

Kirsty Mackenzie

From: Dave Leadbetter [REDACTED]
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To: Planning
Subject: Kincaig Development Plan

Categories: Kirsty

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Main Issues Report 2020.

Let me firstly attempt to place my comments in context.

Preface:- I full appreciate the balancing act which the National Park has to perform in reconciling the vested interests of competing stakeholder groups. The outdoor/conservation lobby who seek to place the preservation of the environment as the top priority; the commercial lobby seeking to promote developments to increase tourism and employment; landowners seeking to maximise their income by estate development.

Although these interests are often presented as in competition it is certainly my view that the relationship is symbiotic. The relatively unspoiled nature of the local environment and its historic communities is the goose which lays the golden egg. Commercial and tourism related activities are dependent on the public perception that this remains an unspoilt holiday destination. I am sure the vast majority of the local population accept the consequent need for developments which sustain such activities. Hence the debate is about balance.

I have watched, and in recent years have had some active involvement in, the debate and at times, the active opposition against inappropriate developments. All groups present their proposals as "in the communities best interests" and the spin placed on highly intrusive developments by landowners and political vested interests often verges on the absurd. Public compliance is gained by the assurance of various protections by public and political bodies, from Wild Land designation to a ban on road side development on the A9 which are then subsequently ignored or withdrawn in the face of pressure by vested commercial and/or political interests.

Various landowners have also acted to capitalise on the work on the A9 to bypass existing protections on wild land and legitimise the road related developments such as roads and trackways. An ongoing debate which I continue to view with concern.

I also note the proliferation of other encroachments on wild land in the form of hill tracks and other developments implemented without planning permission. My reading of the relevant social media sites suggests that the Park Authority is developing a more vigorous response to deter these initiatives, which, if true, is to be welcomed.

Kincaig:- like the other small Speyside communities the attraction of Kincaig for both tourists and residents lies in its traditional character. Recent years have seen significant housing developments which have altered its character although remaining, in my view generally sympathetic to the area. However, the Community has been required to actively oppose various proposed developments by landowners who, whilst invariably presenting their projects as "in the communities best interests" but were clearly solely aimed at personal income generation at the expense of this community. Examples would include the Allt Duine windfarm and housing developments on amenity land etc. I am gratified that community opposition has played an active and successful role in preventing such unwanted initiatives.

A9 :- clearly the work on dualing the A9 has had a major impact on the community in the form of noise, increased traffic on the B9152 etc. The workers compound in particular. My sense is that this has been accepted by the community due to its temporary nature and the assurances of land reinstatement. The completed dual carriageway has however brought increased noise and a sense of encroachment on the community.

The current planning process , of necessity, deals with short and medium term objectives. The reality, as experienced by communities across the nation is that these constitute a " death of many cuts". One development spawning the next until rural communities are essentially submerged by development and lose their essential character, and any dependent benefits. The infilling of land between a road development and existing housing being the primary mechanism. A process which the Local Development Plan can potentially either expedite or prevent. In its current form my view is that the plan will facilitate the former in relation to Kinncraig.

Specific proposals:-

H1:- although the development of this field will significantly impact on the nature of the village, it is recognised and accepted that such as proposal has been part of established planning proposal for a number of years.

EDI:- Similarly site EDI is an existing development.

THC062:- the park Authority are to be complimented on the proposal to designate the Knoll as Amenity land. It is a significant resource to the community, and a key child care venue. The community has had to continually oppose the insensitive attempts by the landowner to develop this area and will welcome such respite.

Industrial and Commercial redesignation:-

This constitutes the key development proposal detrimental to the interests of the community.

THC046/THC054:- the old A9 compound was, as I suggested, generally accepted on the basis of the assurance that the land would be reinstated to its original agricultural profile. A number of factors suggest that more covert motives are however at play.

You may have noted the "survey" promoted through social media seeking the communities support in the redesignation of this site. By nature this was an almost laughable attempt to link the sites Development with the employment needs of local young people, essentially suggesting anyone opposing this proposal was acting against this agenda. Specifically it promoted the notion that small craft units would be built on the site. It is my understanding this spurious "survey" was developed by the landowner.

Whist such a proposal might well be accepted by the community, I am unaware of any legitimate systematically generated data suggesting that such a development is
a) needed, or b) commercially viable.

Despite the communities understanding that this site would be reinstated to its original profile, it is also my understanding that has been subverted in anticipation of redesignation. My understanding is that the bank which shielded the village from traffic noise has been removed ; quantities of topsoil have also been removed from the site for other purposes, the profile of the site has been radically altered; the concrete hut foundations have not been removed, simply covered up, various infrastructure i.e. pipes, electrical infrastructure etc have been left in place. It is to hoped that before any future proposal are considered the Park Authority will undertake a rigorous inspection and assessment of the site to ensure, and if necessary enforce compliance with the original contractual obligations.

The reality is that if income generation is the key priority for the land owner development of the site will be A9 related. The Balavil development demonstrated and ignored the strength of local feeling against such roadside developments which will inevitably proliferate in the wake of Transport Scotland's removal of the ban on such. Any development on the old compound site will almost certainly in time lead to "creep". Development into sites THC054/THC046. to the South. It is reasonable to assume that access to any development will be from the B9152 leading to a potential frightening increase in traffic noise and disruption, dependent on the nature of the development. Effectively destroying the amenity and attraction of Kincaig as a community.

THC054/THC054/THC046:- along with THC046/THC046/THC054 these sites constitute an essential buffer zone between the community and the A9. I am deeply concerned about the proposal to remove this protection through site development. The duelling work has already demonstrated the impact and dangers of increased traffic volume and speed which the relevant authorities have been unwilling to control or restrict. Such a development would also act to the significant detriment of community amenity. For these reasons I would strongly oppose these proposals.

David Leadbetter



Sent from my iPad