



GALLOWAY AND
SOUTHERN AYRSHIRE
BIOSPHERE



GALLOWAY AND SOUTHERN AYRSHIRE UNESCO BIOSPHERE PROGRESS REPORT

2017 - 2019



“

DEMONSTRATING OUR PASSION FOR LIVING IN A WAY THAT BENEFITS PEOPLE AND NATURE
BIOSPHERE VISION

”

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FOREWORD



This report highlights some of the notable achievements, events and activities from the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere (GSAB) over the last two years. It's been a period that has seen both the Officers and our dependable Partnership Board members continue to build a strong and meaningful presence that we believe is beginning to demonstrate the real value of having a UNESCO Biosphere in the region.

Following acknowledgement in the 2017 Programme for Government about the role the UNESCO Biosphere can play in promoting sustainable tourism across the region, new partnerships have been explored and developed with VisitScotland.

Representatives from our Biosphere joined them and a Scottish delegation promoting the region in Amsterdam where our European travel industry partners were already familiar with the UNESCO Biosphere designation and the opportunities it presents to international visitors. We continue to work with VisitScotland on a number of exciting new initiatives being explored for 2019/20 to celebrate the world class nature of our UNESCO Biosphere.

Almost 300 individuals, businesses and organisations have now committed to the Proud Supporters Charter. Over 120 of them are businesses and, as you will read, this has led to the launch of the first UNESCO Biosphere Certification Scheme in the UK for businesses that can demonstrate a true commitment to the Biosphere ethos.

We also have four established Biosphere Communities and a number of others who are actively engaging with the various highway authorities on the installation of village signs so that they too can use the UNESCO Biosphere designation to celebrate and promote their communities.

We continue to network widely, locally, nationally and internationally, learning from others and sharing best practice both within and outside of the UNESCO Biosphere family.

This has led to a number of our Biosphere's initiatives being used as case studies in international reports, including an IUCN report on Biospheres (March 2018) and the Oasiis Biennial report "Shining the light in the

Anthropocene" (2018). We hosted the Chair of the Man and Biosphere International Cooperation Council, Dr Enny Sudarmonwati from Indonesia, who visited our Biosphere in Autumn 2018, and we have supported other partners considering UNESCO Biosphere recognition for their own regions.

We continue to value our local partnerships and have been working closely with Ayrshire College helping it use the Biosphere as a focus for student studies and have been active in supporting the development of landscape scale partnership projects in both Galloway and Ayrshire.

Over the last two years, we have had a number of meetings with the Galloway National Park Association and share its aspirations for greater recognition of the social, environmental and economic potential that south west Scotland's natural and cultural heritage can offer to the communities of our region.

We have actively contributed to consultations and debates that will impact on our region, including the proposed South of Scotland Economic Agency, Forest Strategy for Scotland, Scottish Land Use Strategy, key forest design plans and proposals for the Kendoon to Tongland infrastructure improvements.

We are optimistic for the future and believe that our UNESCO Biosphere has much to offer both the people who live and work here and the many visitors we welcome each year.

Key to the future is working together, listening to each other and seeking mutually supportive solutions that will benefit not just us, but also our children and grandchildren.

Joan Mitchell

Chair Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere

FINANCES

We are fortunate in having a funding package that has been agreed by the three local authority partners within which the Biosphere operates. With additional annual funding support from Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland this enables the Biosphere to maintain a core team of two 0.6 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) Officers with some finance and admin support until 2022. This is a huge step forward for the Biosphere showing real commitment from partners at a time when budgets are extremely tight.

Core Funder	2017/18	2018/19
Dumfries and Galloway Council	£20,000	£20,000
East Ayrshire Council	£15,000	£15,000
South Ayrshire Council	£15,000	£15,000
Scottish Natural Heritage	£10,000	£10,000
Forestry Commission Scotland		£10,000
Forest Enterprise Scotland	£10,000	
TOTAL	£70,000	£70,000

As the following report highlights, those modest funding contributions are beginning to leverage in significant external funding to SW Scotland and to instigate a broad range of initiatives that would not have taken place without the UNESCO Biosphere team.

