They donâ??t want you to know â?? the Caledonian Pinewood remnant in Glen Falloch is now at serious risk

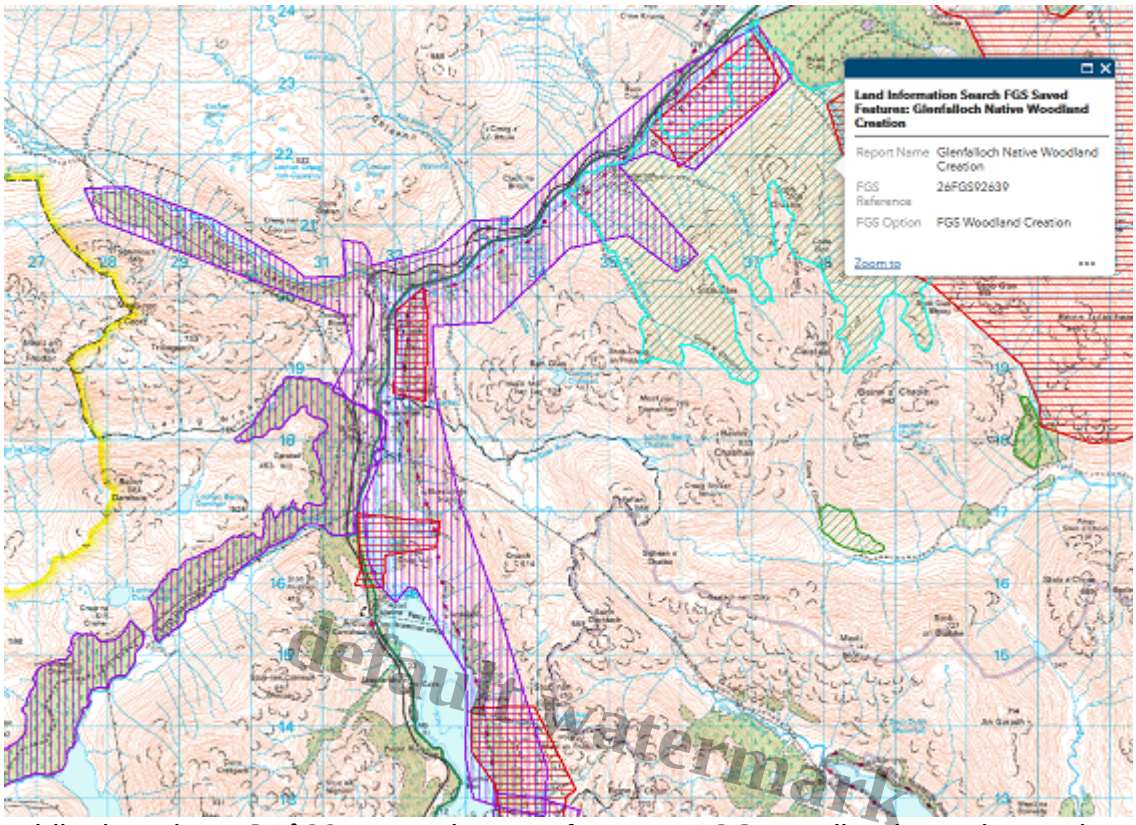
Description

Yesterday, I discovered by accident when looking through Scottish Forestry (SF)â??s register of woodland creation and felling permissions (see here) that a public consultation on native woodland restoration proposals for the Glenfalloch Estate opened on 23rd June. While SFâ??s website now provides a tab allowing the public to comment on grant applications, it provides little information about the proposal apart from the extent of the planting (458.84 hectares in this case, Ref 26FGS92639). Without knowing what has been proposed, informed comment is impossible.

SFâ??s consultations only last four weeks â?? this one closes on Tuesday 21st July. So even where a member of public were to check through the consultation register once a week, by the time the related documents have been requested and supplied, there is very little time to comment. That in my view is not accident. If local authorities and even the Scottish Governmentâ??s Energy Consents Unit can publish planning documentation online, SF could do the same with forestry documentation if they wished.

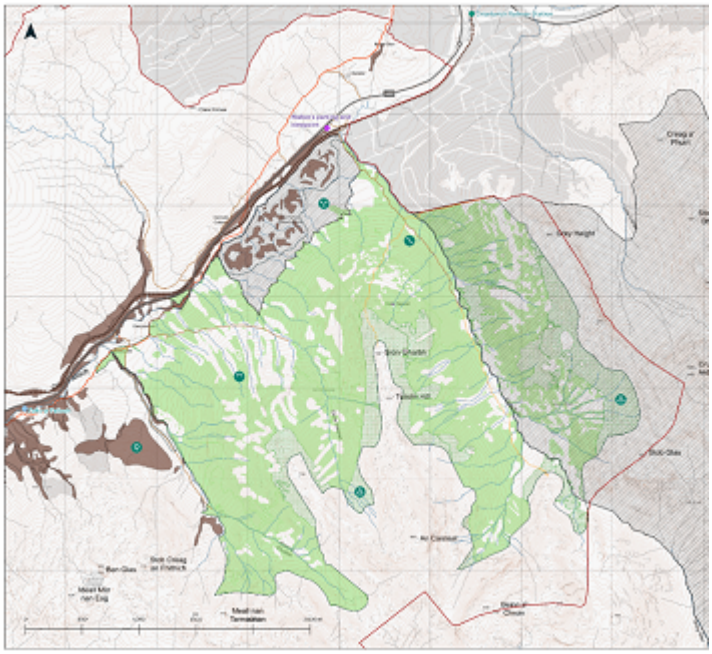
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By cross-checking with Scottish Forestryâ??s map viewer â?? there are no links between the consultation register and the map viewer â?? I have been able to establish that the â??Native woodland Restorationâ?? grant application covers a similar area to the planting proposals for the Glenfalloch estate produced by Tree Story (see here):



While the tab on SFâ??s map viewer refers to a FGS woodland creation project it gives no indication that this is out to public consultation

The area outlined in light blue on the map has the same reference number as the consultation advertised on the register and similar boundaries to the indicative concept map (see here for full sized map and key) produced by Tree Story for the Glenfalloch native woodland restoration project:



The Glen Falloch Pinewood is shown by the brown area areas above the green (the new

planting). The brown areas to the left represent other woodland, much of it ancient.

