

MINUTE PAPER

MR. STOREY:

c.c. Mr. Lansdown

c.c. Mr. Hain

DEVELOPMENT OF SNOW RESORT IN THE A.C.T.

Mr. Lansdown has raised the question as to whether it would be desirable and feasible to open up certain parts of the Brindabella Ranges for winter recreation. Snow usually falls in the Ranges during the winter and with a rapidly growing city with a substantial population and a large number of tourists, improvement in access and the development of certain facilities could add greatly to the enjoyment of the city's environment.

The Land Use Plan for the A.C.T. shows a tourist route through the area, but it is not clear whether this road would provide useful access to areas of intensive snow cover. It is also desirable to make some assessment of the frequency and duration of snow, the suitability of areas for skiing and toboggans, the kind of facilities which could be provided and the location of parking areas. The provision of water and sewerage should also be considered. In addition there are questions of responsibility for providing facilities and services. A further complication could be that part of the more suitable areas may be located across the border in N.S.W.

Quite clearly this could be an extensive investigation and I would appreciate it if you could give a preliminary appraisal from your own knowledge of the area and your planning background. The appraisal could touch on general physical planning and programming matters, but I would value your comments especially on the method by which details for this project could be obtained and a study programme could be set up.

(H.L. WESTERMAN)

20 September 1971.

MINUTE PAPER

71/1386

FAC(P):SNOW RESORTS IN THE A.C.T.

In September Mr Lansdown raised the question as to whether it would be desirable to open up certain parts of the Brindabella Ranges for winter recreation. On Friday 5 November 1971 an inspection was made of suitable areas for winter sports. Mr M. Pratt (Chairman of the ACT Ski Council) who has extensive knowledge of the snow conditions in the Brindabella Ranges, gave technical advice. Ecological advice was given by Dr Alex Costin (Assistant Chief Plant Industry CSIRO).

Background

While the seasons vary considerably skiable snow on an average can be expected on the higher parts of the Brindabella Range for at least two and a half months from mid June to the end of August. Mountains with road access where snow generally occurs include Mt Franklin (5,400'), Mt Ginini (5,782') and Mt Gingera (6,092'). Mt Bimberi (6,274') has no road access and other mountains in the ACT of 6,000' or more are too remote to be considered. The snow comes in from either ~~the~~ the south east or north east which results in the snow generally being deposited on the lee side of the Brindabella Range, that is, on the eastern slopes. While some snow does fall on the western slopes, the sun usually melts the snow rapidly. Likewise, snow on the northern and north eastern slopes is exposed to the sun and snow conditions deteriorate quickly if fresh falls are delayed. The most suitable position for skiable snow is usually found on the south eastern slopes.

The Brindabella Mountains, for the most part, are heavily covered with trees and scrub and any ski slopes have to be cleared. The actual width of the cleared ski runs and the amount of clearing on the tops of the Range can clearly influence the holding capacity of the snow. Preferably the tops of the Range should not be cleared although some clearing on the western slopes can help lift the snow over the crest and increase the amount of fall on the lee side of the mountains.

Skiing first began in the Brindabellas in 1936 when the Canberra Alpine Club built a ski lodge and opened up ski runs on Mt Franklin. The ski lodge is still in use but the Club's main interest is now largely in the Mount Kosciusko area and the lodge is very little used. The Royal Military College in the late 40s developed a ski lodge on Mt Ginini but this has subsequently been pulled down in the interest of preservation of the Cotter water supply catchment area.

The main problem with the Brindabella mountains deterring its use is that when the heavy falls come, the Brindabella Road is usually blocked by snow and it is impossible for skiers to get into the suitable ski areas. If an improved access road could be provided and the road cleared immediately after snow falls and some provision made for parking as well as a permanent ski lift, there can be little doubt that there would be renewed interest in the Brindabellas for skiing, particularly for the family skiers and beginners.

Last winter when snow occurred, traffic counts have shown that over 500 vehicles visited the area during the weekend which account for more than 2,000 people. The present access road is narrow and hazardous and it could be expected that greater numbers would visit the area if the proposed Corin Dam/Brindabella Road was constructed to give access to the higher areas of the Brindabellas.

With a rapidly growing city and a large number of tourists wanting to see snow for the first time, there would need to be provided parking and picknicking areas and other facilities to cope with increased demand and special ranger supervision would be needed to control the people and manage the area. While the Brindabellas cannot be seen as a major ski centre, nevertheless, the demand could justify shelter for visitors and some overnight accommodation, particularly if it could be associated with some summer use such as a nature study centre.

Possible Areas

Five areas were investigated for suitability as ski resorts. These were Mt Franklin (5,400'), Little Ginini (5,550'), Mt Ginini (5,782'), Mt Gingera (6,092') and Mt Bimberi (6,274').