STRATEGIC PROJECTS IN GSAB



A key objective of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere is to facilitate the development of projects that use the UNESCO Biosphere designation to draw down funding to the region that will help to deliver a range of social, environmental and economic benefits.

The Biosphere Team has been active in working with a range of partners in the development of such projects and have had a number of notable successes.



SHAPE – SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE AREAS: PARTNERSHIPS FOR ECOTOURISM



► **SHAPE is a €1.5 million three-year project (2017-2020) funded by the European Commission's Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme.** SHAPE is intended to enable authorities, businesses and communities to develop innovative ecotourism initiatives which preserve local, natural and cultural assets and generate economic value.

The project involves working with Scotland's two UNESCO Biospheres (ourselves and Wester Ross), a Biosphere in Finland, a candidate Biosphere in Norway, a Biosphere in Canada, a regional park in Iceland, and a World Heritage Site in Greenland. Together, we refer to these as 'Sustainable Heritage Areas'. The project is led by the University of the Highlands and Islands and also involves Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Finland.

These areas all experience challenges common to sparsely populated rural areas, including rural depopulation, lack of infrastructure, and low accessibility, which reduce opportunities for community and economic development. Yet these areas are also rich in cultural and natural assets. SHAPE will develop innovative ecotourism initiatives to promote these assets while preserving their condition and supporting local identity.

SHAPE is working to bring together communities, local authorities, tourism providers, conservationists and those involved with the protection of cultural heritage in each area to create new partnerships to build on existing activities and develop new initiatives that will benefit local communities.

The project facilitates the sharing of information and experience between partners and countries by organising learning journeys to allow people from each Sustainable Heritage Area to visit those in other countries and learn from their experience of implementing new ecotourism initiatives.

The partners have been developing best practice approaches to stakeholder engagement, mapping and managing cultural and natural heritage assets, creating new ecotourism markets and comparing governance approaches to Sustainable Heritage Areas. The information gathered will be brought together in a freely available e-service of methods and guidance. This will open up new approaches to other areas that could benefit from them – across the Northern Periphery and Arctic area and in other parts of the world.

The partnership between Universities and protected areas means that academic and practical expertise can be integrated to develop innovative, yet pragmatic and locally adaptable methods. Each Sustainable Heritage Area is at a different stage of development and can offer valuable experience of addressing and overcoming different challenges associated with this; the project outputs should therefore be useful for many other areas.

In our Biosphere the SHAPE project has provided funding for a Biosphere Project Officer, working two days a week, who has focused on Glentworth and the wider Cree Valley, bringing together interested parties from the community, local businesses and agencies, to identify the special features and opportunities the area offers and how they can be used to develop new tourism experiences.



in three contrasting landscapes within the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere: the Borgue Peninsula; the Wigtownshire Moors; and the Stinchar Valley.

The project is intended to leave people feeling more engaged and to have a heightened sense of pride in their local environment leaving them better equipped to take part in decision making across their area.

PLACE is being delivered by two Project Officers who are supported by two eight-week duration intern placements in the summer of 2018 and 2019. Between them they are delivering a wide range of different activities from the sharing of memories and old photos to bringing in local experts who are exploring the origins of local place names and their Gaelic connections to landscape.



GALLOWAY GLENS LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME (GGLPS)



► The GGLPS is a fantastic example of the Biosphere in Action.

It came about through a desire to demonstrate the tangible benefits of having a UNESCO Biosphere designation for the region.

From early discussions between GSAB, Dumfries and Galloway Council and Heritage Lottery Fund about the feasibility of developing a scheme that covered the Biosphere, colleagues in Dumfries and Galloway Council went on to take the lead, continuing to work in partnership with GSAB and many other local organisations, to develop the £5M project that finally went live in 2018, focusing on one of the Biosphere's seven river catchments.

The principles of the Biosphere have been woven throughout the project and GSAB is seen as a key part of its final legacy. With a suite of projects ranging from natural to cultural heritage and from business skills to rural crafts, there are a huge range of opportunities for people to get involved in.

