

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

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### **Horticulture apprentice hones skills in Trust garden**

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) student meets MSP at the start of Scottish Apprenticeship Week

Horticulture student Eilidh Fletcher showed off her new skills when MSP Ken Macintosh visited Greenbank Garden, near Glasgow, at the start of Scottish Apprenticeship Week (March 4 - 8).

Eilidh, who is doing a Modern Apprenticeship in Horticulture at Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), has been working as a garden apprentice at the National Trust for Scotland garden in Clarkston, East Renfrewshire.

The conservation charity launched the two-year apprenticeship last year to help meet a UK-wide shortage of professional gardeners for heritage gardens.

MSP for West Scotland Ken Macintosh visited the garden on Monday to find out more about what the Trust is doing to support apprentices.

He said: "Working in the beautiful surrounds of Greenbank Garden on a lovely spring day is probably not what first comes to mind when we think about apprenticeships and I am grateful to everyone at the National Trust for Scotland and Scotland's Rural College for making this option available for our young people.

"My thanks most of all, however, go to Eilidh for giving me an insight into the world of horticulture and for sharing just some of the gardening knowledge and learning she has already developed."

Head of Heritage Gardening (Policy) at the National Trust for Scotland Ann Steele, who was behind the development of the apprenticeship scheme, said:

"The Trust is planning for these places we love to be protected for future generations.

"To do so we need to equip the next generation with the knowledge and experience they will need along the way to make sound decisions for all our heritage.

"I am delighted that the Trust and its donors are supporting this initiative and investing in Scotland's young people at a critical time for our sector."

As part of her apprenticeship, Eilidh, 20, combines practical gardening experience at Greenbank Garden – including general garden maintenance, propagation and working with volunteers – with study at SRUC's Oatridge campus.

"The National Trust for Scotland has provided a perfect scheme for young people like me as there are not many opportunities like this within the industry," she said.

“Employees from the Trust have all been so supportive, as well as my close colleagues and the lecturers at SRUC Oatridge who have shared their knowledge and passion with me.

“This is a scheme I am grateful to be a part of and I hope it is continued for many years to come.”

Simon Jones, Gardens and Designed Landscapes Manager for Glasgow and West Scotland, said: “As someone who loves seeing young people engaged with plants and honing their gardening skills, I was very happy to have a Modern Apprentice join our experienced team at Greenbank Garden.

“The Trust has fantastic gardens to offer anyone a learning experience. Our apprentice, Eilidh Fletcher, is a great asset and her enthusiasm for learning new aspects of horticulture keeps us all on our toes.”

Lecturer in Horticulture at SRUC George Gilchrist, who started his career at Greenbank Garden, said: “It is great to see the National Trust for Scotland investing in a worthwhile training programme for the next generation of gardeners.”

**ENDS**

