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National Trust for Scotland Encourages Scots to Improve Their Mental Wellbeing by Heading Outdoors This Winter

- **New survey by Scotland's largest conservation charity shows the positive impact the outdoors has on mental health and wellbeing**
- **Dundee, Inverness and Glasgow place greatest importance on the benefits of the outdoors**
- **95% of people stated spending time outdoors reduces their stress levels and 89% said it enhanced their quality of life**

New research for the National Trust for Scotland shows that 97% of Scots believe access to the outdoors is important for their mental health, a point that is particularly significant at this time of year when wintery weather and dark nights can deter people from spending time outside.

Dundonians have been unveiled as the strongest advocates for spending time outdoors, with 99% agreeing it's important for their overall wellbeing, closely followed by Inverness (97%) and Glasgow (96%).

The research for Scotland's largest conservation charity found that 95% of those surveyed said spending time outdoors was effective at reducing their stress levels, with 89% stating that it enhances their quality of life.

The Scottish coast topped the polls as the preferred place to spend time outdoors, with 58% enjoying spending time by the sea, followed by 50% who favoured woodland spaces and 48% favouring country parks or gardens. The popularity of different types of landscape, and their value to people's wellbeing, has highlighted the importance of the National Trust for Scotland's work to care for, protect and share Scotland's outdoor places.

Looking after over 100 places across Scotland, the Trust ensures people of all ages have the opportunity now and in future to discover new places, make memories, and learn more about Scotland's natural and cultural heritage, while experiencing the positive wellbeing impacts of the outdoors. These range from spectacular Corrieshalloch Gorge, to stunning walks at The Hermitage, beautiful landscaped gardens at Crathes Castle and Culzean, and the opportunity to go Munro bagging - when weather conditions are safe - at Mar Lodge Estate National Nature Reserve.

Clea Warner, the National Trust for Scotland's Regional Director for Highlands & Islands, said: "Our charity is privileged to look after some of the country's most beautiful natural heritage, and every day we see the positive impact that the great outdoors can have on wellbeing and mental health.

"It doesn't have to be an epic climb of a mountain, or extreme water sports, it can be as simple as a walk around a peaceful garden or the bracing Scottish coastline. Whether you're looking for a family day out, to make new memories with friends, or share a new experience with a loved one, there's a place and activity for everyone.

"All of us at the National Trust for Scotland are proud to play our part in looking after and providing access to outdoor places, to continue to offer residents and visitors to our incredible country the chance to make the most of the positive wellbeing impacts of the outdoors. It's thanks to the generosity of our members and supporters that we can continue our vital work of caring for and sharing Scotland's most special places, helping to create memories that last a lifetime."

Supporting its work to share the benefits of nature and the outdoors, the National Trust for Scotland appointed Dr Cal Major, vet, adventurer and advocate for nature and the oceans, as its ambassador in 2023. Speaking frequently about how the outdoors has enhanced her own mental wellbeing, Cal's role as ambassador is helping to raise awareness of and support for the Trust's important work, particularly around the conservation of natural spaces.

Commenting on the research results, Cal said: "Over the course of my career, I have discovered that an appreciation of what it means for their wellbeing is why lots of folk feel a strong connection to nature. This often translates into a recognition of its importance in their lives and a desire to protect it.

"Beyond the National Trust for Scotland's survey results, there is scientific research showing that nature, especially blue spaces such as the ocean, is beneficial for our human wellbeing. This seems logical – as humans, historically we would have been hard-pushed to survive without it, so it's no wonder we're drawn to it. But in our modern society, which is so fast-paced and disconnected from nature, making space for it in our lives has never been more important. And equally, nature has never needed us to stand up for its protection more.

"It can offer joy and laughter and connection to other people, an opportunity to top up our nature batteries and stay well, or a path to healing. For me, the outdoors is very much my go-to for staying well, and it is hugely reaffirming to hear this is the case for many other people around Scotland."

To find out more about the work of the National Trust for Scotland, or plan your next outdoor adventure, please visit: www.nts.org.uk.

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Notes to editors

Images: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/J92495041t>

Research conducted by Opinion Matters: 28.11.23 – 04.12.23

- 1001 people polled
- Scottish adults - nationally representative

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. The Trust's Gardens Strategy 'Connecting People, Plants and Places 2023-32' sets out the Trust's ambition for its gardens during the Corporate Strategy period.

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.

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.