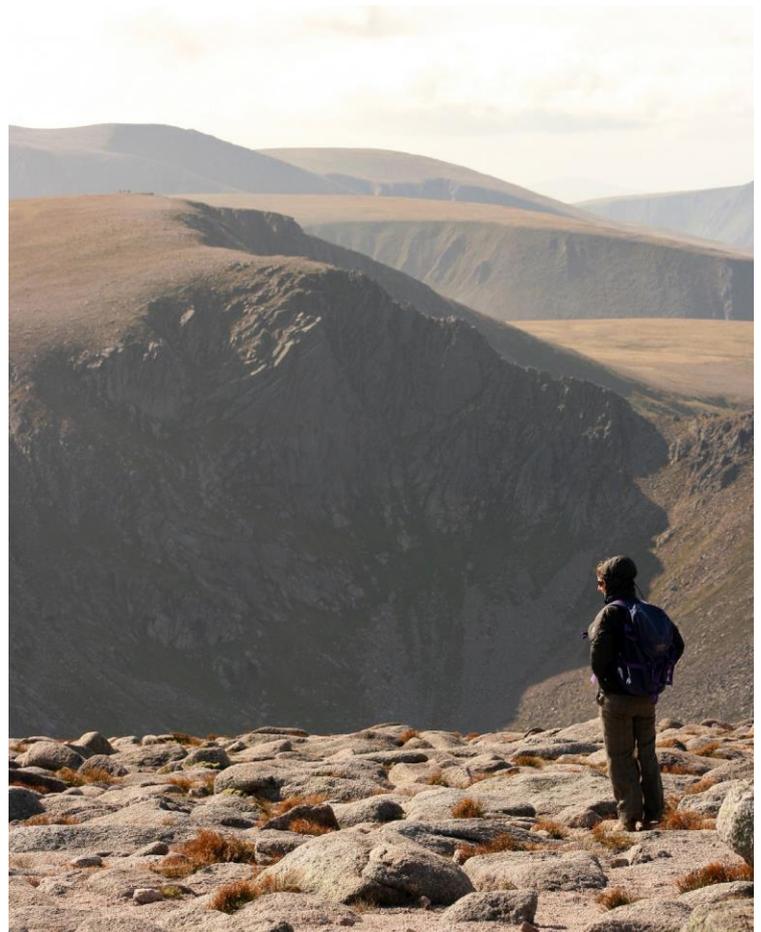


# CAIRNGORM

MOUNTAIN SCOTLAND



**CAIRNGORM MOUNTAIN (SCOTLAND) LTD  
VISITOR MANAGEMENT PLAN 2026**

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# 1. SUMMARY

1. This document has been updated to include the changes that have been agreed and consulted upon during the operating lifespan of the funicular railway. These changes are detailed in Section 3.14.

The original Visitor Management Plan (VMP) was adopted prior to the opening of the funicular railway, and the provisions within this update remain the same, continuing to guarantee the wider management of what has been agreed, as described in Section 1.1.

- 1.1 This document is known as the Visitor Management Plan. It is a requirement of the planning permission granted for the funicular railway. Provision is made for the VMP within the conditions of the permission and the legal agreement, under Section 50 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972, attached to it. It forms the legal agreement and basis that the funicular operator must follow to protect the integrity of land bordering the Ski Area, which is designated under the European Habitats and Birds Directives.

The Section 50 signatories are:

The Highland Council (THC)	Planning Authority
NatureScot	NatureScot (NS) is a non-departmental public body responsible for caring for the natural heritage, enabling people to enjoy it, helping people to understand and appreciate it, and supporting those who manage it
Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE)	Cairngorm Estate landowner and the Scottish Government's regional development agency for the North of Scotland
Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd (CMSL)	Ski Area operating company, owned by CMSL

- 1.2 The S50 group, comprising representatives of all the signatories plus the CNPA, hold quarterly meetings where the working of the VMP is reviewed and potential changes discussed.

The implementation of Reserve Powers identified in the VMP is subject to consultation and prior approval by S50 signatories. Following consultation with HIE, CMSL will undertake to consult with the S50 signatories on any proposed change to its visitor management arrangements in order that THC and NS may consider whether any such change is likely to have a significant effect on the EU sites.

- 1.3 This document is submitted to The Highland Council and NatureScot as the updated Visitor Management Plan (VMP) as required by conditions 1, 28 and 29 of the planning permission of 27 March 1997 and Clause Sixth, Eighth and Ninth of the Section 50 Agreement (hereafter the S50 Agreement), which forms part of that permission.

- 1.4 Further to a transfer in land ownership between Highlands and Islands Enterprise (Cairngorm Estate) and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) in June 1999, FCS is explicitly a party to all matters that relate to its land lying within the Ski Area as defined by the S50 Agreement. It remains an option for FCS to join the S50 signatories if they so wish. This would require a modification to the existing S50 legal agreement, but there is provision within the Planning Acts for this should this transpire.

Term	Meaning	Reference
Visitor Management Plan (VMP) (this document)	The plan for managing non-skiing visitors to be prepared and implemented by the Applicant under the terms of Clause (Sixth) of the S50 Agreement (1997)	Section 50 Agreement (S50)
Ski Area	Refers to the area of land that is the subject of (first) Lease between the Highlands & Islands Development Board and Cairngorm Sports Development Ltd dated 12th, 22nd January 1974 with Addendum thereto dated 14th February and 5th March both 1975 and recorded in the Division of the General Register of Sasines for the County of Inverness on 26th July 1984 as varied by the Minute of Variation of Lease between the said Highlands & Islands Development Board and Cairngorm Chairlift Company Limited (formerly Cairngorm Sports Development Limited, the name having been changed by Special Resolution dated 9th December 1977) dated 23rd January and 10th February both 1984 (Second) a Lease between The Highlands & Islands Development Board and Cairngorm Chairlift Company Ltd dated 25th and 28th November 1986 and (Third) including for the avoidance of doubt the solum of the public road leading to Coire Cas car park (in so far as located within the Ski Area) being part of the subjects described and disposed by Disposition by the Secretary of State for Scotland in favour of The Highland Regional Council dated 19th October and recorded in the said Division of the General Register of Sasines on 30th October 1989, which area of land is shown delineated in green on the plan annexed and signed as relative here to and Boundary Map 1	S50
Detailed Monitoring Scheme (DMS)	Detailed Monitoring Scheme means the monitoring scheme to be prepared and implemented by the Applicant under the terms of Clause (Sixth) (a) and (b) of S50	S50
Snowsport customers/ski spectators	Visitors to the Ski Area who come for the purpose of skiing, snowboarding, tobogganing, snow cat tours, and other winter events and sports of a similar nature, either to participate, observe, supervise, organise, report or simply enjoy and encounter snow, on any such activities that take place within the boundaries of the Ski Area	VMP
Car park visitor	Walking visitors to Coire Cas car park who walk at low levels within the Ski Area for a period of less than one hour, active and inactive users, and sightseers who only use the facilities at the car park level or do not get out of a car or vehicle. (Referred to as non-skiing visitors in S50)	VMP
Summer funicular visitor	Guided walk customers, guided bike customers, general sightseeing visitors, including sightseeing individuals, families and groups whose primary purpose is to travel on the funicular railway, visit the terrace, exhibition and shop, and use the restaurant facilities, as well as visitors participating in any access trials. (Referred to as non-skiing visitors in S50)	VMP
Mountain users	Hillwalkers, mountaineers, ice climbers, ski tourers, climbers, birdwatchers and other participants who undertake their activity beyond the Ski Area boundary for a period greater than one hour. (Referred to as non-skiing visitors in S50)	VMP
Emergency Services & Public agents	Any recognised rescue service or public agents as listed in Appendix 5 of the VMP and approved by NS, THC and HIE	VMP
Conservation system	The restriction required under this plan to prevent funicular visitors leaving the Ptarmigan building, therefore safeguarding the European designated sites. (Referred to in S50 and previous VMPs as the Closed System)	VMP

## 2. KEY PROVISIONS OF THE VMP

2.1 A range of management provisions assist with ensuring the funicular development has no adverse impacts on the integrity of adjacent EU sites. These include:

- Summer funicular visitors are not allowed out of the Ptarmigan station unless on an approved guided activity within the Ski Area, or within an approved access trial under this Visitor Management Plan.
- Snowsport customers and ski spectators cannot leave the Ski Area under the terms and conditions of ticket sale.
- Visitors seeking a short walk are encouraged onto robust trails within the Ski Area.
- Hill walkers/mountaineers are pointed towards robust, well-managed paths leading to the key destinations.
- The detailed monitoring scheme is implemented annually to provide evidence to ensure the visitor management arrangements are successful at avoiding damage to the Natura sites, or give early warning if they are not.

2.2 Car park visitors/funicular visitors /mountain users are referred to as non-skiing visitors in the S50 agreement and are defined in Clause Second of the S50 Agreement as: 'visitors to the Ski Area at any time of the year who come for a purpose other than skiing, snowboarding, tobogganing and other winter sports activities of a similar nature'. The term also includes skiers, snowboarders and others undertaking the aforementioned sports who move from the Ski Area to adjoining land in the proposed European sites.

2.3 The primary purpose of this VMP, as set out in the S50 Agreement, is to protect the integrity of the adjacent areas that have been designated under the European Habitats and Birds Directives from the potential impacts of non-skiing visitors as a direct consequence of the funicular development.

2.4 Provisions of the VMP, to protect the European designated sites, are: egress from the Ptarmigan station throughout the year is limited to snowsports visitors, funicular customers accompanied by a CMSL, or CMSL-licensed, guide on an approved guided activity within the Ski Area, the emergency services and public agents (as listed on page 33 Appendix 5).

Snowsports visitors are excluded from the EU sites by the detailed terms and conditions of carriage (Appendix 4). Access for summer funicular visitors from the Ski Area into the EU sites is managed by the operation of this plan.

2.5 This revised VMP builds on the first edition (adopted in 2000) and incorporates 'lessons learned' from the experience of managing visitors during operation. It incorporates the findings from the Detailed Monitoring Scheme (DMS), which has indicated improvement in habitats, with no negative impacts to EU sites attributable to the railway operation. This has in turn led to reductions in monitoring, although elements could be reinstated if circumstances change in future. No further reserved management powers have been needed. Monitoring has been carried out on approved changes to the VMP during the first decade of operation and has allowed NS and THC to have confidence that the changes do not have any damaging impacts on the notified interests of the EU sites.

2.6 The VMP reflects external changes since the opening of the funicular railway, with the most notable being the designation of the Cairngorm's National Park, and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, which provides for a right of responsible access to most land and water in Scotland. The Cairngorm's National Park Authority is now the key advisor in the role of access authority and planning authority.

2.7 The overall aim of the VMP, as specified in the S50 Agreement (see paragraph 2.2 above) is to ensure that visitor management complies with international conservation legislation, while at the same time permitting the company to achieve its operating objectives and thus continue in its key role of supporting the local tourist economy.

2.8 The objectives of visitor management are therefore:

- To safeguard the environmental and tourism resource;
- To promote greater understanding and appreciation for the mountain's heritage;
- To enhance the quality of the visitor experience; and
- To create the widest possible access opportunities from the funicular railway within the Cairn Gorm Ski Area that will not compromise the integrity of the European site designation along its boundary.

