

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

19 August 2020

Conservation charity reveals plans following consultation and generous contributions

Following an announcement that the Scottish Government has made a financial contribution of £3.8 million towards the National Trust for Scotland in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, the charity has confirmed what this will mean for its properties in the Highlands & Islands and across the nation.

The government contribution adds to nearly £2.5 million donated to an emergency appeal and follows on from a formal consultation on emergency measures intended to save the charity from collapse.

As a result of lockdown and subsequent restrictions, the Trust has lost almost £30 million – half its expected income. The charity's proposed emergency measures included placing 429 positions at risk as well as delaying re-opening of some of the heritage properties in its care until 2021 or 2022.

With the financial support and donations, and with changes made to proposals by the Trust's managers following consultation, the Trust is now able to reduce redundancies to the minimum possible and open or partially open more properties than originally hoped:

- Across Scotland, the number of compulsory redundancies falls from 429 to 188; most of the affected posts are seasonal;
- 33 built heritage properties will re-open this year, rather than the 27 originally planned, in addition to natural heritage properties which opened from July;
- The Trust avoids the risk of ceasing to be a 'going concern' and now has the space and time needed to reconfigure its strategy and forward planning and look towards full recovery in due course.

In the Highlands & Islands, the majority of the Trust's properties are now re-opening this year, including Glencoe Visitor Centre, Culloden, Glenfinnan and Brodie Castle's Playful Garden. Inverewe Garden is also open, though the Sawyer Gallery and other parts of the property will be closed until next Easter as will Hugh Miller's Cottage and Abertarff House.

A total of 26 posts will be saved in the Highlands and Islands from 72 that were originally placed at risk of redundancy.

The National Trust for Scotland's Chief Executive, Phil Long OBE said: "I want to offer my profound thanks to the Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise and particularly to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture, Fiona Hyslop.

"We were confronted by the worst crisis in our charity's history and we had a very real fear that this history was about to end abruptly. The generous support from the Scottish Government, together with the inspiring number of donations made by many individuals, has diverted us away from that terrible outcome.

"My joy at this announcement is tempered by the fact that the effects of Covid-19 are so devastating that we're still having to say goodbye to many friends and colleagues. I wish it were not so, but much to my regret redundancies are unavoidable, although this support has helped us to keep them to the absolute minimum possible.

"While many of the affected posts are seasonal, and staff would have been finishing up for the year in a matter of weeks, we have modified our redundancy policy. If the situation improves sufficiently next year and we are able to recruit again, former staff can apply for posts after six months without having to repay their redundancy money.

"Through our consultation process on our emergency measures we received sage advice from staff and Trust members on functions and expertise we needed to retain. As a result, we were able to come up with a resilient operating model that I'm confident will weather the aftermath of the Covid crisis.

"It has been a tough and demanding year so far, but I am glad that we have been able to begin the return to some form of normality. As we re-open properties we have been very busy ensuring that they are safe places to visit as we abide by the government guidelines designed to ensure the wellbeing of our welcome visitors and our volunteers and staff who I would also like to thank for their immense hard work and fortitude during this deeply concerning time."

Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop said: "The National Trust for Scotland is responsible for promoting and protecting many of Scotland's most important natural and built sites, which are crucial to our heritage and tourism sectors.

"The Scottish Government has worked extremely hard to support as many jobs as possible. Whilst we have a long road ahead of us on the way to recovery as we begin to emerge from the coronavirus lockdown, reopening more of the National Trust for Scotland's most iconic properties is testament to all of the work that has gone on behind the scenes and will enable the Trust to continue its responsibilities to protect, promote and celebrate Scotland's heritage."

The Trust's management team and Board of Trustees will now concentrate on stabilising and securing the charity operationally for the immediate future, and preparing a revised strategy to enable the Trust to move forward.

ENDS

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Notes for Editors

1. The National Trust for Scotland announced a consultation on a series of emergency measures in light of the coronavirus pandemic in May 2020 – full details here: <https://www.nts.org.uk/stories/trust-confirms-emergency-measures>
2. The charity launched its biggest ever fundraising appeal – Save Our Scotland – in response to the crisis with the aim of raising £2.5 million: www.nts.org.uk/donate .
3. Almost all Trust gardens and estates have now re-opened to the public and in the past week the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum and the Hill House were amongst its first built properties to re-open. The current list of openings is available here: <https://www.nts.org.uk/stories/gardens-and-grounds-get-ready-for-visitors-again>
4. The status of built properties in the Highlands and Islands following the receipt of financial support and the outcomes formal consultation are summarised as follows. Natural Heritage properties had re-opened from July 2020. The harbour at the Isle of Canna is now open, although access to Fair Isle and St Kilda remains restricted for safety reasons and the wellbeing of residents.

Abertarff House, Inverness	Opens Easter 2021
Brodie Castle	Estate and Playful Garden. Castle opens Easter 2021.
Culloden	Open
Glencoe Visitor Centre	Open
Glenfinnan	Open
Hugh Miller's Cottage	Opens Easter 2021
Inverewe Garden	Gardens open; remainder of property open from Easter 2021
Moirlanich Longhouse	Open with reduced hours

5. The National Trust for Scotland is the charity that celebrates and protects Scotland's heritage. It relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work of caring for the natural and built heritage of Scotland for everyone to enjoy.
6. From coastlines to castles, art to architecture, wildlife to wildernesses, the National Trust for Scotland exists to protect the national and natural treasures we all love. Join us at www.nts.org.uk.

