

PE2151/F: Grant protected status to primitive goat species in the Scottish Borders

Emma Harper MSP written submission, 8 September 2025

I would like to support the recognition of the ancient herd of wild goats in the Langholm and Newcastleton Hills as a protected species.

These goats are not just animals on a hillside. They are a living link to Scotland's past.

They've roamed freely in this landscape for centuries, likely since the days of the Border Reivers. They are fully naturalised self-sustaining and deeply rooted in the cultural and ecological fabric of the region.

Local people from Langholm and across to Newcastleton do feel a strong emotional connection to them and generations have grown up watching these goats and visitors to the region travel from across the country just to see them and catch a glimpse.

They are part of our natural heritage, a symbol of the spirit of our hills.

But today, they face serious threats due to changes in land ownership, the loss of traditional land management and pressures from rewilding and tree planting schemes have left them vulnerable.

Without legal protection, they can be culled without oversight, their habitat can be fenced off and their survival is at risk.

The Wild Goat Conservation Group has proposed a thoughtful 7-point plan. It includes a moratorium on culling, scientific study, and a long-term conservation management plan.

At the heart of this is a call for protected status, so that this ancient herd can be managed sustainably and remain part of our upland ecology for generations to come.

These goats belong to no one, but surely, they must belong to the people of Scotland.

I urge the Committee to support this petition and help secure their future in the most optimal and sustainable managed way.

Emma Harper MSP