



# Is it Time for a Peatlands World Heritage Site?



# Background



- 1988 – IUCN + The Nature Conservancy Council identify The Flow Country as a potential WHS.
- 1999 – The Flow Country included on the UK’s Tentative List.
- 2013 + 2015 – The Peatlands Partnership submit Technical Evaluations.
- 2017 – The Peatlands Partnership establishes The Flow Country WHS Working Group.



# What is a World Heritage Site?

- Places on Earth that are of outstanding universal value to humanity.
- Belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of where they are.
- Protect and celebrate for future generations.



# How does a Bog become a World Heritage Site?

**Stage 1:** Convince the UK Government that The Flow Country is the best candidate on the Tentative List.

**Stage 2:** Prove to UNESCO that The Flow Country has outstanding universal value.



# How might The Flow Country Qualify?

*Criterion (ix)... outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, freshwater... ecosystems and communities of plants and animals*

“The quality and extent of its blanket bog habitat, including its unique species assemblage of plants and birds”



# How Might The Flow Country Qualify?

*Criterion (x) contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation*

“Blanket bog is a globally rare type of peatland... The proposed Flow Country WHS represents one of the largest, and most intact areas of blanket bog in the world”



# What would The Flow Country bring to the World Heritage Site list?



- 32 sites in the UK
- Only 4 are natural (13%)
- Only 6 in Scotland (19%)
  
- 1,121 sites in total
- 213 are natural (19%)
- 0 are peatlands (0%)
  
- Carbon storage
- Cultural heritage of the North Highlands

# What are the Benefits?

- ❑ Eco and heritage tourism
- ❑ Educational activities
- ❑ Raise awareness of peatlands
- ❑ Encourage slow tourism
- ❑ Spread economic benefits
- ❑ The #1 heritage accolade
- ❑ Potential to increase funding
- ❑ Join a global community
- ❑ Protect and promote heritage





# Volunteering at Durham Cathedral

- Good work experience/ learn new skills
- Community spirit/ socialising
- Connection to local heritage



# Jurassic Coast Ice Cream

- Partnership between Purbeck Ice Cream and the Jurassic Coast Trust.
  - ▣ 5p of every tub goes to the Trust
- Purbeck Ice Cream are now a “lead business partner” (contribute at least £3k per year)
  - ▣ Advertised on the Jurassic Coast website
- Funds are used “to preserve the scenery and heritage” of The World Heritage Site.



# World Heritage UK

- Networking, advocacy and promotion for the UK's World Heritage Sites and Tentative list sites.
- Annual Conference, Technical Workshops, Networking meetings and World Heritage Chairs meetings.



World Heritage UK



# England's World Heritage Story – The North

- A tour of England's six northern WHSs
- Encouraging people to explore beyond the “honeypot” sites



HOME

THE SITES

ITINERARIES

ACCOMMODATION

MORE ATTRACTIONS

BUYER'S GUIDE

CONTACTS



**ITINERARIES**



# Potential Challenges

- ❑ Breaking new ground
- ❑ Creating a boundary
- ❑ Huge variety of land use
- ❑ Communicating the value of peatlands
- ❑ Spreading the word in rural communities
- ❑ Working with “OUV”



# Benefits of the Process

- Raising awareness
- UNESCO Volunteers Programme
- Local and national media coverage
- Oral and local history
- School talks
- Community Engagement
- Gaining political support
- Encouraging important conversations about land use



# World Heritage Volunteers



- A group of young volunteers from 6 different European countries
- Meeting like-minded people and sharing a passion for nature and heritage
- Giving us new perspectives in their feedback



# The past year

## **Community Consultation**

- 15 drop-in events across Caithness and Sutherland
- Big events in Lairg, Thurso and Inverness
- Online consultation
- Feedback forms at Edinburgh Botanical Gardens
- Community Council meetings + much more!

## **Technical Evaluation**

- Developing a draft boundary
- Bringing in planning and World Heritage expertise
- Liaising with UK Government and advisory agencies



# Out and About



Edinburgh Botanical  
Gardens – August 2019



Wick drop-in session, May  
2019



Full Flow Event in Inverness,  
July 2019



Mairi Gougeon MSP, Gail  
Ross MSP, Frances Gunn



Sutherland Show, July 2019



Volunteering on a croft,  
February 2019

# What happens next?

- Community consultation report
- Technical Evaluation submission

Then, hopefully...

- Confirmation of The Flow Country as the UK's next World Heritage Site candidate
- Full nomination to UNESCO (alongside much more consultation!)



# The Flow Country – A Future World Heritage Site?

