



## **Press Release**

**Wednesday 16 December 2015**

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### **Flows to the Future Project: Bids sought for interpretation contract**

The Peatlands Partnership has announced the next stage in its multi-million pound Flows to the Future project: the development of a range of interpretative materials at a number of locations across the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland. The Partnership, which is restoring seven square miles of blanket bog in the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland, is very keen to ensure that residents and visitors to the area, and also people living further afield, gain a full understanding of the international importance of the peatlands.

The project, which is led by RSPB Scotland on behalf of the Peatlands Partnership, and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, has recently advertised the requirement for interpretation, and is currently seeking bids from interested suppliers.

Project manager Caroline Eccles, said, "The interpretation work is an essential part of the project. The recent installation of the Flows Lookout tower at Forsinard has been a great success with thousands of visitors enjoying the stunning views over the Flow Country. However we want people across Caithness and Sutherland, and further afield, to better understand the features which make the Flow Country so special.

“The Flow Country is the largest expanse of blanket bog in Europe and is home to a rich variety of wildlife. It is also incredibly important for carbon storage. These are facts which we really want people to know.”

Among the interpretation requirements are the development of a touring exhibition which will visit venues across the United Kingdom, the creation of new interactive materials at the RSPB visitor centre at Forsinard, and a range of interpretative panels at key sites across Caithness and Sutherland.

Ms Eccles said, “The project is really achieving momentum now and we have been delighted at the way our community events have been received across the region. The interpretation and the new state-of-the-art field centre, due for completion at Forsinard during 2016, are the next significant milestones for the project to reach.”

*The Flows to the Future project gratefully acknowledges funding support from the Heritage Lottery Fund*



**PHOTOGRAPH:**

- **The Flows Lookout**

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

The Peatlands Partnership includes Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission (Scotland), Highland Council, RSPB Scotland, Plantlife Scotland, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, The Highland Third Sector Interface, The Flow Country Rivers Trust, The Northern Deer Management Group and The Environmental Research Institute. It is independently chaired by John Henderson of Scrabster Farm, Caithness.

RSPB Scotland is the lead partner in The Flows to the Future project, a Peatlands Partnership project, which gratefully acknowledges funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and from the following funders and supporters; Environmental Research Institute, European Regional Development Fund, Forestry Commission (Scotland), Peatland Action, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, The Highland Council, RSPB, WREN, Scotland Rural Development Programme, Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Tubney Trust.

## **FLOW COUNTRY FACTS**

The Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland is part of a vast expanse of blanket bog. It is widely recognised as the largest expanse of blanket bog in Europe.

Blanket bog is a rare habitat which is found only where there is lots of rainfall and not much evaporation. A 'blanket' of peat develops over large areas of ground.

Blanket bog covers approximately 400,000 hectares, 50% of the total area of Caithness and Sutherland. The area we now call 'The Flow Country', with its deep peat and typical patterned pools, covers about 200,000 hectares.

Peatlands are found in at least 175 countries and cover around 4 million km<sup>2</sup> or 3% of the world's land area.

The UK is amongst the top ten nations of the world in terms of its total peatland area. The UK has between 9 - 15% of Europe's peatland area (46,000 - 77,000 km<sup>2</sup>) and about 13% of the world's blanket bog - one of the world's rarest habitats.

Underneath the living peatland surface of The Flow Country is an estimated 400 million tonnes of carbon. That's more than twice the amount found in all of Britain's forests combined.

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## **CONTACT DETAILS**

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