2.9 The key objectives of management reflect those for the zones identified in the Cairngorm Estate Management Plan. These objectives are:

- To contain the bulk of visitor activity within the Ski Area boundary;
- To educate and inform visitors about the sensitivity of the Cairn Gorm environment and the need for management;
- To enhance the quality of the visitor experience;

- To monitor the impact of summer funicular visitors /car park visitors /mountain users as a direct result of the funicular development and thereby guide future management;
- To prevent non-skiing visitors from using the funicular to gain access beyond the Ski Area boundary and into the adjoining designated EU areas;
- HIE to manage and maintain paths within the Cairngorm Estate, so that they are robust and attractive to walk on, therefore minimising off- path damage.



# 3. OPERATION OF THE FUNICULAR

The purpose of this section of the VMP is to define the operation of the Conservation System referred to in the previous VMP as the 'Closed System' introduced to protect adjacent European designated sites.

## Visitor Management objectives

3.1 The Cairn Gorm Ski Area is located in a mountain area that has a high degree of environmental recognition and protection under both EU and UK legislation. Under ERDF funding approval document BD/98/001, in respect of the construction of the Cairngorm funicular railway, HIE are required to manage visitors to the Ski Area under specific conditions, which are listed under Annex A of the Approval Document in recognition and support of environmental protection of adjacent EU sites.

3.2 The VMP was implemented to manage the increase in summer visitors from the funicular railway in comparison with the White Lady Chairlift it replaced. The Conservation System avoids the potential impact of a substantial increase in numbers reaching the adjacent EU sites and recognises the potential visitor management tools the funicular provided for managing visitors in ways that were not possible prior to its development (see Section 5). The purpose of the funicular, compliant with the ERDF funding conditions, is to provide:

- Uplift for snowsports visitors and egress under suitable snow conditions;
- A year-round destination for visitors to the Ptarmigan Station;
- Use by emergency rescue services year round.
- Access for public agents and recognised contractors (see Appendix 5);

- Access for guided activities within the Ski Area by CMSL staff and CMSL-licenced guides.

3.3 Out with the snowsports operation, the Funicular carries passengers from the Base Station directly to the Ptarmigan Station, the exception to this is when the carriage is carrying Bike Park passengers, with a valid Bike Park ticket. This allows them egress to access the descent trails in the bike park from the Middle Funicular platform. Bikes and riders with a valid bike park ticket will be loaded in separate compartments within the carriage, at the Base Station. Egress will be managed by the Funicular carriage attendant and control room operator along with Bike Park staff on the ground. Walking egress at this point is not possible for summer funicular visitors, unless they are part of a CMSL guided activity.

Guided Mountain Biking and Mountain Carting under the direction of a CMSL guide, uses the Funicular for access to both the Ptarmigan Station and Mid Station, allowing the participants on the activity to descend the hill track.

During the ski season the funicular will operate for snowsports as long as suitable snow conditions prevail and there is viable operational demand. Ski spectators using the funicular during the winter months will purchase a funicular ticket that entitles the holder to reach the Ptarmigan station. In the winter months the funicular stops at the middle station for snowsports customers. Whilst it is possible for ski spectators to view snowsports from the vicinity of the Shieling middle station building this will be done by prior arrangement with the operator.

3.4 During a prolonged ski season CMSL will actively manage ski spectators when snowsports continue into May and June and there is a risk of spectators disturbing dotterel. This will be achieved by reference to the late skiing protocol (see Appendix 5).

### 3.5 The Base Station

The objectives of visitor management at the Base Station are:

- To welcome, inform and direct all visitors;
- To ensure efficient access for visitors to the funicular;
- To encourage visitors to spend time enjoying facilities available within the Ski Area boundary;
- To promote awareness of the special qualities of the mountain environment;
- To encourage visitors who wish to access routes and summits beyond the Ski Area, to use the robust paths provided.

3.6 CMSL provide a welcome service at the Base Station with additional information provided at the Ranger Base and ticket office on the visitor facilities available and advice on any access issues relating to the wider mountain environment.

3.7 Orientation and interpretive opportunities in the foyer of the Base Station, Wild Mountain Garden and outside the buildings, available to all visitors to the site.

3.8 Allow assistance dogs/working dogs used in search and rescue operations onto the funicular and dogs whose owners are participating in a guided walk down or who have walked up and wish to take the train down carriage on the funicular.

3.9 Make it a condition of sale and carriage that snowsports ticket holders using the railway remain within the Ski Area. This condition does not apply to snowsports customers' use of surface lifts, nor the ski-mountaineering ticket, which allows for unrestricted movement beyond the Ski Area boundary. The ski-mountaineering ticket allows the use of two surface lifts for access subject to adequate snow cover.

Egress at the Ptarmigan:

3.10 The ticket policy, including both pricing and conditions, is used to prevent, so far as is reasonably possible, use of the funicular as a transport system for access to the Cairn Gorm plateau and, specifically, the EU sites. This is achieved by:

- No single ticket option for ascent on the funicular;
- Return travel on the funicular, and use of all Ptarmigan building facilities;
- A condition of sale of non-skiing tickets is that the holder cannot exit the Ptarmigan building and viewing terrace, unless they are accompanied by a CMSL, or CMSL-licensed, guide on an approved guided activity within the Ski Area;
- A condition of sale of funicular tickets (non-ski-mountaineering ticket) to snowsports customers requires the holder to stay within the Ski Area;
- Ski tourers and snowboard splitboarders going beyond the ski area, who wish to use uplift are able to purchase a ski-touring ticket that can be used once to ascend the Funicular Railway, only available when the other ski tows are operable;
- The conditions of sale also add validity to the refusal of access to the funicular to any individual obviously equipped for mountaineering or hill walking and carrying a funicular ticket; or ski-touring/splitboarding equipment when the touring ticket is suspended due to lack of snow cover or the late skiing protocol is in operation.
- If these groups purchase a skiing ticket they will thus be accepting the terms and conditions that require the holder to stay within the Ski Area;
- In order to fulfil the obligations of the S50 definition of a non-skiing visitor, i.e. the holder of a ski spectator ticket or a funicular ticket, the ticket does not permit the carriage of sports equipment unrelated to snowsports.

CMSL Will:

3.11 Throughout the year manage use of the funicular so that it is not used as a transport system for access to the EU sites, through a comprehensive ticket sales and carriage policy (Appendix 4).

3.12 During the ski season, continuous assessment of snow depths and the likelihood of ground being vulnerable to impacts, where needed may lead to closure of ski runs. Lift and piste closure or opening information will be provided through telephone messages, the web, radio, social media and at the ticket office and Ranger Base. Particular attention will be paid to monitoring and limiting snowsports ticket sales to reflect the capacity available. CMSL will continue to manage snowsports ticket sales (or suspend snowsports ticket sales) at these vulnerable times.

3.13 The following approved changes to the original VMP have been adopted during the first decade of funicular operation.

Ingress for walkers to the top station	Approved in October 2004 following trials in 2002, 2003 and 2004
Sale of downhill only tickets whereby walkers can purchase a down train ticket at the shop at the top, this also includes downhill train tickets for dogs	Approval was made in January 2007
To add the Windy Ridge to the list of preferred paths	Approved in January 2007
Informal discussions took place in winter 2010/2011 between CMSL, THC and NS regarding cross-country skiers/ski-mountaineers. It was confirmed that these groups can purchase a 'ski-mountaineering ticket' and use non-funicular uplift and thereafter ski anywhere	Approval 2010 / 2011
Guided walks with a member of staff or CMSL licensed guide within the Ski Area	Approved in 2012 following trials in 2010 and 2011
Media visits for film/news crews producing educational or current affairs programmes or journalism. Allowing access from the funicular, accompanied by a member of staff. If going further onto neighbouring land then CMSL will consult with the landowner in advance	Approved in April 2012
Two-year trial for guided mountain bike descents from the top funicular station	First trial period approved in August 2012

CMSL will:

3.14 Throughout the year manage use of the funicular so that it is not used as a transport system for access to the EU sites, through a comprehensive ticket sales and carriage policy (Appendix 4).

3.15 During the ski season, continuous assessment of snow depths and the likelihood of ground being vulnerable to impacts, where needed may lead to closure of ski runs. Lift and piste closure or opening information will be provided through telephone messages, the web, radio, social media and at the ticket office and Ranger Base. Particular attention will be paid to monitoring and limiting snowsports ticket sales to reflect the capacity available.

CMSL will continue to manage snowsports ticket sales (or suspend snow sports ticket sales) at these vulnerable times.

3.16 Manage late-season ski spectators to avoid disturbance to dotterel by using the late season protocol in May and June. This is achieved by highlighting the increased management due to dotterel to all funicular users, managing the movements of ski spectators within the ski boundary, documenting snow cover during this period, recording dotterel in the area and any observed dotterel disturbance, increased signage highlighting disturbance to mountain users at the ski area boundary.

The Reserve power which may provide a fallback option is to:

3.17 Close the funicular to certain categories of visitors or suspend the ski spectator category of ticket during the ski season, should the monitoring and review programme show that management techniques for funicular visitors are insufficient in managing environmental impacts in the EU sites.

3.18 Sightseeing visitors to the Ptarmigan

This plan is a significant management tool in reducing the potential for visitors using the funicular railway to access the plateau and the protected EU sites adjacent to the Ski Area. Access for those who wish to walk in the high hills is retained through the existing footpath network from Coire Cas car park; however, the easy access to the plateau and EU sites previously provided by the chairlift system is not possible under this plan.

3.19 The objectives of visitor management at the Ptarmigan are:

- To provide maximum enjoyment and fulfilment for all visitors using the funicular to reach the Ptarmigan;
- To manage the volume of visitors effectively at peak times;
- To ensure that funicular visitors are retained within the funicular system and Ptarmigan building, unless accompanied by a CMSL, or CMSL-licensed, guide on an approved guided activity within the Ski Area, or under the terms and conditions of the access trial, allowing participants to reach the Cairn Gorm Summit via the path network whilst remaining in the Ski Area as set out by the S50 group. i.e. operate this plan.
- To provide guided experiences to highlight the special qualities of the surrounding mountain landscapes.

3.20 The Ptarmigan building provides visitor facilities at four levels:

- Level 1: Exhibition;
- Level 2: Shop and toilets;
- Level 3: Viewing terrace;
- Level 4: Bar, restaurant, top platform for the funicular and egress point for skiing visitors in the ski season.

CMSL will:

- 3.21 Summer funicular visitors at the Ptarmigan will not be permitted to leave the building or viewing terrace unless they are participating in a CMSL guided activity or CMSL access trial, which is bound by the terms and conditions, agreed to at the time of booking. This exclusion does not affect snowsports customers or ski spectators during skiing operation. In some instances, snowsports and ski spectator access from the top station may be stopped in bad weather due to safety reasons while the funicular railway is still operating.
- 3.22 Provide and maintain an interpretive experience at the Ptarmigan as part of the CMSL Interpretive Strategy.
- 3.23 Ensure as far as is practical that visitors remain in the building or on its terrace and return to the Coire Cas car park by the funicular.
- 3.24 Through monitoring ensure that the patterns of use are collated and reported in order that the information can guide future management refinements.
- 3.25 Offer guided walking/biking experiences from the Ptarmigan within the Ski Area to cater for demand from people who wish to exit the building in a way that avoids damage to the European sites.
- 3.26 Actively manage ski spectators when snow sports continue into May and June.
- 3.27 Actively manage the Summit Access trial in Autumn 2025, allowing participants to use the path network within the Cairngorm Ski Area to access Cairn Gorm summit but not to access the European sites. The tracking of these participants, who choose to book onto the trial, will be used to gathered data to inform any future trials in 2026, subject to S50 group approval.

