

Coillte Blanket Bog LIFE Project Conference

Bringing the Bogs back to LIFE

4th – 5th October, 2007

LIFE-funded Bog Restoration
- The Scottish Experience



Neil Wilkie

LIFE Peatlands Project

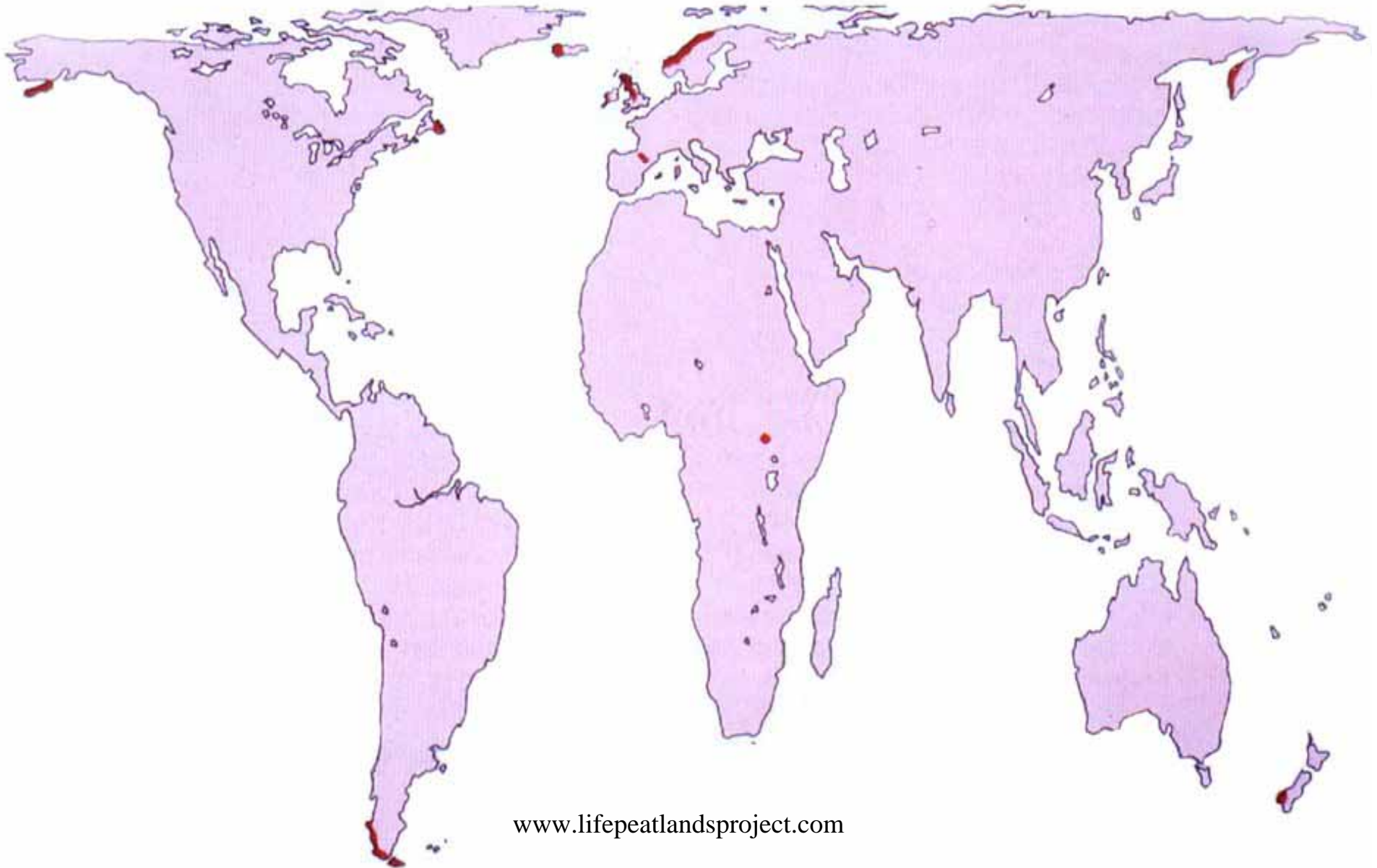
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Presentation format:

- Historical context
- LIFE Peatlands Project I (1994 – 98)
- LIFE Peatlands Project II (2001 – 2007)
- Attitudes and awareness survey