A number of the projects directly build on the GSAB designation, from the tourism focused Galloway Glens Biosphere Experiences to the learning project, Biosphere Explorers. Other projects indirectly contribute to the delivery of aims and objectives of GSAB. Organisations and communities are encouraged to actively use the UNESCO Biosphere designation to raise both their own profile and that of the Galloway Glens area.



COALFIELD COMMUNITIES LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME (CCLPS)



► The Biosphere has also been working closely with partners in East Ayrshire Council to develop the CCLPS.

The project follows a similar approach to Galloway Glens and is focused on the north eastern corner of the Biosphere and some of the old coalfield communities.

The two projects are on opposite sides of the watershed at the head of the Ken / Doon catchments and are working together to explore complimentary initiatives.

Having successfully secured development funding in 2018 to work up a Stage 2 bid to Heritage Lottery Fund, we are hopeful that the CCLPS will be another success story with its funding bid in 2019/20.



LAND USE AND BIODIVERSITY



Land Use and Biodiversity are quite literally at the very core of the Biosphere; we recognise that it is the foundations on which our futures all depend.

This commitment is encapsulated in our vision for the Biosphere “To demonstrate our passion for living in a way that benefits people and nature.”



Over the last two years, despite the loss of a dedicated Natural Heritage Officer, the Biosphere Partnership has continued to work with a wide range of local and national bodies to explore and highlight the issues we face in south west Scotland and the role that the Biosphere can play in influencing future land use change that will benefit all of us.



A CHANGING LANDSCAPE CONFERENCE



► In January 2018, our Biosphere brought together key national representatives from **Scottish Land and Estates, Scottish National Farmers Union, Confederation of Forest Industries and the Biosphere** as part of a panel to explore and debate issues of land use in south west Scotland, the challenges we are likely to face in the future and how we can achieve a more balanced consensus on delivering against economic, social and environmental needs in south west Scotland. With an audience of local tourism businesses, communities, NGOs and other interested parties, there was some lively debate about the challenges we face and how best to address them.

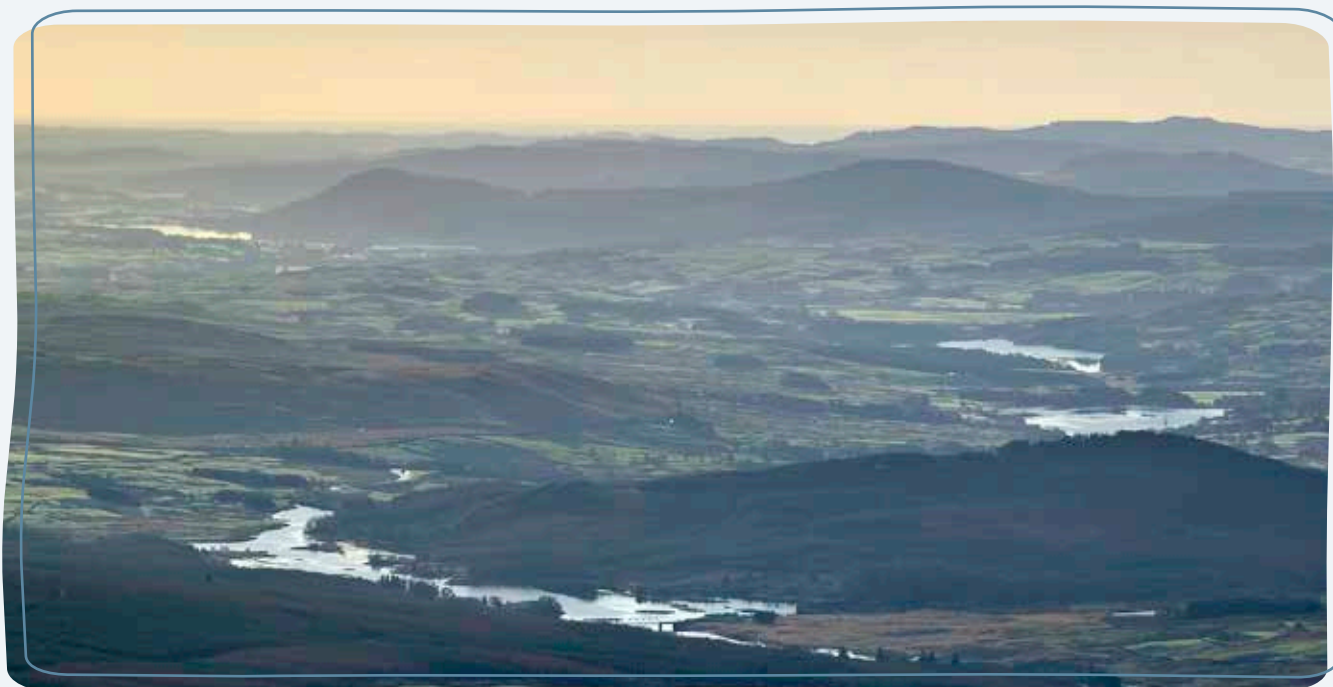
It was broadly recognised that whatever individual opinions might be, that the future lies in better communication between all parties to create an understanding of the local impact that differing land uses can have on all of us. The Regional Land Use Partnerships advocated in the Scottish Government's Land Use Strategy were highlighted as a potential forum for future debate with the Biosphere Partnership seen as a good lead.

