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## **THREAVE LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROJECT INSPIRES CHANGE**

Scotland's largest conservation charity, the National Trust for Scotland, is inspiring change through the 100-year Threave Landscape Restoration Project. Located in the heart of Dumfries and Galloway, the project has seen 81 hectares of land transformed from a disused dairy farm to one which features wildflower meadows, rich wetlands, and growing native woodlands that are buzzing with insect and bird life, including species rarely before seen in the area.

The project has inspired other places cared for by the National Trust for Scotland, with teams at Culloden, Burg, Iona and Ben Lawers all looking to adapt their conservation grazing approach to utilise new GPS software in use at Threave. Holistic planned grazing, such as that done at Threave by the 14 Belted Galloway cattle on site, increases biodiversity by creating vegetation at different heights, which encourages a range of wildlife as well as allowing wildflowers to grow. The project uses pioneering GPS technology, located in the collars of the cows, to allow remote tracking of activity via smartphone to reduce the chance of over-grazing.

Not only is the project inspiring large-scale changes at key historic sites throughout the country, it's also generating change locally. Following a visit from Gelston Primary School to the Threave Landscape Restoration Project, pupils have worked with the conservation charity's Engagement Ranger, Mary Smith, to create their own wildlife garden in the grounds of the school.

Since the project, supported by HSBC UK and the Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership Scheme, using funds from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, began in 2021, the National Trust for Scotland has been giving nature a helping hand to encourage wildlife and biodiversity across the site. An innovative project from the beginning, it captures a new way of caring for the land which moves away from the more traditional prescriptive measures, to one which lets nature and the land itself lead the way.

Taking what was once a segregated landscape, the Trust has created a cohesive, open space on which natural heritage can flourish across wetland, woodland, wild meadows and grass-scapes. 210m of new boardwalks have been introduced to allow visitors to cross the re-created 7.3 hectare wetland area and discover species new to the site, including shoveler duck.

A different approach to woodland management, which saw the Trust shift from commercial forestry plantation woodlands to replanting methods and native woodland generation, has seen 2,000 native trees planted between November 2022 and March 2023 alone. By the end of the project, the land will be home to 16,000 trees.

Committed to increasing accessibility to all of its places as part of its vision of nature, beauty and heritage for everyone, the Trust also upgraded the core paths around the land, in partnership with the Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership Scheme. The wider pathways not only connect to the town but will also allow wheelchairs and prams easier access. Currently the area receives between 800-900 visitors each week, with people of all ages keen to spot the range of wildlife now living on the land – from ospreys to wild fowl, greylag geese and sand martins.

Although a long-term project spanning 100 years, the difference in the land approach is already reaping rewards for the conservation charity and the local area. This month alone a pair of wheatear birds were seen using the reserve. Curlew have been spotted on the wetlands, all 19 ponds and scrapes were occupied all winter with wild fowl, and three shoveler ducks took up home on the 'great scrape'. Skylark have also been displaying on the site over the last month in a direct result from the change in land use, as a species which searches for long grass for nesting.

**Gareth Clingan, Operations Manager – Dumfries & Galloway, at charity the National Trust for Scotland, said:** “The Threave Landscape Restoration Project is a really different way of thinking about looking after land, one that lets nature recover and monitors the changes over a 100-year period, with a bit of a helping hand from the National Trust for Scotland. We hope our approach will inspire others to think about how they can make changes that mean nature will flourish. This is so important in this time of climate and biodiversity crises.

“Another great thing about our work here at Threave is how easy it is for people to see it firsthand. We’re just off the A75 and only five minutes away from the heart of Castle Douglas, so everyone can come along and see the difference our conservation charity’s work here has made, and enjoy the nature, beauty and heritage of this lovely part of Scotland.

“Not only have we created flourishing eco-systems, teeming with flora and fauna, but we’ve also created local job opportunities with the recruitment of two new rangers, alongside a number of volunteers who are making a big contribution to the project. If this is what we can see after just two years, imagine the transformation in 2121.”

**David Thompson, Head Ranger – Dumfries & Galloway, at the National Trust for Scotland, said:** “This project has really put our charity and our conservation credentials on the map. We’ve been talking to folk from all over the world, and especially pupils and students, which is essential if we are to grow the next generation of conservationists. It’s been really rewarding sharing our specialist skills and knowledge. As a team, we’ve also

learned a lot and have a much deeper understanding of, and appreciation for, this special place. “

**McNabb Laurie, Galloway Glens Team Leader, said:** “Every member of the Galloway Glens team has really thrown themselves into supporting this project and to see the changes already happening on the site is so rewarding. Some really challenging project development and delivery work has already resulted in improvements for visitors and nature. It’s also great to see the number of local businesses employed on the project. Congratulations to everyone involved.”

The Threave Landscape Restoration Project is just one example of the work being undertaken by the National Trust for Scotland as part of its 10-year strategy, *Nature, Beauty and Heritage for Everyone*. With over 100 places in its care, the conservation charity is committed to caring for Scotland’s special places, providing access and enjoyment to all, and being a sustainable forward-thinking charity.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland or the Threave Landscape Restoration Project, visit [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk).

## **ENDS**

**Please find a Dropbox of supporting images here: <https://bit.ly/NTSTLRP>.**

### **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.

