

AGENDA ITEM 5

APPENDIX 4A

2022/0046/DET

**PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS-
GENERAL**

Comments for Planning Application 2022/0046/DET

Application Summary

Application Number: 2022/0046/DET

Address: Ranger Base Office Cairngorm Mountain Glenmore Aviemore PH22 1RB

Proposal: Formation of mountain bike track and related infrastructure

Case Officer: Stephanie Wade

Customer Details

Name: Mr George Allan

Address: 7 Bothwell Terrace Pitmedden Ellon

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Member of Public

Stance: Customer made comments neither objecting to or supporting the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I am writing on behalf of the North East Mountain Trust (NEMT)- Scottish Charity SCIO 008783- which represents the interests of hill-goers and those who enjoy visiting wild land. NEMT membership, comprising twelve hillwalking and climbing clubs along with individual members, totals around 1000 people.

NEMT has concerns about a number of aspects of this application.

NEMT is opposed in principle to the development of mountain biking facilities at higher altitudes; nevertheless, NEMT accepts that a biking facility on Cairngorm is part of the management plan for the mountain.

The risk with facilities at higher levels is that these give the impression that biking is generally acceptable on hills and plateaus irrespective of the potential damage to vegetation. With regard to this application, the Visitor Management Plan states that the implications for the European Sites beyond the ski area are 'low or nil', presumably because the proposed facility is quite far down the coire but this does not remove the more general perception that biking high up is, per se, an unproblematic activity. Much is made in the application of both the yet to be produced guidance for users of the facility and the monitoring of behaviours following its open. NEMT thinks that guidance must be available from day one and this should be agreed with the National Park and should be a formal condition of approval. Considerable reliance is placed on a suite of monitoring measures but nothing is said about what would happen if this shows that the guidance is being ignored. The only action available to the National Park would appear to be the implementation of byelaws to prevent cycling on the plateau (and elsewhere) where it was damaging vegetation and habitats- a possible but controversial step.

The cycle tracks will be visually intrusive and will further urbanise the lower coire. The proposal that trees will be planted to mitigate this to a degree is welcome. NEMT suggests that a tree planting plan, approved by the National Park, be subject to a formal condition. NEMT thinks that additional measures to compensate for the detrimental visual intrusion, such as the further reseeded and the removal of redundant infrastructure and little used tracks, should be agreed with the National Park and also made a formal condition.

The application and the masterplan seems to suggest that this family orientated proposal, complementing more challenging facilities elsewhere on Speyside, will be the extent of biking infrastructure in the coire. NEMT would be extremely concerned if, at a later stage, the company brought forward applications for more demanding courses further up the coire. NEMT asks the Park to confirm with the company that this will not be the case so that this can be reported to the Planning Committee.