

**Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere
Developing the Biosphere – Next steps 2014 – 2017**

Year 2 Report



southern uplands partnership
living land, living community

The Southern Uplands Partnership

April 2016

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere progress report 2015/16

The Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Next Steps project continues to make steady progress, raising the profile and engaging individuals, communities and business in the Biosphere. There are challenges to overcome in demonstrating what the Biosphere can achieve and how people can use it to good effect and importantly how we can continue to progress post March 2017 when the current project ends.

Introduction

The Southern Uplands Partnership have continued to manage the Next Steps 2014-17 project through a partnership agreement including Scottish Natural Heritage, Dumfries and Galloway Council, East Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council, Forest Enterprise Scotland, and The Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP) on behalf of the wider Biosphere Partnership. Management on behalf of SUP has continued to be led by Ed Forrest.

During the year 2015/16 there were a number of changes to the project officer staffing. Our Natural Heritage officer left in March 2015 and was replaced by with a job share involving Wendy Fenton, a former FWAG officer, and Emily Taylor from the Crichton Carbon Centre, who also works as the regional Peatland Action officer. With Emily starting in June 2015 and Wendy in July 2015 work on the Natural Heritage agenda was inevitably held up for a while but proceeded again rapidly once the new team was in place.

During the summer of 2015 our Business Development officer decided to return to higher education so we found ourselves once again going through a recruitment process. She was replaced by Marie McNulty, formerly a South Ayrshire Council officer, well networked in South Ayrshire, who started at the end of August 2015.

Fortunately Nic Coombey our Communities and Learning officer has held the fort during this period of change and has offered support and encouragement in bringing the new officers up to speed.

Networking

During May 2015 the a small delegation from Biosphere attended the EuroMab biannual conference in Estonia. It was an opportunity to meet with other Biospheres from around Europe and North America to exchange idea and develop new partnerships.

Two significant outcomes from the EuroMab conference were discussions with Urdaibai Biosphere in Northern Spain who invited a small delegation from Galloway and Southern Ayrshire to visit and learn more about their management and research with a view to exploring potential future partnerships.

The second was a visit to Dyfi Biosphere in Mid Wales to explore the use of COBWEB a citizen science “app” that has been developed by an international group of biosphere in association with Edinburgh University. More information on use of the app is contained in the natural heritage section of this report.

Communication

The Biosphere is all about making connections and good communication has proved to be an essential for promoting the Biosphere concept.

The distinctive brand and logo has been used on all Biosphere communications in various media and is beginning to be adopted by partners and supporters of the Biosphere designation.

The Communication Plan developed by consultants, Countryside, continues to inform and provide direction for the Communications Group. Graphics for the Proud Supporters of the Biosphere have been used to develop certificates and stickers.

Local consultants, Weesleekit, continue to support the Biosphere Team updating and improving the Biosphere website as required.

Facebook and twitter continue to raise awareness of the Biosphere and attract new followers.

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere
Non-profit Organisation

687 likes +1 this week

100% response rate, 60-min response time
Respond faster to turn on the badge

THIS WEEK

- 2,976 Post Reach
- 111 Post Engagement
- 0 Sign Up
- 0 Website Clicks
- 0 of 0 Response Rate
- 60 minutes Response Time

Promotion of the Biosphere using the new branding has taken place through:

- Continued development of the website
- 6 e-newsletters
- press releases, news items and articles featuring in printed media
- posters for Biosphere supported events
- 3 exhibition pull-up displays
- 2 banners
- 10 generic Biosphere panels
- 21,000 Leaflets including Biosphere information, Charter information and political leaflet
- Facebook page and Twitter
- 500 sense of place toolkit publications
- 2 films – Social Enterprise film for the World Congress of Biosphere Reserves and a film of a Business Sense of Place event

Charter



The Biosphere Charter continues to attract attention with 105 applications being approved from a variety of individuals, community groups and businesses.

As part of the development each signatory to the charter receives a Charter Certificate, Proud Supporter badge and information leaflet. They are also invited to attend a 'Sense of Place event' within the Biosphere and get a Proud Supporter badge to display as a window sticker.