Global distribution of blanket peatlands



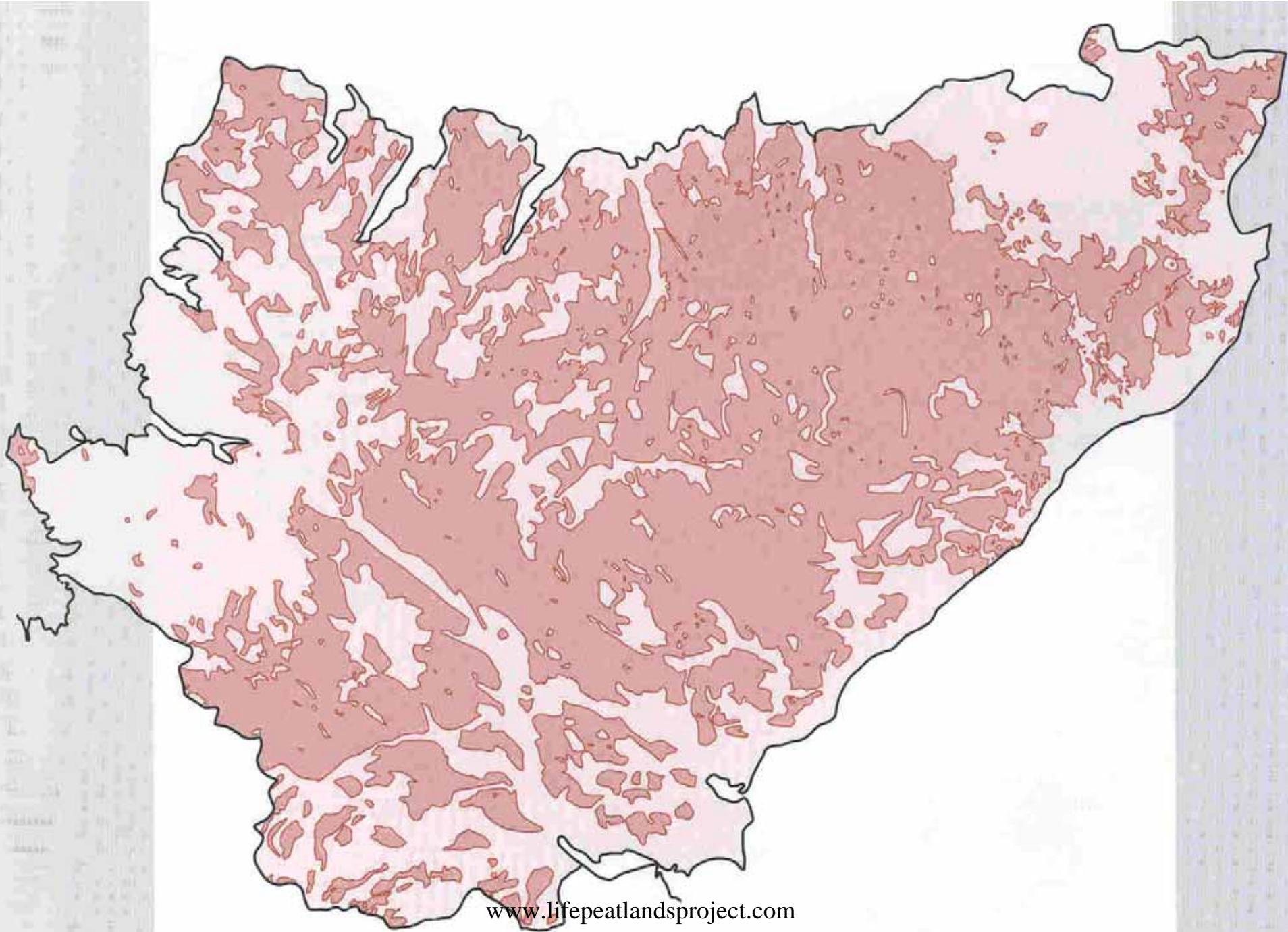
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Map of the general location of the project

