

## **Trees planted Campsie Glen, Scotland as a preparation of the Eritrean Martyrs' Day**

**May 10, 2010**

Children and their families from the Eritrean community recently visited Campsie Glen, near Lennoxton, in a bid to prepare the groundwork for a day of celebration marking their country's history.

Tree saplings were planted in advance of a return visit on June 20<sup>th</sup> when the community will commemorate Eritrean Martyr's Day at the Glen. The Eritrean Martyrs' Day is a national day celebrated on June 20 as a commemoration for the martyrs who paid their dear life during the Independence struggle of this Horn of Africa nation.

The initiative and the visit is part of a drive by Forestry Commission Scotland to encourage people from diverse backgrounds to use woodlands more often to boost their community mobilization and organization, health, well-being and promote outdoor children and family activities. The group joined Forestry Commission Scotland staff to plant three fruit trees to symbolise the Eritrean Martyrs.



In the opening address to the group, Romena Huq, Forestry Commission Scotland's engagement officer for central Scotland stated: "We are keen to give the Eritrean children and their families an enjoyable experience of visiting woodlands and the great outdoors. ....Not only is this connection with nature important for the youngster's future, these visits help to break down any social or cultural barriers and demonstrate that woodlands have a lot to offer....."

Plans have been set to commemorate Martyrs' Day on June 20, 2010 at the Campsie Glen. A plaque will be established then and in the future a cairn is to be built through volunteering days with the Eritrean community in Scotland. The Commission is also working with the arts and drama company Creative Artworks, to provide an entertaining day of guided walks, tree identification and cooking food outdoors.



Martyrs' Day is celebrated in Eritrea by taking a long walk to the Martyr's Park, planting trees in memory of more than 65,000 Eritreans who scarified their life in the 30 year independence struggle of the country. Children are encouraged to take care of their trees as their 'guardians' and to look at ways of promoting environmental security.

Reflecting on the above history, the Chair of the Eritrean Community in Scotland, Mariem Yassin in her speech highlighted the following:

“The essence of this event goes beyond merely the planting of trees. It is about strengthening values, an opportunity not only for us to teach our children of their historical background, but also to share those values with our host community. Issues of environmental consciousness are part and parcel of the Eritrean psyche of self-reliance and a product of its unique struggle for independence. Forestry Commission Scotland has provided us with a great opportunity to share our history on the one hand, and on the other, to learn about the Scottish Countryside, for this, words cannot express our gratitude.”

The Ambassador of Eritrea to the UK and the Republic of Ireland, Mr Tesfamicael Gerahtu who also attended the occasion commended the initiative taken by the Eritrean Community and the support and encouragement provided by the Forestry Commission of Scotland and its staff. He further outlined the importance of the initiative in strengthening the Eritrean culture, values and harmony, its importance in promoting people-to-people relationships between Eritrea and Scotland, and the modest contribution it can make in promoting the ideals of environmental security in the new generation.

