

The forestry roads prior notification farce in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park

Description



New quarry in Monachyle Glen, Balquhiddel Photo Thursday 13th July

On 23rd June the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority issued a decision to Fountain Forestry UK Ltd that Prior Approval was not needed for “*Construction of 800m of new forest track, upgrade of 330m forest track, formation of turning and stacking areas, upgrade of 2no existing bridges and construction of 3no small span bridges*” in Monachyle glen.

While the “Prior Notification” is on the LLTNPA’s planning portal ([see here](#)) not a single document remains. The short description of the Prior Notification quoted above makes no mention of “a quarry”, as this great big hole is described by the sign.

Forest roads are still classed as permitted developments in Scotland but under the Prior Notification system have to be notified to planning authorities who have 28 days to decide if “Prior Approval” is required. The “borrow pits” that are used to source the material to construct forest roads are included in the Prior Notification system. The word “borrow pit” is misleading as the borrowed material will never be returned and the word “quarry”, as on the sign, would appear a more appropriate description.



Section of upgraded road near the start of the plantation which is NOT included in the outline of the area covered by the planning application

This particular quarry appears larger than would be required to construct 800m of new forest road and upgrade 330mm more but whatever the case there appear to be no plans to restore or mitigate the landscape impact of either the quarry or the road.

Fountains Forestry submitted their Prior Notification on 28th April so would have been within their rights to commence the work one month later. It appears they did as it is difficult to see how this quarry could have been excavated between 23th June, when the LLTNPA decided prior approval was not required, and my visit on 13th July.

Had the LLTNPA decided the road required prior approval it could have imposed conditions requiring the quarry be restored /landscaped as happens in the Cairngorms National Park. It appears to have chosen not to do so.

I have remarked before that the LLTNPA treats anywhere in the National Park like Monachyle Glen that is out of sight of most tourists and Scottish Ministers as being of no account. This is wrong. I was quite surprised on my visit to pass two groups of people walking back down the road before I realised they were probably staying at the Monachyle hotel at the entrance to the glen and this was the obvious place to go for a walk. What a way to welcome visitors!



Old sign at the end of the new section of forest road and just beyond the quarry

The area at the head of Monachyle Glen was once managed as a conservation area by Forest Enterprise and planted with native trees. It appears this, like so many other native tree planting initiatives, failed well before Forest Enterprise had sold the land. Its the usual story, instead of native woodland – which the LLTNPA claims it wants to see more of and which could offer a high quality walking experience – only those trees that had “got away” before the deer got through the fences survive.

The double standards of the LLTNPA, which talks in its new National Park Partnership Plan about managing visitor pressures to protect the natural environment ([see here](#)) while doing nothing to stop the degradations and failures of the forestry industry, are shocking. It is time that people and tourism related businesses got very very angry.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

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