Sense of Place and Dark Sky Park



The Sense of Place toolkit has been published to provide a resource to be used as part of the Charter approach when engaging with community groups and organisations.

Our first Sense of Place Business Engagement event took place at Kirroughtree Visitor Centre and gave Business Charter supporters the opportunity to hear from the team at the Biosphere, network with others

and participate in a 30 minute Dark Sky Experience. Feedback from the event was positive and further events are planned for the coming year around the Biosphere.

The Biosphere project has supported the training of 4 local people who applied to be given the skills to become Biosphere / Dark Sky Rangers. A training program run in conjunction with Forestry Commission Scotland and the Galloway Observatory took place over summer 2015. Since the autumn of 2015 the rangers have delivered a variety of ranger experiences and dark sky talks in the Biosphere. In April 2016 they contributed to the stand for outdoor experiences in Dumfries and Galloway at the Visit Scotland industry expo event, raising the profile of the Dark Sky Park and the Biosphere.

Biosphere Communities

Biosphere Community signs have been developed for communities to erect on their settlement thresholds, with the first being erected at Glentool Village. However it has been a challenge to find Community Councils who want to erect Biosphere Community signs. We hope that now a process for obtaining planning consent has been agreed more communities will take up this opportunity.



Interpretation panels explaining the concept of the Biosphere have been given to seven businesses and organisations who have become Proud Supporters of the Biosphere. The panels have been erected in prominent locations across the Biosphere area.

Local communities have been engaged in the Biosphere through a variety of presentations, walks and events including;

- 3 Community Councils
- 10 talks to interest groups
- 2 walks
- 5 community events

Business in the Biosphere

Engagement with a range of organisations and attendance at a variety of industry forums has taken place over the year to raise the profile of the Biosphere and improve its engagement with businesses and the business sector

- Dumfries and Galloway Economic Development Team
- Dumfries and Galloway Chamber of Commerce
- Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce
- Ayrshire Food and Drink Sector Development group
- Food and Drink Industry Events
- Visit Scotland
- Business weeks
- D n G tourism strategy and marketing forum
- South Ayrshire Social Enterprise Network
- D n G Creative Industries working group
- Ballantrae Food and drink Development group

The Biosphere project contributed to the Year of Food and Drink 2015 initiative by supporting and attending Ballantrae festival of Food & Drink, and attending Wigtown Food and Drink event. The Biosphere has continued to have a role in the development of the 2016 Ballantrae Food and Drink Festival with a much greater opportunity to raise the Biospheres profile at the 2016 event in June.

Learning from experience

The Biosphere project has led or supported activities with 11 Primary Schools and 3 Secondary Schools. A joint event was run with 3 Secondary Schools, one from each region, to encourage outdoor and creative learning.

The Biosphere project has also taken part in presentations to newly qualified teachers in Dumfries and Galloway and has taken part in discussions to improve information exchange with teachers and practitioners through the Outdoor learning Forum and OWL (Outdoor and Woodland Learning).

The Biosphere project has also engaged with further education establishments including lectures to Glasgow University and SRUC (Ayr) and a site visits with Glasgow University, SRUC (Ayr) and Ayrshire College.

Ayrshire College has become a Biosphere Learning Partner and is working to integrate Biosphere principles into their course work. Lecturers are currently working with officers to see how opportunities to involve Sense of Place and a Biosphere brief can be adopted by the photography course.

Examples of good practice between schools and other organisations or businesses are being collected to be presented as an 'Education Pack' on the Biosphere website.

Arts and Festivals

The project team has promoted use of the Biosphere to leading arts practitioners in the area and has encouraged the continued use of the Biosphere area as a location for environmental arts events including Environmental Art Festival Scotland 2015 and Sanctuary 2015 event.

Biodiversity and Habitat Networks

The Natural Heritage Management Plan, including sections on the nine High Focus habitats and nine High Focus species, along with additional habitats important for High Focus Species, was completed and published online at the end of November 2015. Included in this plan were maps detailing the perceived current distribution of the High Focus habitats. The management plan provides information on the current distribution and requirements of these habitats and species, along with opportunities for enhancing existing habitat and even increasing their extent and refers to relevant projects that are current or have recently

taken place. This document aims to inform land managers across the Biosphere and help in project development within the Biosphere.



