

Planting of Covid Memorial Forest Continues Across Dumfries and Galloway



Caption information below. Image credit: Kirsten McEwan

25th March 2024

Four hundred trees are set to be planted across Dumfries and Galloway as part of Remembering Together, a national project to honour those lost to COVID in the region and provide a community place for reflection.

Details on future tree-planting dates below, All 11am start:

Wed 27th March – Moffat, Community Nature Reserve

Sat 6th April – Sanquhar, Bells Crescent Park

Tues 9th April – Stranraer, Galloway Community Hospital

Thurs 11th April – Castle Douglas – Threave Nature Reserve

For more information and to confirm attendance at any of these dates, please email chris.boyd@premiercomms.com

DG Unlimited and Dumfries and Galloway Council have been working in collaboration with greenspace scotland and Commissioned Artists t s Beall and Katie Anderson to deliver Dumfries and Galloway's contribution to Remembering Together, a national project that seeks to give each of Scotland's 32 local authorities the chance to reflect their unique experience of the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the past two years, the artists have been working with communities across the region to collaboratively design a Dispersed Memorial Forest which is now being planted across five sites in Castle Douglas, Dumfries, Moffat, Sanquhar, and Stranraer.

Work on D&G's community Covid memorial, **The Dispersed Memorial Forest** has begun – with 2 planting days having already taken place in Dumfries at The Crichton Estate and the NHS's Mountainhall Treatment Centre. Now, work continues to plant over 400 trees across the region, with future planting dates just around the corner. On Wednesday 27th March, the team will be joined in Moffat by volunteers from The Community Nature Reserve and Borders Forest Trust. Additionally, the Galloway Community Hospital in Stranraer will see volunteer groups such as Stranraer Incredible Edibles, D&G Carers Centre, and NHS staff assisting in the planting



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Members of the public are warmly invited to attend these events. For those coming to watch the tree-planting activities and learn more about the project, there is no need to book a place in advance.

However, those interested in helping to plant trees are kindly asked to either email in advance rememberingtogetherdg@gmail.com or register by filling in an online form available at [Linktr.ee/rememberingtogetherdg](https://linktr.ee/rememberingtogetherdg).

Artists t s Beall and Katie Anderson explain: “It’s been amazing to see the first trees planted, and to meet those who came along to share their stories at the Dumfries planting days. We’re looking forward to the next tree-planting events in Moffat, Sanquhar, Stranraer, and Castle Douglas, and we want to invite members of the public to come along – either to watch, or to get involved and plant a tree!”

The project will be planting one tree for each person lost to COVID in the region, and will plant additional trees to represent other types of loss and resilience. In planting **The Dispersed Memorial Forest**, the artists hope to highlight “the different ways communities grew together over the pandemic”.

Between July and December 2022, the artists spoke to over 800 of the region’s residents right across Dumfries and Galloway from Kirkcudbright to Annan, Stranraer to Sanquhar to gather ideas and experiences as part of shaping the memorial. Through these conversations and by using bespoke engagement tools, a renewed appreciation for nature and outdoor spaces began to emerge as a clear theme. Therefore, a memorial forest was chosen as the heart of the project, providing not just a vital place of healing for the community, but also an important statement of intent for increasing biodiversity and sustainable development.

The artists, working with consultants **TreeSurv** who are advising on the native species being planted, intend to create a memorial that speaks to the way the pandemic both separated communities, and also brought them together. Although each tree planted will not represent an individual, the artists hope that the four hundred trees will collectively honour those who died from COVID-19 in the region, as well as acknowledging other losses, and ways communities came together during the pandemic.

Fiona Barr, Adult Carers Support Worker at Dumfries and Galloway Carers Centre said, *“It’s been great to work with the artists to help develop this project. Our group of unpaid Carers have met with them several times, and it’s been a valuable way to allow them to have a voice in shaping the memorial. Unpaid Carers played a critical role during Lockdown and its fitting that we have been able to share thoughts and help shape the community covid memorial for D&G.”*

James Short, Managing Partner of Tree Surv said, *“TreeSurv is delighted to be involved in the Remembering Together D&G project, applying our skills in native woodland creation to this living memorial project. We are passionate about improving biodiversity, especially in the South of Scotland, and bringing the benefits of native woodlands to people in rural areas. Woodlands are wonderful spaces to spend time in, and we believe the Dispersed Memorial Forest will create great green spaces for local people to enjoy for generations to come.”*

Councillor Gail Macgregor, Co-Chair of Dumfries and Galloway Community Planning Partnership Board and Leader of Dumfries and Galloway Council said: *‘As we return to ‘normal’ after the pandemic, we risk losing sight of what a huge difference it made to people’s personal lives and how it impacted on our communities. This project is an important opportunity to see something positive passed on to future generations’.*

Nick Morris, Co-Chair of Dumfries and Galloway Community Planning Partnership Board and Chair of NHS Dumfries and Galloway, said: *‘COVID-19 had a massive impact on the lives of people across our region, and health and social care staff, including those in the care home sector (among others) were on the frontline at this challenging time for all of us. It is great to see how communities and individuals from across Dumfries and Galloway have contributed to creating this COVID memorial project for our region.’*

Frank Hayes, Vice Chair of DG Unlimited said, *“We are proud to be supporting the important work of this public artwork project. The five community site partners, Katie and t s, and all our strategic partners, are an example of how creativity and community working together can make lasting positive impacts on the people living in Dumfries and Galloway.”*

Gwilym Gibbons, CEO of Crichton Trust said, *“The Crichton is delighted to be one of the sites for the Dumfries and Galloway’s Dispersed Memorial Forest. We look forward to watching these native trees grow alongside our community and welcome those visiting for generations to come to reflect upon and remember the impact of the pandemic on our lives. We see this project as a continuation of the heritage of our grounds connecting health and landscape, enhancing The Crichton as our place to breathe while creating a part of our future heritage. The importance of the natural environment and, in particular, trees, to support people’s health and wellbeing was recognised from the very start of the Crichton Royal and we are delighted to continue to develop our exceptional place as part of the 100-year vision of our greenspaces and supporting biodiversity, climate resilience, and community connections as we continue our journey to NetZero and beyond.”*

The project will be completed in June 2024, creating a living memorial for those that were lost to the virus, and a space for future generations to come together and reflect.

Remembering Together Dumfries and Galloway is commissioned by **greenspace scotland, DG Unlimited,** and **Dumfries and Galloway Council** with funding from the Scottish Government.

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