

The Rest and Be Thankful fiasco.....and corona virus

Description

We should consider a tunnelling for the Rest and Be Thankful p

YOUR revelation that the Scottish Government has spent nearly £100m in 13 years unsuccessfully trying to stop landslips blocking the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful ("Another sticking plaster: fury at £100m 'wasted' at Rest And Be Thankful site", the Herald, March 6) should trigger a national debate on how we manage roads and the land in Scotland.

The Rest and Be Thankful is a historic and scenic pass that should be one of the tourism highlights of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. Instead it has been gradually ruined by industrial forest plantations, the misconceived routing of the A83 across one the steepest slopes in Scotland, the suburban-style landscaping at the top of the pass, and now all the ugly engineering works that have so far failed to prevent landslips engulfing the road.

A significant contributory factor towards the engineering failure has been the history of overgrazing on the slopes above the A83. In other European countries it is widely accepted that overgrazed slopes in mountain areas help cause



The Rest and Be Thankful is notoriously prone to landslips

avalanches and landslips and public authorities have been taking action to address this for well over 100 years. At the Rest and Be Thankful, however, the problem was not acknowledged until 2012 when a report from Forest Research showed that the grazing by sheep and deer of the south-facing slopes of Beinn Luibhean was contributing to the instability of the slope. That report recommended that woodland restoration/planting

would ameliorate the problem. Despite the creation of the taskforce, chaired by the Scottish Transport Secretary, it was not until March 2017, five years later, that it was agreed a planting "trial" would go ahead. Planting was originally scheduled to start in the spring of 2018 but so far nothing has happened, apparently because the landowner was reluctant to co-operate. What has been agreed that Forest Land Scotland should purchase

I was pleased to have this letter published in the Herald last week following a post last year asking why

grazing had been allowed to continue on the slopes ([see here](#)).

The proposed Woodland creation scheme for the Rest and Be Thankful 2019-29 on the slopes of Beinn Luibhean is still open for consultation ([see here](#)). Maybe that's an administrative error and the plan is now approved? However, if this plan had been treated as an emergency, like the coronavirus, planting would have started years ago.

What I didn't say in the letter is that despite all its policy statements about the importance of woodland for preventing flooding etc, the LLTNPA has NEVER spoken out about the inordinate length of time its taking to plant trees at the Rest and Be Thankful. We should expect our National Parks to be doing far better than that.

The £100m cost of this Rest and Be Thankful bungling to the public and the additional cost to the local economy in Argyll and Bute of the repeated road closures will, however, pale into insignificance if COVID 19 results in a tourist lockdown in the countryside. To give Forest and Land Scotland some credit therefore, it was good to see they issued a blog on Tuesday encouraging people to visit the countryside as a safe thing to do ([see here](#)). Quite a contrast to the LLTNPA Board the day before who missed the opportunity to discuss the implications of the corona crisis in the light of their statutory duty to promote sustainable economic development ([see here](#)).

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. conservation
2. Forest Land Scotland
3. landscape
4. LLTNPA
5. Local communities

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