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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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**Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION**

**Prepared by: ANDREW TAIT, PLANNING OFFICER (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT)**

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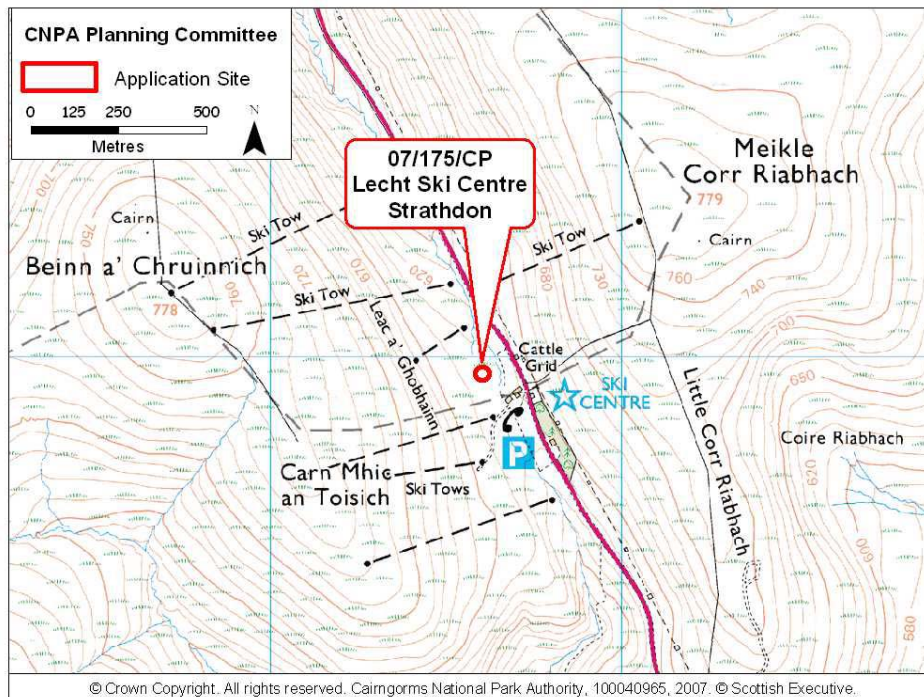
**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: ERECT SCULPTURE AT THE LECHT SKI CENTRE, STRATHDON**