## 4. FOOTPATHS

4.1 A comprehensive footpath network extends from the Coire Cas car park. Visitors can access a number of footpaths, some of which remain within the operational Ski Area boundary and others lead into adjacent areas (*Map 2*).

4.2 Since commissioning the railway, the following trails have been developed in the lower part of Coire Cas:

1. Aonach all-abilities trail alongside the car park and connecting with the Mountain Garden and Windy Ridge;
2. Mountain Garden;
3. Allt Mor Trail (developed by the Forestry Commission) from the lower car park in Coire Cas to Glenmore;
4. Climbers Direct between the car park and the Northern Corries path;
5. Lower Coire Cas trail from the car park to the foot of the Kassbohrer Brae below the Shieling;
6. Action for Mountain Woods (AMWoods) trail connecting the Lower Coire Cas trail with the hill track at the pump house on the zigzags of the hill track.

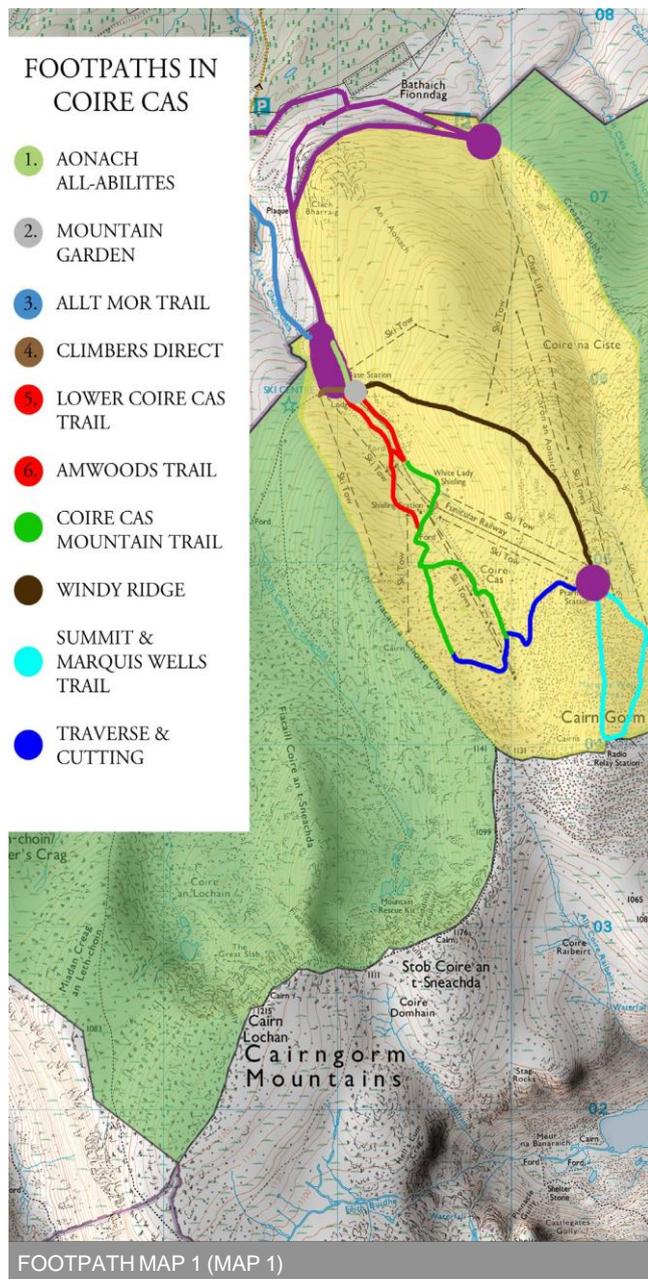
Interpretive facilities have been provided in the Mountain Garden, on the Aonach trail, the lower Coire Cas trail, AMWood trail and hill track (known as the Coire Cas Mountain Trail).

4.3 Footpath management objectives are to:

- Contain use on existing footpaths and encourage use of footpath networks on lower ground within the Ski Area.

- Continued development, maintenance and promotion to the existing path network within the operational Ski Area for short-distance walkers, bird watchers and general sightseers. These visitor groups are encouraged to use this network of paths, through clear route marking from the upper car park at Coire Cas with supporting visitor information (i.e. print and interpretation material).
- Provide a clearly defined, suitable footpath network within the Ski Area that will provide short, safe walks complemented by portable and static interpretation where appropriate.
- Encourage walkers to keep to maintained footpaths and avoid straying onto the margins of paths where ground conditions can be particularly fragile.
- Maintain footpath access from Coire Cas car parks.
- Improve the overall levels of awareness and understanding of the consequences of all footpath users' actions and the need to minimise and manage the impacts of access on the environment.

4.4 Existing and potential new paths within the Ski Area boundary – no new routes are currently proposed.



4.5 Path network beyond the Ski Area

The operation of the funicular has not been shown to have any significant impact on the overall numbers of long walkers and climbers visiting Cairn Gorm. Previously, a small proportion of these mountain users took advantage of the access provided by the chairlift. These people now use the Coire an t-Sneachda, the Fiacail a'Choire Chais and the Northern Corries paths.

As reported in Section 9.6, use of the Northern Corries and Miadan Creag an Leth-choin paths has increased, as the new key access route to Ben Macdui. The potential impacts of this change have been managed by defining and upgrading the path to move us away from sensitive ground- nesting bird species and to reduce habitat damage. This has been successful. In general, action is taken to ensure that, so far as possible, mountain users are encouraged to use preferred routes to discourage the proliferation of other paths out with the Ski Area or habitat damage/ species disturbance within the European sites.

This is achieved by:

- Maintaining footpath access routes from Coire Cas car park for mountain users;
- Providing car parking in the lower Coire Cas car park aimed specifically at this mountain user group;
- Communication with this user group on site through the Cairngorm Mountain Ranger Service and other media to encourage movement through the Ski Area on preferred designated routes;
- Maintaining low-key 'gateways' with information indicating the preferred routes at the starting points of the main path to the Ptarmigan and the Northern Corries footpath.
- Managing and maintaining the key paths so that they are attractive to walk on and robust for the required levels of use.

Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd will:

- 4.6 Provide walking routes and promote those walking routes that are within the Ski Area and maintain key access paths in Coire Cas with the objective of encouraging users to stay on them and thereby reduce impact on adjoining sites.
- 4.7 Provide route marking from the Base Station to the Coire Cas Mountain Trail, Lower Coire Cas Trail, Allt Mor Trail, Windy Ridge Path, Mountain Woods Path and An t-Aonach all abilities paths only.
- 4.8 Work with others to promote the philosophy: leave no trace.

- 4.9 In consultation with CNPA, NS and THC through the interpretive strategy promote the walks within the Ski Area by means of promotional literature, information and interpretative displays.
- 4.10 Provide and maintain signposts at agreed points on footpaths within the Ski Area.
- 4.11 Monitor the use of footpaths within the Ski Area by surveys and counts as required in the DMS.
- 4.12 HIE will continue to manage and maintain footpaths beyond the Ski Area within the European sites to attract walkers and minimise habitat damage and species disturbance.
- 4.13 Consult with and co-operate with HIE, NS, THC, CNPA and Forestry Commission Scotland on the way the above measures might be modified if, in the light of changing evidence on recreational access to adjacent EU sites, it becomes apparent that further management is necessary as a consequence of the funicular development.
- 4.14 CMSL will work with NS and the CNPA to promote initiatives and campaigns aimed at promoting good dog walking behaviour. CMSL will continue to use signage and engage where possible with dog owners to promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) – whereby during the breeding season (usually April–July) owners are advised to keep dogs on a short lead or close at heel. Rangers and CMSL guides, and other staff will continue to record sightings of dogs deemed to be out of the control of the owner. This will be recorded when witnessed and if a staff member believes it breaches SOAC.
- 4.15 The reserve powers that CMSL may implement, if necessary, following monitoring evidence are to divert the use of footpaths under sensitive conditions allowing regeneration of vulnerable areas. This would need the provision of suitable alternative access.

# 5 MARKETING

## CAIRNGORM SKI AREA

The purpose of this section of the VMP focuses on the role that the Interpretive Strategy and the marketing strategy both play in influencing visitor behaviour and respect for the site.

5.1 Following the development of the funicular, CMSL have a unique product within the British tourism and leisure industry, namely a quality visitor attraction offering an all-year-round mountain experience for visitors of all ages and physical ability.

The operator has two principal products:

### **The mountain experience**

The Cairngorm funicular railway provides the opportunity for visitors of all ages to enjoy one of Britain's most outstanding scenic mountain areas. The funicular system is designed and managed to help secure the environmental integrity of this special Scottish mountain landscape. The location of the Ski Area as principal access point to the Cairngorm plateau allows visitors to experience the heart of the national park.

### **Cairngorm snowsports experience**

The Cairn Gorm Ski Area is Scotland's most popular snow sports destination, providing spectacular scenery and excellent terrain.

5.2 The Interpretive Strategy is reviewed and updated on a three-year basis, and highlights interpretive projects, leading to comprehensive interpretive plans. The document guides CMSL's future interpretation provision, along with the marketing strategy, sits within the CMSL Strategic Business Plan.

It focuses on our visitors, making their journey and time here at Cairngorm Mountain enjoyable and stimulating. Our interpretation builds on the inherent asset – the magnificent landscape within and around our site.

The document sets out our vision, our strategy and our interpretive goals. It is guided by best practice and supports stakeholder initiatives like the CNPA's 'Sharing the Stories of the Cairngorms National Park' and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

5.3 A consistent and coordinated message reinforces the site's environmental values and CMSL's obligations as set out in the Cairngorm Estate Management Plan. All categories of visitors will continue to be encouraged towards areas and activities capable of accommodating them. There is a presumption against events out with the Ski Area, whereby events are only supported where it can be demonstrated by the promoter that the event will not have a likely significant effect on Natura sites.

5.4 Interpretation plays a key role in raising visitors' awareness and understanding of the special nature of the landscape and the need for management, shaping visitor expectations (both pre-visit and on site). Advance information and interpretation are important in order to help promote compliance with the conservation system; this helps avoid non-skiing visitors arriving with false expectations and trying to exit the Ptarmigan building.

5.5 The company's marketing strategy is reflected in its active participation in the Cairngorms Business Partnership, Visit Scotland, the Cairngorms Attractions Group and the Scottish Ski Marketing Group in promoting sustainable tourism to its target markets year-round, and also initiatives with other individual businesses.

5.6 The marketing strategy is delivered through a yearly marketing action plan with performance and market share indicators, social media and customer feedback targets, all of which influence future marketing and visitor management strategies.

5.7 There are varied opportunities to increase visitor awareness pre-arrival as covered in the marketing strategy, including partnership promotion with other visitor attractions and facilities.

