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LOOKING FOR LOVE IN BEN LOMOND: TRUST PLAYS MATCHMAKER FOR MUNRO'S RELICT TREES

- **National Trust for Scotland becomes cupid to save downy willow tree population on most southerly Munro**
- **Surviving relict population of endangered willow species to be matched with male plants to encourage natural woodland regeneration**
- **Project made possible thanks to funding raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery**

The National Trust for Scotland is playing cupid in a bid to help save a population of relict downy willow trees on one of the most popular Munro's in the country.

Scotland's largest conservation charity is playing matchmaker for the small patch of four female trees on the slopes of Ben Lomond, thought to be several decades old. The Trust is aiming to enhance the population of trees through natural woodland regeneration by introducing male plants grown from cuttings carefully taken from the healthy population of male willows in woodland on Loch Lomond side.

By collecting cuttings and growing saplings in its tree nursery at Ben Lomond, the Trust is pairing up potential partners through planting male plants amongst the patch of relict trees to create a viable and sustainable seed source. This work aims to protect mountain willow scrub, one of the six priority habitats identified in the Trust's Plan for Nature, which provides a framework and focus for its nature conservation efforts and includes the actions it will take to care for its willow populations.

Alasdair Eckersall, National Trust for Scotland Property Manager and Senior Ranger at Ben Lomond, said: "This project was made possible by funding from players of People's Postcode Lottery and will support our nature conservation on Ben Lomond. It will enable improvements to our tree nursery, that is crucial in helping us to grow native montane willow scrub species that are replanted on this beautiful mountainside.

"We are nurturing the cuttings to develop rooted male saplings that will be planted out on Lomond side in future and we're grateful to Forestry and Land Scotland for the permission to obtain the cuttings. The cuttings grown in our nursery will be used to help expand the population of downy willow on the ben and protect the relict female trees from dying out. The plants will take some time to grow and develop strong roots system before we can plant them and we expect to do this in 2028, so it's a long-term vision that we hope will have a positive impact on the biodiversity of this precious landscape."

The funding will also support the creation of woodland pasture habitats that will see enclosed areas of new tree saplings planted across the lower slopes of Ben Lomond by teams of volunteers who will construct the fenced exclosures. This will help to protect the young trees from grazing animals, and in the longer-term soften the landscape, combat habitat loss and support biodiversity.

Alasdair continued: "It is thanks to the continued generosity of our members and supporters, including players of People's Postcode Lottery, that we're able to continue our vital work to care for, protect and share Scotland's nature, beauty and heritage at this special place for everyone to enjoy."

Players of People's Postcode Lottery have supported the conservation charity's Love Our Nature project since 2022, which benefited from £900k last year. Funding awarded through Postcode Earth Trust this year has supported nature conservation projects at a variety of different habitats, including coastal and marine areas, peatlands, wetlands, woodlands, and the eight National Nature Reserves cared for by the Trust.

Head of Charities at [People's Postcode Lottery](#), Laura Chow, said: "It's great to know our players are making such a difference by supporting the Trust's work to care for Scotland's rare tree populations. It's vital that we conserve our native plants and woodlands to help tackle the growing threat of climate change and protect our natural heritage for future generations."

Ben Lomond is the most southerly Munro (mountain over 3,000ft/914m), at 3,193ft/974m. The summit is the highest part of the area of land in the care of the National Trust for Scotland, which also includes the woodlands and fields of the lower slopes, peatland and moorland, and the crags and steep slopes of the high ground. One of the most popular hill-walks in Scotland, visitor can enjoy spectacular views of Loch Lomond from the summit, guided tours by the Trust's team of rangers, and wildlife such as ptarmigan and ravens, skylarks and wheatears, black grouse and even pine martens.

The Love Our Nature project supports the National Trust for Scotland's vision to care for, protect and share Scotland's nature, beauty and heritage for everyone, as outlined in its 10-year strategy, launched in 2022. For more information on the National Trust for Scotland, visit www.nts.org.uk.

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Notes to Editors:

Images: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/YN3K96gx5U>

Players of People's Postcode Lottery have now raised over £4m since 2014 to support the National Trust for Scotland.

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland's largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland's magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022 the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland's heritage which doesn't have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk. The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.