**RESTORING ACTIVE BLANKET BOG OF
EUROPEAN IMPORTANCE IN NORTH SCOTLAND**

**LOCATION
IN THE COUNTRY**





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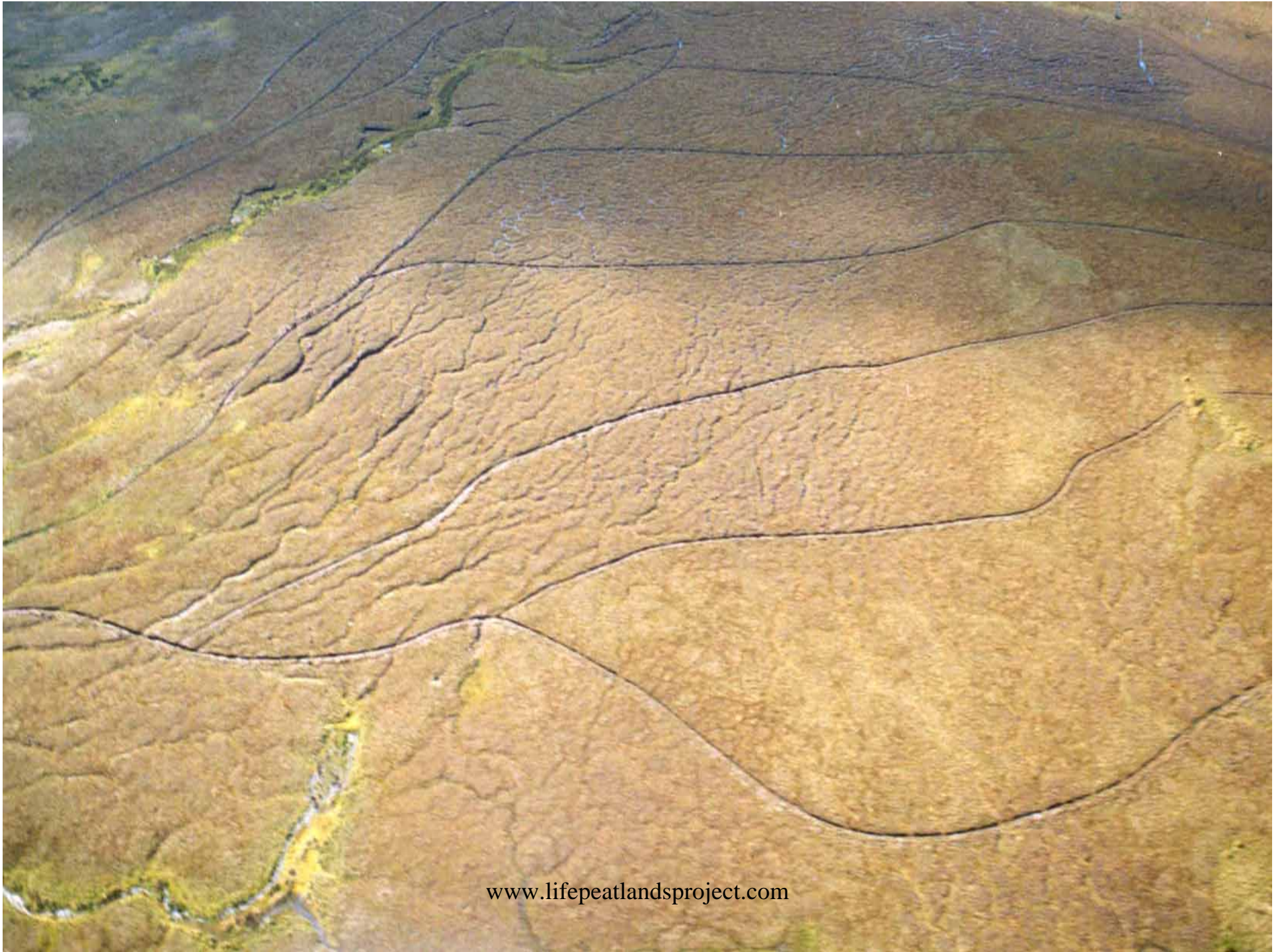
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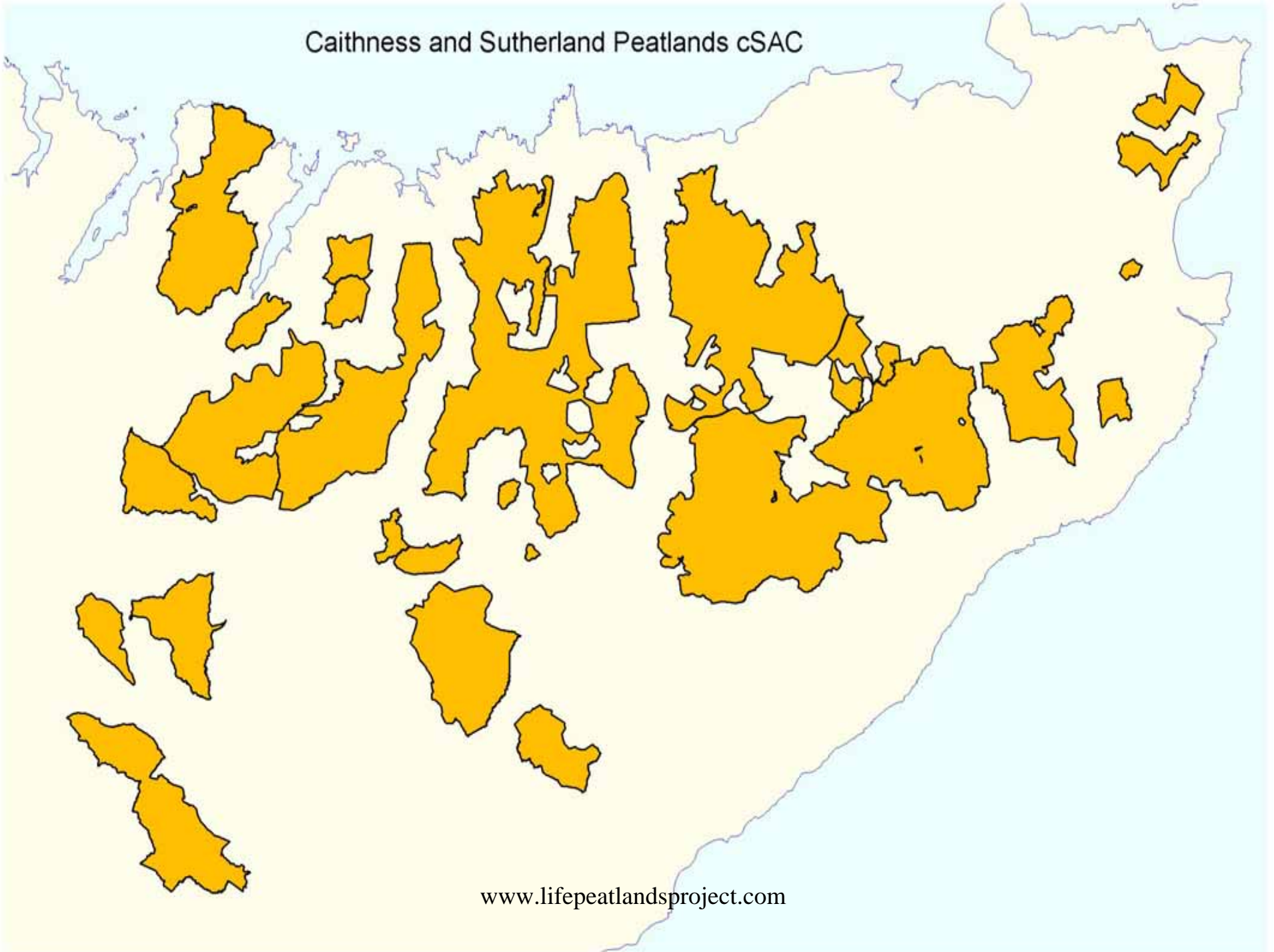


