

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 11 February 2026
4th Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

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

Introduction

Petitioner Kenneth Erik Moffatt

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to help ensure the survival of primitive goat species in the Scottish Borders by granting them protected status.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2151>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 10 September 2025](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government, the UK Joint Nature Conservation Council, NatureScot and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from NatureScot, the Joint Nature Conservation Council, the Scottish Government, The Wild Goat Conservation Trust, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, and the Petitioner, which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. During Stage 2 Consideration of the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill, Rachael Hamilton MSP lodged [amendments 284-286](#), which were directly relevant to the ask of the petition. The Rural Affairs and Islands Committee debated these amendments [on 19 November 2025](#). The amendments were subsequently defeated, [on 10 December 2025](#). The Parliament passed the Bill on 29 January 2026.
5. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
6. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
7. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 22 May 2025](#).
8. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 21,300 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

9. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
February 2026

Annexe A: Summary of petition

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

Petitioner

Kenneth Erik Moffatt

Date Lodged

25 March 2025

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to help ensure the survival of primitive goat species in the Scottish Borders by granting them protected status.

Background information

Feral goats found around Langholm and the lower Scottish Borders have their origins in the native species of the Iron Age, but are not recognised in any capacity other than general protections for wild and feral animals.

These neglected species survive in the last truly wild and free habitats of the Borders, and represent an independence of spirit reflective of our national character. Their numbers are dangerously low, and in danger of extinction due to loss of habitat, and systematic and ongoing culling.

The feral goats of the Cheviots in Northumberland, which share similarities with the native goats in Scotland, have been added to the Rare Breeds Survival Trust watchlist to support their conservation, and are also included on DEFRA's Native breeds at risk list.

The British Primitive Goat Society summarises identification of primitive goats, and also explains the Cheviot goat herd protection process, close relatives to the Langholm herd.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2151 on 10 September 2025

The Convener: The first new petition for consideration is PE2151, lodged by Kenneth Erik Moffatt, which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to help ensure the survival of primitive goat species in the Scottish Borders by granting them protected status. I believe that the petitioner may be with us, and I invite any colleagues who wish to address the committee in relation to the petition to come forward.

The Scottish Parliament information centre briefing for the petition highlights NatureScot's position regarding what the body terms "feral goats". Although NatureScot has indicated that some Scottish feral goat herds have been established for a long time and might be described as naturalised, it considers feral goats to be an invasive non-native species that has the potential to cause serious damage to habitats by way of overgrazing, for which reason they have to be managed. However, NatureScot recognises that feral goat herds are held in affection by people and often have strong local cultural links.

In its initial response to the petition, the Scottish Government makes it clear that it has no plans to provide full legal protected status for primitive goats. The Government echoes NatureScot in supporting the reduction of feral goat numbers to prevent damage to habitats or forestry, in a similar way to how deer populations are managed. Regarding the specific circumstances in the Scottish Borders, the Government submission states that it is for landowners to consider how any reduction in the feral goat population should be achieved in practice.

It is worth noting that the Scottish Government acknowledges that feral goats might have some positive benefits for biodiversity, such as providing food for eagles and carrion feeders and, more important, preventing open habitats from scrubbing over, with goats having already been used for that purpose in Tentsmuir in Fife.

We have received a submission from the Wild Goat Conservation Trust in support of the petition. It argues that granting protected status to wild goats would enable regulation of numbers through licensing, so that there would always be a healthy herd of wild goats in balance with the rest of the upland wildlife.

In additional submissions, the petitioner provides extensive evidence on primitive goat herds' unique nature, and he objects to NatureScot and the Scottish Government's use of the terms "feral" and "invasive" as opposed to "wild". In his view, those terms mischaracterise the importance of an endangered species and make it easier to oppose the granting of protected status. The petitioner also deplores what he calls the "overzealous culling"—his words—of wild goats in the Langholm and Newcastle hills, which he sees as unethical and unsustainable.

We have received a submission in support of the petition from our colleague Emma Harper, and we are joined by our colleagues Rachael Hamilton and Craig Hoy. I invite them to offer the committee any pearls of wisdom ahead of our consideration of the steps that we might take. I take it that Rachael Hamilton will go first.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): Thank you for the welcome, convener. I thank Kenneth Moffatt for lodging the petition. He is not able to make it today, but I welcome members of the Wild Goat Conservation Trust.

