

1.89 Funicular Railway in the Cairngorms Mountains, Scotland, UK

NOTING the detrimental impact on the heritage quality of many European mountain areas from inappropriate downhill skiing developments and associated tourism facilities;

NOTING that these issues are part of the considerations of the European Intergovernmental Consultation on Sustainable Mountain Development;

WELCOMING the support of the UK and Italian Governments in hosting the two sessions of the European Consultation, in Aviemore, Scotland, in April 1996 and Trento, Italy, in October 1996;

RECOGNIZING that the Aviemore session took place at the foot of the Cairngorms Mountains, an area of outstanding wildlife, scenic and recreational values;

RECOGNIZING that the UK Government is considering the possible nomination of the Cairngorms for World Heritage listing as a site of natural importance under the terms of the World Heritage Convention;

RECOGNIZING the significance of the area for special protection measures under European Community Birds (79/409) and Habitats (92/43) Directives;

RECALLING the long-standing concern of IUCN about the Cairngorms, as reflected in Resolution 15/29 of the 15th Session of the IUCN General Assembly, which called on the UK Government to “take all practical steps to secure for the Cairngorms Mountains protection appropriate to their international significance”;

RECALLING the efforts of the UK Government to improve cooperation amongst all interests in the area through the establishment in 1995 of the Cairngorms Partnership Board;

CONCERNED about proposals for the construction of a funicular railway on the northern slopes of the Cairngorms, as a facility for skiers and tourists;

CONCERNED about the widespread controversy this proposal has generated, including opposition from organizations concerned with environmental protection, public enjoyment of the countryside and the use of public funds in support of development objectives;

AWARE that studies in the northern Cairngorms have shown that alternative development options are able to provide equal economic benefit with substantially less environmental impact;

The World Conservation Congress at its 1st Session in Montreal, Canada, 14–23 October 1996:

1. NOTES the continuing controversy over the proposal to construct a funicular railway in the northern Cairngorms;
2. CALLS upon the European Commission to acknowledge the controversy over certain development projects in the mountain areas of the European Union and to indicate that funding support for projects will be provided only if the highest environmental and planning standards are met;
3. CALLS upon the UK Government to evaluate the full range of development options, to agree a solution which satisfies all the main environmental considerations, which, in terms of public funding, represents good value for money and is financially viable, and which is capable of gaining widespread public support;
4. REQUESTS the Director General, within available resources, to continue to monitor this development and to make representations to the UK Government and other organizations as appropriate.

Note. This Recommendation was adopted by consensus. The delegation of the State member Germany indicated that it had not participated in discussion of the Recommendation nor would it have participated in any voting. The delegations of the State members Norway, Sweden and United States indicated that had there been a vote they would have abstained.