How to wreck a Caledonian Pinewood â?? prevent it expanding naturally by planting

Glen Falloch is one of the very few areas in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park where semi-natural habitats survive on lower ground. This is reflected in the survival of the Caledonian Pinewood fragment whose history goes back 4,300 years. The LLTNPA half recognised this in a blog on the importance of ancient native woodland which specifically focused on the two Caledonian Pinewood fragments in the National Park (see here):

â??Their age is what makes them so significant. Over centuries, ancient woodlands have developed a rich diversity of species and wildlife. The undisturbed soils , along with the accumulation of dead wood and leaf litter, create a unique habitat for fungi and invertebrates.

Once lost, these woodlands cannot be recreated. Restoring new trees is just the start; it takes centuries for biodiversity to return and for the woodland ecosystem to rebuild [my emphases]*.â?•*

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Instead of allowing the woodland to expand naturally after two centuries of overgrazing, assuming the Forestry Grant application is similar to the proposals on TreeStoryâ??s Glenfalloch restoration website, the plan is to plant all around it. This ignores the extensive seed source in Glen Falloch (brown on map) and the current policy framework for Caledonian Pinewood Sites, which includes a 100m regeneration zone and a 500m buffer zone beyond that. That policy framework is now very out of date, as evidenced by the much more extensive natural regeneration which has been taking place in Glen Feshie and on Mar Lodge estate since deer numbers were reduced to less than 2 per square km.

No one should be fooled by the claims TreesStory made on their Glenfalloch restoration website to an â??innovative no fence approachâ?? and:

â??Sensitive cultivation methods to produce variable tree spacing that mimics natural patterns of regeneration / organic fertiliser / no chemical herbicides / biodegradable (or no) vole guardsâ??.

Wildland Ltd stopped erecting new deer fences 20 years ago, so not using them on the Glenfalloch estate is hardly innovative. Wildland Ltd were able to stop fencing because their focus was on reducing deer numbers to enable natural regeneration. TreeStory by contrast have been overseeing the development and implementation of tree planting plans for Oxygen Conservation at Kinrara (see here), Dorback and Invergeldie (see here), all of which depend on deer fencing as a substitute for reducing deer numbers to sustainable levels. (Oxygen Conservation revealed to the Herald last month they are aiming for 4 deer per square km (see here), about twice the deer density required for natural regeneration to take off).

As for TreeStoryâ??s other claims:

- Fertiliser is fertiliser, whether organic or not, and is intended to enable trees to get established on peaty soils where they would otherwise have great difficulty growing.

- Clearing vegetation, whether by organic herbicide or screefing, will have the same effect â?? enabling trees to grow in areas that might now unsuitable for trees.
- And the only vole guards proven to be biodegradable are made out of cardboard or paper, fall apart when wet and are easy to gnaw throughâ?¦â?¦â?¦â?¦

How does this grant application fit with wider plans for Glen Falloch?

Also visible on SFâ??s map viewer is a much larger Y-shaped area of land outlined in purple. This demarcates an area covered by what id described as the Glenfalloch LTFP (long-term forest plan). This has a different reference number, 26FGS90879, to the Forestry Grant application but the 26 shows it also relates to the current year.

As yet SF appears to have undertaken no public consultation on this wider plan, which covers both sides of the River Falloch and the lower reaches of the Allt nan Caorann to the west. Bizarrely SFâ??s map viewer show that some of the higher areas included in the Forestry Grant Scheme application fall outside the boundary of the LTFP â?? why?

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In submitting a Forestry Grant application before any LTFP consultation, TreeStory/the Glenfalloch estate appear to have pre-empted the LTFP the purpose of which is create a framework for woodland within an area and ensure that specific proposals are consistent with the wider whole. For example, as I showed in my last post on Glen Falloch, all the native woodland glen is threatened by invasive Sitka, and one would expect the LTFP to contains proposals for its removal which would then be incorporated in specific plans, such as those produced by TreeStory.

It is also unclear how the Glenfalloch estateâ??s woodland creation project and wider long-term forest plan fit with previous work, including a tree nursery, funded through Nature Scotâ??s Nature Restoration Fund, or the *Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Landscape Connections* initiative, backed by the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) and the National Lottery (see here). The brochure for the Landscape Connections initiative (see here) suggests plans are still in the course of development but also claims there is an opportunity to:

â??embed communities and land managers as an integral part of the nature recovery process, supporting inclusion and agency to ensure that actions are coordinated and from those who are essential for long term success.â??

So what is the LLTNPA doing to co-ordinate actions in Glen Falloch and to ensure that the outdoor recreation community, by far the largest community to have an interest in the glen, is involved in plans which will affect its future and that of the Caledonian Pinewood there?

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. Caledonian Pinewood
2. Deer
3. Freedom of Information

4. LLTNPA
5. NatureScot
6. outdoor recreation
7. restoration
8. scottish forestry

Date Created
July 7, 2026
Author
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