

PE1812/O

Petitioner submission of 4 January 2021

The case for protecting, funding and restoring Scotland's ancient, native & semi-native woodlands and woodland floors before COP26 is unequivocal and we thank everyone who has reinforced the Petition's compelling catalogue of evidence for this.

'Specific national legal protection for Scotland's remaining ancient, native and seminative woodlands and woodland floors would be a long overdue start. This is a land use issue, not simply a developmental issue, and as long as there is an 'anything goes' approach to that, then short of (properly enforced) statutory protection these assets will remain at risk and continue to be degraded.' **Heads of Planning Scotland: Climate Change, Energy and Resources Subcommittee**

'...at present most of designated woodlands (more than 50%) are in unfavourable and declining condition – the precursor to eventual loss....The status of designated woodlands, and their priority for intervention and incentives is important, but has not been sufficient to prevent the decline and loss described – and that decline and loss is very likely to be worse in non-designated natural woodlands.' **NatureScot**

'Humanity is waging war on nature.... This is suicidal....To put it simply, the state of the planet is broken....We must spell out how close we are to climate catastrophe...' **Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General on 02/12/20**

'The largest 1% of trees in mature and older forests comprise 50% of the total biomass, storing half a forest's carbon. A tree's ability to stockpile carbon increases rapidly with diameter. A tree with a two-foot diameter stores about 1.7 tons of carbon, yet a five-foot-diameter tree stores 19.2 tons. Removing the largest 1% of trees releases half the carbon stored in the forest above ground.' **Utah State University.**

Eco-grief, eco-anxiety, climate change distress, climate grief and other new phrases now regularly surface to describe the psychological and physical damage many people suffer in relation to our degrading life support system: Planet Earth. The Royal College of Psychiatrists, in November 2020, updated their website with new advice on eco-distress for parents, stating *'the number of young people who are concerned about the environment is growing rapidly'*.

On 04/11/20 Scotland's First Minister said (re Covid-19): *"I think we all recognise that when something is put into law, most people realise – more than they do when it's guidance – that it's important."* This clear and robust approach must now be used to protect our most precious natural resources.

On 24/12/20 our local authority published details of a proposed circa 202 hectare commercial forest next to part of the ancient bluebell wood that prompted our petition. Approx 181 hectares are scheduled for monoculture conifer plantation, with just approx 21 hectares (10%) for broadleaves, mostly planted around the perimeter for aesthetic purposes. Scotland's environmental organisations united in 2020 to produce an 11-point Nature Recovery Plan. Number 1 is to deliver a significant expansion in native woodland, stating it is *'critical that all new planting is appropriately planted and at least 50% of new planting is of native tree species'*. Is

there really any hope of stemming the catastrophic decline in Scotland's biodiversity and countryside while we mindlessly continue to risk conifer seed dispersal in to ancient woodland and rapidly expand ugly, brutalist monoculture and all the destructive practices that go with it?

The Woodland Trust Scotland is urgently calling for a commitment and funding to update Scotland's Ancient Woodland Inventory.

We welcome the submission from the John Muir Trust. From our observations of herbivores grazing in the small, ancient bluebell wood in the petition, we note only the areas of this wood that are grazed by both cattle and deer do not regenerate naturally. Herbivores have grazed in woodland for millennia and have a vital role to play, but our ancient and native woodland resource is so diminished, threatened and neglected it is essential root out bad practice and nurture and fund what is left.

We urge our Government to grasp the opportunity this year to show leadership on a world stage at COP26 by granting full legal protection to our ancient and native woodlands & woodland floors.