A workshop took place on March 4th 2016, in which those previously involved in natural heritage in the Biosphere attended for the official launch of the plan by Joan Mitchell, Biosphere Chair, and to discuss potential targets for the 2022 Biosphere review. 37 delegates attended and the workshop included three discussion groups, of Uplands, Lowlands and Native Woodlands, everyone attending each group during the

afternoon. There was a great deal of discussion and thought about targets, opportunities and priorities for the natural Heritage of the Biosphere. These were documented and are currently being assessed.

Peatland and woodland habitat maps were completed as part of the management plan. Opportunity Maps are now being looked at and, as a consequence of discussion at the workshop, discussion will take place shortly with Forestry Commission Scotland looking at the possibility of including a priority woodland area within the Biosphere that would attract premium planting rates within the Forestry Grants Scheme, to provide added incentive in management and planting of two of the High Focus habitats, native and wet woodland.

The Natural Heritage officers are also working with the Community and Business Officers to develop three visitor routes around the Biosphere that highlight High Focus Habitats and Species.

Land Management

With Water Vole one of the high focus species in the Biosphere the Natural Heritage team have been leading on a Water Vole Citizen Science Project in conjunction with the Dumfries



and Galloway Environmental Resource Centre. The project encourages volunteers to undertake surveys along water courses determine the range of Water Vole in the Biosphere. A training day was held on 23rd April, with 24 volunteers attending. A second course will also be held due to popular demand! Presentations were given on wildlife recording, Water Vole habitat and signs, how to survey and health and safety advice. A site was then visited and the participants were

able to look at suitable habitat and to see some Water Vole burrows. Participants selected survey areas, all of which have either had Water Vole sightings or were nearby.

Initial feedback from the day was very positive and included one participant who emailed back: *“Thoroughly enjoyed the day thank you so much for the chance to be involved, I am starting at SRUC in August for a year 2 BSc in Environmental resource management so all of this experience is wonderful and invaluable for me. Hopefully I will have the opportunity to be further involved with the biosphere. Looking forward to completing the survey armed with 100% more knowledge than I had.”*

As part of the project, and in keeping with Biosphere work including educational and developmental angles, a SmartPhone App, COBWEB (Citizen’s Observatory Web), is being trialled which has been developed for Biospheres by Edinburgh University and was seen in action in Dyfi Biosphere by some of the team last October. The Water Vole survey has been

set up in an app that users can take out and trial during survey. This survey will update and hopefully add to current known presence of Water Vole in the Biosphere and help inform future land management decisions.

Ecosystem Services

The team are exploring how they can demonstrate the ecosystem services (ES) approach by retro fitting to existing projects. This might for example include a Woodlots Project which matches people wanting to work manage and use areas of woodland with those who have woodland they would like managed.

The ES approach has also been used when:

- Participating in the development of the Galloway Glens HLF Project. It is hoped the existing ES maps of the Biosphere will be used when designing and prioritising projects.
- Commenting on the Land Use Strategy and Cairnsmore of Fleet Management Plan
- Discussing the Fleet Catchment Survey Project at the event day held at Cairnsmore NNR

Financial Update

At the end of the year 2015/16 financial projections show an underspend of £18,621 on foreseen costs, see below. This is largely due to reduced staffing and travel costs as a result of staff changes earlier in the year. The capital spending projections reflect the fact that it has been found necessary to spend more time than was originally foreseen on creating the foundations for the Biosphere's development through work on marketing and communications, in developing the charter and in preparing the natural heritage management plan. What has become clear is that it is only when enough people in the area understand and identify with the objectives of the Biosphere that activity will really take off. As the project enters its third year there are increasing signs that the required momentum is building and that the team will be able to devote more of their time to delivering action on the ground. But continuity is crucial if the Biosphere's potential is to be realised, which is why considerable attention is now being given to the task of securing adequate resources for its future management.