MOORLAND FORUM

► This event was followed up in the summer of 2018 when the Biosphere hosted the **Moorland Forum and its summer field visit.**

Based in Carsphairn, a remote community in the heart of the Biosphere that faces conflicting land use pressures and the associated social impacts that are typical of many communities in the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, the Moorland Forum heard from local community representatives about the impact of changes from differing land uses on their village.

From forestry expansion to windfarm development to flooding and declines in upland farming, the very makeup of the community is changing with new opportunities and challenges having to be addressed. Again the conclusion was very much focused on the value of having a Regional Land Use Partnership at which all such views and concerns could be aired and the practicalities of how that could then influence direct action.



UPDATED NATURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018



► **Despite the loss of an in-house Natural Heritage Officer for the Biosphere, our partners at the Crichton Carbon Centre led the way in reviewing, updating and expanding our Natural Heritage Management Plan so that it now covers all 5,268 sq/km of the Biosphere.**

The original High Focus Habitats and Species were selected based on their importance within the Core and Buffer Zones of the Biosphere; the Core area being the focus for the original designation of the Biosphere as it contains designated sites of high national importance.

However, the Transition Zone is the large area surrounding the Buffer Zone, in which the majority of Biosphere residents live and work and the habitats contained within in it, although not all designated, are consequently of great importance. The majority of the Transition Zone is privately owned, which distinguishes it from the publicly owned Core and Buffer.

The 2018 update to the Natural Heritage Management Plan was felt necessary to recognise the habitats of importance within the lower lying Transition Zone of the Biosphere and to provide more specific guidance on their management. In addition, the original section on Freshwater Habitats (originally included specifically in relation to the High Focus Species brown trout) was reviewed and expanded to include important features and habitats within the Transition Zone. The section on Woodlands for Red Squirrels was also updated given the work to minimise threats to red squirrels and their habitats since the original publication of the Natural Heritage Management Plan in 2015.

Through expanding the identification of priority habitats and species to the transition area, we hope to be able to influence local estates, farmers and foresters when they are making their land management decisions.



NATIONAL PLANT MONITORING SCHEME PARTNERSHIP



► **The National Plant Monitoring Scheme (NPMS) is a national habitat-based plant monitoring scheme designed by BSBI, CEH, Plantlife and JNCC.**

The aim is for volunteers to be trained to collect data to provide an annual indication of changes in plant abundance and diversity. The data is collected from randomly selected 1 km squares across the whole of the UK.

The volunteers can select a square that is convenient for them to visit. The visit involves recording plant 'indicator species' in plots. Within the 1km square the volunteers record around 5 plots in semi-natural habitats.

The NPMS approached GSAB when it noted that very few squares in the Biosphere had been selected. We brought together a new partnership with ourselves, NPMS and SWSEIC (South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre) to promote the scheme, running training days and supporting local volunteers in their recording.

Different levels of participation ensure that all who are keen can participate: volunteers do not have to be an experienced botanist - they will only need to identify between 25-30 "indicator species" per habitat; those who are more experienced can identify more; and those who are expert can do a complete inventory. Either way the information gathered allows NPMS to monitor changes in the countryside.