In March 2023, an investment company called Oxygen Conservation acquired 11,000 acres of Langholm moor to protect and promote carbon sequestration and generate carbon credits. In February this year, the same company culled more than 80 per cent of the herd of ancient wild goats during the breeding season, which prompted widespread concern across the local community.

Not only are the goats ecologically significant, they form part of the cultural and natural heritage of the Scottish Borders. They have roamed freely between Langholm and Newcastle for centuries, contributing to the biodiversity of the uplands and attracting visitors from across the country.

As committee members will be aware, despite their long-standing presence, wild goats have no legal protection in Scotland. The Scottish Government has stated that it has

“no plans to provide full legal protected status for primitive goats, or feral goats”.

Unlike other species, such as pigeons or parakeets, the goats can be culled during the breeding season with no safeguards for pregnant or nursing animals. Such a lack of statutory protection leaves them vulnerable to actions that can severely impact herd viability.

The recent cull has highlighted the fragility of their status, and more than 13,000 people have signed PE2151, which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Government to grant protected status to primitive goat species in the Borders. Their message is clear—these animals matter and their future must be safeguarded.

Concerns about landscape damage, as highlighted by the convener, or about population control are not supported by the evidence. Goat numbers have remained broadly stable across Scotland, and they are easier to manage than deer. With traditional livestock numbers declining in upland areas, wild goats might even help to fill ecological gaps. Losing the herd would be a loss not only to biodiversity but to the identity of the Langholm and Newcastle communities.

The Parliament has the opportunity to act now by reviewing the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which, because of their non-native status, excludes goats from protection. We must consider changes that reflect their ecological role and cultural value and extend appropriate safeguards, particularly during the breeding season, to ensure their continued presence in the Scottish Borders. Thank you for listening.

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): I am attending alongside Rachael Hamilton to speak in support of the petition lodged by Kenneth Moffatt, which reflects the real sense of public anger and concern at the culling of wild goats by Oxygen Conservation in February. The petition was signed by more than 13,000 concerned citizens, which is, I believe, one of the largest-ever groups to petition the Parliament and the committee.

The Langholm goats have grazed the hills peacefully and quietly for generations without any significant issues, and with careful and sensitive management. If anyone wants to know more about the history of the goat population in Scotland, I note that the committee has listed on its website a reference to the paper “The ‘Poor Man’s Mart’: history and archaeology of goats in Scotland”, which was authored by Catherine Smith and is useful for putting the issue into context.

In February, we saw those with outside commercial interests go too far in a rush after maximum financial return. They dramatically reduced the goat population for entirely the wrong reasons, and they did so without undertaking proper and meaningful community consultation. The petition that we see before us reflects the community’s response. Worse still, alternatives such as fencing around tree planting or working more closely with neighbouring landowners, including the Tarras valley nature reserve, were not properly explored.

Companies such as the natural capital organisation Oxygen Conservation need to better understand the need to work in partnership with communities in the Scottish Borders and Dumfriesshire rather than work against them, which is what has occurred in this instance. NatureScot and other bodies should not turn a blind eye when those commercial entities do not take cognisance of community concern. Sadly, in this case, I think that NatureScot has done so and that it is too remote and bureaucratic. I encourage the committee to explore that directly with NatureScot.

My constituents feel that, in the case of the hundreds of wild goats that graze the 30,000 acres between Newcastle and Langholm, NatureScot came down on the side of big commercial and corporate interests rather than serving the local people, who care deeply about their local landscapes and their ecosystem. That reflects the fact that the present processes fail to recognise or understand the strength of local feeling. They fail to recognise and understand how important it is to the local community that the goats are free to roam the Langholm hills. Therefore, anything that the committee can do to address that imbalance must be explored.

The petition makes a strong case for more robust protection measures and processes for locally important species, such as the wild goats of Langholm moor. As Rachael Hamilton said, without some form of designated protection, it is clear that NatureScot and other bodies will not intervene in such cases. In future, important local heritage and biodiversity could be lost. I therefore ask the committee to urge the Scottish Government to grant protected status to this primitive goat species—or, as the goats are described by the popular local newspaper, the *Eskdale & Liddesdale Advertiser*, “our feral friends”.