- 5.8 A range of communication tools including print, local radio and the internet are used to inform visitors of the experience in advance of their arrival.
- 5.9 CMSL will continue to promote environmental awareness and responsibility with messages that are consistent with visitor management objectives in pre-visit information and on site information across a range of prescribed media.
- 5.10 CMSL will provide engaging, enjoyable and stimulating interpretation that promote awareness and understanding of the mountain environment and its special qualities to encourage responsible enjoyment of the site;
- 5.11 CMSL will regularly review off site signage, in collaboration with partners.
- 5.12 CMSL will continue to use the CMSL marketing strategy contained within the strategic business plan along with the Interpretive Strategy, as the basis for offsite and onsite awareness raising of visitor management to protect the EU sites.



# 6 MANAGEMENT OF CAR PARKS

The purpose of this section of the VMP is to indicate the potential levels of use, seasonal variations and the measures to be applied in various conditions in relation to car parking arrangements.

Cairn Gorm mountain is located at the end of the most visited outdoor area in the National Park – the Aviemore, Rothiemurchus, Glenmore/Cairngorm area. Therefore, a continued collaborative approach to visitor management is required. CMSL will in conjunction with nearby land managers and partners help improve the quality of visitor experience and sense of place in a co-ordinated way across this whole area.

6.1 Coire Cas car park is owned by HIE. It is the main arrival point for visitors to the Cairn Gorm Ski Area and is also the main access point for mountain users wishing to enjoy the Cairngorm massif (NS Mountain Recreation User Survey, June 1997–1998). Current calculations of visitors using the Coire Cas car park are contained in Appendix 3.

The objectives of visitor management at the Coire Cas car park are:

- To promote visitor satisfaction and enjoyment of the visit;
- To manage the access roads and car parks in a way that ensures the efficient movement of visitors towards their chosen activity; and
- To manage the access roads and car parks to meet health and safety requirements.

Coire na Ciste car park principally provides additional car parking at busy times within the ski season with a shuttle bus service to Coire Cas car park. During the summer months it is frequently used by overnight camper vans; the monitoring of this use will continue. It is used by some hill walkers/mountaineers to access the European sites, but numbers are small with no specific management action needed.

6.2 Currently CMSL operate a car parking donation scheme whereby all visitors have the opportunity to donate money directly towards path and car park maintenance, facility provision, interpretation, snow clearing and any future projects on the mountain that have the potential to benefit all visitors. The donation policy has a recommended contribution that has been set as the same rate as the compulsory car parking charges that are operated by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) at Glenmore.

6.3 CMSL, after agreement with HIE and others, may introduce a compulsory car park charging policy in the future that will directly contribute towards the costs of future site management, including car park management, monitoring, footpath works and other management issues associated with the VMP and relevant to all visitors to Coire Cas.

6.4 CMSL will continue to work with CNPA Glenmore Partnership to consider any future car parking and vehicle management initiatives that may be developed, for example through the proposed new strategy for the area.

6.5 CMSL will continue to promote staff car sharing and other carbon reduction schemes where possible and continue to strive to create an integrated public transport system from Aviemore to Coire Cas that is befitting of a National Park.

6.6 The reserve powers that CMSL may implement, if necessary, following monitoring are the preparation and operation of a traffic management scheme for the ski road and car parks that may include

- Compulsory car parking charges at Coire Cas;
- The introduction of an associated Clearway Order on the ski access road.

6.7 Consideration of future options for car access to Coire Cas with the proviso that any alternative must enable the Ski Area to continue to function and provide a quality service to snowsports users.

6.8 Cairngorm Mountain Ranger service will continue to monitor the car parks and report overdue vehicles to Police Scotland to assist with safety issues.

# 7 MONITORING

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VISITOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

This section of the VMP sets out the process whereby relevant information will be available to ensure that management decisions can be made in good time and thereby safeguard designated European sites from the potential visitor impacts that might result directly from the operation of the funicular railway and this plan.

### The functional role of monitoring

7.1 An essential component of the visitor management plan is the Detailed Monitoring Scheme (DMS), which is linked to management decisions as required by Clause Sixth of the S50 Agreement. The basic objective of monitoring is to provide up-to-date and accurate information that enables management to be effective in minimising the impacts of visitors on the adjacent EU sites, if they are attributable to the operation of the funicular railway and associated conservation system. The results of the monitoring programme feed back into the management of the funicular and related facilities.

### 7.2 Monitoring hypotheses.

The analysis of levels and distribution of visitors in Section 5 of the original VMP postulated that the most likely changes in visitor use, due to the operation of the 'Closed System' at the Ptarmigan, would be increased numbers of short-distance walkers and sightseers using the Ski Area and increased numbers of short-distance walkers and bird watchers using the Northern Corries. Meanwhile it was considered likely that fewer visits would be made to the summit of Cairn Gorm and the plateau by mountain users formerly using the chairlift.

Use of the Northern Corries was also thought likely to increase by long-distance walkers and climbers passing through the area on their way to the plateau. Management measures were therefore prescribed to discourage additional use of the Northern Corries by short-distance walkers and sightseers. Any effect of additional use in the Ski Area and the Northern Corries has been mitigated by footpath improvements, and by the use of interpretation.

7.3 Thus the specific measures that the DMS has tested since 2000 are:

- Extent of summit path usage;
- That the management measures prescribed in the VMP are effective in:
  - a. Concentrating short-distance walkers and sightseers within the Ski Area; and
  - b. Concentrating walkers entering the Northern Corries on selected paths, so that the risk of potential impacts on disturbance to wildlife, and damage to vegetation, soils and geomorphology, are reduced.

7.4 Monitoring has focused on visitor numbers, visitor distribution and impacts (vegetation trampling, habitat changes, footpath widening and disturbance to birds), which provide the most timely information in guiding future management policy.

The coverage of the other topics included in the Baseline Surveys undertaken as part of the S50 Agreement, namely, soils and geomorphology, are considered to be less timely in their ability to guide management policy and will be kept under review. Flexibility will be retained to respond to new concerns and impacts that may arise. Currently, with the exception of footpaths, all these indicators of impacts are deferred; however they may be revisited in the future.

7.5 Operation of the DMS Clause Eighth a) of the Section 50 agreement requires that: 'The Planning Authority and NS will after consultation with the Applicant and the Proprietor appoint a suitably qualified person or persons to provide for them, by the end of November in each year or such other date as may be agreed by the Planning Authority and NS, at a reasonable cost to the Applicant, an annual report on the impact of non- skiing visitors using Coire Cas car park and the funicular railway and the effectiveness of the approved VMP in managing such visitors'. Clause Eighth c) of the Section 50 agreement requires the Company and NS to provide such person(s) with access to all of their data arising from the implementation of the DMS.

The DMS operates on an annual basis, following a programme prepared by the company and agreed in advance with NS. Refinements to the visitor management plan and monitoring programme may be required from time to time (S50 Clause Ninth), and these will be agreed with THC and NS within the framework of the Section 50 Agreement.

NS and THC have agreed to a number of reductions in monitoring effort over the past few years, although elements could be reinstated if circumstances change in future.

7.6 Cairngorm Mountain currently undertake the majority of monitoring work, particularly in relation to visitor monitoring. However, some tasks require specialist skills, and suitably qualified staff are contracted to do this work.

## 7.7 Reporting

The suitably qualified person or persons (known as the Reporting Officer) is independent from the developer, operator, statutory authorities and any monitoring contractors. The Reporting Officer is responsible for preparing and presenting an annual report to the S50 signatories for final approval by NS and THC. CMSL provides NS and the THC with the raw data gathered in accordance with the monitoring scheme together with a basic description of this data. The Reporting Officer then analyses that data to prepare the annual report.

7.8 The annual report presents analysis of DMS results, making recommendations on the effectiveness of the VMP management techniques. The report includes recommendations to the S50 signatories on any future monitoring or management modifications that may be required and on any proposed remedial measures and their implementation.

7.9 An opportunity will be provided for the operating company and HIE to comment on the annual report when it is finally approved by NS and THC. Any decisions on monitoring issues which cannot be resolved will be arbitrated according to the procedures set out in Clause Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Eighteenth of the S50 Agreement.

Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd will:

7.10 Undertake primary responsibility for implementing the monitoring scheme in consultation with NS and THC, and to the satisfaction of NS and THC.

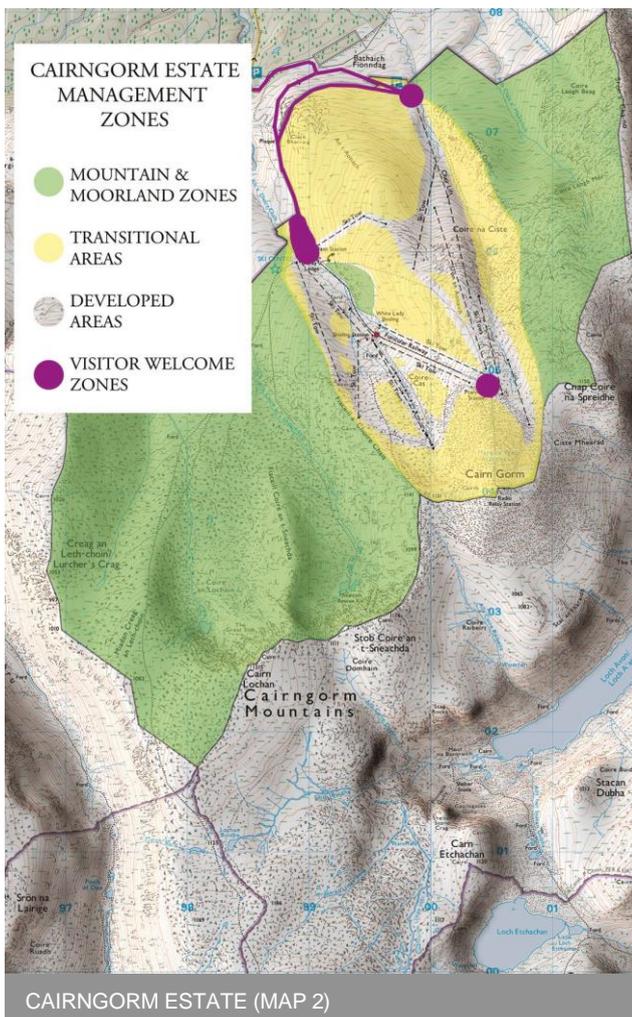
7.11 Provide data obtained by the monitoring contractors to NS.

7.12 Take part in an annual review of the effectiveness of the visitor management measures in the light of the annual monitoring report.

# 8 CAIRNGORM SKI AREA AND DESIGNATIONS

8.1 The Cairn Gorm Ski Area lies 10 miles east of the village of Aviemore on the north of the Cairngorm mountains.

The whole area lies within the Cairngorms National Park, the largest in the UK. The Ski Area covers 598 hectares of the 1418 hectare Cairngorm Estate. The Estate, Ski Area and car parks are owned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise. HIE were the first public landowner to publish a management plan, and the Cairngorm Estate Management Plan (CEMP) is updated regularly providing a framework for successful land management. The Glenmore Partnership Plan is guided by the CEMP.



8.2 Along its eastern and southern boundaries the Ski Area abuts the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' Abernethy National Nature Reserve. To the north, the Ski Area and Cairngorm Estate are bounded by Glenmore Forest National Nature Reserve, owned by the Forestry Commission. (See the designations map, Figure 3.)