**REFERENCE: 07/175/CP**

**APPLICANT: THE LECHT MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION**

**DATE CALLED-IN: 18 MAY 2007**

**RECOMMENDATION; APPROVAL**



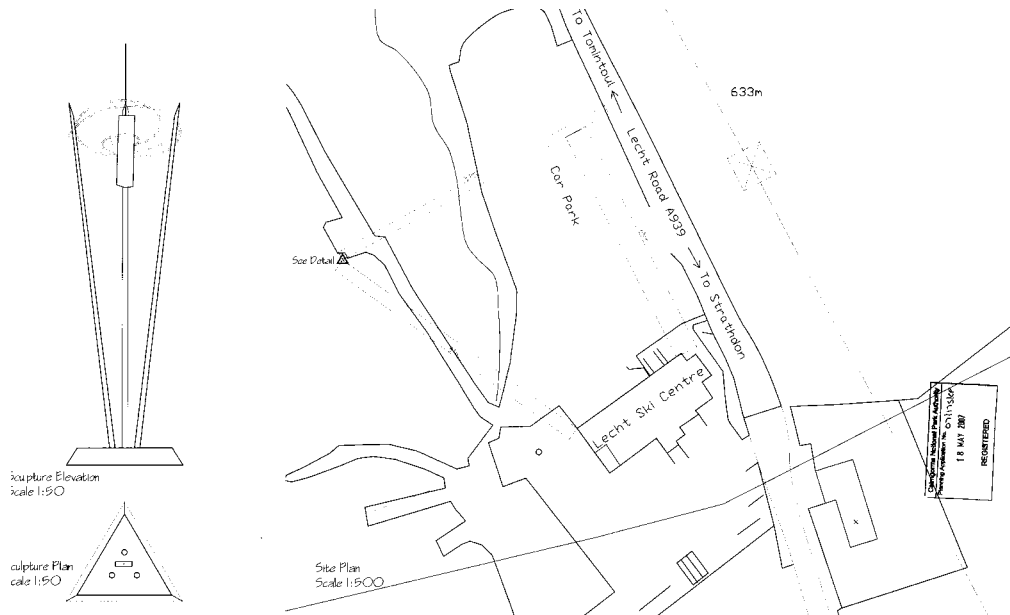
**Fig. 1 - Location Plan**

## SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The site for this application is at the Lecht Ski Centre on the A939 in Strathdon. The proposal is for a permanent sculpture to be sited west of the car park on the Moray side of the ski centre. The sculpture would be located at the bottom of the ski slopes adjacent to a track (see figs 1, 2 and 3).
2. The sculpture is part of an arts event called 'Let there be Lecht'. The event would be a free open air event designed for families in celebration of Highland 2007 in Moray; local schools are being involved in the project. A smaller temporary version of the sculpture will be sited at the summit of Ben a' Chruinnich above the Lecht as part of the celebrations. The event will take place on 22 September to celebrate the autumn equinox. The temporary installation is a smaller model of the permanent sculpture and does not require planning permission as a temporary structure for the duration of the event. The permanent sculpture proposed at the car park is called 'Cosmic Reach' would be approximately 10 metres in height and constructed in stainless steel, quartz and stone (see fig 3). The sculpture would be constructed on site by staff at the Lecht Ski Centre. The sculpture is designed by the renowned artist George Wyllie and as his last piece of public art is being donated to the project. More details of the event and the reasoning behind the sculpture are attached at the back of the report.



**Fig 2 Site adjacent to hut (viewed from car park).**



**Fig 3 Elevation and Site Plan**

### **DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT**

3. The Moray Local Plan has no direct policies relating to the type of development proposed. **Policy E6 of the Moray Local Plan Finalised Version** considers that development proposals which adversely affect National Parks or National Scenic Areas will be refused unless the developer demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that: a) the overall objectives of the designated area would not be compromised, and b) any adverse impact is significantly outweighed by the National benefits resulting from the development.

### **Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007**

4. **Under 5.1 Conserving and Enhancing the Park** Strategic Objectives for Landscape Built and Historic Environment include a) maintaining and enhancing the distinctive landscapes across the Park c) Ensuring development complements and enhances the landscape character of the Park. Strategic Objectives for Culture and Traditions consider that there is a wealth of culture and tradition associated with the long history of people living in the Park area. Many of these traditions and cultures remain a strong influence on the identity of the Park and its communities. Strategic objectives for culture and traditions include a) developing a sound knowledge and understanding of the cultural traditions associated with the Park's places and communities; b) supporting and promoting the diverse cultural traditions of communities within the Park

5. Under **5.3 Understanding and Enjoying the Park** a range of objectives include b) Improving and maintaining the quality of experience in the Park for all visitors, communities and those working within the tourism industry; c) maintaining a high quality environment by encouraging sound environmental management by all those involved in tourism in the Park; e) strengthen and maintain the viability of the tourism industry in the Park and the contribution that it makes to the local and regional economy.

## CONSULTATIONS

6. **Moray Council Environmental Health** has no comments.
7. **Cairngorms National Park Authority Landscape Officer** comments as follows: The permanent work will undoubtedly be an additional intrusion in the area. However it located well within the confined of the ski centre and close to the car park. In addition there are numerous other metallic vertical structures within the area. Although the form of the sculpture is clearly different to the ski tow equipment its additional impact will not be significant nor will it go beyond a threshold of acceptability.
8. Conclusion: there is no objection to this proposal. The addition of another structure in this area is unlikely to cause a significant deterioration to the landscape.
9. Issue: Lighting; it is intended to light the sculpture however the details are non existent. Lighting may cause additional light pollution and detract from the inherent wildness of the area. However the sculpture is not far from the building so to some extent they will be read together. Conversely, the immediate area is unlit and so the additional lighting will be an additional intrusion. Some limited lighting may be acceptable but this would have to be carefully considered.

## REPRESENTATIONS

10. Papers are attached at the back of the report from the applicant providing more details of the sculpture and events surrounding it.

## APPRAISAL

11. There are no planning policies that relate directly to this type of development. Moray Plan Local Plan Policy E6 considers that development that would adversely affect the National Park will be refused. However, there a range of objectives contained within the National Park Plan's Strategic Objectives which are of assistance in assessing the proposal.

