



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

Finlay Carson MSP
Convener
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

Edward Mountain MSP
Convener
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

10 February 2025

Dear Conveners

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

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to deliver world-leading legislation giving Scotland's remaining fragments of ancient, native and semi-native woodlands and woodland floors full legal protection before COP 26 (UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties) in Glasgow in November 2021.

The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee has been considering the above petition throughout the current parliamentary session. We have examined written and oral evidence from a range of sources including the petitioner, environmental NGOs, Scottish Forestry, local authorities, and the Scottish Government, [the full details of which can be found on the petition history webpage](#).

The Committee previously agreed to write to the Scottish Government summarising the evidence we have gathered, and also to share this summary with your respective Committees. The Committee subsequently agreed to wait until a response from the Scottish Government had been received before writing to both the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, and the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, in order to provide you with a more complete picture of the evidence and the Government's response.

[A copy of our letter to the then Minister Environment and Land Reform is available on the petition history webpage](#). This correspondence sets out the key issues raised during our consideration of this petition, including:

- Concerns over the effectiveness of existing woodland protections,

Contact: Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email petitions.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

- Lack of information on the location and condition of ancient woodlands, and a lack of resources to properly monitor their condition,
- Tension between the pursuit of commercial forestry and protecting ancient and native woodland.

The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee called on the Scottish Government to reflect on this evidence and consider the opportunities to strengthen the statutory protections for woodlands.

[The Committee received a response from Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands in June 2023](#). I would draw particular attention to the Cabinet Secretary's response that the route for further safeguarding and managing ancient woodland within protected areas would likely be through the forthcoming Natural Environment Bill.

Following that response, the Committee has continued to seek clarification on the Scottish Government's plans to protect and restore the natural environment, including the timetable for introducing the Natural Environment Bill.

At its meeting on Wednesday 5 February 2025, the Committee agreed to close the petition on the basis that the Scottish Government has signalled its intention to introduce the Natural Environment Bill during the current parliamentary year, and is committed to delivering the new Register of Ancient Woodlands by mid-2027.

As the issues this petition raises touch on the remit of your respective Committees, we wanted to share the substantial body of evidence we have gathered, which you may find helpful when considering these matters as part of your own work programmes and ongoing legislative scrutiny.

Yours sincerely,



Jackson Carlaw MSP
Convener