



## The Flow Country: Opportunities for Artists

- Residency/Commission for Visual Artist
- Community Engagement Artist's Project (Visual Art or Crafts)



Photo: Neil Cowie

<http://www.theflowcountry.org.uk/>

### INTRODUCTION

**The Flow Country** is a large, rolling expanse of peatland in Caithness and Sutherland in the north of Scotland. There is no other blanket bog in the world of such quality and extent. It is home to a rich variety of wildlife and is a hugely important carbon store, of increasing importance in our fight against climate change.

Together with associated areas of moorland and open water, large areas of the peatlands are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. They are recognised as being of national importance for conservation both as a habitat in their own right and because of the diverse range of rare and unusual breeding birds they support.

The protected peatlands are also part of the Natura 2000 series of sites (Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation), which seeks to maintain representative examples of the range of habitats and species across the European Union.

**Flows to the Future:**

Flows to the Future (FTTF) is an ambitious project which is restoring areas of blanket bog in the heart of the Flow Country that have been damaged by forestry planting. It also seeks to promote and develop our knowledge about the role of peat and carbon storage, and to involve and connect people everywhere with this precious habitat, delivering real economic benefits for one of the least densely populated areas in Scotland.

The project is far-reaching, ambitious and aims to significantly increase the level of conservation management in the Flow Country, and through a broad range of initiatives, intends to build awareness and opportunities for learning and engagement with the peatlands.

The project is being delivered by the Peatlands Partnership with RSPB Scotland as the lead partner.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISTS (Visual Arts and Crafts):**

As part of the core aim of widening awareness and understanding of the Flow Country the project seeks to appoint **2 artists to undertake residencies/projects in Spring 2017**.

Selected artists will spend time in the Flow Country and will develop new work in response to the context of the peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland.

We aim to encourage approaches that investigate the unique nature of the Flow Country, or that focus on particular aspects or details of the landscape or ecology, revealing different readings and understandings of the environment. The residencies present opportunities for artists to develop exploratory projects - that will raise awareness of the Flow Country, engage with communities and audiences, and contribute to widening understanding of the fragility and importance of the Flow Country.

The Flows to the Future Project is delivered by a partnership of key environmental organisations based in the region, and the Project Manager is Caroline Eccles. In addition, the region benefits from a rich network of arts and heritage organisations - including museum collections, archives and specialist facilities for production. FTTF is keen to encourage and support commissioned artists where appropriate to engage with the wider resources of arts/heritage partners in the region including:

*Caithness Horizons* <http://www.caithnesshorizons.co.uk>

*Timespan, Helmsdale* <http://timespan.org.uk/>

*Strathnaver Museum, Bettyhill.* <http://www.strathnavermuseum.org.uk>

The creative commissions programme has been developed with support from independent producer/project manager Jane Connarty. (Recent projects include Programme Manager, Edinburgh Art Festival 2016, and Production Manager, Scotland + Venice 2015). In addition to the core FTTF team, Jane will be available to offer some support to selected artists in planning for the residencies and development/presentation of work.

**We are pleased to share two residency opportunities for artists:**

**1: Residency/Commission for Visual Artist**

For this opportunity we seek to identify a contemporary artist who has a strong interest in developing work in response to landscape, the environment, and who demonstrates an innovative and exploratory approach to the context. Ideally the artist will have some experience of public engagement. We are open to artists working in any visual medium.

**Residency to include:**

- An opportunity to spend minimum of 2 weeks in The Flow Country - allowing time to explore the context, the landscape, environment, its communities, and to devise a proposal, and realise new work in response to this experience;
- support from local partners - RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage, Environmental Research Institute (Thurso), Flows to the Future project staff - in building understanding of the environmental value of the area and the ongoing restoration and research.
- Potential for artists to engage with arts/heritage partners and their unique resources relating to the area.
- an element of public / community engagement - for example this could be an artist's talk, or workshop.
- participation in 2 day interdisciplinary creative workshop in April 2017 - with focus on exploring future potential for further creative artists, musicians, writers etc. to contribute to the Flows to the Future Project and work in the Flow Country. The workshop will be organised in partnership with Creative Carbon Scotland.

