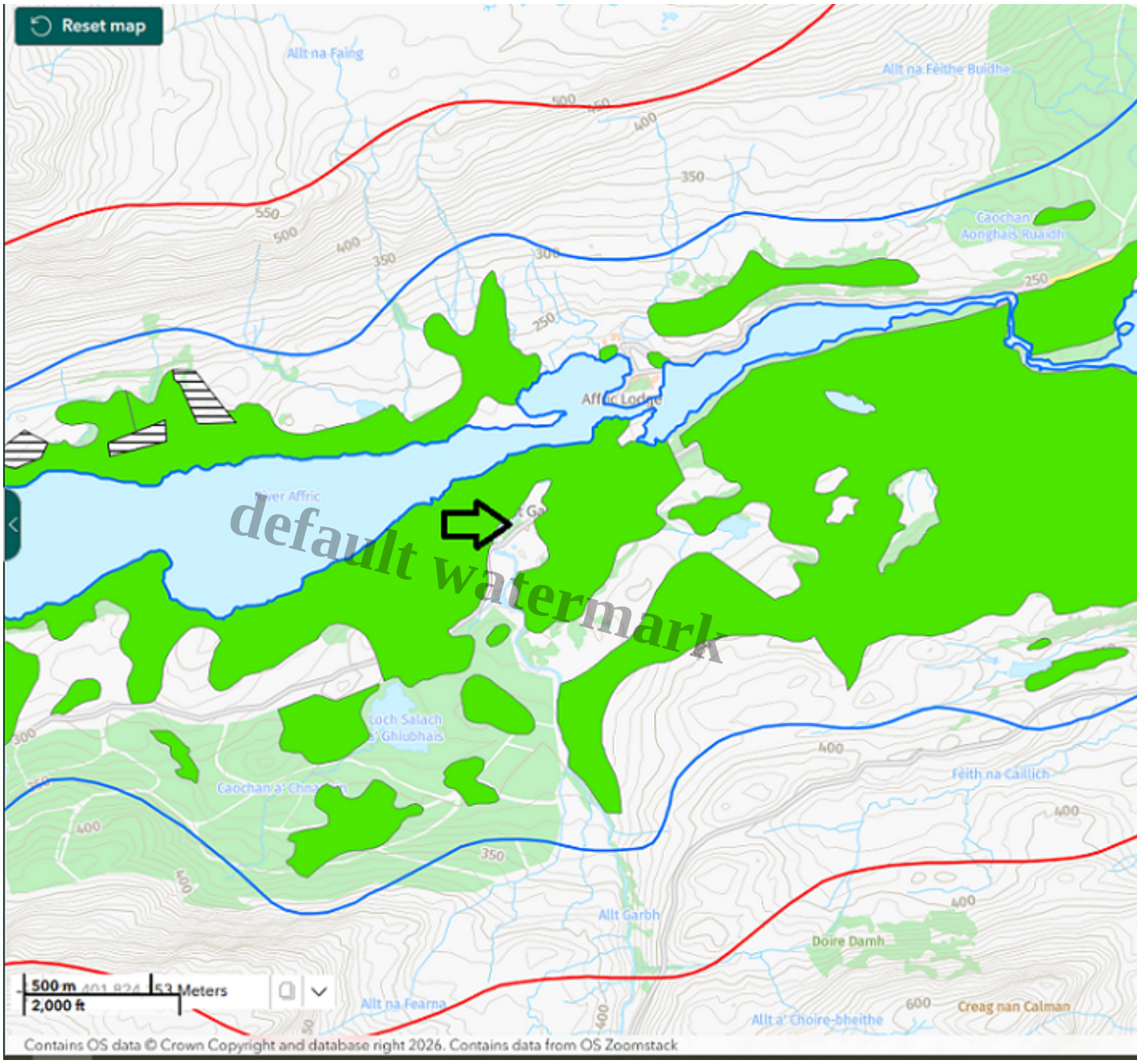
Gardening the Glen Affric Caledonian Pinewood â?? time to stop interfering in nature

Description



Planted oak trees within a fenced enclosure within the Caledonian Pinewood in Glen Affric. Sgurr na Lapaich behind.

Driving up to Glen Affric last Monday, a jay, those hoarders of acorns and natural spreaders of oakwoods, flew across the road soon after we had left Cannich. Later that day, returning from a walk up Sron a Coire Gharbh on the south side of Loch Affric I noticed these oak trees planted in the heart of the Caledonian Pinewood near the hydro scheme.



Map from Caledonian Pinewood Inventory. Green = core area; the blue line demarcates the natrual regeneration zone; and the red the buffer zone

Checking the Caledonian Pinewood Inventory (CPI) afterwards, it appeared the oak trees had been planted within the natural regeneration rather than the core zone. That, however, does not make the planting any more acceptable because the natural regeneration zones were intended to allow the remnants of the Caledonian Pinewood in Scotland to expand naturally, without planting.

Walking the couple of kilometres back to the car park and then driving back to Cannich the first oak trees I spotted were near Cannich, close to where I had seen the jay earlier. It is possible that in time that jay and its descendants could introduce oak trees to Glen Affric.

Since sessile oak, however, can live for several centuries, the absence of mature specimens from the Caledonian Pinewood suggests that they have not been present in most of Glen Affric for hundreds of years, if ever. Whoever planted them, appears to have been trying to change the Caledonian Pinewood into their vision of what sort of woodland should exist without any regard for the natural history or ecological principles. While the planters are claiming to help nature in fact they are doing the opposite, destroying nature.

The CPI zonation system was supposed to prevent this. Core zones have been drawn around areas where it is believed the Caledonian pinewoods have regenerated naturally for centuries. The regeneration zones around them were then intended to create space around them to allow them to expand naturally, with a further buffer zone around that where planting was supposed to be a last resort. While the existing regeneration zones are far too small, usually covering an area just 100m wide around the core zones, not even these small areas are sacrosanct to those who wish to garden (as TreeStory are currently proposing to do in Glen Falloch (see here)).

NatureScot and Scottish Forestry, who are responsible for conserving the Caledonian pinewoods, need to be publicly challenged about why they are allowing this to happen? If we are serious about conserving the Caledonian pinewoods we should be removing planted trees, whether native or not, from the core and regeneration zones.

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Category

1. Other parts Scotland

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