

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

IMAGES OF TRUST CHIEF EXECUTIVE PHILIP LONG -

<https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/OVF633>

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Conservation charity praises Scottish Government for helping to stave off crisis

The National Trust for Scotland has offered ‘profound thanks’ to the Scottish Government after it announced financial support that will help the conservation charity avoid a feared worst-case scenario arising from Covid-19 and save 197 jobs.

As a result of lockdown and subsequent restrictions, the Trust, which protects and cares for such iconic places as Glencoe, Culloden Battlefield, Mar Lodge Estate National Nature Reserve and Culzean Castle, has lost almost £30 million – half its expected income. The charity was poised to enact emergency measures that included making 429 staff redundant as well as delaying re-opening of some of the heritage properties in its care until 2021 or 2022.

The Scottish Government announced that it has offered a total of £3.8 million of financial support and this will be used to help underpin a new, resilient operating model for the Trust, which will allow it to survive short-to-medium term issues, such as a prolonged national economic recovery and further Covid-19 spikes. The support also enables the Trust to reduce redundancies to the minimum possible and open or partially more properties than originally hoped.

The Scottish Government’s generous support adds to the donations to an emergency appeal made by thousands of donors and members who so far have raised nearly £2.5 million.

The combined outcomes of the financial support and donations are:

- The number of redundancies falls from 429 to 188; most of the affected posts are seasonal (this includes saving 20 countryside ranger roles out of 35 and all ecologists);
- 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;

The funding support and consultation outcomes also help the Trust to open or partially open more properties than originally hoped, with some welcoming back visitors in a matter of weeks. Thirty three built heritage properties will re-open this year, rather than the 27 originally planned, in addition to natural heritage properties that opened from July.

Following staff consultation, the Trust will confirm details of those properties soon.

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.

"The task group set up by the Cabinet Secretary and managed by Scottish Enterprise was instrumental in helping us put together a business case that showed the Trust's worth to the people of Scotland and demonstrated that we could endure as a functioning charity if given support.

"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 redundancies are unavoidable, although this support has helped us to keep them to the absolute minimum possible. This is also helped by the availability of 105 pooled posts that affected staff can apply for, as well as posts that have become vacant over this year's recruitment freeze in addition to over 40 people requesting voluntary redundancy.

"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.

"While this would have saved jobs, it came with a price tag in lost savings I wasn't sure we could afford to cover – with the Scottish Government's support we can now meet this cost and save even more jobs."

The 188 compulsory redundancies are combined with a further 44 voluntary redundancies, meaning that 197 jobs have been saved from the original proposed total of 429 redundancies.

The Trust's management team and Board of Trustees will concentrate on securing the charity operationally in the immediate future. Beyond this, they will prepare a re-jigged strategy and recovery plan to be presented to members at the Trust's September AGM.

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. More details about additional property openings will be available in the next few days.
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.