12. In principle, a sculpture at an existing tourist site could be considered acceptable and strengthens and maintains the viability of tourism business and the contribution it makes to the local economy in line with the Park's strategic objectives. There are sculptures elsewhere within the Park including those at the Glenshee Ski Centre. There is also the recently approved proposal for landscaping at Cairngorm which includes an element of public art.
13. There is a lot of background to this project, the sculpture being viewed as a centrepiece of a much larger event as part of the Highland 2007 celebrations. Some of the literature for the project talks about a sculpture being at the summit of the hill (Ben a' Chruinnich) on the western side of the Lecht. However, this will be a temporary structure to be sited purely for the duration of the event on 22 September (an advice note is included at the end of the report). However, beyond the principle, the key question to be answered is whether the siting, scale and design of the permanent sculpture is appropriate in terms of the site proposed.
14. There would be concern with any permanent sculpture proposed at the top of the hill. However, the permanent sculpture is sited at the bottom of the ski runs close to a number of ski tows. Given the amount of other structures around the sculpture would not be especially obtrusive, the site essentially being a developed area. When viewed from the A 939 the sculpture would be viewed across the car park and backed by the hill slope that includes ski runs, fencing and ski tows. The site for the sculpture can be easily accessed from the car park.
15. While not being qualified to provide an artistic critique of the proposed structure it is generally designed upon vertical lines which reach upwards towards a piece of quartz that will be fixed towards the top of the sculpture. I have no particular concern about the general form and scale of the sculpture given the existing character of the area. However, it is proposed to light the sculpture. This would make it more prominent than would otherwise be the case. The CNPA landscape officer has looked at the proposal and recognises that the area is part of the developed ski area and the additional element of the sculpture would be unlikely to cross any threshold that would result in an unacceptable impact upon the general character of the area. However, there is some concern regarding the potential illumination of the structure as mention is made in the application of up-lighting the structure from its base. It was the intention of the applicants to light the structure with solar lighting. However, concern was expressed about the amount of cloud cover the area receives and whether solar lighting would work. Instead it is proposed to use two 40 watt spotlights to light the quartz at the top of the sculpture with power coming from the nearby ski tow. While there is no objection regarding the sculpture in my view its illumination would cause some concern. It would be difficult to train the spotlights exactly on the quartz so it may be possible that some light would escape to the sky above. In addition, the lighting

would use the main power supply making it less sustainable. I see no problem with temporary lighting for the unveiling of the sculpture as part of the equinox event but have concerns about any permanent lighting. In my view, extra lighting should not be introduced to what is after all a mountain area without a clear need and justification. The applicants have expressed the view that they could live without lighting should the issue be problematic. It is therefore recommended that this permission be granted on the basis of there being no permanent illumination of the sculpture.

16. Overall, in terms of the Strategic Objectives of the Park Plan if the sculpture cannot be considered to detract from the landscape character or general environmental amenity then it can be considered to accord with cultural, social and economic objectives of the Plan with particular regard to strengthening the tourism industry. The proposal is consequently recommended for approval.

### **Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area**

17. The proposal is sited within the existing ski area and close to existing ski infrastructure such as runs, fences and tows. Given this context the proposal cannot be considered to result in any unacceptable landscape impacts. The sculpture may well become important to the cultural heritage of the area.

### **Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources**

18. There is no information regarding where the material for the sculpture would be sourced from. However, the sculpture would be constructed using local labour in the welding shop at the Lecht Ski Centre itself.

### **Promote Understanding and Enjoyment**

19. The sculpture is part of a public arts event that includes elements of interpreting the landscape. The event overall also involves a number of local schools who will be involved in designing elements of the event. The permanent sculpture itself will add an additional feature of interest at the site with easy access to it from the car park.

### **Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development**

20. The proposal would in a sense result in a form of economic diversification for the ski centre. The sculpture is part of what is essentially a community event involving local schools and as such would promote both social and economic development.

## RECOMMENDATION

21. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to: **GRANT Full Planning Permission** for the Erection of a Sculpture at the Lecht Ski Centre, Strathdon, subject to the following conditions:
1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.
  2. The sculpture shall not be illuminated apart from at the time of its unveiling, temporary lighting measures to be agreed with the CNPA.
  3. A maintenance scheme for the sculpture shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority. The sculpture shall then be maintained in accordance with that agreement.
  4. Samples of materials for the base and vertical poles of the structure shall be submitted to and approved by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development.

## ADVICE NOTE

Please note that this permission is for a permanent sculpture adjacent to the ski centre car park and not for the permanent erection of any sculpture on the summit of Ben a' Chruinnich intended as part of the "Let there be Lecht" event. You are advised that any additional structures as part of the event should only be in place for the duration of the event (including a limited time for preparation and removal).

***Andrew Tait***

***Date 18 July 2007***

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The map on the first page of this report has been produced to aid in the statutory process of dealing with planning applications. The map is to help identify the site and its surroundings and to aid Planning Officers, Committee Members and the Public in the determination of the proposal. Maps shown in the Planning Committee Report can only be used for the purposes of the Planning Committee. Any other use risks infringing Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Maps produced within this Planning Committee Report can only be reproduced with the express permission of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and other Copyright holders. This permission must be granted in advance.