

P-05-911 Protect Wales' Ancient Yew Trees, Correspondence – Petitioner to Chair, 08.12.19

Dear Janet Finch-Saunders,

Thankyou very much for your letter concerning my Campaign for Legal Protection for Ancient Yews. I am so sorry it has taken a while to reply but I have had a lot of practical problems to deal with recently, including no internet.

You ask what measure I would like to see the Welsh government take in the way of protection. I do not have all the answers but as you will see if you look at the most recent update on <https://www.change.org/p/save-britain-s-ancient-yew-trees-before-we-lose-any-more> , English Heritage have taken a significant step in making the Ankerwycke Yew at Runnymede a Scheduled Monument which carries penalties of the highest possible kind for damaging it. As a result I am now working with the Tree Council to push this advantage in order to attain that status for a total of 12 ancient yews. This will move things on considerable if we are able to achieve this and open the door for protection for other ancient yews. I'm afraid I do not know who is the equivalent NGO in Wales to English Heritage but obviously as a devolved government Wales will need to do things separately here but this I believe could be an advantage. I wonder if you could find out who is in charge of awarding this status in Wales? I will also try to find out. My point is that as a devolved government, surely this should enable Wales to introduce its own similar status and protection? It would be useful if we had a lawyer who can work with laws in Wales. The Campaign has a Barrister, Paul Powlesland who works for us voluntarily and got us a hearing in the House of Lords but in Wales we would need someone else. We also need to find out what body is equivalent to English Heritage in Wales and able to award such status as a Scheduled Monument or Ancient Scheduled Monument?

In the past there were laws such as those under Hywel Dda to protect sacred yews (Tauxus Sanctus) I attach a paper I wrote on this. These were old laws which have nevr been revoked and I have often wondered if a case could be built up on this basis, given the right Lawyer. We have the largest number of ancient yews on earth in Wales. As the oldest living trees this is incredibly important to the Welsh nation, both nationally and internationally. Wales is truly the Land of the Yews and needs to be flagged up as such. This would increase both Wales's standing in the world and its tourism with people coming from all over the world, as is happening at Defynnog, people coming specifically to see the ancient yew.

I am sure that with the new zeal for trees being promoted, as a result of Climate Change now being seen as the most important issue of our times, that the time is ripe for gaining the protection these ancient trees need. If you scroll down the page in this link you will find a list of ancient yews in Wales - http://www.janisfryart.co.uk/ancient_yew_tours.htm

These ancient yews (trees of over 2,000 years old) are our most important heritage and must be protected for the future.

Yours sincerely,
Janis Fry