



## **Press Release: 17<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

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### **TITLE: Shaping the landscape – Dornoch students gain insight into the processes that created the Flow Country**

Over the past few weeks, pupils from Dornoch Academy have been taking part in a field studies project to learn about peatlands and the importance of landscapes like the Flow Country. Working with the Flows to the Future Project they have participated in peatland fieldwork at a site at Birichen, located only 10 minutes drive from the school.

The pupils, an S3 and an S4 Geography class, were taken to Birichen by geography teacher Luke Naunton, to investigate how peatlands work. Access to the site was kindly made possible by the local land owner.

Birichen provided an ideal environment for pupils to gain an understanding of how a peatland habitat forms and how conditions in the landscape, such as the degree of slope and wetness, influence what vegetation will be found. The pupils developed skills in plant identification in order to observe the changes in vegetation along a cross-section of the site, and used peat probes to measure the depth of the peat. It proved a great opportunity for pupils to gain hands-on experience in fieldwork and practise techniques similar to those used by researchers.

Also incorporated into the excursion was a tour of the Londornoch Scottish Water treatment plant. Pupils were taken around the works and shown how the water is purified and how peat particles are taken out, before it is delivered to the wider Dornoch area.

Mr Naunton reported that he is planning to bring more of his classes out to the peatland. He commented, "The students loved getting out of the classroom and into a

fieldwork environment. It is very important for them to be able to connect what they learn in school to their immediate environment, and to understand how special their local landscape is.”

All in all, the field studies gave students the chance to develop an understanding of how a peatland habitat functions, and their importance on a larger scale in terms of the regulation of climate by storing carbon underground.

According to Sjoerd Tel, Learning Development Officer for the Heritage Lottery funded Flows to the Future Project, “This has really proven a great opportunity to engage young people with their environment and to see how it fits into the bigger picture. Hopefully in the future more students will be able to benefit from gaining hands-on experience through peatland field studies, inspiring them to protect this internationally important habitat.”



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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), Peatland Action, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, The Highland Council, RSPB, WREN, Scotland Rural Development Programme, Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Tubney Trust.

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