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Caithness school children gain a “Lookout” over the Flow Country

Children from two Caithness primary schools have been the first school visitors to enjoy the new Flows Lookout at RSPB Scotland’s Forsinard Flows nature reserve.

Teachers from Reay primary school and Wick’s Hillhead primary school brought their classes to the Forsinard Flows reserve for hands-on lessons about the environment and wildlife of the internationally important peatlands. For both schools, a visit to the Lookout was an essential part of the experience. According to Sjoerd Tel, Learning Officer for the Flows to the Future Project, the facility really proved its worth during the visit of Reay Primary due to the squally weather conditions

Mr Tel said, “Without the viewing tower, I probably would have cancelled the walk out to the dubh lochans and we would not have been able to go pond-dipping.

Thanks to the shelter of the Lookout, the children could examine some of the local newts in more comfort, and take time for a closer look at other pond life such as dragonfly nymphs”.

Mr Tel said that a primary benefit of the Lookout was that it enables pupils to enjoy the peatlands under the shelter of a roof which was not possible before its construction when school visits were always vulnerable to the notoriously changeable weather of the area. Up until then the site of the tower had been used as an outdoor classroom by the RSPB.

Mr Tel added, “As well as the shelter from the elements, the children were able to better understand the intriguing pool system by seeing it from an elevated vantage point. We look forward to introducing more children to this amazing area when school resumes after the summer break.”

The Flows Lookout and boardwalk were constructed as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund supported Flows to the Future project and were funded by the European Regional Development Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Highland Council and the RSPB.



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 liaises with local community groups, the Scottish Government’s Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate and the North Sutherland Community Forest Trust. It is independently chaired by John Henderson of Scrabster Farm, Caithness.

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