

AGREED MINUTE

Meeting of
Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Partnership

Friday 23rd May 2014

Dumfries Arms Hotel, Cumnock, Ayrshire

Present: Roger Crofts (Chair), Joseph Murphy, Mary-Ann Smyth, Cllr Robert McDill, Joan Mitchell, Cllr Alistair Geddes, Peter Mason, Annique Armstrong, Teresa Dougall, John Thomson, Howard Wilkinson, Keith Muir, Chris Rollie, Chris Miles, J Mark Gibson and Gillian Arnot

In Attendance: Alan Edgar, Chimwemwe Chagunda, Nic Coombey, Ed Forrest, Stephanie Miles, Simon Fieldhouse, Alison Blair,

Apologies: Alison Steel, Cllr John McDowall, Chris Savage, Christine Cuthbertson, John Esslemont, Pip Tabor, Wilma Finlay, Gordon Mann, Maggie Gordon, Iain Cruikshank, Ewan Green, John Smith, Peter Brown.

ITEM 1 – Welcome and apologies for absence.

Roger Crofts welcomed everyone to the meeting. In addition to those members who had previously indicated that they were unable to attend, apologies for absence were noted from Alison Steel and Cllr John McDowall.

ITEM 2 – Minutes of previous meeting held on 9 October 2013 and matters arising.

The draft minute was accepted as an accurate record of the previous meeting. The following matters arose from the minute:-

Chairmanship (item 3):- Roger Crofts reminded the meeting that he intends to stand down as chair at the AGM which requires to be held before the end of September this year. Roger asked all members to consider whether they wish to be considered for election to the chair and to indicate this to him over the coming months.

Youth Conference (item 4):- Simon Fieldhouse advised the meeting that the Youth Conference, involving secondary school pupils from Dumfries and Galloway and East Ayrshire will take place on 18 June at Dumfries House, Auchinleck. The conference will utilise the concept of the Biosphere to explore the topic of sustainable employment. Simon indicated that an invitation to attend will be sent out to the members of the Biosphere Board.

Action:- send invitations to Biosphere Board Members to attend Youth Conference (SF)

Councillor Geddes asked whether the youth conference format could be extended to all schools within the Biosphere. The meeting agreed that the concept is a very good way of spreading the message within the younger generation about the Biosphere and what it aims to achieve.

Action:- consider repeating the Youth Conference and which schools can be invited to participate in future Youth Conferences (NC)

Wild Land (item 4):- It was noted that a response was prepared by South Ayrshire Council on behalf of the Partnership to the SNH Wild Land Mapping consultation. The response welcomed the inclusion of the Merrick area as a nationally important core area. It was noted that the supporting technical analysis recognises that almost all landscapes have been influenced by man and it was proposed that afforested areas within the national forest estate should be included for consideration as wild land. More specifically, the response encouraged SNH to broaden the area of search within this area to include all of the core and buffer zone to ensure that the characteristics of 'Wildness', valued locally, are adequately protected.

It was noted that the Wild Land consultation is of significance in developing the third National Planning Framework.

Development of Business Plan (item 7):- Simon Fieldhouse advised the meeting that the grant application submitted by Allan Jones Associates to Awards for All for developing a business plan was rejected. Allan Jones together with Simon and Chris Miles are considering a bid to the "Investing In Ideas" fund of the Big Lottery as an alternative to Awards for All.

Simon Fieldhouse further advised the meeting that Dumfries and Galloway Council are willing to provide staff resources to prepare a five year business and project funding plan.

Action:- examine prospects for successful application to Investing In Ideas fund (SF, CM and Allan Jones)

Action:- prepare draft report and business plan for consideration at the next Partnership meeting (September 2014) (SF)

Logo and Branding Guidelines (item 8):- The meeting discussed the lack of progress in producing a logo and branding guidelines and noted the impact this is having on taking forward other aspects of the Partnership's work. After discussion, it was agreed that the Board will continue its contract with Countryscape, responsibility for production of the logo will be delegated to a Logo and Branding sub- group, comprising Howard Wilkinson, Keith Geddes, Annique Armstrong and Peter Mason with Nic Coombey facilitating the sub-group and liaising with Countryscape. It was further agreed that a deadline of three months from now should be set for completing the logo and guidelines.

