



AGREED MINUTE

Annual General Meeting

Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Partnership

Thursday 27th November 2014

The Carrick Centre, Culzean Road, Maybole

Present: Anniqne Armstrong, Gillian Arnot, Andrew Bielinski, Anne Connick, Roger Crofts (Chair), Chris Miles, Keith Muir, Joan Mitchell, Alison Steel, Peter Mason, Chris Rollie, Mary-Ann Smyth, Cllr Alistair Geddes, Howard Wilkinson

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

Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The chair, Roger Crofts welcomed everyone to the AGM. Apologies for absence from Joseph Murphy, Mark Gibson, Cllr Robert McDill, Cllr John McDowall and John Thomson.

Item 2 – Approval of Draft Minutes and Matters Arising

The draft minute of the May 2014 board meeting was agreed as an accurate record of that meeting. It was noted that a number of matters from the previous meeting are the subject of reports on the current agenda and it was agreed to discuss these at the appropriate point on the main agenda.

In relation to Item 3, ***Developing a Physical Presence*** it was noted that new display boards are being produced. All partners were reminded to consider opportunities to mount temporary displays at premises within their control and to suggest other suitable opportunities and locations.

Action Point 1:

Identify possible locations and events for temporary displays promoting the Biosphere.
Suggestions to be forwarded to Nic Coombey

By: All

Item 3 – Chairman's Annual Report

The chair verbally presented his annual report to the AGM. The importance of the financial support being provided by SNH, FE, SUP and the Councils to employ the Biosphere Officers is acknowledged.



The chair expressed his personal thanks to Chris Miles for driving forward the new project. In comparison with the other UK Biospheres, the ability to employ staff puts Galloway and Southern Ayrshire in favourable position. However, three years is a short period of time compared to the time that it will take to achieve the Partnership's objectives. The Partnership needs to start to consider how the project will be funded at the end of the current funding package now. The public sector cannot always be relied upon to be able to fund the project and we need to be imaginative about seeking non-public sector funders.

The geography of the Biosphere area, with its mountainous core will always present a challenge to the Partnership. There is a tendency for the populations of South and East Ayrshire to "look" north whilst the people of Dumfries and Galloway tend to look to the south. Creating a new sense of place amongst the communities within the Biosphere is an important objective. The recruitment of community champions are vitally important in this.

The Core Area is the driver of the Biosphere designation and is well maintained at present. RSPB and SNH have worked to map and audit the natural environment of the Core and Buffer and we look to the Forestry Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage to continue to work to maintain and improve the quality of the environment. The challenge for the Partnership is to facilitate careful management of the natural environment within the Transition Zone, where there are a great many more landowners to engage with and many more conflicting priorities for land management. Commercial forestry and windfarm development are particular challenges within our area. The Scottish Government, have tried to pull things together through the Land Use Strategy. However, the staff involved are isolated from other parts of the Government and there remains significant issues of coordination.

Connecting people who live in Biosphere with nature is an important theme. Examples of good work that has been done already include the schools projects which sought to make these connections amongst the younger generation and the Dark Skies Observatory at Craigengillan.

We should realise that what we are doing is quite ground breaking. Through harnessing the support and involvement of the communities to solve problems locally, we have badged ourselves as something different from other public sector led organisations. The SCIO is the right model to do this through and we should be proud of what we have achieved so far.

Finally, as the outgoing chair, I would like to thank the Councils' and other public agencies for their funding support and the commitment of all the partners to the work of the Biosphere.

Item 4 – Statement of Accounts

Alan Edgar, as Secretary to the Board, made a verbal presentation in relation to the annual accounts. Over the relevant accounting period, which ended 31 July 2014, no money had been received by the Partnership and no expenditure had been made. The funding for the Biosphere Officer posts is channelled through Southern Upland Partnership and is overseen by a Funders' Steering Group comprised of the funders and the Chair of the Partnership. SUP are responsible for the financial management of the project and will produce audited accounts for presentation to the Funders and their own Board of Trustees. The Biosphere Partnership, therefore, whilst benefiting from the output of the Biosphere Officer posts, have no financial responsibility for the project officer posts.



A report on these arrangements will be included within the Annual Report (which the Trustees are required to submit to OSCR) to demonstrate that the SCIO is able to achieve its objectives, despite currently having no funds of its own.

