

AGENDA ITEM 8

APPENDIX 3

2021/0143/DET

COMMUNITY COUNCIL
COMMENTS

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Alan Atkins
Planning Support Team
Cairngorms National Park Authority
14 The Square
Grantown-on-Spey
Moray PH26 3HG

6 June 2021

Ref: 2021/0035/DET
Case Officer: Alan Atkins

By email to planning@cairngorms.co.uk

Dear Mr Atkins,

Re:	Mid Deeside CC Consultation Request
Application Number:	2021/0143/DET
Development Proposed:	Temporary Change of Use of Farmyard to Form Car Park and Associated Toilet and Refuse Facilities
Location:	Land at Clarack, Dinnet, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire

We write further to your letter of 10 May 2021 asking whether Mid Deeside Community Council (MDCC) would like to respond to the above proposal.

MDCC has the following comments on behalf of the community that we serve. Whilst we are broadly supportive of the intentions behind the proposal, we do have some concerns which we believe need to be addressed.

By way of background, both the application site and the Muir of Dinnet Nature Reserve are within the boundary of MDCC's catchment area. Visitors are drawn to the Muir of Dinnet Nature Reserve for various reasons, including walking, to see the rare and protected species of birds or, increasingly, for recreational water sports on Loch Kinord. All visitors also contribute to our local tourist economy. However, these are potentially conflicting interests which need to be balanced.

In support of the application, we are aware that last year there were impacts on the Muir of Dinnet Nature Reserve from high visitor numbers, including through parking on verges and wild camping around Loch Kinord. Insufficient formal toilet facilities for the number of visitors also resulted in antisocial behaviours around the Loch. Having attended a meeting held by NatureScot on 11 May 2021 regarding the detrimental impact of high visitor numbers and, in particular, the increased use of Loch Kinord for water sports such as paddle-boarding, we

appreciate that, if visitors to the Loch can be encouraged to park in one place, then damage to the Nature Reserve could potentially be limited through controlling routes of access and improving the ability to message visitors about appropriate use of the area. The provision of public toilet facilities may also reduce antisocial behaviours. We therefore appreciate the potential for the proposed development to alleviate pressure on the Nature Reserve by providing formal parking and toileting facilities.

However, we are concerned that, in providing an extra 70 spaces for parking, there is the potential for the existing problem to be exacerbated rather than improved if measures are not taken simultaneously to ensure that a similar number of cars that currently park elsewhere to access the Loch are prevented from doing so. Having met with the Factor of the Dinnet Estate on 18 May 2021, which was a very helpful meeting, we are aware that the Dinnet Estate intends to restrict parking elsewhere around Loch Kinord to encourage users to park at the Clarack facility. This includes blocking off the New Kinord car park, accessed from the road to Ordie, where there is currently space for approximately 15 cars. However, such measures are not included as part of this planning application. We are also concerned that there may be potential for more than 70 cars to park at Clarack if they are allowed entry into the Steading area and are able to find space to park outwith the formal parking bays. We understand that a small daily fee will be charged to help to pay for the facilities, which is similar to fees charged for parking and toilet facilities elsewhere in the National Park. Many users who will be happy to pay this fee, but there may be some who decide that they would rather park elsewhere. Once future plans for the development of the Clarack Steading are progressed, the additional parking spaces will be serving visitors to the new facilities; however, in the meantime, they will only be serving visitors to the Nature Reserve and Loch.

We are therefore concerned that the proposed application could have the unintended consequence of potentially exacerbating the current impacts that high visitor numbers are having on the Muir of Dinnet Nature Reserve. Bearing in mind what we have been told by NatureScot, namely that "*urgent action is needed to reduce disturbance*" in order to "*avoid a catastrophic failure of bird breeding on Loch Kinord this year*", this is of concern to us. This is particularly because NatureScot have said that, although guidance is currently in place regarding access to the Muir of Dinnet and, in particular, Loch Kinord, "*even if existing guidance is followed, the number of users now taking access onto to the Loch means that even if individually everyone follows the guidance and behaves responsibly, unacceptable levels of disturbance are still very likely due to the relatively small size of the loch.*" (See NatureScot's "[Water access at Loch Kinord – Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve Community & stakeholder notice – April 2021](#)".) It is in everyone's interests to ensure that the loss of protected species from the Muir of Dinnet Nature Reserve is avoided.

We therefore think that it would be helpful if planning applications such as this were part of an overarching strategy to manage visitors at the Loch, into which each of the parties with an interest in the Loch (for example the Dinnet Estate, NatureScot, the Cairngorms National Park, MDCC, the SCA and representatives of users of the Loch) have contributed. Such a strategy may, for example, identify suitable measures to limit numbers of people accessing the Loch or perhaps the types of pursuits that are acceptable, whether on a seasonal basis or all year round. In the absence of such a strategy, there is a risk that actions taken by an

individual party, albeit with good intentions, may have unintended consequences. We understand that NatureScot is reviewing the results of its public consultation held earlier this year which may provide the foundation for such a strategy, whether led by them or by another stakeholder.

In the meantime, we ask that any approval of this application should only follow the preparation of an impact assessment undertaken by the applicant which demonstrates that the proposal will not increase but preferably reduce the overall impact of visitors to the Loch. We also believe that any permission granted should be subject to ongoing monitoring of visitor numbers using the facility, and any resulting impact on the Loch, to ensure that use of the car park does not increase pressure on breeding birds or on the Nature Reserve as a whole. The CNPA should also have the ability to require that the use of the additional parking provided at the Clarack Steading must cease, or be reduced, if any impact on the Nature Reserve arising from its use is considered unsustainable.

Please let us know if you have any questions or would like further clarification.

Kindly acknowledge safe receipt.

Yours sincerely,



Fiona Sawyer

Planning Lead, MDCC

For and on behalf of Mid Deeside Community Council