The Convener: That is the dead hand of NatureScot—sorry, my prejudice has been provoked again. At times, I find it difficult to understand what the connection is between NatureScot and the people on the ground and in communities. Do colleagues have any thoughts or suggestions?

David Torrance: Believe it or not, I have been climbing to the Grey Mare’s Tail for many years and I have spent many hours watching the goats there, which has brought great pleasure not only to me but to every scout I take up during the summer holidays. I have a personal connection with the goats at the Grey Mare’s Tail.

Will the committee consider writing to the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee to seek its views on the matter and writing to the Scottish Government to seek clarity on how it plans to ensure the survival of primitive goat species, given its acknowledgment of their benefits to biodiversity?

The Convener: We could couple that with a reference to the fact that the petition has attracted an unusual degree of public support and we could draw attention to the number of individuals who have supported it. We could also reference the fact that some of the evidence that the Scottish Government apparently believes NatureScot has acted on has been directly challenged by those in the communities, who I imagine know more about the subject than NatureScot does.

Fergus Ewing: To follow on the theme of commenting on NatureScot, it seems that all species are equal, but some are more equal than others. Goats seem to be the species that does not merit any care or attention from NatureScot. Why that is the case is completely baffling, but NatureScot could no doubt explain it. I suggest that we ask NatureScot to explain why goats are apparently not worth anything as a species, and on what value judgment basis it has come to that apparent conclusion.

I want to pick up on a point that Lynda Graham made in her submission on 27 August, which is that, unless there is grazing of moorland upland by cattle, sheep or feral goats—I am told that the cattle and sheep have gone, which just leaves the goats—a fire load of tinder will be created. We have seen that in my constituency with the largest recorded wildfire in Scotland's history—in Dava, Carrbridge and Lochindorb—and also, I gather, with fires in the Borders during the Easter period.

10:30

I am told that in the local press—perhaps the August journal that Mr Hoy mentioned as well as others; I do not know—the fire service has expressed concern that, unless there is grazing, vegetation will increase the propensity for fires to become even more serious than they have been in the past.

Therefore, I would be grateful if we could write to the chief of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to ask whether the service has a view on the desirability of moorland being subject to grazing. After all, it seems to be a pretty obvious and sound management practice, although, again, it is a practice that seems to have gone by the attention of NatureScot.

The Convener: Are we all content to proceed on that basis?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: I thank our colleagues for coming along. You will be pleased to hear that we are keeping the petition open and are acting robustly in light of the evidence that you, the petitioners and all those who have supported the petition have brought to the committee.

Annexe C: Written submissions

NatureScot written submission, 2 October 2025

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

Thank you for your correspondence in relation to the Committee's consideration of petition PE2151: Grant protected status to primitive goat species in the Scottish Borders.

As requested, this response provides further information about the basis on which NatureScot has come to its views regarding the protection status of primitive goats, or feral goats as they are more commonly known. In doing so we would also draw attention to the Scottish Government's submission in May, in which they outline the current legislative context and confirm that they have no plans to provide full legal protected status to feral goats.

Firstly, we acknowledge the strength of feeling that exists on this matter and the considered views that have been put forward by the petitioner and those who have provided evidence. We know that the feral goat population that has been highlighted as part of this petition, in Langholm and the lower Scottish Borders, is valued by the local community. We also recognise the cultural and historical significance of feral goats in the Scottish Borders, and across Scotland.

As highlighted in the Scottish Government's response, feral goats have both positive and negative impacts on the environment. Benefits include the role they can play in managing vegetation and providing food for eagles and carrion feeders.

However, feral goats are an invasive non-native species that can cause serious damage to the natural environment and forestry interests through browsing and bark stripping. We have recorded browsing and trampling by feral goats as a negative pressure on twenty-nine nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The habitats most affected are woodlands, montane scrub, juniper and tall herb ledges, and the impacts are usually in combination with other large herbivores. Browsing and bark-stripping by feral goats can also have a negative impact on young trees and forestry.

Feral goat populations also have the potential to increase in size rapidly if they are not properly managed. For example, the number of feral goats in Snowdonia increased from 230 in the late 1960s to 1,100 in the early 2000s, despite ad hoc management. It is for these reasons that feral goat populations often need to be managed to best keep their numbers in balance with the environment.