**Criteria for Selection:**

- Quality of previous work (35%)
- Relevance of practice and previous work/experience to the brief and the opportunity (35%)
- Experience of public engagement (20%)
- General response to the brief (10%)

**2: Artist's Project (Visual Art or Crafts) - with focus on Community Engagement**

For this residency we seek to identify an artist or craftsperson whose practice is concerned with participation, and who has experience of delivering opportunities for direct engagement or participation. We wish to identify an artist to develop a project that would encompass participatory creative activities connecting with individuals or groups from a community/(ies) in the Flow Country.

**Residency to include:**

- opportunity to spend minimum of 2 weeks in the Flow Country - allowing the artist to explore the context, the landscape, environment, and in particular to research potential engagement with local communities, and to devise a proposal for a community based project.
- support from local partners - RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage, Environmental Research Institute (Thurso), Flows to the Future project staff - in building understanding of the environmental value of the area and the ongoing restoration and research.
- Potential for artists to engage with arts/heritage partners and their unique resources relating to the area, and support for artists to engage with a community context - the focus to be devised in collaboration with the artist through the initial research period.

- participation in 2 day interdisciplinary creative workshop in April 2017 - with focus on exploring future potential for further creative artists, musicians, writers etc. to contribute to the Flows to the Future. (The workshop will be organised in partnership with Creative Carbon Scotland.)

**Criteria for Selection:**

- Quality of previous work (30%)
- Relevance of practice and previous work/experience to the brief and the opportunity (30%)
- Experience of public engagement (30%)
- General response to the brief (10%)

**We are aiming for a programme that is world class; high quality; bold; collaborative; professional; sustainable; valuing creativity, innovation and equality.**

**Anticipated Outcomes to include:**

- public presentations of resulting work (details to be confirmed, subject to proposals, artform etc.)
- online presentation of work/documentation of work on FTTF website
- inclusion of work, or documentation of process/work in 'Flows to the Future' Touring exhibition 2017/18 (venues TBC) (The focus of this exhibition will be an interpretive exhibition designed by Bright 3D.)

**Project Team:**

Caroline Eccles, Project Manager, Flows to the Future Project

Jenny Middlehurst, Communities Officer, Flows to the Future Project

Ian Mitchell, Operations Officer, Projects and Rural Development, Scottish Natural Heritage

Jane Connarty, Flows to the Future Creative Commissions Consultant

**Timing:**

We seek to appoint artists in early November, and to plan activity to happen primarily in Spring (March to May) 2017, but with the possibility of some research/planning visits in Winter 2016/2017.

**FEES AND EXPENSES (all inclusive of VAT):**

**Artist's Fee: £3,000**

**Expenses:** Artists' Accommodation/Travel etc.: A budget is available to support **travel within UK** and accommodation while working in the Flow Country. Self-catering accommodation is potentially available at the Flows Field Centre, Forsinard.

**Production Budget - for the development and presentation of new work: up to £5,000**

Detailed project proposals, and related budgets, to be agreed following initial research in the Flow Country.

**HOW TO APPLY:**

The Opportunities are open to artists who have been practising as professional artists for a minimum of 3 years.

**Deadline for Applications: 9am Monday 24 October 2016**

**To make an application please submit the following to:**

caroline.eccles@rspb.org.uk, Flows to the Future Project Manager

An expression of interest - formatted as a single PDF and including:

- An outline of your interest in the project, and initial ideas for your potential areas of research or your approach (max 300 words)
- A statement detailing your relevant experience (max 300 words)
- Curriculum vitae
- Up to 6 images of your work - either within the PDF or via links to Dropbox or similar. Timebased media should be limited to 4 clips, each no more than 3 minutes duration.
- Names and contact details for 2 referees - References will only be requested if you are shortlisted to attend interview.
- Please clearly state which of the two opportunities you are interested in.

**Selection and Shortlisting:**

The shortlisting and selection for this opportunity will take place in the week of 24 October 2016. All proposals will be viewed by representatives from FTTF and relevant partners. Shortlisted artists will be invited to attend interviews in Inverness (on 8th or 9th November) and successful applicants will be appointed in November 2016. Shortlisted artists will be invited to interview by 28 October. Unfortunately FTTF is not able to offer feed-back to artists who are not shortlisted for interview.

Flows to the Future is a Heritage Lottery Funded project

