



The Peatlands Partnership

Press Release: 29 January 2015

Peatlands Partnership announces that Flow Country Observatory to be built by local contractor

The Peatlands Partnership has announced that Thurso-based O'Brien Construction has won the contract to build the Partnership's new Observatory, designed to provide elevated views across a natural area of bog pools near Forsinard in the Flow Country.

Project manager Caroline Eccles said, "The Observatory and the visitor experience it will provide is a key part of the Flows to the Future project. This is a demanding commission and I am delighted to say that a local company has won the contract."

Donald Chambers of O'Brien Construction, said, "I am extremely pleased that we, a local firm, have won this contract and have the opportunity to make a contribution to this important project and the benefits it will bring to the area. Although only a small structure, the high level of environmental care being required and the location makes it quite an engineering challenge. We look forward to meeting the challenge and I am very confident that we will do the area proud."

Ms Eccles said, "The observatory will be built on the existing Dubh Lochan Trail at a location currently used as an outdoor classroom. Hundreds of schoolchildren and thousands of visitors use the trail every year and there has long been a demand for a

structure that can give elevated views of the intricate shapes of the bog pools, and provide a degree of shelter.

“As the project develops, with a redeveloped visitor centre at Forsinard, the creation of a new field centre and developments elsewhere, we will see more and more visitors coming to this iconic part of north Scotland. This is great news for local tourism businesses and a real boost for the local economy.”

John Henderson, the chairman of the Peatlands Partnership added, “It has taken a lot of hard work to get this far and it would not have been possible without the active help of our many partners and local supporters. Building a sustainable future for this area is one of the goals of the Partnership. Businesses and our young people will be major beneficiaries of these investments in our infrastructure”.

The Flows to the Future project gratefully acknowledges funding support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the European Regional Development Fund.

PHOTOGRAPH

RSPB Scotland’s Norrie Russell (left) and Cathel Mackay from O’Brien Construction study plans for the new Observatory

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Peatlands Partnership includes Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission (Scotland), Highland Council, RSPB Scotland, Plantlife International and The Environmental Research Institute. It liaises with local community groups, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, 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), Green Stimulus Package, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Highland Council,

RSPB, Scotland Rural Development Programme, Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Tubney Trust.

CONTACT DETAILS

Alan Tissiman RSPB Public Affairs Manager can be contacted on 01463 228810 or 07775 227614 or alan.tissiman@rspb.org.uk

Caroline Eccles Project Manager - Flows to the Future Project, working on behalf of The Peatlands Partnership, c/o North Scotland Regional Office, Inverness. 01463 715000, Mobile 07590 441475 or caroline.eccles@rspb.org.uk

Ian Mitchell, Secretary, The Peatlands Partnership, c/o Scottish Natural Heritage: Tel 01408 634063 or peatlands_partnership@snh.gov.uk



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