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VOLUNTEERS GROW GALLOWAY'S NATIVE WOODLAND

Volunteers from the local community and HSBC UK employees have joined forces to progress an ambitious landscape restoration project at the National Trust for Scotland's Threave Estate in Dumfries and Galloway.

More than 200 native aspen trees were planted on the Kelton Mains site, as part of the conservation charity's centuries-spanning Threave Landscape Restoration Project that aims to restore the area's wetlands and native woodlands, helping combat the climate crisis. These trees were planted as part of the Millburn Restoration, helping to make the stream and its banks a better habitat for wildlife.

Supported by the Galloway Glens Partnership, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and HSBC UK, 81 hectares of land at Kelton Mains are being transformed into rich habitats

for flora and fauna, with the area being 'undrained' to re-establish the area's unique wetlands, redundant fenceposts being removed and native woodland being expanded.

David Thompson, National Trust for Scotland Estate Manager at Threave said: "These new trees are the next step in our plan to restore the natural features that are so unique to this part of the Threave Estate. The benefits of these trees will be immediate – from the moment they go in the ground, they improve the biodiversity of this site, and they'll keep doing that for centuries to come. This is a really exciting step for our project to protect and restore Threave's landscape, now and for years to come."

Around 10 volunteers from HSBC UK, the National Trust for Scotland and the Galloway Glens Project were onsite on Thursday 25 November, contributing to an important conservation effort and enjoying the health and wellbeing benefits gained from spending time in nature. A group of HSBC UK employees visited the site earlier this year to learn more about the project and the positive impact it will have on the Threave Estate.

Ian Stuart, Chief Executive of HSBC UK said: "A challenge as significant as climate change can only be tackled in collaboration. Our ambition is to help open the door for National Trust for Scotland to explore new areas of agroforestry management and how nature-based solutions are being scaled and delivered to tackle climate change internationally."

Galloway Glens Project Officer, Nick Chisholm, added: "This is a super ambitious project that demonstrates a new way of managing and interpreting our landscape. Humans will be the spectators and biodiversity will be the winner."

Volunteers also saw the progress being made by the herd of Belted Galloway cattle who will be helping with the conservation project. The cows will be shepherded via new GPS technology which controls where they graze. They are currently learning about their new 'smart collars' in their field. Once they understand how the sounds work, they will be able to graze in very specific areas of the estate, guided and herded remotely using the 4G and bluetooth enabled solar powered collars.

David Thompson added: "This is really exciting technology which not only means that we can remove kilometres of unsightly and expensive-to-maintain fencing, but it means we can direct grazing to the areas where it makes the biggest impact for the project, helping to improve the soil condition, encourage wildflowers and natural woodland regeneration. It provides variety and interest for the animals too, which is important to their wellbeing. We're going to carefully monitor how this technology works in practice and are looking forward to sharing our results in coming months."

The team hope that the cattle will be able to move to this new system of grazing some time in December, and visitors to Kelton Mains will be reminded that dogs will need to be kept on leads from that point on.

For more information about the Threave Landscape Restoration Project, visit www.nts.org.uk.

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About the Threave Landscape Restoration Project

The project, one of the largest currently underway by conservation charity the National Trust for Scotland, will re-establish wetlands by 'undraining' the land, allowing the River Dee and its floodplain to revert to more natural flow patterns, providing habitats for a wide range of native and migrant waterfowl, and many other species too. It will also reintroduce native woodland species, with the ultimate ambition to create a 30-hectare native woodland.

About National Trust for Scotland

The National Trust for Scotland is the conservation charity that over 90 years has saved, maintained and shared many of the country's most loved places, rich with history, heritage, nature and culture. The charity celebrates Scotland's heritage and with more than 100 places in its care, there's a place for everyone to love.

The National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work of caring for the natural and built heritage that people from Scotland and across the world all love, ensuring its future for everyone to enjoy.

Support the National Trust for Scotland and help them protect the places we all love. Become a member at www.nts.org.uk.

About Galloway Glens

The Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership connects the people living and working in the area with its heritage and landscape. In doing so, we are working to secure a prosperous future for the communities around the Water of Ken and River Dee, right from their source to the sea. The Galloway Glens Scheme is an initiative of Dumfries & Galloway Council's Environment Team, primarily funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Find out more at www.gallowayglens.org

About HSBC UK

HSBC UK serves around 15 million customers across the UK, supported by 26,000 colleagues. HSBC UK offers a complete range of retail banking and wealth management to personal and private banking customers, as well as commercial banking for small to medium businesses and large corporates.

HSBC Holdings plc, the parent company of HSBC, is headquartered in London. HSBC serves customers worldwide from offices in 64 countries and territories in its geographical regions: Europe, Asia, North America, Latin America, and Middle East and North Africa. With assets of US\$2,976bn at 30 June 2021, HSBC is one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisations.