Project Costs		Budget	Spend to date January 15 2016		Mar-16	Jun-16	Sep-16	Dec-16	Mar-17	Total Projected Spend	Balance
Dark Sky Park Business	BD	£15,000.00	£4,235.00		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£10,000.00	£0.00	£14,235.00	£765.00
Biosphere Dark Sky Festival								£10,000.00			
Biosphere Dark Sky Ranger Equipment											
Biosphere Marketing and Signage	BD	£15,000.00	£9,052.00		£400.00	£5,000.00	£3,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£17,452.00	-£2,452.00
10 x Generic Interpretation Panels											
Biosphere Village signs x 6 (@£60)							£3,000.00				
Mobile exhibition / pop ups											
Leaflet reprint											
Businesss, Land Use, Community promtional material						£5,000.00					
Mill on the Fleet					£400.00						
My Sense of Place	BD	£9,000.00	£2,891.00		£900.00	£1,250.00	£250.00	£250.00	£4,250.00	£9,791.00	-£791.00
SOP Exemplars online & print					£500.00	£1,000.00			£4,000.00		
Community Workshops					£400.00	£250.00	£250.00	£250.00	£250.00		
International Environmental Art Festival	CL		£5,500.00		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£5,500.00	-£5,500.00
Healthy Living in the Biosphere	CL	£7,500.00	£720.00		£0.00	£2,500.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£3,220.00	£4,280.00
3 x online or printed itineraries 'explore the biosphere'						£2,500.00					
Learning from Experience	CL	£4,500.00	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£3,000.00	£0.00	£3,000.00	£1,500.00
Biosphere Education Pack online								£3,000.00			
Business in the Biosphere	CL	£7,500.00	£3,341.00		£0.00	£10,500.00	£2,000.00	£500.00	£0.00	£16,341.00	-£8,841.00
Sample product / service with biosphere branding							£2,000.00				
Socio economic Baseline						£10,000.00					

Project Costs		Budget	Spend to date January 15 2016		Mar-16	Jun-16	Sep-16	Dec-16	Mar-17	Total Projected Spend	Balance
Green/sustainable tourism industry event						£500.00					
2 learning journeys						£400.00		£500.00			
Business networking/VIC industry sense of place						£100.00					
Enhance Biodiversity and Habitat Networks	NH	£12,000.00	£474.00		£200.00	£500.00	£0.00	£1,000.00	£0.00	£2,174.00	£9,826.00
Water Vole project - training events, publicity etc					£200.00			£500.00			
habitat network engagement						£500.00		£500.00			
Ecosystem Services	NH	£7,500.00	£634.58		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£3,000.00	£1,500.00	£5,134.58	£2,365.42
Biosphere Ecosystem Services Conference Event / Workshop									£1,500.00		
use of third party to update/enhance ES								£3,000.00			
Land Management		£3,000.00	£0.00		£0.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£2,000.00	£1,000.00
Learning Journey to see other approaches to land management ECAF - community and / or land managers						£1,000.00					
landmanager engagement workshops/site visits							£1,000.00				
Sub Project Total										£78,847.58	£2,152.42
Transfer from Capital to Project Management		-£15,000.00								£0.00	£15,000.00
Shortfall in Original Budget		-£7,461.00									-£7,461.00
Total Project Costs		£66,000.00	£26,847.58							£78,847.58	£20,308.58

Staff and Office Costs											
Salary Costs		£191,100.00	£109,652.27							£187,958.37	£3,141.63
Pension		£15,288.00	£6,098.77							£11,521.84	£3,766.16
Employers NI		£19,110.00	£7,450.46							£11,703.56	£7,406.44
Sub Total Staff Costs		£225,498.00	£123,201.50							£211,183.77	£14,314.23
Travel		£39,600.00	£9,785.77							£23,074.74	£16,525.26
Office / On-Costs / Computer		£22,500.00	£6,788.83							£14,409.27	£8,090.73
Sub Total Other Staff Costs		£62,100.00	£16,574.60							£37,484.01	£24,615.99
Total Staff and Office Costs		£287,598.00	£139,776.10							£248,667.78	£38,930.22
SUP Project Management		£63,363.00	£36,961.74							£63,363.00	£0.00
Total Budget Costs		£416,961.00	£203,585.42							£390,878.36	£18,621.64