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NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE

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Scottish Woodlands Student Excellence Award Announced

The Scottish Forestry Trust is delighted to announce that the winner of the Scottish Woodlands Student Excellence Award for 2013/14 is Jo Clark, a former external PhD at Bangor University and Forestry Research Manager at the Earth Trust. Her thesis "Adaptation of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior L.*) to climate change" was successfully completed during 2013.

Speaking from her home in Oxfordshire, Jo said, "I thank the Trust and Scottish Woodlands for this recognition and I am extremely happy to have been able to contribute to this important area of research. The results highlighted the need to keep as broad a genetic base as possible in light of the likely impacts of climate change, but are also pertinent in the face of such problems as ash dieback and the other myriad diseases that are affecting many of our timber trees. I am really delighted that the work has been recognised."

Course supervisor Dr. Christine Cahalan of Bangor University said "On behalf of all of Jo's postgraduate advisers I would like to thank Scottish Woodlands and The Scottish Forestry Trust for making this award to Jo. She wrote an excellent thesis and has made an important contribution to the understanding of genetic variation in one of our native tree species".

Commenting on the latest award, Guy Watt, the Chairman of The Scottish Forestry Trust said, "Trustees were particularly impressed by the quality of the final thesis and by the practical relevance of the findings. Since Jo's work started, the outlook for Ash has become particularly precarious and her work has helped to identify some practical steps to help to build greater resilience into Ash populations to aid adaptation to future climate change impacts."

Colin Mann, Managing Director of Scottish Woodlands Ltd and a Trustee of The Scottish Forestry Trust, said "I am delighted that Jo is presented with this award in recognition of her hard work and dedication in seeing this project through to its conclusion".

Jo is now leading the Defra funded Living Ash Project, which will identify trees tolerant of Chalara, with the aim of bringing together sufficient individuals to start a new breeding programme in the UK.

Ends

Notes for Editors:

The Scottish Forestry Trust launched The Scottish Woodlands Student Excellence Award in 2011 in order to recognise excellence in the quality and relevance of the output from PhD Studentships funded by the Trust. The Award provides £250 per recipient as a result of funding provided by Scottish Woodlands Ltd.

The Scottish Forestry Trust is the leading UK Charitable Trust providing funds for research, education and training in support of British Forestry and Arboriculture. Established in 1983 by a gifting of share capital, the Trust is a registered charity and has a remit to provide private sector funds to support research and education throughout the British forestry industry. Since 1983, the Trust has provided over £2m to 150 projects ranging from supporting post graduate education through to contributing towards industry applied research and assisting policy formulation.

Scottish Woodlands Ltd is a leading Forestry Management Company with a long tradition of offering services to clients such as forest owners and investors in Scotland and the rest of the UK. Originally established in 1913 as The Cooperative Forestry Society, its roots can be traced back for a hundred years. The current company, which is substantially employee owned, has grown and developed significantly to become a major player in the British forestry and timber industry, delivering a 1 million tonnes of timber per annum into UK processors, and planting a significant proportion of private sector new woodland expansion with an annual turnover in excess of £60 million. Web: www.scottishwoodlands.co.uk

The Living Ash Project is a partnership project involving Defra, Forest Research, the Sylva Foundation, the Future Trees Trust and the Earth Trust. More information and contact details are available at <http://livingashproject.org.uk/>

Award Presentation

A small seminar was held in the Department of Plant Sciences, University of Oxford, on the 26th September looking at the future of ash trees and woods in the light of climate change and the threat from ash dieback. Among the presenters was Jo Clark from the Earth Trust at Little Wittenham. Scottish Forestry Trust trustee, Dr. Keith Kirby made the award presentation to Jo at the meeting. The photograph shows Jo on the steps of the Department of Plant Sciences, having received her cheque.

Further information is available from SFT Director, Bob Stubbs at director@scottishforestrytrust.org.uk