

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

Petitioner written submission, 28 January 2026

With regard to your meeting on the 11th February to discuss PE2151, the protection of the Wild Goat Herd of Langholm Moor, recognised by conservation groups as a unique Primitive British goat Herd.

I would ask that an additional few points may be considered by the committee.

In the first instance I would ask the Committee to consider the high number of signatures this petition has gained, bearing in mind the low population of the area, this reflecting the strength of support for the protection and recognition of the Wild Goat Herd.

Following Oxygen Conservation's controversial cull of the Wild Goat Herd, it is a concern that this petition, started in response to that cull, has in fact caused an acceleration in The Wild Goat Herd being shot.

The Tarras valley was again subject to a further massive cull of the Wild goat herd at the end of last year, this time by OC neighbours, the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve, landowners citing NatureScot's repeated statement of wild goats as an invasive species. A clearly outdated statement.

A statement, but no consultation, was made by TVNR to the local community prior to its cull.

This cull was based on speculated goat numbers, with no accurate thermal drone survey employed, and executed under present laws – that offer no consideration for the Wild Goat Herd as a heritage asset in any capacity.

This surely demonstrates the need for protected status, as voluntary management to date has ultimately meant the demise of the majority of the individual herds that once existed in Scotland, and an updated change in NatureScot's policy and attitude towards conservation is clearly essential.

On a more positive note exciting progress has been made in terms of a genetic study of the Wild goats.

Leading scientists of Trinity College Dublin, Roslin Institute, and Newcastle University have offered to study the DNA of the Wild Goat Herd, in relation and comparison to the advances and DNA studies done with regard to the origins of the Old Irish and Cheviot Goat.

Comparisons with archaeological bones from both the Bronze and Iron Age, from Scotland, are also available for this study.

Unfortunately requests for required blood sampling of three verified wild goats *has not been permitted at any point* by landowners to advance this study, despite the many hundreds of wild goats that have now been shot and bled, prior to entering the food chain.

This study is currently unfunded, and based on the goodwill and interest of the research scientists and archaeologists.

In view of the above I would hope that the Petition committee might not only recommend protected status for the Wild Goat herd, but also recommend funding for an independent study and goat count, to be granted to a locally based conservation group, such as The Wild Goat Conservation Trust.

The Tarras Moss is not only an area of special environmental interest for rare wildlife and plant life. It is also an incredible region of rich and concentrated archaeology - the majority of which is both unrecognised, and unexplored.

The region is part of the old Border Reiving debatable land, and although the region is included as part of the UNESCO's Frontiers of the Roman Empire, its historical importance is not recognised by any UK Government.

Further news from the Tarras unfortunately includes a pair of satellite tagged Golden Eagles sighted regularly, Wren and Tarras, disappearing, with a Police Investigation ongoing.

This follows the disappearance of another satellite tagged Golden eagle, Emma, again regularly sighted, who disappeared following sightings with a mate.

Tarras is a remote region which offers some of the few sites suitable for Golden eagles to nest.

Following Oxygen Conservation's acquisition of its estate, it seems now traditional land management has gone.

An increase in fox numbers, added to a general neglect and lack of animal stock, seems to be allowing the moorland to overgrow, potentially putting ground nesting birds, like the protected Hen Harrier at risk.

This added to High deer fencing erected over the estate, seems also to have restricted traditional right to roam access for the local community, over much of the land. On the estate too is Woolhope cottage, an unspoiled herdsman's cottage which is being allowed to fall into ruin, rather than sell it to the youngest member of the family who lived there for three generations, and who have offered to buy and restore it.

This all preceding Oxygen Conservation's announcement of their proposed plans for a giant windfarm on their estate.

A proposal which is unlikely to be granted permission, should protected species exist in the vicinity.

It is the hope that recognition and protection of this Unique Wild Goat Herd will be the first step in a genuine conservation programme, for an incredibly beautiful and vulnerable part of the world, of which the Wild Goat Herd have long been a part of.