1. Mt Franklin

Situated 40 miles away from Canberra, this was the first area developed for snow sports in the ACT. Access and parking space is available to the base of the mountain but to get to suitable ski runs it is necessary to climb 400' to the top of the mountain over a distance of over 3,000'. This has been the main deterrent to any popular use of this area for skiing although the slopes are suitable for all standards of skiing. An access road could be provided to the top, at some expense, but there would be insufficient space available for parking.

The view from the top is quite spectacular and walking trails could be provided to Ginini Falls to the north east of Mt Franklin. Ski runs of up to 2,000' long with a fall from 400' to 500' are possible in this area.

2. Little Ginini

Because Ski runs on Mt Franklin involved a long climb and the snow is somewhat unreliable, 20 years ago the Canberra Alpine Club opened a ski run on Little Ginini. The configuration of the land ensures adequate snow for a long period. The run is easily accessible from the road which cuts across the area. This is the most popular area for both skiers and sightseers but there is inadequate provision for parking and turning and in the middle of the season the area becomes very congested. Areas suitable for parking are available (shown on the map) and a suitable site for a building development associated with the ski area exists on the rise to the south west of the run. The area would be suitable for the provision of a ski tow although the flatter slopes suitable for beginners are largely situated on the top of the mountain and this to some extent would be a deterrent to beginners.

This location, unlike the other areas, is outside the Cotter catchment area and is located in NSW. There may be problems of getting water supply to any residential development in the area if it is located on the top of the hill but water could be probably pumped from nearby creeks.

3. Mt Ginini

Existing ski runs are located on the tops of the ridge facing to the north and for this reason do not hold the snow. The south eastern face, however, is known to retain the snow for a longer period although no runs have so far been developed in this area. By crossing the existing road from Mt Ginini to Mt Gingera it would be possible to develop ski runs of 500' fall over a distance of half a mile with slopes suitable for the advance skier and the beginner. The road, however, in the existing position does not offer suitable sites for extensive area of parking that would be needed for any ski development. This could be overcome if the proposed Corin Dam/Brindabella Road was to be located further downhill so that parking areas and ski development could be provided on the flatter land below the steeper slopes of Mt Ginini.

The Department of Civil Aviation have a directional beacon and building located on the top of Mt Ginini and an access road has been provided for this. From the top there are very extensive and spectacular views, but the existing DCA building is a disruptive element and while the top must be developed as a public lookout, it is not a suitable position for any building associated with the ski resort. The haphazard clearing along the top of the ridge mars the quality of this hill area and regeneration of the

hill top would be desirable. Mt Ginini has great ecological diversity and would be particularly suitable for a nature interpretation area (sub-alpine). As well as ecological diversity on the large scale which is visible from the top of Mt Ginini there is also the small scale eco-systems such as the unique spagnum moss areas of considerable botanical and entomological interests. This area is also an excellent jump off point for walkers into the Cotter and the Goodradigbee River areas and the Kosciusko National Park.

It should be noted that any resort development at Ginini would drain to the Cotter Catchment area and while adequate provision could be made for sewage treatment there could be objections from Department of Health to any development within the Cotter Catchment.

4. Mt Gingera

The north facing slopes of Mt Gingera which can be seen from Canberra does not hold snow long enough to justify it being considered for the development of a ski resort. The south eastern slopes, however, are suitable but the steepness of the land makes it impossible to find areas suitable for parking and the slopes would be too steep for beginners. This area might best be considered as a ski touring area as an adjunct to a resort development at Mt Ginini.

5. Mt Bimberi

While it is known that this area holds the snow, it is 12 miles beyond Gingera on a narrow winding mountain road leading only to the base of the mountain. Snow falls in winter would block the road and it would require extensive snow clearance to make the road passable. The land also is generally too steep to achieve suitable parking areas except on top of the mountain. Moreover, as the ACT in this position butts onto the Mount Kosciusko National Park there would be objections from the Park Authorities if extensive development and roadworks were provided to this area. The difficulty of gaining access to Bimberi from the ACT is great but the advantages of Bimberi over Ginini are not sufficient to justify its development in the short term.

Conclusion

Of the four sites investigated Mt Ginini with its location at the intersection of the proposed Corin Dam Road with the Brindabella Road seems to offer the greatest scope for development of the ski area. Extensive snow clearing of the road to gain access to the ski resort would not be necessary in this location. The area also has the greatest scope for summer usage, particularly as a nature study area, and with the extensive view that can be obtained from the top of Mt Ginini, is likely to attract visitors throughout the year.

If a ski resort was to be developed at Mt Ginini, the Corin Dam/Brindabella Road should be located as shown on the plan. As well as providing for a more interesting route it brings the road down onto flatter land more suitable for the development of resort area and provision of parking spaces etc.

