

# National Trust volunteering at an all-time high



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by *VIOLET DALTON*

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## **We believe our volunteers made a contribution worth more than £1.8 million during the past year, says Violet Dalton**

If you have been lucky enough to visit a National Trust for Scotland property over the summer, the chances are you have bumped into a volunteer.

That person could have been a guide at the Georgian House, working in the garden at Castle Fraser or putting through your souvenir sales in the shop at Culzean Castle.

And those are just the people you will have seen. We have many hundreds more, working behind the scenes in a huge range of roles, making sure our conservation charity can carry out our vital work to conserve and promote our heritage day in and day out.

The National Trust recently reported that its volunteer numbers are at an all-time high. I'm pleased to report that the same is true here in Scotland, too.



At the last count, we had more than 3,800 folk generously gifting their time, talent and enthusiasm to the Trust.

These volunteers come from all walks of life and for a whole range of reasons, but they are united by a passion and commitment to the place where they decide to give their time – whether that is a wild hillside in Glencoe, a perfectly manicured hedge at Pitmedden Garden or behind a computer at Hermiston Quay. In fact, even our chairman, Sir Kenneth Calman and his Board of Trustees are volunteers.

### **Contributing to Scotland's heritage**

It is difficult to put a value on all of this, but in order to ensure that the huge contribution our cheery army of volunteers gets the recognition it deserves, we have found a few ways of “measuring”.

We have figured out that our 3,816 volunteers have worked 186,580 hours for the Trust in the past year. If we assume an hourly rate of £10 per hour, that is a contribution to Scotland's heritage of more than £1.8 million.

The value of our volunteers is vast, as you can see, but not just in the slightly crude terms of time and money.

As our chief executive, Kate Mavor, has recognised on many occasions, the fact is that the Trust simply could not do what it does without these people and their skills.

As you may know, the Trust is working hard to modernise so that it is in a position to continue in its role as one of the primary custodians of Scotland's natural, built and cultural heritage.

The charity has identified strategic objectives which focus on our portfolio and its conservation, promoting Scotland's heritage, securing financial sustainability, ensuring visitor enjoyment and investing in our people.

Day in, day out, our volunteers are helping us to work towards those objectives, and we will be reporting on our progress to our members at our annual general meeting in Stirling on Saturday 28 September.

### **Valuable experience for young people**

But, of course, volunteering should never be an arrangement that benefits only the organisation.

It has to work both ways and we are really pleased to say that is the experience for our volunteers.

Through our volunteering roles, we are giving folk the chance to indulge in their passion, develop new skills, keep old skills fresh and make lifelong friendships.

Our partnership with Project Scotland means young people are gaining valuable experience to start them off in their careers. And, after retirement, folk are staying fit and active by playing a vital role in a Trust volunteering position.

We have secured Investing in Volunteers status, so our commitment to our volunteers and providing them with a positive and productive experience is officially recognised.

However, perhaps the best endorsement comes from our volunteers themselves.

Clark Wallace, 70, from Aberdeen, has been volunteering as a guide at Drum Castle near Banchory for three years.

He explains why he became involved and what keeps him coming back, week in, week out: "I first became aware of Drum Castle in the 1970s when I moved to Aberdeen from Ayr.

"I've always been interested in Scottish history and I was visiting Drum with my grandchildren when I enquired about volunteering. "Drum particularly suits me because the proximity of the castle to Aberdeen means it is close and I can get public transport there if I need to.

“I enjoy the atmosphere of Drum: the forest and gardens; the history of the castle; and the discoveries that are being made in the Tower. Drum excites me and I can never learn enough about it.”

Volunteering certainly keeps Clark active – he ran the Crathes Half-Marathon last weekend, so it’s good to know that the Trust is certainly providing him with a valuable experience.

- Violet Dalton is head of volunteering at the National Trust for Scotland. To learn more about volunteering opportunities, visit

**[www.nts.org.uk/volunteering \(http://www.nts.org.uk/volunteering\)](http://www.nts.org.uk/volunteering)**

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