

Plastic tree tubes, deer and the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park – the case of Ewich

Description



Plastic tree shelters and large amounts of wasted wood are two of the hallmarks of UK forestry

I am not sure when I first saw the bright green plastic tree tubes on the left of the A82 heading north from Crianlarich but on Saturday I stopped to have a look.

The site is much easier to access than previously as in 2020 the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority granted planning permission to widen the junction of the old track with the A82 ([see here](#) for planning papers).



The LLTNPA also granted planning permission to increase the width of the first section of the road to facilitate access by timber lorries

This area formed part of the Ewich Forest which was sold off by Forest and Land Scotland in 2019-20 ([see here](#)). The sales details are still not on the online Registers of Scotland but Tilhill manages the property and commenced felling sometime after February 2021 after they had been granted approval for 6.5km of new forest road.



Vertical batters (sides of cuttings) don't revegetate. The paperwork for the Prior Notification for the new road claimed they would be avoided

Forest harvesting in Scotland has become an increasingly brutal affair. Its not just the clear fell but the huge tracks, the cuts across hillsides, the way felled trees are used to create a firm surface from which harvesting vehicles can operate and the large amount of wood that is wasted

The UK Forestry Standard, a revised version of which was recently approved by Scottish Ministers, does not prevent any of this. Lip service is paid to the importance of soils and landscape but the reality is very different as the photo shows.



The new UK Forestry Standard includes guidance that owners should :

“Manage a minimum of 15% of the forest management unit with conservation and the enhancement of biodiversity as a major objective.”

Hence why parts of the Ewich conifer plantations are now being planted with native trees but in a way that just adds to the destruction. The problem is that there are far too many deer for native trees to survive,:

“In areas where deer are present, deer management measures should be developed and implemented as part of a management plan, with the aim that deer browsing does not prevent regeneration of trees or the development of resilient forests; ideally this will be in co-operation with neighbours or as part of a Deer management Group.”

It would appear Tilhill Forestry are either spending too little money on deer management or have no

confidence that they can prevent incursions of deer from neighbouring landholdings, hence the plastic tree shelters. In about a third of the shelters I looked at the saplings were already dead so the plastic was serving no useful purpose.

The revised UK Forestry Standard recognises the damaging impact of plastic on soils recommends tree shelters should be removed and recycled after use. That revised advice came too late for Ewich Forest but there are serious concerns about how it be enforced. It would be far better to pay stalkers to shoot deer, removing the need for tree tubes, than to pay people to collect them after they have started to break-up and shed plastic into the natural environment.



The West Highland Way crosses through the site. One wonders what the many visitors from the continent who walk it must think of scenes like this? In the Alps and Pyrenees forests regenerate naturally with almost no planting and no plastic tree shelters, simply by keeping grazing under control,

Ewich Forest is part of the Inverary and Tyndrum Deer Management Group. It includes the Auchreoch Estate, which has for a long time failed to protect Coille Coire Cuilc effectively ([see here](#)), and the Strone Estate, where landslips have affected the A82 ([see here](#)). Plastic tree tubes, dying remnants of Caledonian Pine Forest, landslips, three apparently very different problems but with a common cause – grazing pressure resulting from a failure to control deer numbers.

So has the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority made any difference? Well, its supported fencing to protect native woodland on both the Strone Estate and Coille Coire Chuilc, rather than deal with the real problem, the number of deer. And its helped plaster Balquhiddy in plastic ([see here](#)), rather than deal with the real problem, the number of deer and sheep. The LLTNPA is therefore hardly in a position to advise Tilhill to stop polluting the natural environment with plastic or to employ local stalking staff.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. hill tracks
2. landscape
3. LLTNPA
4. planning
5. tree tube

Date Created

November 21, 2023

Author

nickkempe

default watermark