Action:- Reconvene Branding Theme Sub-Group and produce logo and branding guidelines by end August 2014 (NC, HW, KG, AA and PM).

ITEM 3 – Introduction of Biosphere Officers, Initial Work Programme and Organisational Arrangements

Simon Fieldhouse presented a paper on the membership and role of the Biosphere Project Funders steering group and the draft work plan and initial outcomes. The arrangements for directing the work of the Biosphere Officers were noted and there was no disagreement.

During consideration of this item, the following issue emerged:-

Promoting The Biosphere

It was agreed that there is an urgent need to increase awareness amongst all sections of the community of the Biosphere. Aside from developing the logo and branding guidelines this should be pursued through the following means:-

Promotion By Board Members

The Board Members are lead partners for talking to the local populations. Board Members should consider what opportunities there are to promote the Biosphere within their area and what materials they need. Members should advise the Biosphere Officers of their requirements.

Developing a Physical Presence

The geography of the Biosphere, with a remote unpopulated area at its centre, does not lend itself to provision of one central office/ visitor centre. As a consequence, the Biosphere Partnership will need to develop physical presence within a network of centres, with different centres focussing on different aspects of the Biosphere. The following were agreed as an initial list of location types at which permanent or temporary promotional displays can be mounted-

- Council Buildings
- Key Tourism Centres (eg Culzean Castle, Dumfries House, Cairnmore of Fleet Centre, etc)
- Relevant Business Premises

Promotion at Public Events

Under the previous BOB project, the Biosphere Officers attended numerous relevant public events, such as county shows, to promote the Biosphere. It was agreed that this work should be resumed.

Promotion Through Website and Social Media

The Biosphere website needs to be updated urgently and thereafter maintained up to date. Some new content has been added very recently by the Biosphere Officers, who now have access to make updates. An official Facebook page has been established and members of the board were urged to “like it” and encourage their contacts to do likewise as a means of spreading the message.

The Sense of Place Toolkit has an important promotional role. This provides templates for text that can be added to other organisations' websites and printed marketing material and ensures a consistent message.

Community Ambassadors & Volunteering

Encourage advocates within the community to promote the biosphere at local events. Developing relevant volunteering opportunities is another good way of promoting the Biosphere. Such opportunities will include local recorder groups which will also contribute to the environmental and education themes.

Action: Consider opportunities to promote Biosphere within local communities and advise Biosphere Officers (Nic) of materials required (all Board Members)

Action: Consider what buildings are suitable for mounting temporary/permanent public promotional displays and forward suggestions to Nic (Council Representatives, Biosphere Officers, all Board Members)

Action: consider at what public events the Biosphere can be promoted and forward suggestions to Nic (all Board Members)

Action: develop website and social media and Sense of Place Toolkit (Logo and Branding Thematic Group and Biosphere Officers)

Action: recruit community ambassadors at an appropriate stage (all Board Members and Biosphere Officers)

Action: consider ideas for developing Biosphere volunteering opportunities and feedback to the Board (all Board Members)

Invitation To Wigton Area Committee (Community) Event

An invitation was extended to the Board Members to attend an event hosted by the Wigton Area Committee looking at the economic opportunities associated with the Dark Skies Park. The meeting will be held at 7pm on Wednesday 18th June in the Glentrool Community Facility.

Presentations By Biosphere Officers

The three Biosphere Officers were introduced to the Board. Each officer gave a short presentation on their initial priorities for the first three months.

