



## **The Peatlands Partnership**

**Press Release: 21 April 2015**

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### **Work gathers apace on new peatlands visitor attraction at Forsinard**

#### **New observatory taking shape as materials brought to site by helicopter**

The Peatlands Partnership has reported good progress on the first phase of its development of visitor facilities in the Flow Country, with the building of the new viewing tower or “Observatory” at an advanced stage of construction. The Observatory forms part of the Partnership’s HLF-funded Flows to the Future project.

Project manager Caroline Eccles said, “The building of the Observatory was always going to be quite a challenge given its location on peat and I am very pleased to report that much of the structure is now in place. It won’t be long before visitors to the Flow Country will be able to enjoy special views of a peatland pool system from the tower.”

In order to speed up the process of construction and minimise disturbance to the peatlands, the contractor, Thurso-based O’Brien Construction, is using helicopters to deliver some of the larger components to the site. The observatory is being built on steel piles sunk into the ground and will sit just above the peat surface.

Ms Eccles explained, “We chose the site because it is already used as an outdoor classroom by visiting school parties and is on an existing trail. It is not in a protected

area for nature and we know from years of monitoring this particular bit of peatland that there are few breeding birds nearby. Even so, we are very keen to keep disturbance to a minimum and finish the work as quickly as possible. The use of the helicopter greatly speeds up the process and reduces the need for vehicles to cross the peat. A temporary walkway has also been constructed to allow access for the workmen and any other building materials are being taken in along here in small loads. The working area is being very tightly managed to minimise any damage and to ensure a fast recovery.”

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

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

- 1) Construction activity on site**
- 2) Helicopter carrying supplies**

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

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), Green Stimulus Package, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Highland Council, RSPB, Scotland Rural Development Programme, Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Tubney Trust.

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