

Landowner ordered to pay highest ever illegal felling fine

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A Leicestershire landowner is to pay £268,751 after illegal tree felling.

A landowner has been ordered to pay fines and costs totalling £268,751 following the illegal felling of trees after an investigation by the Forestry Commission.

On 28 January 2026, at Leicester Magistrates' Court, the landowner was sentenced, after pleading guilty to failing to comply with an Enforcement Notice that was served following unlawful felling of mixed broadleaf woodland beside a petrol station in 2019.

The trees were felled as a pre-emptive action for a future development proposal to extend the premises at the site.

The court ordered the landowner, Motor Fuel Ltd, to maintain the trees replanted for 10 years. If the landowner does not comply with this Court Restocking Order, they could face action for contempt of court, with further financial penalties or even a custodial sentence.

This case is the latest example of robust action by the Forestry Commission to protect the nation's trees, woodlands and forests.

Richard Pearce, Forestry Commission Area Director for the East and East Midlands said:

"Felling trees without a licence or failing to comply with an Enforcement Notice is unacceptable.

"This case demonstrates how seriously the Forestry Commission and the courts take the protection of trees, woodlands and forests, and the harm caused by illegal felling to the climate and nature".

Following the unlawful felling in 2019, the Forestry Commission served the landowner with a Restocking Notice under Section 17a of the Forestry Act 1967, directing him them to replant the trees. This was not complied with and a further Enforcement Notice under Section 24 of the Act was served.

Failing to comply with an Enforcement Notice without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence. The matter was referred to the Crown Prosecution Service, which brought charges against the landowner.

Additional information:

- A total sum due of £268,751 was ordered to be paid within 28 days of the sentence. This included the fine of £266,666, prosecution costs of £85 and a surcharge of £2,000.
- The Restocking Order ensures trees are replanted, to help protect the environment.
- Information on when a felling licence is required: Tree felling licence: when you need to apply - GOV.UK

- Applications for felling licences can be made via the Felling Licence Online system

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landowner-ordered-to-pay-highest-ever-illegal-felling-fine>