

## **NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE**

12 May 2020

### **SCOTLAND'S LARGEST CONSERVATION CHARITY ANNOUNCES EMERGENCY MEASURES**

The National Trust for Scotland, the country's largest and oldest conservation charity, has announced a series of emergency actions designed to ensure its survival during the Coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath.

The magnitude of this year's expected income losses are of a level similar the Trust's current reserves and without taking these actions, it would put the future and wellbeing of some of Scotland's most iconic places, such as Culzean, Glencoe, Culloden and Mar Lodge Estate, in jeopardy.

Today it was announced that the Trust was:

- Placing 456 staff in its permanent workforce at risk of redundancy;
- Opening a formal consultation process which involves its recognised trade union, Prospect;
- Approaching grant-giving bodies and the Scottish Government for financial support;
- Seeking to sell non-heritage land and property;
- Scaling-back based on the possibility of a staged re-opening of 27 key properties this year on a limited basis with others following next year;
- Preparing to launch an emergency fundraising appeal.

The Trust's estate and holiday accommodation has been closed since March to comply with Government instructions, meaning that its income has been virtually eradicated during what is normally the busiest period for membership recruitment and property visits.

The loss of direct income has been compounded by poor stock market conditions that have depressed the value and dividends paid by the charity's investments, as well as a growing number of people giving up their memberships due to the property closures and personal circumstances.

The Trust's total charitable income from all sources is forecast to collapse to the tune of £28 million this year, and to fall again in 2021 even if current restrictions are relaxed.

This does not include estimated investment losses of £46 million due to stock market conditions.

The Chief Executive of the National Trust for Scotland, Simon Skinner said:

“The extreme and unprecedented public health emergency has put the charity’s future in doubt.

“This is despite us running the Trust in a financially prudent way, building up our reserves, and latterly taking critical decisions at the outset of this crisis, reducing our expenditure to a minimum, foregoing the recruitment of seasonal staff, terminating temporary and fixed-term contracts and furloughing a large proportion of our permanent staff.

“With some level of restrictions likely to apply post lock-down, and having effectively missed the busiest part of the visitor season, I see little prospect of us being able to return to more normal levels of membership, visitation and income for the rest of this year and beyond.

“Even after we’ve done all we can to stave off the worst, it’s crystal clear that we need radical action if we are to buy more time that will give the Trust space to overcome income loss and weather depressed economic conditions.

“Post-lockdown, we plan to scale back our current offering to match the anticipated restrictions that will remain. We propose to initially focus on the safe, phased re-opening of a core of 27 built heritage properties around Scotland, primarily those best able to accommodate social distancing. The remainder will be placed on a care and maintenance basis, with the aim of opening a further 18 sometime next year, and the rest once there is a general upturn in the economy and the Trust’s fortunes.

“The sad consequence of this is that we must make a cut to our workforce. We’ve therefore made the toughest of all decisions in placing 456 colleagues at the risk of redundancy. In light of the reduced scale of operations and activity, a further review of back office functions is underway, meaning that more posts are likely to be at risk.

“This is bitter news and, believe me, if there were any other alternatives we would be trying them. This is a situation not of our making and was impossible to foresee just a few short weeks ago.

“Although there are support schemes in place for charities and businesses, we’ve found that we either don’t qualify for them or that the scale of support is too limited. For that reason, we’re approaching grant-giving bodies and the Scottish Government, as well as planning an emergency appeal, to seek financial support to bridge us over the most difficult period. While we reduce our costs as far as we can, what we are asking for are relatively small contributions that will give the Trust a fighting chance and enable us to go on contributing to Scotland’s wellbeing.

“This wouldn’t be money for nothing: since 1931, with minimal state support, our charity still remains the only organisation able to take a holistic approach, both natural and cultural, to conservation. We tell Scotland’s story from Neolithic to contemporary times we’ve pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the country’s most magnificent buildings, collections and habitats.

“In straight economic terms, we’ve invested millions in conservation and in normal years delivered over £300 million of annual economic gain to Scotland, benefiting many local businesses and communities. We’re a mainstay of the nation’s visitor economy, accounting for 54% of attraction visits in Ayrshire & Arran, 22% in Aberdeen & Grampian, 21% in the Highlands, 18% in Perthshire, and 8% in Dumfries & Galloway.

“Some people may not care that a charity is in trouble or see heritage as having little importance just now – but if the Trust goes down then what will be lost will impoverish Scotland forever: The beautiful settings in which you take the dog for a walk, fun with your family at places like Culzean, the historic legacy that shaped our country at Bannockburn, Culloden and elsewhere, buildings that are emblematic of Scotland’s long story like the Tenement House and Gladstone’s Land, the paths that make access to landscapes like those of Glencoe and Mar Lodge Estate easy – that’s what’s at stake.

“The birthright of generations yet to come may be denied to them if this generation doesn’t do what’s needed to save it. That’s why we’ve been forced into taking such painful decisions in the middle of a situation that’s not of our making.”

## **ENDS**

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### **Editor’s Notes:**

456 posts have been placed at risk of redundancy but the final number of redundancies will not be confirmed until the end of the formal consultation period.

The Trust currently has 751 employees. No seasonal employees were engaged this year due to the public health emergency.

The Trust’s expected income losses are broken down as Membership (-30%), Rentals (-30%), Properties (-100% in the first half of the year and -50% for the remainder), Investments (-50%) and Fundraising (-50%).

The National Trust for Scotland is the charity that celebrates and protects Scotland's heritage. It relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work of caring for the natural and built heritage of Scotland for everyone to enjoy.

Since 1931, the Trust has been the country's only conservation body with a holistic portfolio. Our work encompasses built, natural and cultural heritage; archaeological sites, grand estates and gardens, plants, birds, natural habitats, farmland and crofts, paintings, furniture and much else. We are uniquely placed to demonstrate best practice in integrated conservation policy.

We have a presence in every corner of Scotland from the most northerly tip of Shetland to the south coast of Dumfries and Galloway and from the east at St Abb's Head to the most westerly islands of St Kilda, 64 kilometres into the Atlantic Ocean. We care for properties in more than three quarters of Scotland's local authority areas. Many of the Trust's properties are in rural areas, with 77% of properties in areas classed as rural by the Scottish Government, including 13% in remote rural areas and 23% in very remote rural areas.

Our responsibilities extend to nearly one million seabirds on the islands of St Kilda; 100,000 artefacts in our properties; 77,699 hectares of Scottish countryside including 46 Munros; 10,000 archaeological sites; more than 400 islands and islets in Scotland and significant stretches of the Scottish coastline; 270 listed buildings; the birthplaces of important Scottish figures including Robert Burns, David Livingstone and J.M Barrie more than 100 Scheduled monuments; 70 gardens and designed landscapes, 35 of which are some of the most important gardens in Scotland; seven National Nature Reserves (NNR) and 45 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); and the only dual World Heritage Site in the UK – St Kilda – designated for its terrestrial and marine natural heritage and cultural landscape.

