

FIRST EDITION

Flow Country Partnership Newsletter



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WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

We have brought this together to inform members, and indeed anyone interested in the peatlands of the North, of the great work undertaken by staff, trustees and partners in the two years since the Partnership was formed.

The Partnership was established as a Charity in February 2024, and a few months later, in July, UNESCO inscribed The Flow Country World Heritage Site (WHS), the World's first and only peatland WHS and Scotland's only site to be inscribed on purely natural grounds.

This presents us with a tremendous opportunity to position ourselves among the Globe's great WHS landscapes, including Victoria Falls, Yellowstone and the Galapagos Islands.



Flow Country Restoration Ltd was set up as the Partnership's trading arm. This arrangement allows us to partner with landowners and land managers to design and manage peatland restoration projects, in return for a share of the resulting carbon credits.

All profits from the sale of these credits will be reinvested in further restoration and other community benefit projects, delivering positive outcomes for the World Heritage Site and, indeed, the residents of Caithness and Sutherland. We have restored 973 ha of peatland to date and are on the cusp of making our first carbon sale.

The Partnership is growing. We now have 57 members, and welcomed new Trustees Peter MacRae and Ian Ross, three new members of staff and a peatland restoration intern last year. This brings our workforce to a total of six, currently employed through three partners: North Highland Initiative, Highland Council and RSPB.

This newsletter gives a flavour of the projects we are delivering across our two workstreams: peatland restoration and management of the World Heritage Site. We are also working hard to secure more funding to help us deliver more good stuff!

**- Janet Bromham, Project Manager,
The Flow Country Partnership**

A FAREWELL FROM THE CHAIR

As I step down as Chair of the Flow Country Partnership, I want to take a moment to reflect on what an extraordinary journey this has been.

The Flow Country is one of the world's natural treasures - a place of immense natural beauty, global significance and quiet climate might. Over the past few years, I have had the privilege of watching our Partnership grow from an ambitious vision into a thriving organisation delivering real change on the ground, of international and national importance.

Together, we have secured the incredible accolade of World Heritage Site status for The Flow Country, continued to increase the pace and scale of peatland restoration, developed new opportunities for funding restoration, created local value chains and skills development, premiered a live orchestral and film triptych, assembled the mechanism for charity governance, and built a strong foundation for the future. These achievements belong to all of us.



I would like to express my sincere thanks to our exceptional staff team, whose dedication, expertise and enthusiasm have driven so much of our success. I am equally grateful to my fellow founding and more recent Trustees, our partners, funders, landowners, contractors, volunteers and community supporters. Most importantly, thank you to you, the members. Your belief in the Partnership and its mission has been fundamental to everything we have achieved.

The challenges facing nature and our climate remain significant, but so too is the opportunity before us. The Flow Country peatlands have never been more important to solving the climate-nature crisis, and the Partnership is incredibly well-placed to make a lasting difference.



As I hand over to new leadership, I do so with great confidence and optimism. It's time for The Flow Country Partnership to have an independent chair who can speak with a clear voice on behalf of us. I encourage every member and partner to play an active role in supporting the next chapter of this story - championing the Flow Country, supporting the Partnership's ambitions, and helping us reach new audiences, secure new opportunities and deliver even greater impact.

The years ahead will require collaboration, innovation and determination. We're doing groundbreaking stuff. By continuing to work together, we can strengthen our vibrant communities, accelerate restoration, deepen understanding of this globally important ecosystem and ensure its benefits are felt for generations to come. And I'm delighted I'll still be part of that, supporting the work in my professional work, and I can honestly say that working with you all has been the absolute highlight of my career.

Together, we have achieved a great deal. Together, we can build on that momentum and realise an even more ambitious vision for the future of the Flow Country.

Thank you for your support, your commitment and your passion for this remarkable place. I can't wait to see what happens next.

- **Graham Neville**



A NOTE FROM THE (NEW) CHAIR

I am delighted and privileged to become the Chair of the Flow Country Partnership. I recognise the importance of the Flow Country and World Heritage site status and the significant benefits which can be delivered to our area and communities. I am firmly of the view that WHS status should be seen as a great opportunity and a means of promoting appropriate and inclusive development.