Following discussion it was agreed that a report will be circulated to the Board Members which:

- 1/ explains the relationship between SUP and the SCIO;
- 2/ explains the reasons for these arrangements;
- 3/ provides financial information for the project to this point;

It was further agreed that a full financial report will be presented at the next Board meeting.

Action Point 2:

Prepare and circulate report to all Board members which:-

- a) Explains the relationship between Southern Uplands Partnership and the SCIO
- b) Explains the reasons behind these arrangements
- c) Provides interim financial expenditure information for the project to this point

By: Secretary and SUP

Action Point 3:

Full financial report on the Biosphere Officer Posts to be submitted to next Board meeting.

By: Secretary and SUP

Item 5 – Retirement of Current Chair and Election of New Chair

The Chair had previously announced his intention to step down at this meeting and had invited expressions of interest from current board members to take over the role of Chair. One nomination was received from Joan Mitchell, supported by Cllr Alistair Geddes, Alison Steel and Mary Ann-Smyth. Joan left the meeting at this point and her nomination was discussed. The meeting noted Joan's background as a geographer, farmer and her deep roots in tourism and agreed unanimously to her appointment as chair for a term of up to three years.

Joan returned to the meeting and assumed the role of Chair. Joan thanked Roger for the great service he has provided to the Biosphere particularly in relation to the hard work that was required to steer the Biosphere Designation through the UNESCO approval process.

The new Chair proposed a vote of thanks and expressed her wish that Roger will remain involved with the Partnership and continue to be an ambassador for the Biosphere.

The Chair highlighted that it is vital to maintain momentum and that all Board Members need to be more effectively engaged. There was general agreement that:-

- The Board should meet quarterly;
- All Board members should be involved in one or more Thematic Group. The Biosphere Officers should say what groups are needed, however, Board members should also take the initiative in forming Thematic Groups;



- The purpose of Board Meetings should be for strategic discussion and sharing of information and ideas

Action Point 4:

Dates for Board Meetings in 2015 to be circulated following the AGM

By: Secretary

Item 6 - Biosphere Officer Update Reports

The Chair asked members to note the papers circulated detailing the activity undertaken by the Biosphere Officers since the May 2014 meeting. Members were invited to ask questions and the following points were noted.

Communities and Learning Officer (Nic)

- Opportunity to be involved in Environmental Arts Festival
- 2015 is the Year of Food and Drink in Scotland and there are opportunities to promote the Biosphere.
- Cultural heritage should have a higher profile in the Sense of Place Toolkit. The links between cultural heritage and natural heritage can be explored, looking at how one has influenced the other.

Natural Heritage Officer (Stephanie)

- Maintenance and restoration of Ecosystem Services are the strategic issues at the heart of the Biosphere. A full day workshop, involving all partners, is needed to ensure that all partners understand and agree the priority actions needed to maintain and enhance the natural environment within the Biosphere
- Noted that the “Biosphere High Focus Habitats” depicted in the hand-out are all protected sites (there are however many more examples within the Biosphere). There is an opportunity for the Partnership to go beyond statutory protection by establishing the value of these areas within the context of South West Scotland and by expanding and repairing them.
- There is also a need to communicate the diversity and value of these sites to local people and visitors to the area and to highlight the work being done to improve them through the Landscape Partnership for the Dee Valley and the audit of the Core and Buffer. The Natural Heritage of the Biosphere will be published on the new website.

Business & Development Officer (Chimwemwe)

- Noted that training for Dark Skies Park communicators will start early 2015 and be completed in time for August 2015.
- Agreed that the Biosphere should be involved in supporting the various food festivals planned for next year, given the importance of these events
- Agreed the revised Charter statement. The reduced number of objectives was welcomed by the meeting.

- Agreed to support the principle of the Charter but not the financial contribution from signatories. Organisations wishing to use the logo should sign the charter beforehand.
- Agreed that the cost of trademarking the logo should be investigated. If cost not prohibitive a trademark should be sought prior to permission being granted to third parties to use the logo and branding.

Action Point 5:

Develop opportunities to promote the Biosphere through the Year of Food & Drink

By: Nic and Chimwemwe and Theme Group

Action Point 6:

Continue to develop My Sense of Place Toolkit with a greater emphasis on Cultural Heritage and the links between natural heritage and cultural heritage

By: Nic and Theme Group

Action Point 7:

Arrange full day workshop examining natural heritage priorities and eco-system services

By: Ed and Stephanie

Action Point 8:

Finalised revised Charter, investigate trademark for logo and encourage organisations to sign up to the charter.