8.3 The Cairngorm Estate lies wholly within the Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area. The Northern Corries SSSI covers the entire western part of the Estate. The Cairngorm Estate is nominally designated as part of the Glenmore Forest Park. Detailed maps of the surrounding Cairngorm Estate designations are available at NS's Site <https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/>

8.4 The ski season operates at any time when there is sufficient snow between October and June. Snow cover is assessed daily by the CMSL Operations Team. Attention to snow depths, weather and ground conditions help to protect the environmental integrity of the Ski Area. The operation of the Ski Area is guided by the wider Cairngorm Estate Management Plan, which is available on request.

# 9 PRINCIPLES OF VISITOR MANAGEMENT & PATTERNS OF USE

This section sets out the principles on which visitor management is based, reviewing changes in visitor levels and patterns of use as a result of the implementation of this plan.

User Group	Levels and pattern of use pre funicular chairlift usage	Predicted levels & pattern of use in November 2000	Actual levels & pattern of use during funicular operation	How changes have been managed to date	Further management requirements needed
Snowsports customers	Between 1996/1997 and 1999/2000 the numbers of skiing visits fluctuated between 75,000–110,000, (rolling average 94,000 skier days)	It was predicted that skier days would rise to 150,000 with the opening of the funicular	During the winters 2000/2001 to 2011/2012 the high was 145,000 skier days in 2009/2010 and a low of 38,000 in 2006/2007. The rolling average is 74,580 during this period (less than half the predicted level)	Snowsports are fundamentally dependent on snow cover and weather conditions, which can change daily, thus making it difficult to predict user patterns (this can be seen in the extremes of skier days over the two winter seasons in 2009/2010 and 2011/2012. However, it is apparent that the funicular has increased the number of days in which snowsports can be offered in comparison with the chairlift, due to the ability to operate in higher wind speeds. The ability to quickly change to a closed system in poor weather demonstrates the strength of the funicular operation	Current management of snowsports visitors is working. Reviews of ticket sales and visitor feedback will continue to help guide decision making. Late skiing into May and June will continue with monitoring of snow cover and ski spectator access. Ski-mountaineering access will continue to be reviewed and improved. By maximising the potential of snowsports, further reinvestment can be directed towards the management of the Ski Area environment, which continues to improve
Funicular users (Summer)	Varied between 29,000 in 1998/1999 and 58,000 visits in 1994/1995. In the ten years between October 1988 and October 1998 the average was 45,000 summer visits on the chairlift	It was anticipated that summer funicular use would rise to 165,000	Up to 182,000 non-skier users (2002/2003), declining to 117,000 in 2010/2011	Recording of visitor numbers and visitor feedback along with the positive results shown in the DMS, leading to the proposals to open up the Closed System in ways that do not have adverse impacts to the EU sites	Current visitor management is working. Reviews of funicular numbers and feedback will continue with further access for activities within the Ski Area considered by the S50 group

Funicular users (Winter) / Ski spectators	Total winter chairlift ticket sales to visitors who did not buy a skiing ticket ranged between 5000–11,000 tickets. It was estimated that 30% of winter chairlift tickets were sold to ski spectators, (1500 and 3300 winter chairlift tickets)	It was anticipated that ski spectator tickets would rise marginally with the opening of the funicular	In the 2013/2014 winter the number of ski spectator tickets sold was 24,881. The lowest number sold in a winter season since the railway opened was 22,941 in the season 2004/2005, with the greatest number in the season 2008/2009 53,853	As above with further activities added to allow visitors to experience the mountain in a managed way within the Ski Area boundary. When snow conditions and weather are suitable, for example, there is the possibility of snow cat tours aimed at the winter guided walk customer base	As above, with further management when snowsports continue in May and June when there is a risk of ski spectators disturbing dotterel
Down tickets	Single ticket descents on the chairlift were available but records are unreliable and therefore cannot be used as a comparison with down train ticket sales on the funicular	Unpredicted	4393 down train tickets were sold in 2014	Successful trial period highlighted the positive contribution this change made to the closed system. Therefore the Closed System became the Conservation System to reflect downhill travel on the funicular	Continue to monitor sales. The management of this activity is working and sales have increased
Guided walks	Ranger guided walks from the chairlift were conducted in the summer months. However, numbers are unknown and walks were undertaken beyond the Ski Area at a time when self-guided walks were unrestricted; therefore these guided walks are not directly comparable	Unpredicted	The number of people taking part in guided walks in 2014 was 2563 guests. The lowest number in a season was the inaugural year of 2010 with 1179 guests, however during this trial year the walks started in June compared to subsequent years when the walks have been started when snow cover allows. The highest number was season 2011 with 2418 guests between May and October	A successful trial period highlighted the positive contribution this change made to the conservation system. There has been public consultation by NS on change. Guided walks have increased visitor satisfaction and improved the interpretation of the surrounding wild mountain landscape. Feedback from participants has extremely high satisfaction rates, proving the visitor experience is consistently of high quality	Current visitor management of this activity is working. Continue to monitor feedback, visitor compliance, dotterel disturbance and sales
Guided biking	Not comparable	Unpredicted	In the season of 2013 the number of mountain bike guests was 482. This is the highest number since the trial commenced	Two-year trial period in 2012/13. Monitoring submitted to S50 group for review	Current visitor management of this activity is working. Continue to monitor feedback, visitor compliance (currently 100%), hill track maintenance, general mountain bike use and sales

- 9.1 The original VMP proposed to approach the management of visitor access by a series of incremental measures to be reviewed in the light of information and experience provided by the monitoring scheme, that is, by relying on voluntary restraint and self-regulation by users. At the time (2000) it did not appear that limitations on long-stay users by the introduction of escalating car park charges and prohibitions on the introduction of roadside parking were warranted on the available evidence. These powers were retained in reserve and only to be applied if the monitoring scheme detected trends that would demand such measures.
- 9.2 Levels and patterns of use: Snowsports
- The availability of uplift via the funicular has significantly increased the number of skiing days and permitted more reliable access to the top nursery slopes than was provided by the chairlift. Funicular access has not changed the geographic scope of skiers' activities beyond the Ski Area.
- 9.3 The company has introduced a ski-mountaineering ticket which permits the holder one uplift on each of two tows (excluding the funicular) from the car park to the top, from where they are not limited by the restrictions placed on railway passengers and may access the high ground. This did not represent a change of practice from before the introduction of the VMP.
- 9.4 It was envisaged that, under funicular operation, visitors would purchase either a ski spectator or funicular ticket, and only those with spectator tickets would leave the building. In practice, all winter passengers are sold ski spectator tickets, as they can decide when they arrive at the top station whether they wish to go outside or not. Most do, and they are not counted separately.
- 9.5 The numbers of people taking the train in winter is an increase on the former chairlift as the funicular provides a more reliable and comfortable ride, and the Ptarmigan building provides a higher level of comfort than the former ptarmigan igloo cafe and toilets. There is continuing demand from spectators for access to the summit, particularly on fine days, and this has been accommodated by defining the area to which they are permitted access as the Ski Area boundary, including the summit approach.
- 9.6 Mountaineers.
- Insufficient data exists to detect trends in mountaineering, mountain-skiing and birdwatching use since the railway was developed, but the levels are considered to be broadly similar. A small proportion of mountaineers (6%) have been inconvenienced by being unable to access the hill via the railway. Use has been redistributed to the Northern Corries Path, with the route to Ben Macdui via Miadan Creag an Leth-choin becoming established as the main route. This has led to some problems of path proliferation and erosion in the Miadan Creag an Leth-choin, which have been managed by defining and repairing a single robust path line, with on-going maintenance.
- 9.7 The visitor questionnaire survey (VQS) was repeated in 2012/2013 using a modified version of the questions from 2005/2006. The VQS has a detailed breakdown of questions and responses and is available on request. The following conclusions were taken from the Reporting Officer's report in 2013. Funicular users were asked in both surveys whether they support the management arrangements, and the 2012/2013 results show that there remains a high level of support for retaining the closed system in summer (with over half strongly supporting), although less than a third strongly support the system in winter. This suggests that there is very little pressure from the existing customer base to remove the closed system.

Although there is limited pressure to remove the closed system from existing customers, it is clear that they would like to leave the Ptarmigan building, if they were allowed. Path users who said that they had been to the plateau (or further afield) are those most likely to have entered the Natura site. Of these respondents, 12% - 7% said that they were accompanied by one or more dogs. The behaviour of the dogs is not recorded, nor is whether they were kept under close control at all times, therefore the impact on sensitive features of the Natura site by dogs cannot be estimated. Only 35 - 42% of path users said that they would have paid to use the funicular and take a walk in the summer of 2013, down from 61% in 2005/2006.

However, it is impossible to know whether this decrease reflects changes in the visitor profile (e.g. fewer path users who see the value of using the funicular) or changes in attitude (e.g. path users have less desire to use the funicular). The results provide insight into the knowledge and awareness of current visitors to the site. The analysis cannot be used to extrapolate to the wider population of visitors and non-visitors to the countryside in general and, without further information about their demographic profile, it is impossible to infer how typical, or otherwise, these responses might be. This is a typical compromise with visitor surveys, balancing short interviews with depth of questioning.

Walkers are permitted to enter the Ptarmigan building and subsequently leave, in a variation made to the VMP in 2002. After a few years when around 5000 per year took advantage of this, numbers have risen significantly to over 10,000 in the last three years, with no sign of this abating. Improvements to the path from the Base Station and the availability of downhill-only tickets since 2007 are thought to have contributed significantly.

## 9.8 Birdwatchers

Many bird enthusiasts continue to travel on the funicular and use the Ptarmigan terrace, from where ptarmigan and snow bunting can often be seen. Anecdotal evidence suggests the numbers of birdwatchers have continued to increase with many more organised groups visiting the car parks and using the path network.

The introduction (2012) of a licence to permit bird watching guides to use the funicular and take their clients around paths on the top of Cairn Gorm may serve to accommodate this growing market. Social media tip offs within this user group to locate rarer bird species is also a changing feature and may alter future behaviour. Occasional disturbance to scheduled and non-scheduled species has been witnessed by the Ranger service, where large bird watching groups walking into the Natura sites from car park level have been recorded. Raising the awareness of the vulnerability of ground nesting birds by dog disturbance will continue using onsite signage.

## 9.9 Summer funicular use

Whereas summer use of the chairlift varied between 29,000 and 58,000 visits a year, the funicular has recorded up to 182,000 non-skier users (2002/2003), declining to 117,000 in 2010/2011. As with the chairlift, the weather has a powerful effect on its use by visitors. The chairlift had operational reliability of between 120 and 170 days annually depending on weather conditions; the railway operates over 350 days per year. In most years there have been days when over 1000 people have used the railway, contrasting with others when the numbers barely reach 100. Downhill-only travel has attracted over 5000 people per year. August is the most popular month, with over 1600 in August 2010.

## 9.10 Monitoring has revealed that leakage from the management system is tiny in comparison to the numbers using it, varying from 10 to 30 recorded people breaching the conservation system per year.

9.11 During the summer season, CMSL lead walks from the top station to the summit, and also to the Base Station, on footpaths within the Ski Area. A trial into guided mountain bike descents of the main ski road within the Ski Area is currently taking place. These activities have passed off with no instances of participants wandering off or refusing to be bound by the agreement entered into when buying their ticket.