In terms of my own background, I have lived in Sutherland for over 37 years and have a long-held interest and professional involvement in sustainable development, particularly in terms of the balance between community, environmental and economic interests and the active promotion of a “living” landscape.

Considerable impressive work has been done by many people associated with the Partnership and I want to record my appreciation of the efforts of staff, trustees, Partnership members and local land managers and communities. In particular, I want to pay tribute to the crucial leadership of the past chair, Graham Neville.

I look forward to working with you and continuing this important work.

**- Ian Ross OBE, Chair,
The Flow Country Partnership**



STAFF PROFILES

Janet Bromham – Project Manager

Janet joined the Flow Country Partnership in July 2025. Her role is to co-ordinate staff to deliver the work programme and provide effective governance, management and oversight, working closely with Trustees to ensure the Partnership operates in accordance with its values, policies and legal obligations.

Janet has over 30 years' experience working in the environment sector. She began her career as a peatland surveyor with Scottish Natural Heritage and spent 14 years working as Highland Biodiversity Officer.



Sarah Lashley – WHS Co-ordinator

Sarah Lashley is Co-ordinator for The Flow Country World Heritage Site.

Born and raised in the Highlands, Sarah's background in ecology, environmental consultancy and project management has led perfectly to her role in managing the day-to-day running of the World Heritage Site.

The Flow Country not only fulfils Sarah's love of the natural world but also provides an opportunity to work together with local communities and organisations to help protect, enhance and promote this amazing landscape.



Audrey Parsons – Project Officer

Audrey supports peatland restoration projects and the management of The Flow Country World Heritage Site, working closely with partners, landowners, local communities, and schools. Her role includes managing funding, communications, engagement, project governance, and legal agreements.

With a background in community and third sector development across Sutherland, Audrey enjoys being part of work that supports local communities while helping protect and restore the Flow Country landscape for the future.



***Kirsty Mackay –
Peatland Restoration Officer***

Working with Marjoleine, Kirsty designs peatland restoration projects. This includes desktop mapping and ground truthing field surveys to inform a restoration plan. Considerations on species & environmental protection, access, livestock and deer management all feed into this. Kirsty also works on the Peatland ACTION applications to fund restoration work and Peatland Code validations to generate carbon units.

Kirsty enjoys working in the beautiful Flow Country landscape for a charity that focuses on local benefits.



***Marjoleine Kopmeiners –
Peatland Restoration Officer***

Marjoleine came to the team as a seasoned fieldworker with a qualification in wildlife management. She is adept with the highlights and challenges of fieldwork in the Flow Country.

“In the summer, we moan about midges and in the winter, there’s the gale winds. But with love, and on we go!”

Her practical approach to work and her drive to do bigger, better work amid paperwork and fieldwork are crucial to supporting the team. Marjoleine is well-versed in maps and restoration plans and finds great excitement in this aspect of her role.



***Marcus Evans -
Peatland Communications &
Engagement Officer***

With a background in journalism, Marcus’ role promotes the message of the Flow Country’s ties to the local, national, and international stages.

Coming from rural Wales, Marcus resonates with the mission of connecting people with the environmental, cultural, and economic values of this landscape.



UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE UPDATES

Since inscription, the Partnership has been working hard behind the scenes in developing and promoting The Flow Country World Heritage Site. Below is a short summary of what we have been working on over the past few months

Tourism

In November, we hosted our Flowing Forward events in Wick and Armadale, funded by Nuclear Restoration Services Ltd (Dounreay) and The Highland Council Ward Fund. The events brought together community members, businesses, tourism providers, stakeholders and policy makers to explore how we can develop tourism within the Flow Country with the view of developing a Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the World Heritage Site. In January, we welcomed consultants Blue Sail to help us develop the Strategy and in April, hosted two consultation events in Thurso and Lairg to ensure we're heading in the right direction. We're excited to share the finished Strategy with you all this summer.



Steering Group

As our focus turned from inscription to delivery, we reformed and re-energised our World Heritage Site Steering Group to support us in delivering practical actions for the Flow Country and for communities. Meeting every three months, including a great turn out at our in-person meeting in June, it has been fantastic to see how engaged and responsive the Group has been.

