hand experience the impacts of this development. We are amazed to see the developers using the ES to express opinion on funding for outdoor recreation in Scotland or indeed the implications of lack of public transport to remote areas requiring private car use. Similarly it would be inappropriate in response to give opinion on the general impacts of extractive industries. This explicit attack on mountaineers is unconstructive and inappropriate, and we do not propose to counter with details of the damaging record of mining industries, the planning process for a specific development not being an appropriate forum. In terms of the demographic, it is likely to be the more mature people that engage with questionnaires such as those from the UHI as they are likely to have more time. The demographic of responses to the questionnaire may more reflect those of the member organisations rather than outdoor recreationalists. “Joining” organisations often not being seen as trendy for young people to engage in, but it is worth noting that despite this over 1000 of our members are in student clubs or other categories of young people. The opinion that outdoor recreationalist are “rich, well educated group that is also older than average” are all unqualified relative terms e.g. older than whom? What definition would the developer wish to use for “rich”? It should be noted that MCofS aims to represent all mountaineers, not just their membership and consult widely on position statements as well as engaging actively with clubs. This is recognised by the Scottish Government. Additionally, whatever the demographic, mountaineers contribute approximately £150 million to Scotland’s rural economy each year and are attracted to Scotland mainly where there are mountains, crags and a relatively wild experience.

The importance, and desirability, of outdoor recreation is recognised in the National Park Plan. The Plan specifically categorises Cononish Glen (map 7) as one of the, “areas of moderate recreation activity with potential to accommodate a moderate increase.” The management approach includes “protection of the tranquil nature of the open hills.” It is important to consider the quality of the experience of the Park for those enjoying recreation in the wilder areas, generally mountaineers

including hill walkers. This is supported in Policy LS3 Landscape Experience d) “Safeguarding the unspoilt, wild and tranquil qualities of the Park’s landscapes by resisting development or land use activities that have adverse effects on these qualities.” Breadalbane is recognised in 3.4 as an area having the special quality of low development and important for wildness. More generally, 4.2.4 states that, “new development and land-use change can influence the character and experience of the Park’s landscapes. It is important to protect and enhance the quality and diversity of the landscape resource, ensuring that change does not adversely affect it.” All these references in the National Park Plan support the views of the MCoFS that developments in Cononish Glen that impact on the quality of the landscape experience, including wildness, are unacceptable whatever the developer’s opinions are on mountaineers.

We do not consider that the likely impacts on the natural heritage (biodiversity and landscape) are outweighed by wider public interests of this development for the reasons stated in the original submission.

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

Yours sincerely

Hebe Carus
Access & Conservation Officer