In relation to the specific circumstances at Langholm, under current legislation, the culling of goats is not an activity that requires a licence from us. Therefore, it is for the landowners to manage the environmental impacts of goats and to consider how any reduction in the feral goat population should be achieved in practice. We continue to engage proactively on this matter, including meetings with representatives from land managers and the Goat Conservation Trust.

We understand that nobody has any intention to eradicate the local goat population and have recommended collaborative engagement between landowners on a sustainable goat management plan as a potential option for consideration, in a similar way that deer are managed across multiple ownerships.

We hope that the information provided is of use to the committee's consideration of this petition.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee written submission, 9 October 2025

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

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.

Scottish Government written submission, 24 October 2025

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

I refer to your email of 11 September 2025 regarding Petition PE2151 – Grant Protected Status To Primitive Goat Species In The Scottish Borders, lodged by Kenneth Erik Moffatt, seeking the Scottish Government's views on the action called for in the petition, namely calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to grant full legal protected status to primitive goat species in the Scottish Borders.

As set out previously, the Scottish Government currently has no plans to provide full legal protected status or increase regulatory protection for primitive goats, or feral goats as they are more commonly known. In terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, feral goats are considered to be outwith their native range in Scotland, which means it is an offence to release goats into the wild without a licence from NatureScot.

We must also consider the twin biodiversity and climate crises, which mean that our actions to mitigate and prevent damage by herbivores on our environment are now more important than ever.

Whilst we have acknowledged that feral goats can bring some benefits to local communities, ultimately they are an invasive non-native species that can cause damage to the natural environment and forestry. NatureScot's experience advice is that feral goats, particularly if not controlled, are likely to lead to negative impacts which outweigh any potential positive effects. For example of these negative impacts, browsing and trampling by feral goats has been recorded as a negative pressure on almost 30 Sites of Special Scientific Interests. While this has typically been a result of the presence of feral goats alongside other large herbivores, we must be clear that feral goats can, and do, contribute to significant damage to our environment as a result of their presence in the wild.

The Scottish Government empathises with the strength of feeling from the public around this issue and fully understands that feral goats are considered to be of local cultural and historical significance, not just in the Scottish Borders, but in various parts of Scotland. However, feral goat populations are likely to require managing as part of a sustainable grazing management, and NatureScot will continue to work with land owners on this.

With regard to the Committee's concerns about ensuring the survival of primitive goat species, as I have set out above, they are ultimately an invasive non-native species, so population gathering exercises are not undertaken. We do however encourage people to report any sightings of feral goats, or any other non-native species, in the wild to NatureScot. While population gathering isn't undertaken, neither the Scottish Government nor NatureScot are concerned about feral goat populations being at risk of eradication.

We also understand that there are a wide range of views on whether and how animals in the wild should be managed. In providing advice and taking forward

action, NatureScot attempts to take on board the wide range of knowledge and experience made available to it. Ultimately NatureScot seeks to ensure that biodiversity gain is given the best chance while assuring wildlife welfare.

For the reasons I have set out above, granting protected status to feral goats would not be in line with Scottish Government policies to protect our environment from herbivore grazing pressure, nor would it be in line with our policies on managing non-native species.

I hope this reaffirms out the Scottish Government's position on this issue.

Wildlife Management

Environment and Forestry Directorate

Nature Division

The Wild Goat Conservation Trust written submission, 5 November 2025

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

This further submission to the Public Petition PE2151 provides important additional information to the CPPPC regarding the new Scottish Government submission and submissions by JNCC and NatureScot.

The Wild Goat Conservation Trust (TWGCT) is disappointed that the Scottish Government, JNCC and NatureScot are set on maintaining the status quo in respect of the legal status of the wild goats of the Langholm-Newcastleton Hills, citing difficulties with current legislation and herbivore grazing impacts as obstacles to change.

We make the case that there would be little point in the Public Petition process if changes were never required. Change is the whole point of the ask of PE2151 and what over 13,000 people are calling for. We contend that there must be change.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

- Recent landowner changes and their commercial interests are putting real pressure on these animals through unregulated and indiscriminate culling. This happened to the ancient Bewcastle herd, mentioned in 15th century parish records, that was shot to extinction in the late 20th century.
- Currently, one landowner has just put forward plans for a 130MW windfarm and wishes to plant 1.5 million trees on a significant part of the 30,000-acre Langholm-Newcastleton Hills. To date, that company has been merciless in its culling of the wild goats that roam its land.

