

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

Joint Nature Conservation Committee written submission, 9 October 2025

Thank you for the invitation to provide the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's (JNCC) views on the action called for in the petition '*PE2151: Grant protected status to primitive goat species in the Scottish Borders*'. JNCC is the public body that advises the UK and devolved governments on matters of international or UK-wide nature conservation.

From a legislation perspective, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) provides legal protections to species in Great Britain listed in Schedules 1 (birds), 5 (animal species other than birds) and 8 (plants). Quinquennial Reviews (QQR) are the process by which Schedule 5 and Schedule 8 of the WCA are reviewed every 5 years under the requirements of Section 24 of that Act. QQR policy guidance, developed and adopted by JNCC and the statutory country nature conservation bodies (for example NatureScot and Natural England), states that species are only eligible for inclusion if they are both native to Great Britain and endangered. Feral goats are understood to be non-native to the UK and therefore ineligible under current guidance.

Although JNCC facilitates the QQR process, it is the country nature conservation bodies that are required to review the Schedules under the WCA, and Scotland maintains its own Schedule lists separate to England and Wales. NatureScot is therefore the most suitable advisor regarding the ecological impact, status and management of this species (or particular population) in Scotland.

We do however note, from a practical standpoint, that it would be difficult to define and enforce a schedule listing for 'British Primitive Goats', as distinct from more modern variants because they are taxonomically the same species (*Capra hircus*) and there is no commonly accepted subspecies status for feral populations. Their listing could create a paradox in the WCA whereby the species is simultaneously protected under Schedule 5 and restricted as a non-native species under Section 14, creating barriers to their management by landowners and NatureScot in pursuit of conservation goals.

We recognise that the petition highlights alternative potential avenues for protection such as conservation measures for heritage breeds, however JNCC would not be the appropriate adviser in this respect.

We hope this submission will assist the committee's consideration of the petition.