

Is snow making the answer to help sustain Scottish skiing?

1. Making snow in Scotland is technically possible and has been used successfully, at times, on a very limited basis, at both Glenshee and The Lecht. Whether use on a larger scale is practical or economic is still unclear without further investigation.

2. Snow making could be used to supplement snow cover, effectively fill gaps /complete runs, or it may be feasible to create entire runs of snow in the absence of natural snow.

3. Of all the ski destinations in Europe, Iceland has the most similar climate to Scotland (Arctic maritime). Iceland has made considerable investment in snow making and this has apparently been very successful as part a strategy to develop a sustainable skiing economy. Iceland is also similar to Scotland in that it serves a domestic ski market.

4. As part of a new initiative of collaboration and exchange, the North Atlantic Ski Areas Association (NASAA) has been established. Iceland has agreed to host a two day seminar in August to look at operating practices and snow making feasibility. (Full programme to follow).

5. The three ski areas in the Cairngorms National Park- Cairngorm, Glenshee and the Lecht have all expressed an interest in attending the conference.

6. Initial questions that would need to be considered are:

- Given the current changes in the climate, what percentage of a winter would it be feasible to make snow on Scottish Mountains (worst –best case scenarios)?
- Taking into account the most informed thinking on climate change trends, what would be the time frame for any significant changes to the climate that influence snow making feasible?
- What would the capital cost of snow making be?
- What are environmental implications of installing and maintaining the infrastructure?
- What are on going maintenance costs?
- How much water is required? How could this be captured , what are the SEPA/environmental implications of this ?
- What are the running costs?
- Could the capital investment required be utilised in another way that would have a greater impact on sustaining operations on Cairn Gorm- what initiatives in Iceland and else where in the Northern peripheries area have worked that either mitigate for, or adapt to climate change?
- The current market is around 150,000 skier's days in a good year, how will demographic change impact on this market in terms of volume and behaviour?
- Easy jet culture has meant that a lot more Scottish skiers are travelling abroad, given the current global economics, oil price, exchange rates what would be the expected impact on the Scottish ski market?