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Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands cSAC



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LIFE Peatlands Project I

Conservation of Active Blanket Bogs in Scotland and Northern Ireland
(1994 – 98)

- RSPB
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise
- Fermanagh District Council

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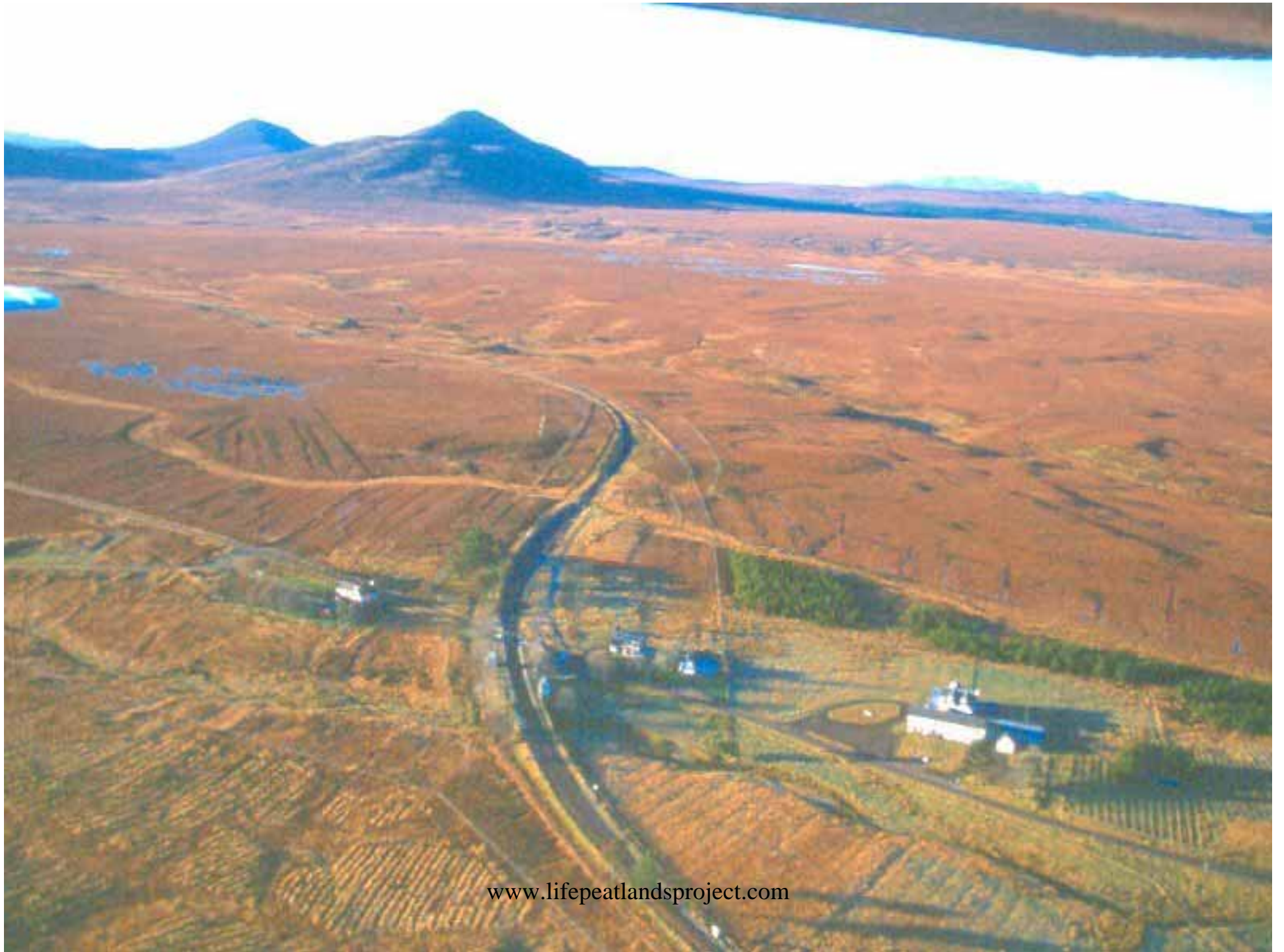
LIFE Peatlands Project I

Conservation of Active Blanket Bogs in Scotland and Northern Ireland

(1994 – 98)

Project Aims:

- Acquire and manage an area of pristine blanket bog
- Restore areas of blanket bog
- Raise awareness of the peatlands
- Promote the peatlands as a valuable visitor resource



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LIFE Peatlands Project II

Restoring Active Blanket Bog of European Importance in North Scotland

- RSPB
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Forest Enterprise
- Plantlife
- Forestry Commission

Project duration: 5¾ years [1st March 2001 to 31st December 2006]

Project Budget: £2.8 million

Project site(s): Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation
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Caol

Cattanach

Alltan Dubh

Raphan

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Imriche

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Peatland management / restoration

□ Acquisition & management:

- Forsinard Flows Reserve: 18 000 ha

□ Peatland restoration:

- Forest felling / restructuring: 2 500 ha

- RSPB: 1 800 ha

- FES: 500 ha

- FCS: 200 ha

- Open hill drain blocking: 17 000 ha

- RSPB: 15 000 ha

- PL: 1 500 ha

- SNH: 500 ha

Jobs / Employment:

- Project brought 4 full-time jobs to Sutherland (2 living /working in Forsinard)
- RSPB currently employing 5 staff at Forsinard plus 5 summer contract staff
- Project has spent £1.1 million on restoration work
- Project has used 14 contractors (c 30 men)
- 95% of tree felling completed by C & S contractors
- Three new businesses started up





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The Peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland

A CELEBRATION



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Lifeline

Welcome to the second issue of Lifeline – the annual newsletter for the LIFE Peatlands Project. This four year project is now entering its third year and work to restore priority areas of damaged peatland in Caithness and Sutherland is well underway.