Nic Coombey

Key priorities are:-

1/ Communications – update website and develop presence on social media

2/ Sense of Place – work with Gatehouse community group who are already involved in similar activities

3/ Education – engage with newly qualified teachers to identify how the Biosphere can be used to teach aspects of the national curriculum. Already engaged in Dumfries and Galloway and now need to establish links with East and South Ayrshire schools. Also school visit planned to one primary school and will be attending the Royal Highland Show dry stone dyking exhibition.

4/ Involvement in Spring Fling Environmental Arts Festival

Chimwemwe Chagunda

1/ working with businesses to promote use of sense of place toolkit

2/ investigating accreditation system

3/ developing baseline study and establishing progress monitoring system

4/ linking with youth unemployment scheme in Dumfries and Galloway and encouraging local businesses to apply for funding

5/ examine what lessons can be learned from study on impact of windfarms on Straiton community

Stephanie Miles

1/ develop the ecosystem services assessment and take it out to the communities

2/ reconvene the scientific technical support group and expand the work undertaken by Lenka on habitat improvements to include the Transition Zone.

3/ develop knowledge of Bioblitz (volunteer recorders) events by taking part in existing arranged events before organising events locally.

Matters Arising From Discussion of Officers' Presentations

The following matters arose from discussion on the officers' presentations:-

- i) Communities - The involvement in the Spring Fling Arts Festival is encouraged
- ii) Business - The measures of success should include employment creation
- iii) Business - Priority should be attached to employment creation within small communities where a small number of jobs can have a significant impact
- iv) Business - In measuring success regard should be had to the fundamental concept that economic development should be of mutual benefit to people and the environment
- v) Business – links should be developed with Business Gateway to introduce us to entrepreneurs who might be able to take our actions forward
- vi) Business – concentrate on helping businesses that already exists to take full advantage of the Biosphere opportunities
- vii) Business - identify the full range of SME businesses in the area and examine where there may be gaps
- viii) Business - Branding and Logo need to be completed as a matter of urgency so that we can engage meaningfully with businesses
- ix) Business - we should not try to duplicate what other economic agencies are doing but seek to add value

- x) Environment - sustainable land management is a key priority for the Partnership and is the basis of the economic benefits that the Partnership seeks to achieve. The Biosphere is a focus of interest for Government and other external organisations examining implementation of the National Land Use Strategy.
- xi) Developing a LIFE+ and/or HLF bid should be a priority and needs someone to lead on this work
- xii) The Land Management thematic group should be re-established as a priority
- xiii) Develop a land use vision for the Biosphere linking forestry, farming and other uses and work towards an integrated strategy as a longer term goal

Action: Biosphere Officers to work on the short term priority actions identified in their presentations (Biosphere Officers) having regard to the comments raised during the discussion.

ITEM 4 – Restarting The Thematic Groups

The Chairman explained that the majority of the work of the Partnership will be delivered through the Thematic Groups and every Board Member is encouraged to actively participate. Views were sought on what thematic groups are required and the following list of potential groups emerged:-

- Branding and Communications
- Business Development/Sense of Place/Cultural Heritage
- Landscape
- Scientific Technical Advisory Group (established)
- Supporting Restoration of Open Cast Coal Sites
- Landuse and management

It was agreed that a “Landuse and Management” and a Branding & Communications” be established as a matter of priority. It was further proposed that the Biosphere officers should put forward suggestions for other theme groups associated with their remits and prepare terms of reference.

Action: prepare list of thematic groups required to take forward the Business, Community and Environment themes and terms of reference and contact appropriate Board Members (Biosphere Officers)

Action: All Board Members to consider which Thematic Groups they can contribute towards and advise the Biosphere Officer concerned (all Board members)

ITEM 5 - Research Priorities

Joseph Murphy presented an updated version of the Research Priorities paper. It was noted that UNESCO require Biosphere Reserves to have a coordinated research programme and the Research Priorities is a key document in taking this forward. The paper acts as an agenda for research activity rather than a list of individual research projects. It should be promoted within academic networks to encourage organisations and individuals to use the Biosphere as an area to undertake research. The paper needs to be kept up-to-date to identify priorities ahead of funding opportunities.

