

# **PE1812/LLL: Protect Scotland's remaining ancient, native and semi-native woodlands and woodland floors**

## **Petitioner written submission, 22 January 2025**

According to the [Scottish Biodiversity Delivery Plan 2024-2030](#), we can look forward to 2027 when we will celebrate the launch of Scotland's new National Register of Ancient Woodland. This will replace the existing Ancient Woodland Inventory, which appears to have done very little to foster regard or action to protect these remaining fragments of Scotland's historic natural identity. The new Register will be very welcome, as will the proposed associated woodland condition reports and any potential opportunities for owners, local people, communities and funders to be actively engaged in the process to identify, assess, restore and protect ancient woodland and, if we are lucky, mature native woodland.

An ancient wood's inclusion in the new Register will not, however, as we understand it, automatically bestow additional legal protection. The condition and survival of Scotland's vital ancient woods, and their awesome living tree legends within, will continue to be mainly at the mercy of their short-term, ever changing (in the grand scale of the lifetime of an oak tree for example) owners and the degree to which those owners are, or are not, motivated to manage invasive non-native species, over-grazing, disease, exploitation, increasing isolation, other pollution and so on. How will the new Register succeed in motivating owners where the old Inventory so clearly failed?

We believe the creation of a National Register truly represents a once in a lifetime opportunity for our Government to take a 360-degree approach to safeguarding Scotland's painfully diminished, vulnerable and rapidly vanishing ancient and mature native woods, as well as important and cherished street and community trees. To stand a chance of making a genuine positive contribution, the Register must not exist in a vacuum. It must surely start a process to resolve the failings the Petitions Committee has identified regarding local authorities and their duty to administer and uphold Tree Preservation Orders, bolster Scottish Forestry to act for the benefit of all of us by using their full regulatory powers in partnership with Scotland's Procurator Fiscal Service to create a genuine deterrent to unlicensed felling and end the irresponsible and polluting practices of industries like commercial forestry.