

## Flowing to the Future

As with all projects, the Flows to the Future Project is coming to an end, but some of the things the project has been doing will carry on.

Hilary Wilson, our Learning Development Officer, will be continuing to work with schools until the end of March 2020, funded by RSPB Scotland. As well as engaging pupils with the peatlands, she will be expanding her remit to cover the coasts and farmland landscapes of Sutherland and Caithness.

The Project has provided an advisory service on matters such as sustainable grazing, deer management and peatland restoration. If you are interested in peatland restoration and there is a potential project you would like to discuss, you can contact Gearóid Murphy about the SNH Peatland Action scheme on 01463 725370/ Gearoid.murphy@nature.scot

Day and residential volunteering opportunities will still be available at RSPB Forsinard Flows for a variety of tasks and activities, please ring Claire on 01641 571225. All welcome!

Meanwhile, the Peatlands Partnership partners will be continuing with peatland restoration where needed, subject to funding. They will also be looking at how further work can be funded to continue to spread the word and involve more people in the Flow Country both locally and beyond.



UNESCO World Heritage Volunteers at Moine House viewpoint © John S Wright

## A future World Heritage Site?

The Flow Country World Heritage Site (WHS) Project is just emerging from a very successful period of community consultation. We began with 15 drop-in sessions across Caithness and Sutherland in May. It was absolutely fantastic to meet so many people with a passion for The Flow Country and to gather a lot of very useful feedback.

In July we welcomed just short of 900 people to 3 big events in Lairg, Thurso & Inverness, featuring BBC presenters Neil Oliver and Professor Iain Stewart alongside Bath City World Heritage Site Chairman Professor Barry Gilbertson.

Over the next few months, we will submit a Technical Evaluation to the UK Government, which will make the case for a Flow Country WHS. If successful, a full case will then be put to UNESCO. More info from: Joe Perry, Project Co-ordinator Flow Country WHS. joe.perry@highland.gov.uk.

## Thank You!

A huge thank you to all the individuals, trusts and organisations who have supported the project financially. Each and every one has been important in making up the jigsaw of funding.



Pond dipping at the Flows Lookout, Forsinard



@TheFlowCountry

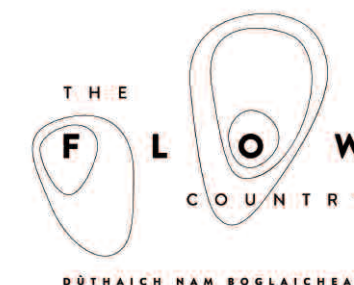
The Flow Country

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THE MORE YOU LOOK THE MORE YOU SEE

# THE FLOW COUNTRY



## What makes the Flow Country so special?

### Hello!

Welcome to this final newsletter of the Flows to the Future Project, as the project will shortly be ending after a busy five years of activity across the Flow Country. We've carried out lots of peatland restoration, done a programme of schools and community events, built a field centre and the Flows Lookout, as well as putting in roadside information points and much more. Find out more in this newsletter and on our website.

We are hugely grateful to all those individuals, community groups, organisations, businesses and contractors who have worked with and supported the project in any way. Thank you so much, without you it would not have been possible and nor would it have been as much fun! It's the end of the project, but not the end of work in this special landscape. Keep reading to find out more.

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Looking for lizards at RSPB Forsinard Flows

The Flow Country is a vast area of blanket bog which stretches across Caithness and Sutherland, and is one of Scotland's most important natural resources. But what makes it so special? It is the biggest blanket bog in the world and the best of its kind, supporting internationally important numbers of birds.

It is also special because of the peat. Peat is made of up of dead plant remains that have not fully broken down, meaning they retain carbon, locking it away in the peat. Many peatlands have been growing undisturbed for thousands of years, so although they cover just 3% of the world's land area, they hold nearly 30% of all the carbon stored on land. The Flow Country's peat bogs alone store about 400 million tonnes - more than three times the amount in all of Britain's woodlands.

The Highland Council has declared a climate emergency. Protecting and restoring the Flow Country peatlands is crucial in this climate crisis, to ensure that the stored carbon is not released.

Bog listening workshop,  
summer 2019  
© Murdo MacLeod





# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE Flows to the Future Project

2014 - 2019



## COMMUNITIES

**151**

events were held locally including walks, talks and workshops, over 4,000 attendees

**27**

events were held further afield including in London, Edinburgh and Orkney

**270**

volunteers were trained and carried out conservation, people engagement and office work, contributing over 5500 days

**1**

information point at Forsinain

**1**

new website

**1**

Lookout Tower with all-abilities boardwalk at RSPB Forsinard, open free of charge at all times

**5**

walking routes signposted

**4**

viewpoints with information, seating and parking: Cnoc Craggie, Moine House (which also has all-abilities walk), Crask and Loch Rangag

**2**

artists' residencies, lots of visiting art students, 1 interactive installation in the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh with arthouse Cryptic: Below the Blanket

Hazel anemometer  
© Hannah Imlach



## SCHOOLS Inspiring future generations

**151**

outreach visits to 35 schools

**4246**

interactions with school children across Caithness and Sutherland

*"Well planned, organised activities - children particularly loved the dragonfly making activity! Friendly and helpful staff make for a stress free experience for teachers!"*

(Dunbeath School, Summer 2019)

**61**

school visits to Forsinard Flows RSPB reserve

**3**

museum and visitor centre displays (Caithness Horizons, Strathnaver Museum and RSPB Forsinard Flows visitor centre)

Lots of press coverage in local and national newspapers, on STV, BBC, Radio 3, BBC Alba, BBC Scotland, Radio 4

**1**

touring exhibition travelled to 13 UK venues, seen by over 150k people

**1**

new information booklet, available at hotels, tourist attractions and elsewhere across the area

**£4.3 million**

spent with Caithness and Sutherland businesses



## INTERPRETATION & VISITOR FACILITIES



## PEATLAND RESTORATION

Forestry furrows and drains blocked over

**1747**

hectares

**837.4**

hectares of non-native tree removal on deep peat

**564**

hectares cleared of regenerating non-native conifers

Surveys carried out, management guidance prepared, and funding applications submitted for land managers across almost

**75,000**

hectares (19%) of the Flow Country

Crask viewpoint  
© Iain Sarjeant



THE  
FLOW  
COUNTRY

THE PEATLANDS PARTNERSHIP

HERITAGE  
FUND

[www.theflowcountry.org.uk](http://www.theflowcountry.org.uk)