



## 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event to mark the opening of the northern section of the Far North Line

(Helmsdale – Wick/Thurso across the Flow Country of Caithness)



This year, 2024, marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Sutherland and Caithness Railway. This now forms the northern part of the Far North Line from Helmsdale, across the dramatic Caithness Flow country to Wick and Thurso. The



25 miles of track across the Flow is amongst the most remote in the UK and the derelict lineside cottages of surfacemen of past ages bear witness to lives lived – in service to the railway – in isolation with no road access and none of the services most households in the country take for granted today.

*Andy Grant*

The Flow itself is a place of rare habitats developed over thousands of years. The deep layers of peat that lie beneath the blanket bog are a hugely important carbon store. Such peat bogs cover just 3% of the world, but hold nearly 30% of all the earth's carbon. Hence the renewed interest in the area as a contributor to combatting climate change and the application for UNESCO World Heritage Site status, currently being assessed.

To celebrate the anniversary and the survival of this remarkable route, the Far North Line Community Rail Partnership, in collaboration with the Friends of the Far North Line and RSPB



*Flow Country Partnership*

Forsinard, plan to stage an event at Forsinard on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June. Speakers will cover the history and the future prospects of both the line and the landscape. Following this a bus will take those interested to Thurso to travel the line back to Forsinard - and on to Inverness if required - on the last southbound train of the day.

Participants will receive a booklet which will include both a line guide to the route and accounts of the history and operation of this lonely, scenic line.

*Completing the Far North Line*, by Keith Fenwick, published to mark the event, will be on sale.

Further details and a booking form from Michael Willmot at [hello@fnlcrp.co.uk](mailto:hello@fnlcrp.co.uk)



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(Helmsdale – Wick/Thurso across the Flow Country of Caithness)

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2024 at RSPB Forsinard**

*(The 07.00 departure from Inverness arrives Forsinard, 10.21)*

10.30 COFFEE

There will be a small exhibition of artefacts and photos curated by Timespan Heritage Centre, Helmsdale

11.00 Welcome

John Yellowlees (who will chair the meeting)

11.10 Intro to RSPB Forsinard

Milly Revill Hayward, Peatland Engagement and Communications Officer

11.50 History of the Line

Keith Fenwick, Highland Railway Society

12.45 LUNCH

*Buffet lunch will be provided by Forsinard Lodge.*

13.30 Life on the line in BR days and up to the present

William Bruce

14.15 Far North Line Future Prospects and Development

Frank Roach, Hitrans

Michael Willmot, FNLCRP

Ian Budd, FoFNL

15.15 Coach departs Forsinard (29 miles to Thurso station)

16.15 Arrive Thurso railway station

16.32 Depart Thurso on southbound train

17.11 Arrive / Depart Forsinard. Train reaches Inverness at 20.14

The cost of the event including refreshments and lunch will be £15 and for the coach/rail travel afternoon activity £20 (or £15 for senior citizen and other valid rail card holders). Booking essential. Request a booking form from [hello@fnlcrp.co.uk](mailto:hello@fnlcrp.co.uk)

*The Far North Line CRP is grateful to the Friends of the Far North Line, the Highland Railway Society, Helmsdale Station CIC and ScotRail for support, both financial and in-kind.*