



**PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF PE1340: QUESTIONS
ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS –
Response by RSPB Scotland¹.**

Should there be a strict presumption against felling or damage to any trees, irrespective of whether or not these lie in a conservation area?

RSPB Scotland considers that trees, including those within woodland, can provide important habitats for priority bird species and other important wildlife, depending on the location and setting of the tree, the woodland and tree type, tree age, form and condition.

RSPB Scotland, however, would not welcome a strict presumption against felling, or damage to any trees, irrespective of whether or not these lie in a conservation area, because:

- a) The RSPB has biodiversity concerns about inappropriately located forestry plantations that are on priority open ground habitats, such as blanket and raised bogs, semi-natural grassland and breeding wading bird sites.

The Scottish Forestry Strategy, UK Biodiversity Action Plan, Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal recognise that such afforested sites and habitats should be restored by tree removal combined with other appropriate remedial action - such as hydrological restoration - and onward management, including grazing management and removal of tree regeneration.

- b) Felling woodland trees can be an important method to improve the biodiversity condition of existing native woodlands, as well as maintaining priority open ground habitats, for priority species, priority habitats and designated wildlife sites. There may also be circumstances where it is appropriate to increase the volume and diversity of deadwood habitats for priority biodiversity in woodland through selected management of key woodland trees.

Improving the biodiversity condition of native woodlands, including for priority wildlife species, is a key objective of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the Scottish Forestry Strategy.

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¹ The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654.

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