

Forestry, access and our National Parks

Description



Unlawful sign at Auch Tubh Balquidder south of the Corbett Meall an-t Seallach

Following my post before the first May holiday weekend [If you come across an access problem this weekend report it!](#) which featured a fence on Loch Gynack in the Cairngorms, the Cairngorms National Park Authority alerted me that they had a form to report such problems. The link is at the bottom of this page <http://cairngorms.co.uk/park-authority/advice-guidelines/outdoor-access-advice/> under “How to Report an access issue”. Since then I have come across several signs which contravene access



There was no evidence of forest

operations on the day I passed this sign and it appears that the forestry industry have simply taken a sign used for building sites and the like – where there is no right of access – and applied it to the countryside. While the position and angle of the first sign meant it was unclear whether Tilhill was claiming no access was allowed up the track, there was another sign just a little further up:

default watermark



A further No Unauthorised Person sign was further up on the right side of the track. Incidentally, in the felling, it was good to see the birch have been left standing which reduces the impact of the conifers felled.

After the Land Reform Act was passed, a lot of work was done by SNH, in the National Access Forum and by organisations like the Ramblers with forest managers on how to “manage” access rights in woodland, particularly when felling operations were taking place. There is even a model sign template available for use [sign_template_-_woodland_management.](#) which shows up just how bad and acceptable the Tilhill sign is. Unfortunately all the fantastic work done in the 10 years following the access legislation now appears to be slowly unravelling and increasingly forest managers seem to ignore access rights completely.

That they are able to do so in a National Park, which should be leading the way, is regrettable. National Parks, which have a statutory duty to promote enjoyment of the countryside, should be the

last place in Scotland where we see such signs. This is not a new problem. Below are two photos I took of Forestry Commission sign on 30th April 2013 – on the West Highland Way! – one more acceptable than the other. Needless to say there were no forest operations in place that day either.



While this sign alerts people to the “No unauthorised persons sign” the issue is

where those signs are placed. If it next door to machinery working on timber stacks that would be proper use of the sign, but to apply it to the whole forest is wrong



The sign on the left totally contravened access rights and there were no proper

directions to the alternative route. I met bemused walkers of the West Highland Way unsure of what to do until I told them to ignore the sign and that, if they came across felling operations, they should be able to walk around them.

What needs to happen

I would like to see the Access Teams in both our National Parks being given authorisation to enter negotiations with forest operators to ensure the Scottish Outdoor Access Code signage is adopted throughout our National Parks and set an example to the rest of Scotland.

Meantime, I hope the LLTNPA access team will, following their success at Drumlean, be able to get this and other such signs removed.

Unless more people report signs such as these, our access rights risk being undermined. If you see similar signs, please report them, and if its in a National Park do send your pics to parkswatch.

Category

1. Cairngorms
2. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. access rights
2. CNPA
3. Forestry Commission Scotland
4. LLTNPA

Date Created

May 23, 2018

Author

nickkempe