By: Chimwemwe

Item 7 – Operational Plan

Simon Fieldhouse presented a first draft of the Operational Plan. The plan was welcomed by the meeting and agreed in principle. However, it was noted that there is no financial information contained within the plan to explain how it will be delivered.

Action Point 9:

Prepare final draft version of Operational Plan, including financial information for presentation to next Board meeting.

By: Simon Fieldhouse

Item 8 – Communications Plan

Nic Coombey presented the Communications Plan for agreement. There was general agreement that the logo is very appropriate and the branding guidelines are well written and clear. The meeting thanked Nic and the members of the Logo and Branding Theme Group for undertaking this difficult task so successfully.

Nic advised the meeting that an updated website has been developed and will be live from week beginning 1st December 2014. The primary purpose of the website is to raise awareness of the Biosphere and the work being done to enhance the area.

The meeting then went on to discuss signage as a means of raising the profile of the designation. Threshold signage on A-class roads at the points of entry to the Biosphere and signage within villages that have signed the charter were discussed. The bureaucratic difficulties of obtaining official Brown

Signs were discussed and it was agreed that this would not be a good route to go down. It was agreed that the “Logo and Branding Theme Group” will reconvene as a “Communications Theme Group” and produce recommendations to the Board for a signage strategy.

Action Point 10:

All partners should start using the Logo where appropriate, in accordance with the Branding Guidelines

By: All

Action Point 11:

Develop a signage strategy

By: Communications Theme Group

Item 9 - Urdaibai Biosphere Partnership Proposal

Simon Fieldhouse presented a paper outlining a request from the Urdaibai Biosphere (Northern Spain) to consider a partnership arrangement.

The meeting discussed the wider issue of how to respond to partnering requests, noting that we are likely to receive numerous offers but have limited resources to enter such arrangements. The similarities and differences between our area and Urdaibai were discussed.

It was agreed that in this case the partnership opportunity should be explored further with an exchange of letters and that the Communications Theme Group should produce an assessment framework for considering future partnering requests.

Action Point 12:

Develop an assessment framework for considering future partnering requests;

By: Communications Theme Group

Action Point 13:

Exchange of letters between GSABR and Urdaibai Biosphere to further explore partnership opportunity

By: Coordinator

Item 10 – Social Enterprise & Biosphere Reserves

Simon Fieldhouse presented a paper on work being carried out by ASSist Social Capital to develop a framework to encourage and cultivate social enterprises within Biospheres that reinvest profits in social and/or environmental benefits. ASSist Social Capital would like to engage with the Biosphere Partnership with a view to submitting an Awards for All application to look in more detail at the opportunities to develop sustainable social enterprises within the Biosphere.

Following discussion of the merits of entering into an agreement with ASSist, it was agreed to

- form a thematic group to explore the opportunity further;
- Invite Colin Campbell of Assist to the next Partnership Board meeting;
- not to commit to a formal agreement at this time.

Cllr Alistair Geddes indicated his willingness to participate in the Theme Group. It was further agreed that any funding bid should include an amount to cover the cost of the Partnership's time.

Action Point 14:

Convene Theme Group to evaluate the merits of entering into a partnership with Assist Social Capital and to consider more generally the opportunities for social enterprises which could help deliver the Partnership's objectives.

By: members of the Partnership Board

Action Point 15:

Invite ASSist to next board meeting

By: Coordinator

Item 11 – Climate Ready Biosphere

The meeting considered the paper on the Climate Ready Biosphere project undertaken by SNIFFER and Adaptation Scotland. It was noted that members of the Board and agency representatives had attended the workshops. The Board agreed the recommendations:-

- 1/ The Board support the continuation of the Climate Change and Adaptation Theme Group
- 2/ Additional membership of the Theme Group is sourced from the wider Biosphere Partnership Board, with a chair elected from the Partnership to oversee the work
- 3/ The Theme Group is tasked with development of the final Climate Ready Biosphere Vision, to be produced and launched in February 2015.
- 4/ The Theme Group is tasked with developing a draft Climate and Adaptation Action Plan for Board approval in May/June 2015.
- 5/ Members of the Biosphere Partnership Board will act as Climate Champions, providing feedback on the work undertaken by the Biosphere to their groups and organisations and work closely to identify areas of work that they are undertaking which would support or be complimentary to the development of the Action Plan.