It has significantly increased the interpretive potential of travel on the railway and the understanding and enjoyment of participants. It has also necessitated the recruitment and training of a team of guides who have themselves greatly developed as ambassadors for the mountain and management system. External licensed birdwatching guides are inducted by CMSL and are bound by the conditions of the guided walk agreement.

Over 4000 people took advantage of the Walk at the Top in both 2010 and 2011.

9.12 Visitors to Coire Cas who do not travel on the train or go on a longer walk often use the trails within the Ski Area, and visit the mountain garden. The most recent visitor survey data, from 2005- 2007, indicated that around 65% of summer walkers arriving in Coire Cas did not walk as far as the plateau. It is considered that the continuing development and promotion of large and smaller attractions such as the Camera Obscura and the Ski Area trails from the car park at Cairn Gorm continue to absorb the interest of visitors who might otherwise be likely to wander into the European site along the Northern Corries path.

9.13 Despite substantial change in the numbers of visitors coming to the Coire Cas car park after the opening of the funicular, the pattern of walk destinations and durations remains similar, despite taking different routes.

Therefore, changes in numbers going to different destinations resulting from the Conservation System are believed by the operator to be relatively modest.

9.14 Variation in use from year to year, as a consequence of weather, might have a greater effect on proportions of visitors to key destinations than the operation of the Conservation System. For example, some of the differences in summer use between 1996 (good summer weather) and 1997/1998 (poor summer weather) visitor surveys appear to have been as high as or even higher than those calculated for the effects of the Conservation System. In 1996 the proportion of walkers getting to Ben Macdui was only about 7% of the traffic to the Cairn Gorm summit, compared to 29% in 1997/1998 (Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, 2000).

9.15 Although mountain use may not have increased there may have been some redistribution of users following the operation of the funicular and the Conservation System. Many of those mountain users who formerly used the chairlift will still aim to reach the peaks, and the longer walk from car park level does not dissuade the committed hill walker. They are likely to use the Ski Area hill road, Windy Ridge path, Fiacail a'Choire Chais path or the Northern Corries path to get to Cairn Gorm, Ben Macdui and the plateau. The impact of increased use of the Northern Corries by mountain users is being managed by encouraging them to use selected paths (see Section 4), and ensuring these paths are well maintained and robust.

9.16 Visitors walking for a shorter time are unlikely to reach the plateau, with a resulting redistribution of these walkers in the Ski Area, with potentially some increased use of the Northern Corries path. The numbers of birdwatchers visiting the plateau has fallen significantly, as predicted by the 2000 VMP. Those that continue to visit the area tend to use the Northern Corries.

## **10 PREDICTIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

It is expected that any funicular-related changes will have happened by now, so no further changes are expected unless visitor management arrangements change or there are changes in external factors.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF CARRIAGE

Terms and conditions of carriage can be found at [www.cairngormmountain.co.uk/terms-conditions](http://www.cairngormmountain.co.uk/terms-conditions)

## APPENDIX 2. FUNICULAR USER GRAPHS, SNOWSPORT TICKET SALE GRAPH, GUIDED WALK GRAPH, BIKING GRAPH

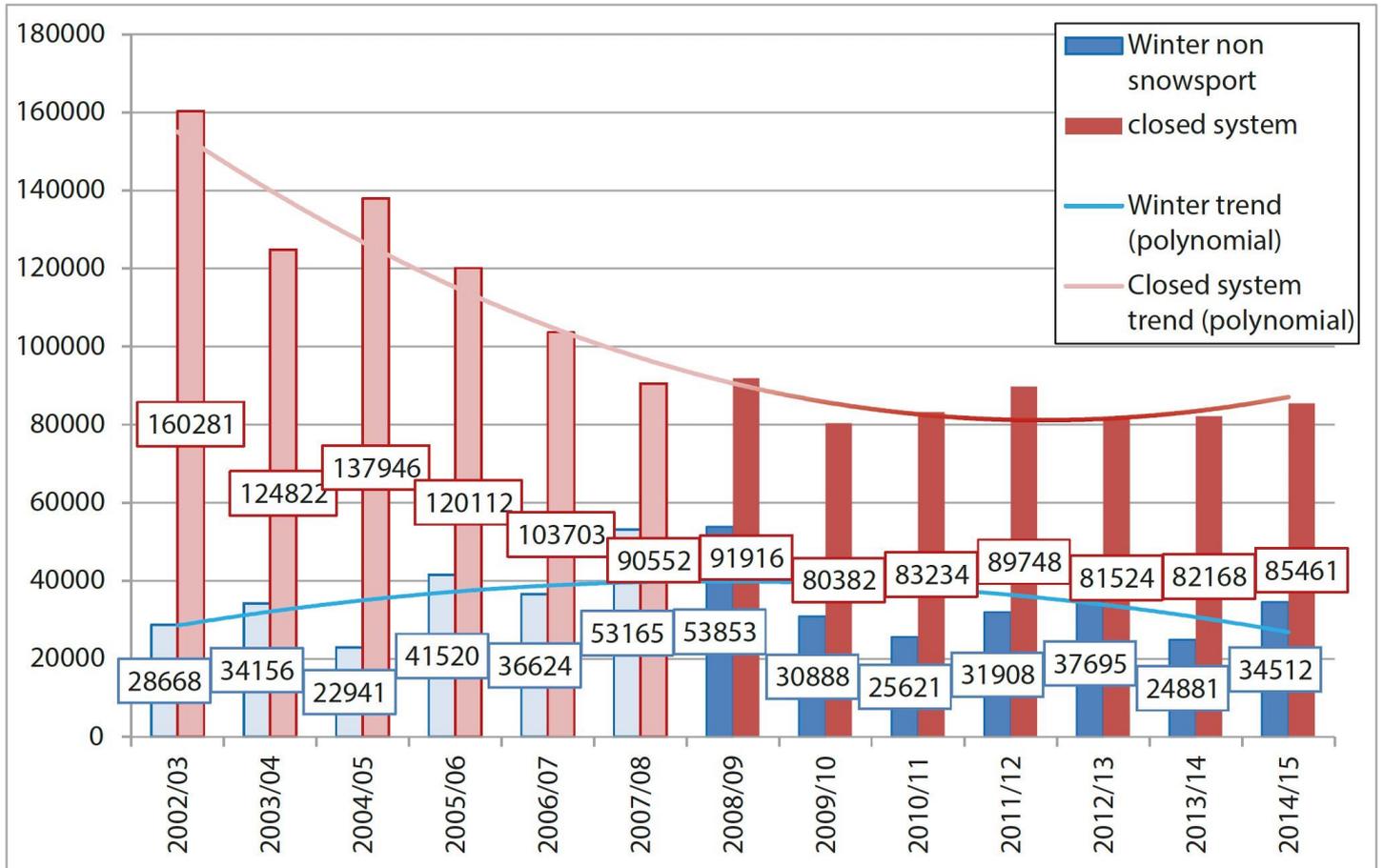
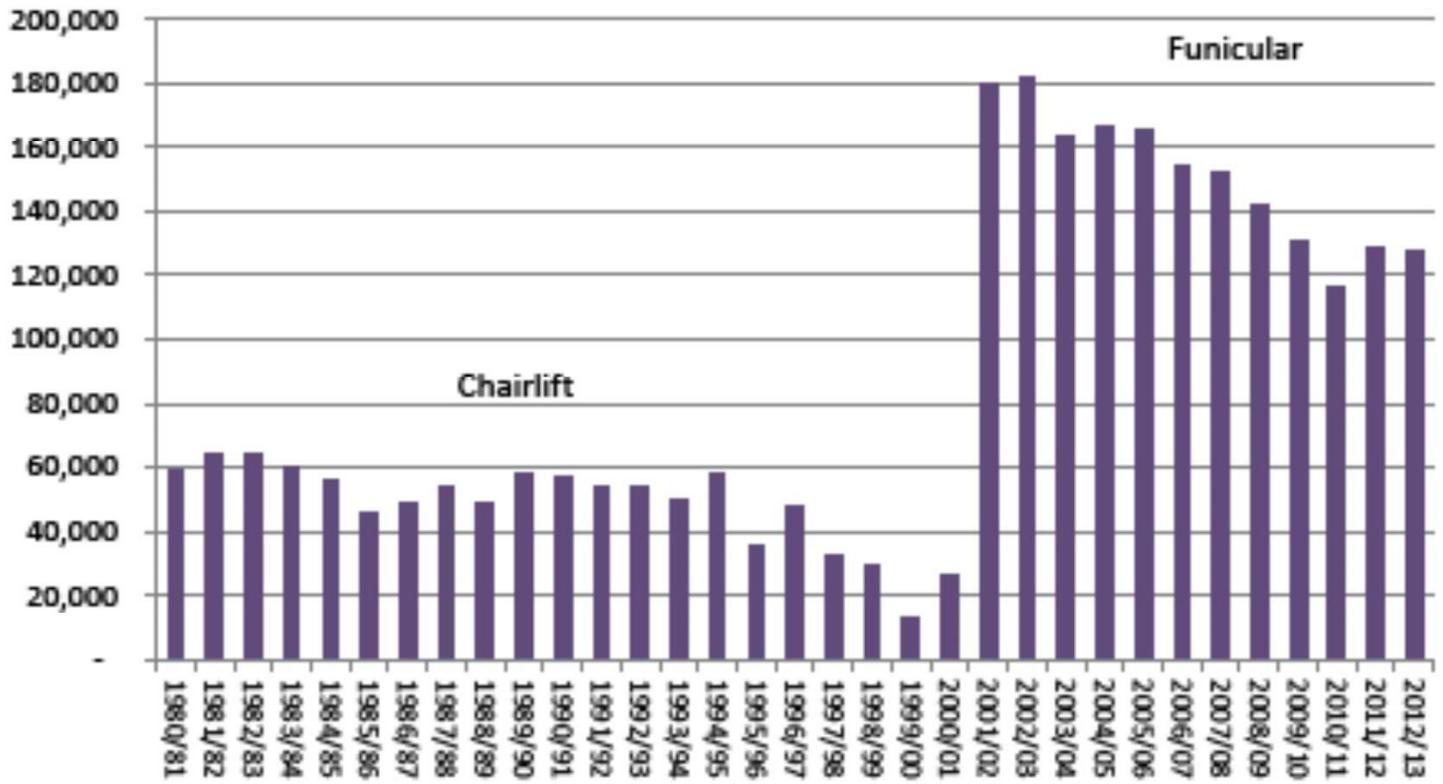
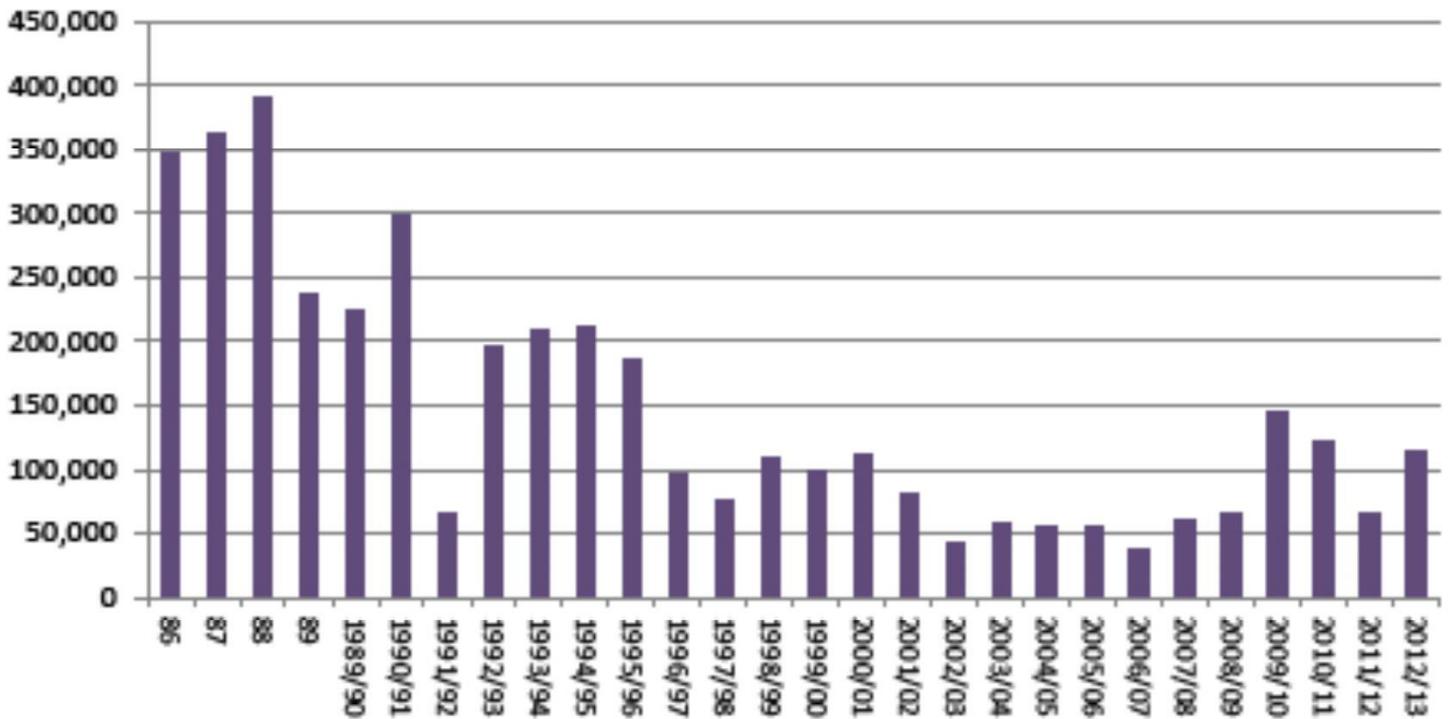