Planning Applications

One of the responsibilities of the World Heritage Site is to respond to planning applications within or adjacent to the Site boundary.

We have responded to a total of 5 applications of various stages over the past few months, treating the applications on a case-by-case basis and ensuring the protection of the Site's inscribed Outstanding Universal Value.

Management Plan

We continue to update our management plan post-inscription. This process has been delayed by the requirement to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment but we're on track to launch the updated version on our second anniversary at the end of July.

Connecting with Communities

From job fairs and science festivals to school visits and local events, we've been out and about representing the Partnership and sharing the story of the Flow Country and its peatlands. We love to chat – so if you ever spot us at an event, please come and say hi!

A lot of hard work from the staff, trustees and partners goes on in the background of the World Heritage Site, and we can't wait to share our future updates with you throughout 2026. In the meantime, keep an eye on our social media for all the latest news as we further develop our exciting plans for the World Heritage Site

**- Sarah Lashley, Co-ordinator,
World Heritage Site**

**- Frances Gunn, Chair,
World Heritage Site Steering Group**



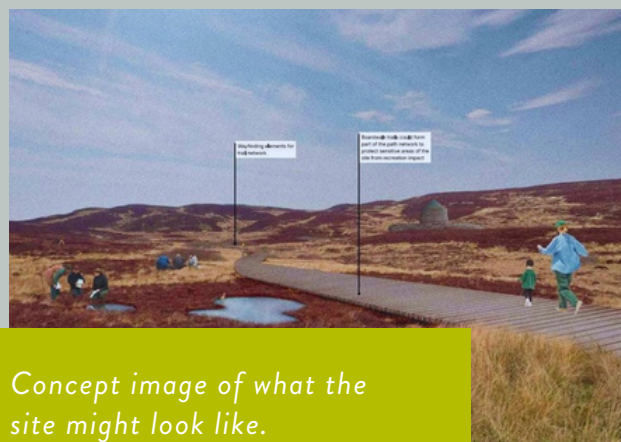
CAITHNESS BROCH PROJECT UPDATES

Last summer, the Caithness Broch Project, The Flow Country Partnership, and the Environmental Research Institute of UHI North and Hebrides division joined forces in a collaboration arrangement to work together on the intended site for the first Iron Age Broch to be built in over two thousand years.

That location, near Latheron, is at the eastern end of the World Heritage Site, and the plan is for this to become one of the gateways to the Flow Country for visitors. You can see some concept images of what the site might look like in the photos.



The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) August 2025 between the Broch Project, FCP and UHI/ERI (L-R Iain MacLean, CBP vice chair; Peter Faccenda, FCP; Prof Stuart Gibb, UHI/ERI; Pete MacRae, Chair Broch Project). (Copyright Caithness Broch Project)



Concept image of what the site might look like. (Copyright Caithness Broch Project)

Concept image of what the site might look like. (Copyright Caithness Broch Project)



The Broch Project's fundraising campaign to purchase the land is going very well, supported entirely by community donations to our Crowdfunder site. CBP have also applied for the site to be de-crofted and is currently awaiting notification from the Crofters' Commission, which is due later in the summer.

The three organisations have come together to share the site near Latheron to create an iconic new visitor attraction and play their part in developing slow, sustainable tourism and boost community prosperity for the north of Scotland.

