

Storm appeal raises thousands for the Botanics

A public appeal for money to help restore some of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's (RBGE) botanical treasures following the "devastation" of Storm Éowyn has topped £100,000.

More than 1,500 people have donated to the appeal set up by RBGE following the worst storm to hit Scotland in over a decade.

The conservation charity lost hundreds of trees across its four sites including Edinburgh, Benmore in Argyll, Logan in Dumfries and Galloway and Dawyck in the Borders when winds up to 90mph hit the country on January 24.

Experts estimate the cost of repairing the "devastating damage" could exceed £1 million.

RBGE's clear up operation has been boosted by a team of tree experts from Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

The four highly skilled arborists spent several days at Benmore and Dawyck helping the resident teams to clear fallen trunks and debris, remove dangerous hanging branches and assess the status of remaining trees.

Benmore Botanic Garden near Dunoon – home to a world-famous collection of plants from regions ranging from the Orient and the Himalaya to North and South America – was the worst hit of

the four locations with nearly 800 plants including trees and shrubs recorded as lost or damaged.

Over 300 mature trees were lost across the 120 acre site and a further 142 were damaged. These included a 165 foot giant redwood that helped form “one of the finest entrances to a botanical garden anywhere in the world”. The tree, which was planted in 1863, was snapped in half by the force of the wind.

At Dawyck, near Peebles, more than 50 trees were lost during the storm, forcing the season reopening to be delayed for safety reasons.

Dawyck has now reopened to visitors while Benmore will reopen on March 1.

Some complex restoration work will take years, however, and a long-term challenge will be to make the Gardens more resilient to an evermore frequent number of severe weather events.

David Knott, RBGE’s Curator of the Living Collections, said: “Our sites at Dawyck and Benmore have been considerably impacted.

“Benmore, in particular, suffered unimaginable damage. The clear up won’t be measured in days or months but years and possibly even a decade in places.

“The big push at Dawyck and Benmore now is to get these gardens open as quickly as possible, so we are very grateful for the additional support of the four arborists from Kew.

“We have a history of supporting one another – we offered similar help as far back as 1987 when Kew’s tree collection suffered significant storm damage.”

Mr Knott thanked members of the public who have donated the huge sum to the RBGE’s Storm Damage Appeal.

He added: “These gardens mean so much to so many people for so

many different reasons. This has been evident by the response to our public appeal.

“It’s heartening for the teams across all four gardens that there is that level of public support.”

The RBGE and Kew are part of a wide network under the umbrella of Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) Tree conservation.

Last year, a major survey concluded that 38% of the world’s tree species are at risk of extinction and 440 species have fewer than 50 individuals remaining.

RBGE’s Edinburgh and Logan gardens also suffered significant losses. In Edinburgh, a 95ft tall Himalayan cedar planted in 1859 was one of more than 15 trees either “uprooted or damaged beyond recovery”, while over 100 panes of glass were lost from glasshouses.

The capital site was able to reopen to the public just days after the storm, while Logan Botanic Gardens, which was supposed to reopen on February 15, will reopen on March 1 instead.



Glasshouse repairs underway in the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's (RBGE) flagship site in the capital. PHOTO Saltire News and Sport Ltd



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