It was agreed that there is a need to log what research is being undertaken within the Biosphere whether this is being done by the Partnership or by others. We need to be able to communicate the strategy to others and make people aware of ongoing research and the outcomes of projects. Most researchers look to build upon existing research and if we can draw this information together and publicise it, the Biosphere will be able to attract a greater number of projects.

Following a discussion, the main opportunities for research within the Biosphere were identified as follows:-

- Opportunities arising through the European network of Biospheres
- Dark Skies Park
- Energy (including micro hydro and geothermal)
- ERDF Interreg projects, particularly social sciences
- Teaching learning and practice
- Ecosystem services

It was agreed that a separate promotional document should be produced identifying what types of research we would like to see taking place. It was also agreed that a baseline document is required.

Action: Ideas for research should be forwarded to Joseph (all)

Action: Prepare a further iteration of the Research Priorities Paper (JM)

Action: promote Research Priorities Paper through academic networks (JM)

ITEM 7 – Climate Change

The paper prepared by Karen Miller of SNIFFER was discussed. The availability of funding from Adaptation Scotland and the interest in the Biosphere were noted. It is proposed to hold three workshops with local communities to examine climate change mitigation and adaptation. This project is a great opportunity to develop a Climate Change document for the Biosphere.

Action: support the work proposed by SNIFFER to engage with three communities within the Biosphere (Biosphere Officers and SUP)

ITEM 8 – report on life-long learning projects

The paper was considered in Alison Steels absence. It was noted that we can learn from all communities and not just from those within the Biosphere.

ITEM 9 – Dates For Future Partnership Board Meetings

It was noted that we are required to hold our AGM by end of September. Dates for the next four meetings will be circulated with the minute.

ITEM 10 – AOCB

None

End of Meeting

ACTION MINUTE

No.	Action	By Whom	Timescale
1	send invitations to Biosphere Board Members to attend Youth Conference	SF	One month
2	consider repeating the Youth Conference and which schools can be invited to participate in future Youth Conferences	NC and others	End 2014
3	examine prospects for successful application to Investing In Ideas fund	SF, CM and Allan Jone)	One month
4	prepare draft report and business plan for consideration at the next Partnership meeting	SF	By AGM date in September '14
5	Reconvene Branding Theme Sub-Group and produce logo and branding guidelines	NC, HW, KG, AA and PM	by end August 2014
6	Consider opportunities to promote Biosphere within local communities and advise Biosphere Officers (Nic) of materials required	all Board Members	Immediate and ongoing
7	Action: develop website and social media and Sense of Place Toolkit (Logo and Branding Thematic Group and Biosphere Officers)	Council Representatives, Biosphere Officers, all Board Members	Immediate and ongoing
8	Consider what buildings are suitable for mounting temporary/permanent public promotional displays and forward suggestions to Nic	All	Immediate and ongoing
9	recruit community ambassadors at an appropriate stage	all Board Members and Biosphere Officers	ongoing
10	consider ideas for developing Biosphere volunteering opportunities and feedback to the Board	all Board Members	September 2014
11	Biosphere Officers to work on the short term priority actions identified in their presentations having regard to the comments raised during the discussion.	Biosphere Officers	immediate
12	prepare list of thematic groups required to take forward the Business, Community and Environment themes and terms of reference and contact relevant Board Members	Biosphere Officers	immediate
13	All Board Members to consider which Thematic Groups they can contribute towards and advise the Biosphere Officer concerned (all Board members)	All Board Members	Immediate, upon receipt of list of Theme Groups

14	Forward Ideas for research to Joseph (all) Action: Prepare a further iteration of the Research Priorities Paper (JM) Action: promote Research Priorities Paper through academic networks (JM)	All	By September
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