**- Pete MacRae, Trustee,
Flow Country Partnership**

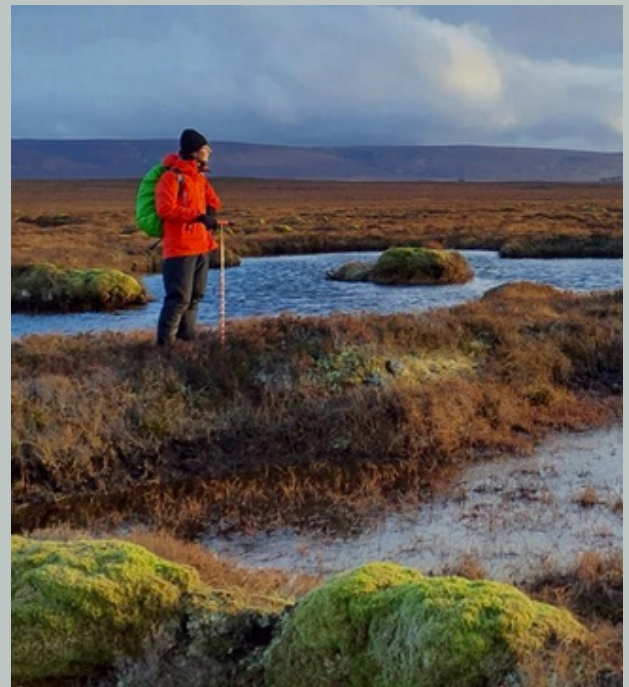
PEATLAND RESTORATION TEAM UPDATES

A Note from the Peatland Restoration Intern

Hello all, I'm Ben! While I worked under The Flow Country Partnership, my time was primarily spent working at the RSPB Forsinard offices.

My arrival came in the middle of a snowstorm, and I managed to drive at a crawling pace to the bottom of a track, so close to the place I would call home for six months. With it being around midnight and snow still coming down, I hectically tried to decide what was essential for my first night and what could be left in the car. A few days later, I returned to unload the rest of my things to find I had left a margherita pizza on the roof of my car. I like to think I have adjusted to life in the highlands a little bit since then.

My contract here had absolutely flown by. At the time, I had a full deep dive into the world of Peatland Restoration.



From being out on site assessing degraded features, liaising with landowners and doing adder surveys, to scrolling the web for archaeological records, being part of the Peatland Action funding process, and slowly learning to use GIS.

Being based at Forsinard enabled me to feed off even more great minds, while also being able to occasionally be involved in the reserves management. Every situation was unique, land with different sizes and features, people with different objectives and priorities.

- Ben Womack, Peatland Restoration Intern



The Flow Country Restoration Ltd Team work with land holdings to develop long-term and mutually beneficial working relationships over the entire duration of a peatland restoration project. Whether that be an estate, owned and run as a farm, or even crofting land/common grazings.

The biggest piece of work that Ben and Marjoleine are currently chipping away at is a project for Achentoul Estate. They are currently designing and ground-truthing 1400 Ha of degraded peatlands. This massive site will be prepared for the Peatland Action funding round in September 2026.

Preparations include many days in the field collecting photographic evidence of the pre-restoration condition and fact-checking the restorable features, assigning techniques and materials. Simultaneously collecting ad hoc data that will help inform Archaeological and Protected Species surveys.

A question new to the team that needed some Peatland Action Officer guidance was the sheer scale of the work and the feasibility of delivering the restoration works within 1 season. How many weeks and how many machines could be used? And where is that sweet spot of feasibility in 1 year versus too risky and will need to be split over 2 years? The guidance was very helpful. But as with most things in the restoration industry. There is no one answer. And many factors weigh in on these decisions.

After many winter days in the field, where Ben is getting more and more desperate to get away from Marjoleine's silly songs and pop culture references, they are now getting to the end of the fieldwork for the Restoration design. After which, there will be a quick shift in gears to Habitat Impact Assessment and Archaeological Surveys. In addition to changing to more office work, they are preparing to go out to tender and seek the Council's approval.

Meanwhile, Kirsty has been focussing on Peatland Code work for other Flow Country Restoration Ltd sites, to generate validated carbon units which will be available to sell for the land holdings and Flow Country Restoration Ltd. The Armadale Farm and Achentoul Estate - Blar Mor sites have completed the restoration delivery phase. Most of the project plan validation for Armadale was completed prior to restoration beginning, but due to the addition of an extra area (agreed with Peatland ACTION and Peatland Code) there has been some final work required, together with the validator, to fully complete the process.

Achentoul Blar Mor has completed project plan validation, and so for this site, Kirsty has been working on the restoration validation documents, which have been submitted to the validator – with adjustments made from project plan validation to confirm the actual restoration work completed.

This process included the validator site visit – a first for Flow Country Restoration Ltd, which went well, with the validator satisfied that the restoration work had been completed.

Flow Country Restoration Ltd are aiming to begin selling carbon units from these projects as soon as the validations are completed.