Action Point 16:

Establish Climate Change & Adaptation Theme Group to undertake the tasks agreed by the Board.

By: Board Members

Item 12 – Socio-Economic Baseline Report

The Board agreed the need for a socio –economic baseline report for the purposes of reviewing GSAB progress at ten yearly intervals (as required by UNESCO). It was discussed that several organisations have carried out similar work within Dumfries and Galloway and East and South Ayrshire (eg D&G LEADER and Ayrshire LEADER) and the statistical information may be available.

It was agreed that a Theme Group should be formed to examine cost effective ways of obtaining the information.

Action Point 17:

Establish *Task and Finish Group* to examine alternative sources of socio-economic data to efficiently produce a baseline study for the Biosphere area.

By: Members of the Board and Representatives of Public Sector Partners

Item 13 - Response To Phytophthora Ramorum In Buffer Zone

Colin Hossack, Galloway Forest District gave a presentation on the impact of Phytophthora Ramorum within the Biosphere Buffer Zone. The disease was discovered in Larch trees in 2012, affecting an area of 200 hectares. By 2013 the disease had spread and affected 4000 hectares within the Galloway Forest. The iconic landscape setting of Loch Trool has been particularly affected, with large areas of dead trees impacting on the landscape. Around 1300 hectares of Larch will have been felled between 2012 and 2015.

Over the next seven years, the affected area will be replanted with a much more diverse mix of tree species. The choice of species will be determined by matching trees with the soil and climatic conditions and the ratio of broadleaf species will increase from the current 6% to nearer 15%. This presents an opportunity to accelerate the program of landscape and ecological enhancement which the extant Forest Design Plan seeks to achieve.

In response to questions, Colin further explained that restocking will as much as possible be achieved through natural regeneration to avoid importing other plant diseases. The aims for restocking include reducing the need for fungicides and avoiding mono-culture. Only tried and tested species will be used and diversification is a key factor in designing in resilience within the replanted areas.

A public consultation process will be undertaken in relation to a new Forest Design Plan. Board members are also invited to engage with Colin directly on an informal basis as well.

It was agreed that there is a “good news story” to be told about the restocking plans and to links this to the Biosphere natural heritage objectives.

Action Point 18:

Members wishing to contribute towards the restocking plan should contact Colin Hossack, Galloway Forest District

Action Point 19:

FCS to send GIS layer for restocking proposals to Biosphere Natural Heritage Officer

By: FCS

ITEM 14 AOCB

Ayrshire Coalfield Landscape Observatory

A paper on the above was circulated with the main agenda beforehand. The invitation to take part in a workshop on 15 December was noted. Further details to be obtained from Ed Forrest at SUP.



Northern Periphery and Arctic Zone

A paper on the above was circulated with the main agenda beforehand. It was agreed that this should be passed to the Communications Theme Group for consideration alongside the Urdaidai partnering request.

The Chair sought to draw together all the suggestions for Theme Groups and it was agreed that the following are required:-

- Communications
- Climate Change
- Socio Economic Baseline
- Social Capital
- Landuse
- Education
- Tourism and Local Produce

Members are asked to volunteer for those groups which they feel able to contribute towards and should contact Simon, Alan, Ed or the relevant Biosphere Officer to register their interest.

End of Meeting

Prepared By Alan Edgar (alan.edgar@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

Date 17/12/14

Next Board Meetings

Thursday 26th Feb - Galloway

Friday 29th May - East Ayrshire

Friday 28th August - South Ayrshire

Thursday 26th November - Galloway

Consolidated List of Action Points

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<p>Action Point 2: Prepare and circulate report to all Board members which:- d) Explains the relationship between Southern Uplands Partnership and the SCIO e) Explains the reasons behind these arrangements f) Provides interim financial expenditure information for the project to this point By: Secretary and SUP</p>
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<p>By: All</p>
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<p>Action Point 12: Develop an assessment framework for considering future partnering requests; By: Communications Theme Group</p>
<p>Action Point 13: Exchange of letters between GSABR and Urdaibai Biosphere to further explore partnership opportunity By: Coordinator</p>
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