

PE1457/C

Petition PE01457

I want to compliment the FCS and SNH for their clear and cogent support for my petition. They show how the role of the Scots pine is central to the traditions, the economy and the environment of Scotland's woodlands and that, in the context of the Year of Natural Scotland, the National Tree would help focus on the wide range of wildlife viewing opportunities across Scotland's forests.

On one point, I question the FCS/SNH submission where it states that "*native pinewoods are associated solely with the Highlands*". There are popular groups of Scots pine near Peebles, on Kyles Hill and other spots in the Lowlands and Borders. I recognise, of course, that the majority of the Scots pine and indeed Scotland's forests are in the Highlands. The Highlands offer greater space for native forest expansion than any other part of the country, and therefore efforts to expand natural forests in Scotland will be more likely to produce significant results in the Highlands, and Scot pine will be a key species in these new native woodlands, thereby increasing its overall extent in the country.

The submission also states that if "*there are any tensions about the selection of the Scots pine as the National Tree of Scotland, these could be teased out by seeking the public's view on the proposal*". My petition asked that the Government should proclaim the Scots pine as the National Tree. I am more than happy to embrace democracy and to give the choice of the National Tree to the people of Scotland. If the majority of people prefer the rowan or the birch, so be it. Furthermore, if there is a national vote, that process would itself encourage awareness of the natural environment and support the aims of the Year of Natural Scotland. Let the people speak.

I am therefore particularly pleased that the Woodland Trust, with the support of other environmental groups in Scotland, is carrying out an on-line vote. They have stated "*We support the idea of a national tree as a great legacy for the Year of Natural Scotland, but we want to know which of our native species you think best represents the nation. Whether you're a pine nut, a birch buff or even an alder aficionado, please let us know by Friday 22 March which species you think should be the national tree and why. The results of this survey will be passed on to the Parliament's Public Petitions Committee.*" See: <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/news-media/scotland/Pages/scotlands-national-tree.aspx>

I hope that the Petitions Committee will encourage SNH to be fully involved in the consultation process and that they will ensure that the Scottish Government clarifies what the legal process for proclaiming a national Tree would be.

Alex Hamilton

24th February 2013