Figure 3: Numbers of ski spectators (non-skiing funicular users) from 2002–2003 to 2013–2015.

Chairlift/Funicular customer numbers from 1981 to date



Skier Days from 1986 to date (inc. seasons)



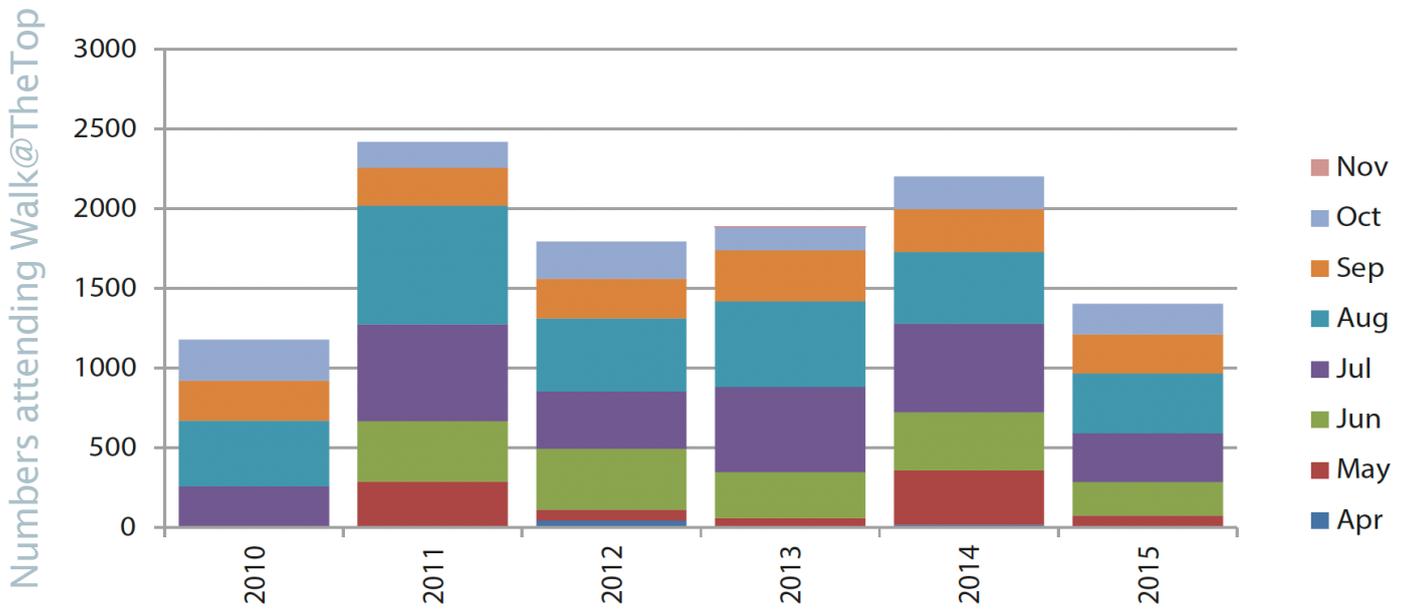


Figure 7: Walk at the Top attendance 2010–2015.

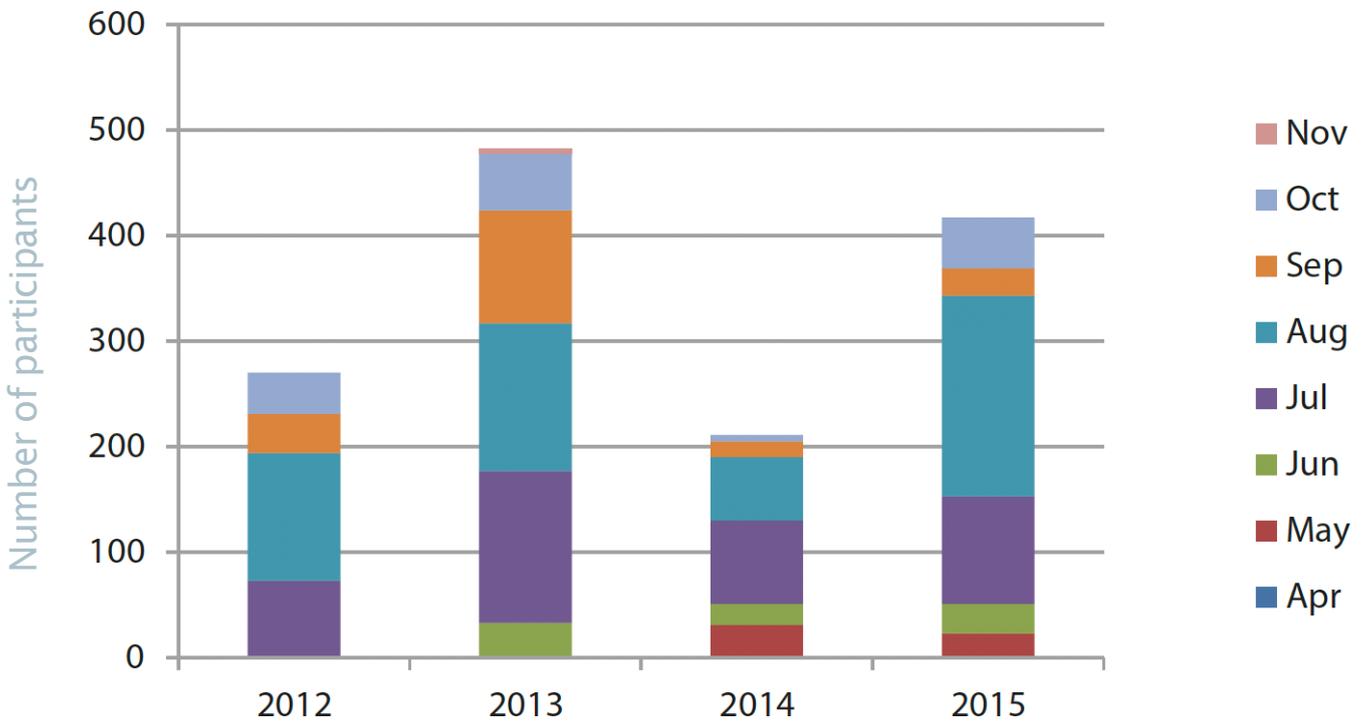
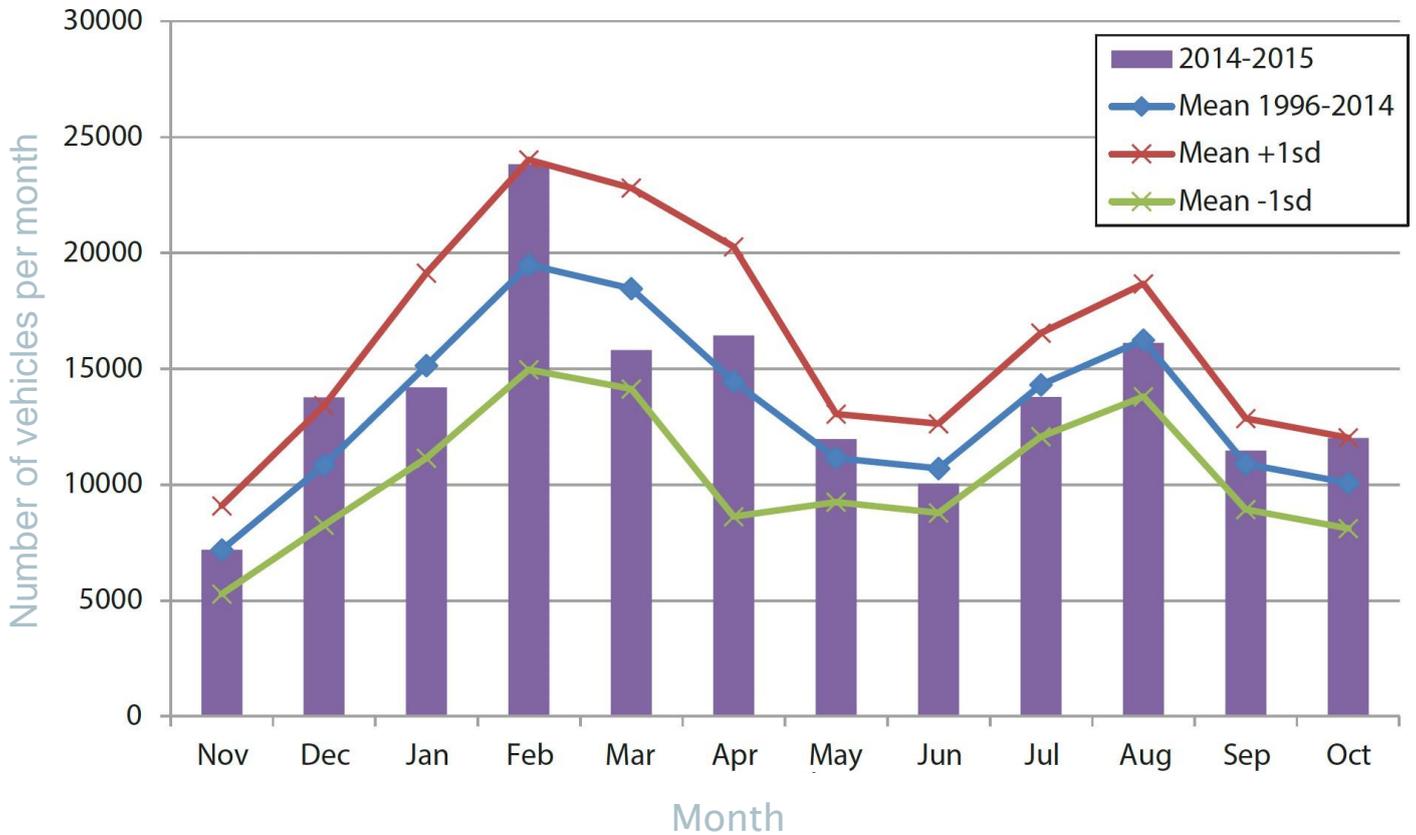


Figure 8: Guided bike tours – numbers taking part 2012–2014.

