

PE1812/R

Petitioner submission of 4 March 2021

The 01/03/21 Scottish Government response, in our opinion, is a catalogue of failure barely disguised by 'statements of intention' on meaningful action to protect native woodland and stem biodiversity loss in the future. We at Help Trees Help Us are troubled and confused by the Government's submission.

1. Most of our petition objectives have been ignored. There is no mention of taking up the unique opportunity afforded by COP26 to show inspirational world leadership to give legal protection to even just our 1% remaining fragments of ancient woodland (that's just 4% of Scotland's woodland cover). Not even action on anything relatively simple, like updating legislation that is no longer fit for purpose and is failing our iconic natural treasures like ancient bluebell woods.
2. Most of the inconvenient truths in all the other submissions in support of the petition have been ignored. NatureScot has already stated in its submission '*....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.*' Our HTHU petition is focusing on those ancient and native woodlands that have no designation and are being gradually eroded and degraded by human activity.
3. The 'Delivering Favourable Condition' programme was lauded in the Government response. Yet the most recent update on the Action Plan on Nature Scot's website was in 2008-9.
4. We are deeply uncomfortable with the Government's focus on blaming other species for the catastrophic decline in our most biodiverse habitats, while taking no obvious responsibility for our own species' actions. Plus, the Deer Management Group work has not quantified impact / improvement to native woodlands and it is unknown if the 10,000 ha target has been met. This is yet another example of the piecemeal approach to protection for ancient woodland.
5. We believe Antonio Guterres, as UN Secretary General, must have a world overview of the current and emerging state of Planet Earth. In February he said our life support system is broken. Making peace with nature, securing its health and building on the critical life support and undervalued benefits it provides are key to a sustainable future for all.
6. According to Worldometer, Earth's human population increased by approx 81 million (approx 161 million births – 80 million deaths) in 2020 during the pandemic. Mr Guterres says we are already living like we have a spare Planet Earth. Earth overshoot day in 2020 was on August 22.
7. Since 18 February this year we have all been amazed by the quality of the images NASA's Perseverance rover has beamed back from Planet Mars to our Planet Earth.....*Hands up who wants to go and live on Mars.*

8. The link provided in the Government response to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Post-2020 Statement of Intention sounds great, as they all do. Yet we all know global governments last year missed every single biodiversity target set 10 years ago and we are not on target to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees.
9. The pandemic has shown us new laws can be created and passed quickly in an emergency. We are in a climate and biodiversity emergency.