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The Flows as an Outdoor Classroom

With the school holidays just underway, the Flows to the Future team can look back on a successful school term. Over 300 pupils from across Caithness and Sutherland were welcomed onto the peat of Forsinard Flows National Nature Reserve, or learned about peatland habitat through activities in their school grounds.

Sjoerd Tel, Learning Development Officer for the project, is very positive: “I am very pleased with the interest schools have shown so far in the learning activities that we offer. The teachers loved to see pupils getting hands on with peat that is several thousand years old, and helped them catch newts, dragonfly larvae and other pool life to observe them up close. I am also glad to have had help from RSPB reserve staff and volunteers in delivering the sessions. Without them, the activities would not have been of this quality.”

Some activities were in partnership with other organisations. Pupils from Kinlochbervie and Durness have explored peatlands closer to their school during sessions run jointly with the Highland Council Ranger Service and the West Highland Fisheries Trust. Two Dornoch Academy geography classes were taken onto peatlands at the Scottish Water treatment facility that provides the drinking water for

the town, and a closer collaboration with Scottish Water is planned for next year.

Mr Tel explained that more activities are being prepared. “I am identifying local peatland sites which are suitable for outdoor learning closer to schools, and I would like to see the new digital resources about The Flow Country integrated with outdoor experiences as well. – These include a new film, 3D landscape model and a game - Of course, I am looking forward to using the new field centre too, as it will have a well-equipped education room and other facilities for groups.”

Schools can get in touch at any time, to book sessions either at Forsinard, at their school or a site nearby. These activities are free of charge and are funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund..



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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