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## **NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND FLIES THE FLAG FOR BINNS ANNIVERSARY**

- **Conservation charity works with boatbuilder to replace historic flagpole on Binns Tower**
- **Tower built as a result of wager on most frivolous use of £100**
- **Flag raised to celebrate 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Binns acquisition**

Celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its acquisition of the House of the Binns in 1944, Scotland's largest conservation charity is hoisting a flag on the prominent Binns Tower - for the first time in almost a decade.

The raising of the flag has been made possible by a newly-completed project by the National Trust for Scotland to replace the broken flagpole on top of the famous Binns folly, which was purportedly built as the result of a wager on the most frivolous way to spend £100.

To maintain a historical connection with the old mast, said to have been a ship's mast from a nearby breakers' yard, the Trust commissioned the new flagpole from Fairlie Boat Builders on Scotland's west coast, fabricated using traditional techniques.

The Trust also carried out vital conservation on the Tower itself, ensuring it can be seen and enjoyed for generations to come. The Trust worked with Conservation Surveyors Adams Napier Partnership to develop a package of work, including high level harling repairs, maintenance to the roof structure, lime washing, and other repairs. They were carried out by G Brown Stonemasons over a period of 10 weeks. The conservation works were made possible by the Historic Environment Scotland Partnership Fund Grant, an ongoing partnership that enables the charity to not only carry out vital work but to support the continuation of traditional crafts and skills.

Leading the building conservation project was Maintenance Surveyor at the National Trust for Scotland, Megan Gardner, who said: "It sounds a simple thing to replace a flagpole, but in this case it really wasn't. The whole process has been an interesting one, throwing up some unusual challenges along the way, particularly the location of the Tower at the highest point of Binns Hill.

"Being in such an exposed location, it gets a lot of wear from the weather, so it was important to find the right solution for the construction of the new flagpole that was appropriate to the structure and its location and heritage.

"Due to the Binns Tower's prominent position and background, we felt that the traditional techniques used in the flagpole and its construction from a ship's mast were a significant part of the building and its story. We looked at how masts were traditionally constructed and are delighted that we have been able to include these traditional shipbuilding elements in the new flagpole. It's a great example of how we're

delivering our strategic objective to be a learning organisation by championing skills to support traditional conservation and innovation.”

There were also practical challenges in carrying out the work. The height of the Tower required significant access equipment, and scaffolding had to be carried up the hill manually because the amount of rainfall during the spring and early summer made it impossible for vehicles to get over the fields. For internal work, space inside the Tower is extremely limited and the top is only accessible via two ladders and a narrow hatch onto the roof.

Stuart Maxwell, Edinburgh & East Regional Director at the National Trust for Scotland, added: “The Tower is such a prominent point in the countryside around the Binns, and we’re very pleased to once again raise the flag there. It’s a splendid way to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dalrymple family signing over the deeds of the Binns estate to our conservation charity. We’re grateful for the generosity of our members and supporters in our work to protect, care for, and share Scotland’s special places, and for the assistance of the Historic Environment Scotland Partnership Fund Grant, which has made this project possible.”

The Binns Tower – also known as Dalrymple’s Folly – was rumoured to have come about as the result of an after-dinner wager in 1825 as to who could spend £100 in the most pointless but amusing way. The story goes that Sir James won the bet with his suggestion of a folly overlooking his neighbour’s estate, and the Tower was completed in 1829.

From 1919 to 1935, the Tower was topped by a windmill rather than a flag, which was used to generate electricity.

The Historic Environment Scotland Partnership Fund Grant of £1,062,000 over 2023-26, enables the National Trust for Scotland to conduct vital conservation work across its built heritage properties, to use technology to better understand its built structures, and to invest in further training and skills development.

## **ENDS**

### **Editors Notes:**

#### **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.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work. For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk). The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.