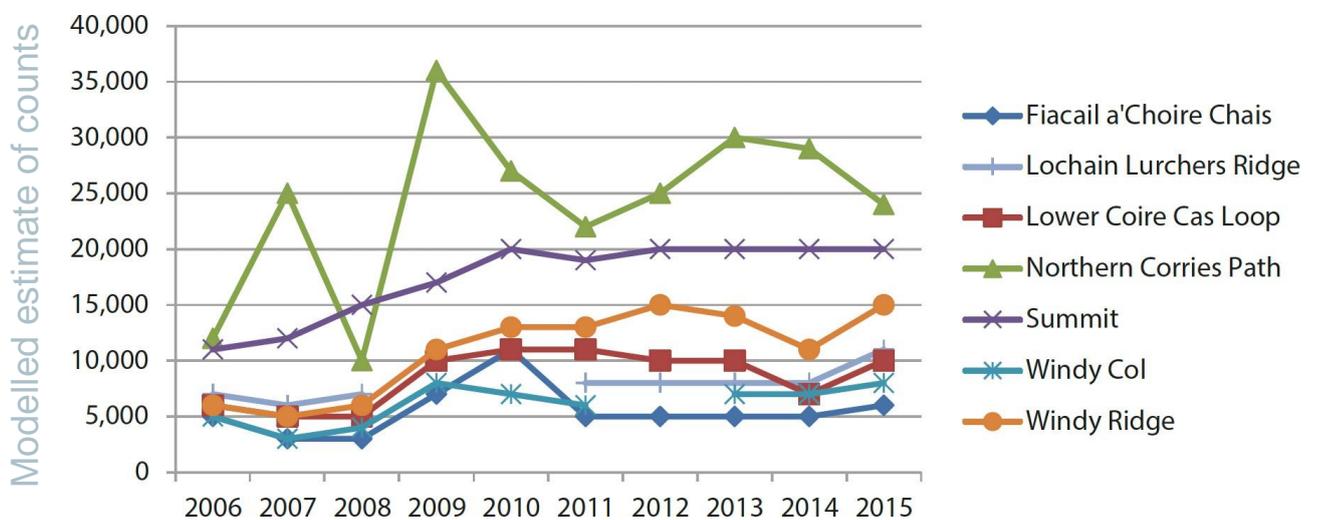
APPENDIX 3. VEHICLE DATA

Figure 9: Mean number of cars counted per month, 2013–2015 compared with the 18-year average.



APPENDIX 4. PATH COUNT FIGURES

Figure 10: June to September estimates for automatic path counters 2006–2015.



## Appendix 5. EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC AGENTS

Public bodies and their appointed agents who have access via the funicular are listed on the following table. Access and egress is provided in response to either an emergency rescue call out or in order to maintain/replace equipment and services vital to the safety of the general public or the environmental integrity of the site.

The scope of geographic activity varies for each of the organisations identified and is detailed along with the management requirements, monitoring and fallback options.

### Mountain rescue and training exercises

CMSL will continue to provide whatever assistance is required to support the Cairngorms-based rescue services. From time to time mountain rescue services request access for training purposes. Local rescue teams, i.e. Cairngorm Mountain Rescue Team (CMRT) and RAF Mountain Rescue Teams will receive access for training year round. These local rescue teams are requested to provide at least 24 hours advance warning of a training exercise which requires funicular access.

Visiting rescue services cannot use the funicular for training activities unless they are involved in a joint exercise with the local rescue services or the specialist training is deemed valid, in which case written notification of the training exercise will be required from CMRT. Rescue dogs accompanying rescue teams are carried in the funicular.

### Maintenance activity

Maintenance activity by public agents are predominantly confined to within the operational Ski Area boundary. Work under this activity is usually always pre-planned and is managed under CMSL's contractor requirements and arrangements.

On arrival the agent reports to the ticket office where documentation is presented and contractor's pass issued. The contractor's pass is logged and staff notify the operations/duty manager of the agents arrival. The operations/duty manager is then responsible for coordinating the agents access on site and recording relevant documentation required to undertake work.

## Monitoring

Access to agents undertaking officially approved research and monitoring relevant to the site are permitted to use the funicular for access and egress. These agents and their work must be officially approved by NS.

NS are responsible for notifying CMSL of such agents and nature of work to be undertaken. The rationale for permitting approved research agents to use the funicular is that their work is directly relevant to monitoring requirements required to meet monitoring obligations under EU or UK environmental legislation. Scientific research in the Cairngorms is difficult due to climatic conditions and the time it takes to access remote parts of the area can be reduced with access via the funicular.

Scientific research agents must report on-site in the same way as maintenance agents, where a record of their access will be recorded.

User group	Access requirement	Geographic scope of activity	Management arrangements	Monitoring requirement	Fallback options
Cairngorm Mountain Rescue Team (CMRT) RAF Mountain Rescue Glenmore Lodge Rescue Team Police Scotland Rescue Team	Car park access; Funicular access; Ptarmigan egress; Piste machine assistance (winter)	Ski Area and beyond	Access co-ordinated between the CMSL and rescue services under existing arrangements, i.e contact call with CMSL operations manager. In summer egress from Ptarmigan will be managed by CMSL duty manager	Operations manager to record: date, incident, assistance provided	None
Scottish Avalanche Information Service (SAIS)	Car park access; Funicular access; Ptarmigan egress	Ski Area and beyond	Receive access as and when required	None	None
The Met Office Heriot Watt Physics Department Scottish and Southern Energy Scottish Radio Holdings	Car park access; Funicular access; Ptarmigan egress	Mainly within the Ski Area	Use CMSL contractor management system, i.e. pre notification required (phone or email) from these agents, with date, scope of work, R.A.'s, method statements, public liability insurance, etc	Duty manager to note: Agent, date and reason for visit in record book. Egress from Ptarmigan arranged by CMSL representative	Refuse access
Public agents: SEPA THC NS HIE CNPA H&S Executive Police Scotland CMSL staff and contractors Cairngorm Ranger Service COAT and path contractors		Some work beyond Ski Area (i.e. monitoring, path works, land management)	Work beyond the boundary of the Ski Area – as above but permission required from relevant land owner. In some instances these organisations may have statutory right to enter onto any land. It is unlikely that any visit would be made without prior arrangement whereby reasonable scope of work or scope of investigation could be ascertained, leading to prior approval for funicular use to access beyond the Ski Area	As above and evidence of contact with relevant landowner	Allow access to reasonable scope of visit and statutory rights of Agency. Refuse access to any unreasonable visit or work. Undetermined visits can be refused
Unlisted mountain rescue teams	Car park access; Funicular access; Ptarmigan egress	Assistance to CMRT rescue or relevant MRT training work	Rescue work and training beyond the boundary of the Ski Area coordinated and approved by CMRT	As above including evidence of CMRT approval	Refuse access

## APPENDIX 6. LATE SKIING PROTOCOL IN MAY AND JUNE

### Background

The following management provision allows for late snowsports, whilst helping to avoid dotterel disturbance. These measures allow CMSL to maximise the potential of snow sports. There appears to be a pattern of late snow from season 2008 through to 2015 which has allowed CMSL to operate surface lifts into late May. This combined with the growing freestyle market using park and rail features to hone skills has additionally provided a welcome revenue increase. Stable weather conditions toward the end of the season allow riders to improve and CMSL is now building a reputation for a well-managed park set-up.

Snowsports enthusiasts are focused on their sport and as this is snow based are unlikely to disturb dotterel. Therefore this protocol is primarily aimed at managing other funicular users and in particular bird watchers in May and June. CMSL do not wish to distinguish between allowing snow sports users access and excluding other funicular passengers from exiting the Ptarmigan station in good snow-cover.

The protocol reduces the risk of dotterel disturbance in a practical way. CMSL will achieve a reduction in risk, by managing ski spectators by raising awareness and cordoned access.

Whilst it is not possible to minimise the risk of disturbance completely, These measures will raise awareness at a key time as dotterel return. It should be recognised that many bird watchers, hill walkers, dog walkers and mountaineers use this area, so risk of disturbance cannot be eliminated completely.

### Informative Management

These measures are introduced when dotterel are observed returning to the wider area (normally May).

- CMSL will continue to work with NS and use observations from employees and general public to guide our management on the ground.
- Pre arrival information can be placed on the website and CMSL social media as and when it is necessary.
- Face to Face interaction at the ticket office. An extended script will be conveyed to all ticket purchasers which will highlight the increased management due to dotterel. Further emphasis will be placed on remaining within the cordon area.
- Message added to funicular journey. 'If you are going outside today please stay within the operating ski pistes and respect our measures that are in place at this time of year to protect returning dotterel. These birds are now arriving back to this area from wintering in Africa and as protected species we wish to limit disturbance with your help'.

Management of movements on the ground when snow cover is restricted to the Ptarmigan and Ciste bowls a rope line from the main piste signage and / or crowd control netting is used to restrict movement and encourage all users leaving from the skiers exit to move directly towards the Fairway piste and Bowls. Narrow access provision to allow hill walkers free access to the summit path and marquis wells path. A rope line along the ski patrol boundary fence will also restrict movement onto the ground on either side of the summit path. The rope line will be continued behind the Ptarmigan tow and along the fence line to restrict access around the marquis wells path area. Entry provision to the marquis well path area will be maintained.

At times when snow cover is wider, piste access will need to be maintained into the White Lady, Traverse and M1. Therefore a cordon along the patrol boundary fence will be used. When snow cover is extensive dotterel disturbance is likely to be reduced.

CNPA vulnerable nesting bird signage advising all user groups will be placed at the entrance to the summit path. This will be duplicated during this period outside the main skier exit doors beside the main piste signage. If the Ptarmigan tow is operational.

CMSL will also place the temporary CNPA signage at the entrance to the Marquis Wells path. In periods where snow cover has reduced enough to allow access up the summit path a reintroduction of the summit path ropes will help restrict movements for those who move beyond the late season restrictive cordon.

A brief report will be submitted to NS within the monitoring scheme and will be available for the reporting officer to include in his report to the S50 group. The report will include images from May and (June if necessary) showing snow cover along with web cam snapshots from the top station which show date and time. A map or satellite image is used with the typical snow cover marked at least once a week in May/June to give a good indication of snow patches or continuous snow cover.