The Commission has already received a request for field study centres (File 71/1418) (a programme now being sponsored by the Australian Conservation Foundation). The idea of a field study centre is to provide the means whereby people of all ages and all walks of life can obtain at first hand an understanding of the environment through professionally presented courses offering a large range of

of subjects to suit the different interests and backgrounds. It involves teaching and overnight accommodation and access to a diversity of natural environments. Such a centre associated with a ski resort on Ginini could provide some accommodation for people wanting to stay in the area during the winter period and could also provide a base for the other facilities that would be required by tourists and visitors to this area. Commercial accommodation in this area, in the first instance, would be most unlikely and if it was to be provided in the future it would mainly be based around the summer attractions of the area and not the winter usage. For this reason, the nature study centre built perhaps by the Commonwealth would be the only accommodation conceivable for this area although local organisations catering for youth such as the YMCA, National Fitness, could be interested in providing youth camps.

Unless ski tows are provided in this area, winter usage would mainly be for the beginners, some family groups and mainly people visiting the snow for the first time. A ski tow could be provided in the Ginini area but it is unlikely to be commercially viable to a developer. If, on the other hand, the Commonwealth provide the tow equipment there can be little doubt that its operation would be financially viable. Without a ski tow, however, there would be little point in opening out further ski runs on the slopes of Mt Ginini.

RECOMMENDATION

- (i) That Mt Ginini be considered for the development of a resort for skiing and summer use such as a nature study centre.
- (ii) That the Corin Dam/Brindabella Road be located in a different position to that proposed in the preliminary engineering investigation (see attached plan) so as to open up more suitable areas for parking and resort development.
- (iii) That a nature interpretation study area be defined in the Mt Ginini area.
- (iv) As the study undertaken so far can only be considered in the nature of a reconnaissance further studies should be undertaken as outlined below:-
 - A cost benefits study of developing the Corin Dam/Brindabella Road as against improvement of the Brindabella Road.
 - A detail ecological study of the area from Mount Franklin to Mount Ginini.
 - A collection of data on snow falls and snow depths.
 - The location of the upper part of the Corin Dam/Brindabella Road.

6.

- Estimates of the number of visitors that could be expected in the snow areas in the future.
- Requirements for and suitability of the area for a nature study centre.
- Further planning feasibility studies of ski resort at Mt Ginini including layout and location of the ski runs and ski tow etc. and cost of development.
- Ecological advice on clearing of ski run and the re-generation of the cleared runs on the tops of Mt Ginini.
- Effect of the resort development on the management and control of the Cotter water supply catchment.

K.W. Storey
(K.W. STOREY)
13. 1.72



MT. FRANKLIN
(5400')

EXISTING
SKI RUN J

FRANKLIN
CHALET

BRINDABELLA
ROAD.

SUGGESTED AREA SUITABLE
FOR NATURE INTERPRETION
AREA (SUB-ALPINE)

EXISTING
SKI RUN

LITTLE
GININI

SPAGNUM
MOSS AREA

POSSIBLE AREA
FOR PARKING &
RESORT DEV.

CLEARED RIDGE
REQUIRES REGENERATION

EXISTING SKI RUN NOT
SUITABLE

SUITABLE SLOPE FOR
NEW SKI RUN AND
POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT
OF A RESORT

EXISTING
D.C.A. BEACON

MT. GININI
(5782')

N. S. W

CORIN
DAM

RECOMMENDED LOCATION
OF CORIN DAM / BRINDABELLA
ROAD SO AS TO OPEN UP A
MORE SUITABLE AREA FOR
PARKING & RESORT DEVELOPMENT

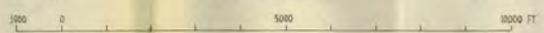
PEG NATURE
STUDY HUT

NORTH FACING SLOPES
DO NOT HOLD THE SNOW

MT. GINGERA
(6092')

SUITABLE SLOPES FOR
SKIING BUT LAND TOO
STEEP FOR RESORT DEV. &
PARKING

SCALE OF 1 inch to 1000 ft.



NARROW WINDING ROAD
TO MT. BIMBERI

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING

C.C. 1972/10... DATE 29 MAR 1972

ITEM 2 - SNOW RESORTS IN THE ACT (71/1386)

Messrs Storey, Speldewinde attending.

The Committee received a Submission from Mr Storey dated 13 March 1972 containing four recommendations concerning the development of ski resorts in the ACT.

It was explained that the snow resorts would be of limited capacity but that their development appeared necessary for the proper exploitation of the alpine area of the ACT.

The Committee noted that there was reference to a notional road in the recent land use report accepted by the Department of the Interior and that provision had been made for the road in the current 5 year programme. The Committee expressed its general sympathy with Mr Storey's proposals but indicated that further consideration should be given to them when a road is built between Corin Dam and the Brindabellas.

In the meantime plans could be developed for the opening up of Brindabella resort areas.

Drawings - Relief Map Location Plan.

Would the following executives please note this extract and take any necessary action
FAC(E)
FAC(P)