

Parking problem rumbles on at new centre

LIVE Active Leisure is working with Perth and Kinross Council to address the current parking issues at the new £36 million Blairgowrie Recreation Centre.

The delay in demolishing the old recreation centre – which would form the car park – has resulted in problems with parking.

Fencing around the old site has now been moved to allow eight to 10 spaces and members of the public have been reminded they can use the neighbouring Blairgowrie High car park outwith school hours.

The plan was that after the new centre opened in August 2025, the old centre would be demolished to make way for the car park.

However, councillors were told last September by senior council officers, the demolition had been pushed back six months to allow more time for issues with the new facility to be resolved – just in case it needed to reopen as a back-up.

On November 26 the council's finance and resources committee was told the old facility's demolition has been further delayed until the autumn.

The scrutiny and performance committee's convener raised the parking issue directly with Live Active Leisure's chief executive when he appeared before the committee on January 28.

Strathmore ward councillor Colin Stewart said asked if there were any plans to alleviate parking issues.

Live Active Leisure chief executive Paul Cromwell said: "What we have is a temporary arrangement and, because of that, it's creating some issues.

"It's actually providing more spaces than the old facility did. However, we still have peak times where we obviously have some challenges.

"We have been working with our colleagues in property around this project. There have been some additional changes to the external access point which has created a few more spaces. And – from a longer term perspective – more car parking will be provided when the old facility has been removed."

# Skier fears dwindling snow a risk to sports



**FEARS:** Clockwise, from above, Ronald Duncan, taking part in a downhill skiing competition, and a snowy Glenshee last month.

A DUNDEE-BORN Winter Olympian has warned that the future of skiing – including the Winter Olympics – is under serious threat from climate change, despite a rare and welcome return of heavy snowfall to Glenshee this winter.

Ronald Duncan, 63, who represented Team GB at the 1988 and 1992 Winter Olympics, said the sport is now so dependent on artificial snowmaking that elite competition would be impossible across much of Europe without it.

The downhill skier's warning comes as Scotland's largest ski centre enjoys one of its best snowfalls in recent years after prolonged periods of uncertainty, cancelled lift days and increasingly unreliable winters.

"Glenshee looks great just now," Ronald said. "But that doesn't mean the problem has gone away. We still get good snow – what we've lost is consistency. And without consistency, winter sport doesn't work."

Ronald, 63, grew up in Dundee and learned to ski at Glenshee at a time when heavy snow was a routine feature of Scottish winters.

He is a former Strathallan School pupil and access to the hills helped him on his way to becoming the 1980 and 1983 British men's downhill champion

**BY MICHAEL ALEXANDER**

and men's super-G champion in 1991. But he said those conditions are no longer reliable, and warned that recent snowfall should not be mistaken for recovery.

On the eve of the 2026 Winter Olympics, Ronald said the games themselves are increasingly dependent on industrial-scale snowmaking to remain viable.

And he warned that in future, the Winter Olympics might only be possible by putting a giant refrigerated dome over mountains.

"The Winter Olympics now only exist because we manufacture winter," he said. "That's the reality."

The Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics, which open on February 6, will rely on millions of cubic metres of artificial snow as freezing days continue to decline across the Italian Alps.

A 2024 study found that all 19 Winter Olympic host cities since the 1950s have warmed by an average of 2.7C, while analysis by Climate Central showed Cortina's average February snow depth has declined by around 15cm since the early 1970s.

Snowmaking has kept competitive skiing viable for more than three decades, but Ronald said it is becoming more difficult and expensive as temperatures rise.

He pointed to the 1976 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck, when

Austria's army was forced to transport snow from mountain passes to prevent the games being cancelled.

By the time Ronald was competing internationally, snowmaking had already become essential in many European resorts, particularly in Italy's Dolomites.

"Racing didn't really return to Cortina until the early 1990s, and that was 100% due to snowmaking," he said. "I raced at Val Gardena before they had it – there was barely enough snow to hold a race. Once snowmaking came in, it transformed the sport."

However, he warned that snowmaking only works when temperatures remain low enough, and that warming winters are beginning to undermine even that safety net.

He said the impact of climate change on skiing became impossible to ignore after he retired from competition in 1993.

That December, he visited the Kitzsteinhorn glacier above Kaprun in Austria, rising to around 3,000 metres.

Just three years earlier, he had skied there in June in falling powder snow.

"When I went back, the glacier had melted dramatically and it was raining all the way to the top," he said.

"That was when it really hit me how serious this was."

The economic consequences are already being felt across Europe, he added.

In the 1990s, installing a single ski lift cost around £1 million.

Today, resorts require tens of millions of pounds of infrastructure, much of it dedicated to snowmaking.

Closer to home, Glenshee – long popular with skiers from Dundee, Angus, Fife and Perthshire – has faced ongoing challenges and has sought to diversify its operations to survive.

Ronald's own businessman father Jack, who passed away last year, was among the early pioneers of the Glenshee ski centre.

Now based near Basingstoke in Hampshire, Ronald has focused his post-racing career on climate action.

He founded CO2Analysis, a technology firm that uses AI tools to help organisations track and reduce supply chain emissions, which are estimated to account for around 80% of global carbon output.

He has also teamed up with fellow Winter Olympian Jeff Olson to launch Olympian Climate Champions' "6 for 6" campaign, calling on businesses to cut supply chain emissions by 6% in 2026.

Supply chains are estimated to generate 47.4 billion tonnes of carbon annually. A 6% global reduction would remove around 2.8 billion tonnes – more than seven times the UK's annual emissions.

Ronald said that scale of reduction is necessary to end declining snowfall.