FERAL vs WILD

The Government and its agencies carefully refer to these goats as “feral”, this is to put the goats outside of any protective framework for wild animals or domestic livestock allowing landowners to legally cull with impunity.

However, the very rare race of goat (British Primitive Goat) to which the Langholm-Newcastleton goats belong, are no longer farmed animals, last being recorded in agricultural service in 1952. They now only exist either in the wild or in conservation grazing projects. They are fully naturalised, as they have been for centuries, meaning that they are sustaining a population in the wild independent of human intervention... they are therefore properly described as WILD ANIMALS.

Moreover, the Langholm-Newcastleton goat has been genetically isolated for such a long period that the unique adaptation to its environment means that it is a distinctive type. This was recognised by Scottish Natural Heritage [became NatureScot in Aug 2020] who stated:

“... ensuring both the survival and genetic integrity of the Langholm-Newcastleton goat as a distinct population will require recognition, protection and sympathetic management ...”¹

With reference to Soay sheep on the St Kilda islands that are also naturalised, the Government was recently happy to refer to these as WILD ANIMALS² and has rebutted protestations by vets calling for more sympathetic management of Soay sheep numbers in the face of the restricted grazing the remote islands offer.

On the basis of the view that these sheep are wild animals, the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), which owns St Kilda, and the Scottish government have stated that the sheep are covered by the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 rather than by farm-animal welfare laws. A recent article in The Scottish Farmer quotes a government spokesperson saying “Soay sheep on St Kilda are considered wild animals due to their unique history of adapting to life without management for many generations”.

Despite being called **feral** pigeons, these birds are afforded statutory protection under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended)³.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service written submission, 21 November 2025

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

In principle SFRS encourages biomass control methods utilised by landowners that actively contribute to wildfire prevention or reduction. SFRS acknowledges that goat grazing, whether by prescribed grazing or wild, can contribute towards active wildfire

¹ Scottish Natural Heritage, 2011, Langholm-Newcastleton Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest Site Management Statement.

² “**Vets press for action on starving Soay sheep in St Kilda**”, The Scottish Farmer, 2 October 2025.

³ RSPB Wildlife Enquiries, personal communication.

control through reducing fuel load, breaking up continuous fuel and decreasing fire intensity and is both a cost effective and eco-friendly option.

The Wild Goat Conservation Trust written submission, 27 November 2025

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

In its written submission, JNCC stated the following three points that we should like to directly comment upon.

- 1) “Feral goats are understood to be non-native to the UK and therefore ineligible under current guidance.”

Whilst there are no non-native animals included in Schedule 5, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 has been carefully worded so as not to preclude this possibility. The Act, in describing animals and plants that are to be listed in the protecting Schedules, uses the terms “principally” and “in general” in respect of them being indigenous to the UK. The guidance referred to by JNCC is therefore open to challenge.

- 2) “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.”

Whilst the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 generally protects at taxon level (species or sub-species) in practice, Schedule 5 allows listings of regional forms, or distinct population units separately from nominal species. Geographically or genetically distinct sub-populations have been granted separate protection.

The ask of PE2151 is specific to a geographic upland area of 30,000 acres that is the home range of a distinct population of ancient wild goats. The Langholm-Newcastleton Goat has already been described as a distinct population by Scottish Natural Heritage.

Protection should therefore be afforded on the grounds of a distinct population within its geographic range... This is very specific, tightly defined and was set out reasonably clearly by the petitioner.

It therefore poses no definition or enforcement difficulties.

- 3) “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.”

There is no paradox, there are already examples of birds listed in Schedule 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 9; Section 14. The Section 14 restrictions would be beneficial

given that a real existential threat to Langholm-Newcastleton Goats, as pointed out by Scottish Natural Heritage in 2011, comes from introgression caused by goats in general being released into the Langholm-Newcastleton Goat population. It is evidently helpful therefore, to have as an offence the releasing of goats into the wild under the Section 14 restrictions.

Petitioner written submission, 28 January 2026

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

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.