Kirsty has also been working on the Peatland Code project plan validation for another future project. A particular highlight was a sunny day of field work on her birthday, collecting additional fixed point photograph evidence of restoration features – a satisfying 14 km adventure around most of the site, gaining many more freckles along the way, and enjoying a birthday cupcake while taking a rest. A welcome change from desk work and hopefully helpful towards her half marathon training.

Other current work for Kirsty includes supporting Marjoleine and Ben as they work towards going out to tender, including consulting with NatureScot, organising otter surveys, and carrying out HIA surveys.

**- Marjoleine Kopmeiners & Kirsty Mackay,
Peatland Restoration Officers,
Flow Country Partnership**

This project is supported by the Scottish Government's Peatland ACTION Fund delivered in partnership with NatureScot and other agencies.



ENGAGING COMMUNITIES AND INSPIRING FUTURE GENERATIONS

It's been a busy and rewarding time for the Flow Country Partnership. From attending events and conferences to hosting site visits and welcoming visitors, we've been sharing the story of this internationally important landscape with a wide range of people.

Working with schools has been a real focus. In partnership with RHET Highland (Royal Highland Education Trust), we've delivered classroom sessions on peatlands for secondary pupils, followed by visits to the Flow Country so they can experience these habitats for themselves. We've also spent time with primary schools, helping younger pupils discover the wildlife, history and importance of peatlands through hands-on activities.



These experiences are helping young people better understand the Flow Country and why it matters, particularly in terms of climate change and biodiversity. We're keen to keep building on this work with RHET Highland and strengthen our links with schools across the area.

We've also been attending multiple careers fairs throughout the area, giving us the chance to share and promote the wide range of jobs linked to conservation and peatland restoration, working together to retain and promote local jobs and employability.

Alongside this, we've continued to attend events and host visits, connecting with communities and organisations from across Scotland and beyond. As interest in the Flow Country grows, we're looking forward to creating even more opportunities to get people involved and inspired.

**- Audrey Parsons, Project Officer,
Flow Country Partnership**





RESEARCH UPDATES FROM THE FLOW COUNTRY

There is currently some uncertainty around peatland terms, which are used in different situations, leading to ambiguity. This includes definitions within peatland classification, condition and use in development. These definitions will be reviewed as part of this work, and some recommendations will be provided about how to reduce uncertainty and increase clarity.

At present, there is also a wide range of methods deployed for peatland condition assessment, developed for different purposes. The attached report looks at some of the existing peatland habitat condition classification systems and assessment tools and determines if there is a suitable existing methodology or one that can be adjusted to determine peatland condition in the context of development.

Such a tool may be used as part of the Scottish Planning Biodiversity Metric for understanding the impacts of a development on peatland habitats,

and indicating the scale of offsetting required to compensate for the loss of peatland habitats.

This commissioned report will be used to improve consistency and understanding of terms and be used to support NatureScot's project to develop the Scottish Planning Biodiversity Metric to help show significant biodiversity enhancements.

To improve readability, the report doesn't follow a typical structure of introduction – method – result – discussion. Instead, it is split in three parts: the first part addresses the issues of clarity of terminology and definition around active peatlands through a lens of development on peat, the second part addresses the issue of classification and tools, and the final part tackles the development of a bespoke tool that could be used in the context of the Scottish Planning Biodiversity Metric.

**- Roxane Andersen, Mascha Bischoff,
Heather Johnstone, David Large**

Visit the link below to find out more:-
nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1404-active-peatland-and-peatland-condition

UPCOMING EVENTS



Wednesday 15/07/2026
FCRL Roadshow, Ulbster Arms, Halkirk
7PM - 9PM

Tuesday 28/07/2026
FCRL Roadshow, Kyle Centre, Tongue
7PM - 9PM

Friday 31/07/2026
WHS 2nd Anniversary Celebration, Latheron Hall
1PM - 4PM

Monday 24/08/2026
FCRL Roadshow, Bunillidh Social Club, Helmsdale
7PM - 9PM

Wednesday 26/08/2026
FCRL Roadshow, Kinlochbervie Village Hall, Kinlochbervie
7PM - 9PM
