

28 October 2024

Report shows Bannockburn proposals to be “unacceptable”

A professional report commissioned by Scotland’s largest conservation charity, the National Trust for Scotland, reveals that a planning submission submitted to Stirling Council for a horse-trotting track on the site of the historic Bannockburn battlefield and the council’s assessment of it are “fundamentally flawed.”

The report, prepared for the Trust by Glasgow-based landscape planning specialist, Douglas Harman, has been submitted to the Scottish Government-appointed Reporter, who is reviewing the application and the Council’s approval of it following a public outcry.

The proposed trotting track, car parking, fencing and buildings, in green fields adjacent to the battlefield centre and parkland managed and cared for by the Trust, would be directly visible from the Rotunda which acts as a national monument to commemorate the 1314 battle which changed the course of Scottish history. Stirling Council approved the application in July despite many objections and it was subsequently ‘called in’ by Scottish Ministers.

The report concludes that:

- No Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment was submitted with the application
- The failure to provide an assessment of the effects of proposals on the surrounding landscape was a “fundamental omission”
- The photos provided by the applicant to demonstrate how the facilities would appear once constructed “do not conform to relevant guidance” and were misleading, unreliable and “fundamentally flawed”
- The applicant’s assessment of landscape and visual impact, such as it was, was “not fit for purpose”
- There are flaws too in the Council planning department’s handling of the application thanks to a failure to “provide a comprehensive analysis of the relevant material considerations” as well as “overreliance” on the information provided in the applicant’s submission.

Douglas Harman, a highly experienced Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute concluded:

“Given the large number of policy conflicts, there is no doubt that the proposed development is unacceptable in landscape and visual terms.

“In determining the application therefore, paramount importance should be afforded to the protection of this nationally important landscape.”

Stuart Brooks, the National Trust for Scotland’s Director of Conservation & Policy said:

“The report supports our contention that this is the wrong application in the wrong place with the wrong decision by Stirling Council.

“It’s more than a matter of protecting green fields: they are the location of the first day’s combat at Bannockburn on 23 June 1314 and are not just historically and nationally significant but also form a core part of the setting and topography of the wider landscape that dictated the course of the battle.

“Many thousands of visitors each year come to the battlefield centre and the Rotunda to experience something of the fateful events that shaped our nation’s destiny. There is no doubt that the proposals, should they go ahead, would be wholly disruptive and compromise yet another part of the historic battlefield. It’s perhaps understandable why the applicant might want to play that down – but the Council’s assessment should have picked that up.

“We have respectfully submitted the report to the Scottish Reporter and we hope that it provides helpful information as part of the review of Stirling Council’s decision that is now underway.”

ENDS

Editor’s Notes:

A copy of the Trust’s submission to the Reporter, including Douglas Harman’s report can be downloaded here - <https://we.tl/t-0wsKaxL2T9>.

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland’s largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland’s magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022 the National Trust for Scotland launched ***Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone***, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland’s heritage which doesn’t have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the

climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

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