As well as the restoration work, the conservation bodies and government agencies involved in the project have undertaken the first steps to shape an agreed vision for the future management of this internationally important area. Half way through the Project, we are pleased to report on our progress and what we hope to achieve in the coming year.

Neil Wilkie
LIFE Peatlands Project Manager



WHY IN THE WORLD...?

The Peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland is one of Britain's most ancient landscapes, essentially unchanged for several thousand years. The peatlands have been acknowledged by international experts as unique and of global importance, equivalent to the African Serengeti or Brazil's tropical rainforest. In Europe, only Ireland, Norway and Iceland have similar landscapes blanketed with peat, but all are on a more restricted scale. Elsewhere in the world such treeless 'blanket bog' scenery is only found in a very small number of widely scattered localities, such as Tierra del Fuego in South America, Kamchatka in Russia, Alaska and New Zealand. The Peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland is regarded as such an important example of this globally-rare type of landscape that it is now proposed as a World Heritage Site.

Global distribution of blanket peatlands



The LIFE Peatlands
Project 2001-2005
RESTORING ACTIVE
BLANKET BOG OF
EUROPEAN
IMPORTANCE IN
NORTH SCOTLAND





for birds
for people
for ever

Help us restore
68 square miles of
unique Flow Country

...before it's too late.



The cost of this pack has been
part-funded by the EU LIFE Programme.

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The Attitudes and Awareness
of
Local People and Communities
to
The Peatlands of
Caithness and Sutherland

by

Donald MacLeod and Colin MacPherson

1996, 2002 and 2006

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Set out to assess:

- Changes in attitudes/awareness since 1996
- Knowledge of Forsinard Nature Reserve
- Views of Peatland Management Scheme
- Knowledge of LIFE Peatlands Project
- Views on how Peatlands should be managed

Survey attitudes and awareness surrounding the Peatlands amongst:

- General public
- Crofters, farmers, estate managers
- Highland Councillors
- Community Council office-bearers
- Schools
- Key opinion formers

Survey general public:

- In 2006, 67% said that they were either *“very or reasonably interested”* in the Peatlands (59% in 1996)
- In 2006, 75% described peatland conservation as *“helpful for the future of the area”* (55% in 1996)
- In 2006, 39% said they go birdwatching in the Peatlands (19% in 1996)
- In 2006, 85% said that it was the plants and animals of the Peatlands that made them important (67% in 1996)
- In 2006, 23% said that windfarms were the *‘greatest threat’* to the Peatlands (0% in 1996, and only 2% in 2002)

Survey crofters / farmers:

- In 2006, 44% of crofters/farmers *“think there are economic opportunities associated with conservation”* (14% in 1996)
- In 2006, 48% of crofters/farmers said that conservation groups *“had sympathy for local issues and needs”* (21% in 1996)
- In 2006, 80% of crofters/farmers agreed with the statement: *“it is possible to balance conservation and development so that jobs are created without damaging the Peatland environment”* (54% in 1996)
- In 2006, 50% of crofters/farmers agreed that conservation is *“helpful for the future of the area”* (19% in 1996)

General interviews:

- But shifts in opinion have not led to an upsurge in people's personal interest in the Peatlands:

"Those involved with the conservation of the peatlands should not be too worried about being ignored. Those interested in the work are being supportive. The vast majority of people are just not overly interested"

- People perceive RSPB / SNH as more sympathetic to local concerns:

"It gladdens me to see my worst fears about over-regulation have not come to pass. SNH seems to be taking a light touch, a pragmatic approach which is well considered"

- Cultivating a pride in the Peatlands v prevalent 'taking it for granted' attitude:

"They are internationally important – it has to be held in very high regard for that reason..."[although] "... It is hard to accept that a place you've grown up with has suddenly become valuable"

Other key findings:

- Major need to better define and describe the Peatlands / Flow Country
- But how do you promote the Peatlands meaningfully?
- More information needed please...
- The Peatlands – they aren't on our agenda




The Peatlands of Caithness & Sutherland

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2005 - 2015





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A group of people, including a guide and several visitors, are gathered in a peatland landscape. One person is kneeling in the foreground, possibly demonstrating a technique. The background shows a vast, flat landscape under a clear sky. In the foreground, there is a body of water reflecting the scene.

“When the guide explained that the Flow Country is as important to the world as the rainforests, they became saucer-eyed and have quoted it in their post-visit work. Having something which is important to the world within their own area really impressed them”