



Press Release: 25 October 2016

Flows field centre open day success

Forsinard was busier last Saturday than it has been for many a year, with the open day for the new field centre. Over 180 people turned up to “have a nosey” around the new building and take part in different activities.

The field centre has been built as part of the Heritage Lottery funded Flows to the Future Project, a Peatlands Partnership initiative for which RSPB Scotland is the lead.

Project Manager Caroline Eccles said “We were very pleased by the response to our open day on Saturday, and delighted to welcome old friends and new from all across Sutherland and Caithness. The open day was the culmination of a year-long construction project and marks a new beginning for conservation and education work in the Flows.”

Each part of the new building was used for different activities on Saturday, to enable people to have a good look around. The new education room, which will be used by visiting school, youth and university groups, was packed out with people watching the new “Flow Country” film and exploring the recently completed 3D landscape model.

Meanwhile the small field laboratory was the place to find out about the science happening in the Flows, with the Thurso Environmental Research Institute giving people the chance to see and handle peat cores. For the arty visitor, there was a chance to learn wildlife drawing skills in the new volunteer social area.

Perhaps the most popular room was the new office, where plenty of tea and cake was available, while people chatted about the ongoing work at Forsinard. Nowhere was out of bounds, and people were encouraged to visit the accommodation. This

includes five bedrooms for long term volunteers, and sixteen beds for short term visitors. These could be volunteers, school and youth groups or visiting scientists, all engaged in finding out more about the Flows.

Outside, many people took advantage of the great weather to go on a guided walk to the Flows Lookout.

Amongst the visitors was Highland Councillor George Farlow. He said: "It's great to see this amazing building coming to fruition. The large west facing windows fill it with light. It's an interesting layout inside too, a bit like the TARDIS - bigger on the inside than it is on the outside! It would be a lovely place to stay if you were working or studying in the Flow Country."

The field centre was designed by Colin Armstrong Associates and built by local firm O'Brien Construction from Thurso. The vast majority of the furniture and fittings have been supplied by local firms, predominantly based in Thurso.

The building has been designed on Passivhaus principles, which means that it is very airtight and energy use will be minimised. The heating system is a biomass boiler run on wood chip, which is supplied by a local social enterprise. The field centre has also been designed so as to minimise its impact on the landscape, being on the site of a former house and being set into the hill side.

The building will enable a step change in the opportunities for volunteering in the Flow Country, as well as providing facilities for visiting school, youth and university groups and researchers. It also provides much needed new offices for the RSPB Forsinard staff and Flows to the Future Project staff.



NOTES TO EDITORS

The new Flows Field Centre is located at Forsinard on RSPB's Forsinard Flows Nature Reserve, part of which received the accolade of being designated as a National Nature Reserve by Scottish Natural Heritage in September 2016

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.

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.

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