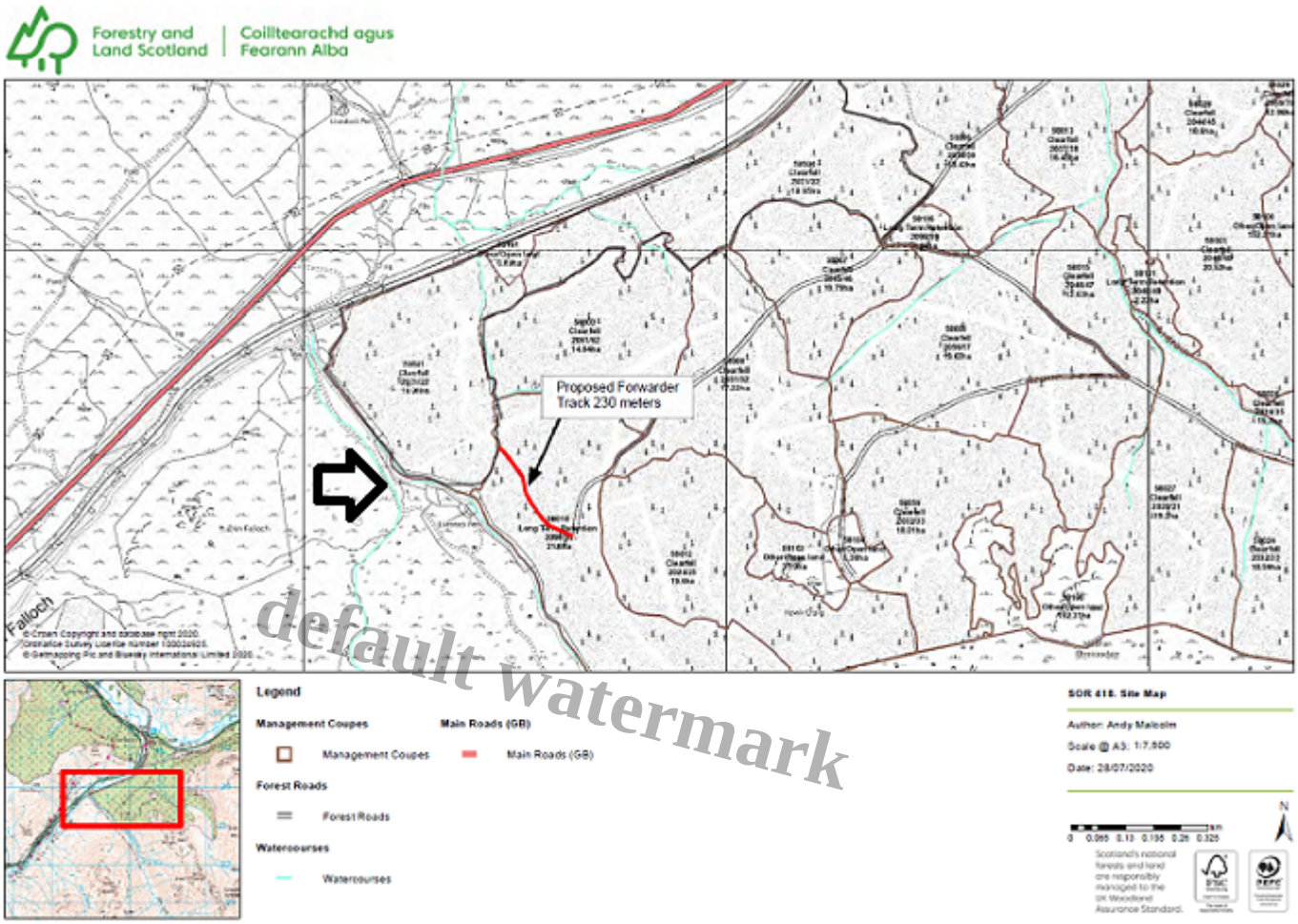
More forestry shenanigans â?? the recently constructed road in upper Glen Falloch

Description



Looking over the sheep fank to the new forest road

When I went up upper Glen Falloch on 8th August to look at the hydro intake (see here), I spotted a new forestry road on the far side of the river. This appears to be in the exact same location as a road which was notified to the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority under the Prior Notification system on 29th July 2020 (see here), i.e just a week earlier.



The arrow shows approx position from where photo taken. Note the date on the plan, 28/07/20

There have been no other Prior Notifications or Planning applications for this part of forest south of Inverardran in the last three years so I believe it is safe to assume it is the same section of road as that in the Prior Notification. There is nothing in planning report dated 25th August to suggest that this was a retrospective prior notification and the papers refer to the works taking place in the future. The application by Forestry and Land Scotland for Prior Approval was, therefore, nothing of the sort.

Whether the LLTNPA was aware of this I am not sure but, accepting the staff concerned did act in good faith, they have been deceived by Forestry and Land Scotland. Whatever the explanation, this is a serious matter and brings the whole Prior Notification system for forest roads into further disrepute.

The LLTNPAâ??s report on this proposal, dated 25th August, refers to this new road as a quad bike track:

â??The purpose of the tracks is to provide quad access for essential works such as planting and general maintenance of a young tree crop through its establishment phase and for deer management purposes.â?•



The road in the background running away from the viewer was there previously and is marked on the plan above.

Some quad bike track! But the report and plans also refer to the track being for â??forwardersâ?•, much bigger vehicles requiring much bigger roads. So which is it?

The LLTNPAâ??s woodland adviser is quoted in the report as saying *â??landscape impact will be minimal and that the specification is acceptableâ?•*. This might be true if a quad bike track had been built, but this is an industrial forestry road, which has the hallmarks of being built to the UK Forestry Standards (roads up to 7 metres wide). Unfortunately, the specification has not been published on the planning portal (I have asked for it) so one cannot tell at present what the LLTNPA was told by FLS.

The Report, however, also states:

â??Tracks will be â??as dugâ?? construction i.e. materials to construct the tracks will be sourced on or immediately adjacent to the track line and no imported or quarried material will be used in the construction.â?•

That is clearly not true, the base of the road appears to have been constructed by quarried material and to have come from a quarry in the forest above (sorry no photo). This suggests that LLTNPA staff have indeed been deceived. If, instead of doing desktop exercises to decide planning applications, they were allowed by their bosses to make site visits, these errors might have been avoided and the integrity of the planning system protected. As it is, this is yet another example of how the endless Prior Notifications of new forestry roads are helping to destroy the landscape qualities of the LLTNPA was set up to protect.



Section of hydro track in upper Glen Falloch above the new forestry road (which is on the opposite side of the glen)

The way this Prior Notification has been handled raises questions about fairness and equity in the planning system. I have campaigned for five years now for hydro roads to meet the LLTNPAâ??s own standards for renewable developments. There is still lots wrong with the Glen Falloch hydro roads â?? the road here for example is far too wide and there is no central grass strip which would reduce the landscape impact and the water run-off â?? but Glen Falloch Estate has gradually been restoring the worst damage. How can they be expected to do that, however, if the LLTNPA allows Forestry and Land Scotland to get away with such disgraceful roads on the other side of the same glen?

Unfortunately, the LLTNPA undermines its own moral authority and the ability of its staff to take effective enforcement action by treating people and organisations differently, depending on who they are and whether any member of the public makes a fuss or not.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. forestry land scotland
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Date Created
September 8, 2020
Author
nickkempe

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