



THE MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND

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13/1/11

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Dear Jayson

Culachy Estate Hydro Scheme Screening – MCoFS Response

The MCoFS responds to development proposals that have the potential to have significant impacts on issues relevant to access to, and conservation of, Scotland's mountaineering environment. In the case of the Culachy proposal concerns would be the potential effect on the ice climbs of the Culachy Falls, access to these and to the Corrieyairack Pass.

Culachy Falls, although of moderate size and intermittently in condition for climbing, is an excellent venue of intermediate difficulty easily accessible from the public road. The scheme has the potential for preventing the frozen falls ever forming after the hydro installation and for the lifetime of the scheme. An assessment of the actual likely impact on climbing condition (affect on probability of ice forming and thickness) of the falls would be required. This assessment is likely to be a technical calculation, and as such should be included within the future impact assessment rather than left to interpretation based on flow levels. To assess this at least it would be necessary to know what proportion of the current flow over the falls originates from the burn running north-west with the confluence at approximately NH371053, so joining the Connachie Burn below the intake but above the falls. Additionally, it would be important to explicitly state whether it would be possible to allow flow down the burn to create the ice climbing at certain times of year or in certain conditions.

The access to the Falls and along the Corrieyairack Pass would need to be retained during the construction as well as operational phases. Should there be concerns about the safety of construction traffic sharing access with access users, this may be solved by advisory signage, contractor training, or as a last resort access user "passing places," although we do not consider the latter is necessary.

In terms of landscape, it needs to be made clear what the current situation is, such as whether the existing penstock is underground or above and whether the intention is to create greater lengths of exposed pipeline, if any extra tracks might be required, and whether these would need to be temporary or permanent. With the number of tracks already existing in the immediate vicinity, it would be expected that further tracks would be unnecessary.

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

Yours sincerely

Hebe Carus (Ms)
Access & Conservation Officer