# Stirling’s unlawful tree felling sparks debate over enforcement as new owner takes charge



In Stirling, a controversial sale of land where over 800 trees were unlawfully removed has raised significant environmental concerns. The site, previously a caravan park on Cornton Road, was sold in February 2024 for £80,000 to James Stewart, a property owner from Carlisle. This transaction occurred amid unresolved legal obligations for replanting the 864 trees that had been felled, without the necessary permissions, leading to questions about regulatory enforcement in Scotland.

Scottish Forestry had issued a legal direction in March 2022, mandating the replanting of the trees. Despite this order, which was supposed to be fulfilled by the deadline of March 31, 2024, the landowner at that time, Beechtree Wright Ltd, failed to comply. This failure has prompted a wider debate about the effectiveness of existing environmental protections, with Scottish Green Party MSP Mark Ruskell highlighting the need for robust enforcement measures from Scottish Forestry. He noted the potential environmental damage from such deforestation and emphasised the urgency for regulatory bodies to take decisive action.

Scottish Forestry is currently facing challenges in reaching the new owner to ensure compliance with the previous order. A spokesperson for the agency confirmed that the situation remains “very much active” and they continue to pursue the matter, indicating that it is crucial for Mr Stewart to understand the legal obligations linked to his new property. The spokesperson added, “It is very much our aim that the restocking of the woodland is carried out,” demonstrating a commitment to re-establishing the lost greenery.

Legal obligations concerning tree felling are stringent in Scotland. Ignoring a restocking order is considered an offence, punishable by a fine ranging from £5,000 to £10,000. This raises significant concerns about accountability, especially given that multiple parties may have failed to act on these responsibilities. The land's prior condition has already been a point of public contention: in 2021, residents near the site reported incidents of illegal burning that spread smoke across nearby homes, necessitating intervention from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) due to the potential environmental damage.

The ongoing saga surrounding the Cornton site illustrates a broader issue within environmental governance and land management. With the failure to secure compliance on replanting and the dubious history of environmental neglect, it presents a challenge for both local authorities and environmental agencies to restore public trust in their ability to protect natural resources. As the community awaits action, the implications of this case exemplify the delicate balance between land use and environmental stewardship in Scotland.

Efforts to improve the state of public spaces in Cornton have also been met with mixed results, as evidenced by the frustrations of residents over the condition of local play areas and the prolonged lack of maintenance. With discussions ongoing about the potential transfer of land ownership for community use, the resolution of these issues is critical in addressing the broader community’s concerns for both environmental and recreational spaces.

As the new ownership and its obligations unfold, the community remains hopeful for a resolution that prioritises environmental restoration and compliance with legal mandates, underscoring the necessity for all stakeholders to engage actively in preserving Scotland’s natural heritage.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraphs 2
3. Paragraphs 1, 2
4. Paragraphs 4
5. Paragraphs 4
6. Paragraph 4
7. Paragraph 5

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/5244133/cornton-caravan-park-trees-stirling-sold/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/5205404/cornton-caravan-park-trees-stirling/> - In March 2022, Scottish Forestry issued a legal direction to replant over 800 unlawfully felled trees at a former caravan park on Cornton Road in Stirling. The deadline for replanting was set for March 31, 2024. However, as of March 2025, the landowner, Beechtree Wright Ltd, had not complied with the order, leading to concerns about environmental damage and the effectiveness of enforcement measures. Scottish Green Party MSP Mark Ruskell emphasized the need for Scottish Forestry to take firm action to enforce the replanting.
3. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/5244133/cornton-caravan-park-trees-stirling-sold/> - In February 2024, Beechtree Wright Ltd sold the land where over 800 trees were unlawfully felled to James Stewart from Carlisle for £80,000, without replanting the 864 trees as mandated by Scottish Forestry. Scottish Forestry has been unable to contact the new owner to discuss the restocking order. Ignoring an official tree restocking order without reasonable cause is an offence, potentially resulting in a fine between £5,000 and £10,000. The Courier attempted to contact Mr. Stewart for comment but received no response.
4. <https://starsalert.com/news/fury-over-tree-fires-at-site-near-stirlings-westhaugh-estate-cornton/697504> - In July 2021, residents of Stirling's Westhaugh estate expressed concerns over fires at a former Cornton caravan site. The fires, which involved burning trees and vegetation, led to smoke affecting nearby homes and roads. Scottish Fire and Rescue attended multiple times to extinguish the fires. The matter was referred to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) by Stirling Council. Residents were worried about environmental damage and the discomfort caused by the smoke.
5. <https://starsalert.com/news/watchdog-says-fires-next-to-cornton-housing-estate-to-cease/701002> - In July 2021, SEPA intervened after fires at a former Cornton caravan site near Stirling's Westhaugh estate. The person responsible for burning materials agreed to cease the practice. The fires had caused smoke to spread across roads and houses, leading to environmental concerns and discomfort for residents. Scottish Fire and Rescue had attended on numerous occasions to put out the fires. The matter was referred to SEPA by Stirling Council.
6. <https://starsalert.com/news/reinstatement-of-caravans-at-vacant-cornton-site-are-lawful-say-owners/789789> - In September 2021, owners of a vacant Cornton caravan site stated that the reinstatement of caravans was lawful. They argued that the existing use had not been abandoned and that no planning permission had been granted for an alternative use. The owners believed that an application for a 'Certificate of Lawfulness' should be granted by the council, confirming that the existing use was lawful at the date of the application.
7. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/5136448/cornton-stirling-playpark-saga/> - In September 2021, residents of Cornton, Stirling, expressed frustration over the prolonged state of disrepair of a local playpark. The play area and football pitch were owned by a private landowner, and maintenance was not the responsibility of Stirling Council. Negotiations were ongoing regarding the transfer of land ownership to the council. Residents were concerned about the safety of the equipment and the lack of maintenance, leading to calls for the issue to be resolved.