

Environmental group challenges decision to allow 'alien species' of tree to be planted in Leitrim

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AN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION group has launched a High Court challenge against a decision to allow what it claims is an “alien species” of tree to be planted at a site in Co Leitrim.

The action has been brought by the Save Leitrim Group (Save Leitrim Environmental and Biodiversity Group CLG) which claims the decision to allow ‘Sitka Spruce’ to be grown at a forestry development on a 13.3-hectare site at Meenymore, Dromohair Co Leitrim is flawed and should be quashed.

The group says it has brought the action over its deep concerns about the “monoculture planting” of Sitka Spruce within Co Leitrim. It claims Sitka Spruce developments can completely obliterate landscapes over a very wide area.

These developments can completely remove cultural landscapes, and leaves large tracks of afforested lands which are dark, foreboding and eliminate all life on the forest floor, it is claimed.

Such forests provide a higher commercial return than agriculture in the area, meaning that local people cannot compete with forestry when it comes to building up sustainable farms sizes that could provide a reasonable standard of living, according to the group.

Such developments can also adversely impact on the local environment, ecosystems and wildlife, the group also claims.

Protected sites

The site, which it says is in a particularly scenic location, is close to two protected sites, or Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Lough Gill and Boleybrack Mountain.

It claims that a decision to allow the forestry development go ahead was appealed to the Forestry Appeal Committee which last May approved the development.

The group in its action says the committee erred in arriving at its decision in several respects.

It claims the screening and assessment of the site to see if the development would have any significant effects on the environment by the committee was neither appropriate nor in accordance with EU requirements.

The committee also failed to consider the characteristics of the proposed development, including its size, relationship with other developments, pollution and other nuisances.

Source: <https://www.thejournal.ie/leitrim-tree-high-court-5173333-Aug2020/>