

P-05-911 Protect Wales' Ancient Yew Trees, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 11.11.19

I would like to add a few things to the document I sent you about my campaign and petition for **Legal Protection for Ancient Yew Trees** which you are due to discuss shortly.

I have had a couple of comments from members of the Senedd to the effect that Tree Protection Orders are already there to do the job of protecting trees. I have also had it pointed out that the National Planning Policy Framework is set to protect ancient woodland. This is irrelevant when it comes to protecting individual yews that stand alone. There are a finite number of these trees and at ages of over 2,000 years, they can never be replaced. I understand you do not have the facilities to receive the online petition which is currently running at over 245,000 signatures which is a great shame because there is a great deal of detailed information on there about this campaign which I cannot give you here as it will run into dozens of pages. Some of the writing on the online petition explains why TPO's are simply inadequate and considered to be so by our Barrister Paul Powlesland, for protecting some of the most important and most ancient trees to be found anywhere in the world.

<https://www.change.org/p/save-britain-s-ancient-yew-trees-before-we-lose-any-more>

While Britain has the largest collection of ancient yews on earth (the oldest living trees), Wales has the largest part of this. There are many coffee table books of our ancient yew trees currently in print and more are being added all the time. This petition represents a golden opportunity to make the most of Wales' true importance in the world and for this country to take its place on the international stage as holding the most important trees in existence, trees of 2-5,000 years old!

The 5th and 6th century saints yews, known as Taxus Sanctus, recieved special protection under the old laws, including those of 10th century Hywel Dda. This kind of protection has gone into abeyance and while it is perhaps unlikely that the Church will ever concede to our request for legal protection of ancient yews on their land, about a third of the ancient yews (trees over 2,000 years) are not under the control of the Church. This petition represents the chance to make a real difference in preserving our heritage for the future if the Senedd would agree to pursue the possibility of passing new legislation. Wales is the Land of the Yews and as such should be celebrated to attract more people here. The fact that Wales is home to such ancient trees is something of real value which we should be extremely proud of.

Since I put the 5,000 year old yew tree at Defynnog on the map as the oldest tree in Britain, possibly in the whole of Europe, the number of visitors here has increased dramatically with visitor books witnessing the number of pilgrimages to see the tree,

visitors from all over the world, but in particular from Japan, Australia and America, visitors who have heard of this famous and extraordinary tree. Our heritage trees must be protected and preserved for future generations. This is also an opportunity for Wales to lead the way in protecting ancient trees at a time when concern for the environment is becoming the most important and urgent issue of our times.

Other countries like France have the yew as their national symbol and an article in the magazine 'Archaeology Ireland' in 2016 suggested Ireland should do too. It is ironic that neither of these countries has anything like the numbers of ancient yews to be found in Wales.

Janis Fry