The summer of 2018 was our first year of partnering with the project when 28 people took part in a programme of summer activities. Further activities and events are planned each spring and summer up until 2023.

RESEARCH AND LEARNING



Biospheres are intended to be pilot areas where interactions between social, economic and environmental interests in a region can be monitored, studied and shared with others. This takes place in a range of different ways from working with local schools, to running networking events to supporting formal research programmes.



Our 2014-2018 Research Priorities were reviewed in 2018 where it was concluded that “The Biosphere has made good progress in around one third of the research priorities; has initiated research in a further one third; and has not yet started progress in less than one third of the list.

Most research has focussed on the Generic and Institutional Priorities (using volunteers, building case studies, networking with other Biospheres) and Applied (Environmental) Science priorities (habitats and land-use).“ Research was led by partners ranging from local Fisheries Trusts, to NGOs and on to local further and higher education institutions.



AYRSHIRE COLLEGES LEARNING PARTNERSHIP



► An initial discussion between representatives from Ayrshire College and the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere saw the opportunity to develop more formal links between both organisations which would have a range of mutually beneficial outcomes.

The college has 14,189 students based over eight campuses across Ayrshire who are supported by 800 staff. Many of the staff and students either live in the Biosphere or use the area for recreation. A formal partnership arrangement was agreed between Ayrshire College and the Biosphere in 2017 which has seen the two organisations working together more closely in a Learning Partnership.

Ayrshire College's aim is to serve the people, communities and employers in Ayrshire. The College plays a key role in helping to develop the economy in Ayrshire, by ensuring that students develop the right skills and positive attitudes to support the local, regional and national workforce needs: "We work in partnership with employers and other stakeholders to ensure we are focused on providing opportunities which meet demand in key industry sectors in Ayrshire and beyond and develop the high quality skills required for the economy. We are confident that by working together we will make Ayrshire College the best in Scotland; inclusive, innovative and sector leading. A College of which all our students, staff, stakeholders and communities will be proud."

The opportunity provides a platform locally for the Biosphere to engage, demonstrate and provide learning experiences for a significant amount of students and wider community engagement opportunities to promote and raise the profile of the Biosphere.

The Biosphere benefits from the relationship through increased awareness and recognition of the role that it plays locally,

particularly within the 16–25 age range which has been difficult to focus on historically.

As a direct result of the activities that are developed, the Biosphere can benefit from work projects agreed between the Biosphere and Ayrshire College that address areas which require additional resources or support to deliver.

The opportunity provided allows a close and developing working relationship between the two organisations and the detail of outcomes and opportunities would be developed to reflect the partnership working and would be an example of positive engagement delivering key objectives for the Biosphere both in the short and long term.

In March 2018 the students ran Biosphere Awareness raising events across three of their campuses. Aimed at students and staff, they were intended to highlight the UNESCO Biosphere and the vast range of opportunities it provides to local people.

The students researched what the Biosphere represented, planned the events - including stalls, information for attendees and logistics - and acted as compères to those that attended. The highlight of the three events was a "Ready Steady Cook" demonstration that used local produce from the Biosphere and involved interviews with some of the Biosphere Partnership Trustees. The whole event was live streamed on the Ayrshire College internal social media platform so that staff and students at other campuses could see what was taking place.



JAMES HUTTON INSTITUTE COLLABORATION

► James Hutton Institute (JHI) is one of Scottish Government's main research providers in environmental, crop and food science and has a major role in the Scottish knowledge economy.

It is one of the biggest research centres in the UK and the first of its type in Europe.

The Biosphere Team have been working with researchers from The Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences (SEGS) Group at JHI who are looking at the mapping of cultural eco-systems services for Scotland and particularly how to map the less tangible benefits delivered by the Scottish landscape.

The researchers have been keen to understand how people experience, make sense of and value natural resources and their social and natural environment, and the implications this has for their decision-making and social practices.

JHI have been especially interested in the GSAB Sense of Place approach and the toolkit used by the Biosphere with communities. The Biosphere describes a 'Sense of Place' as being:

"what gives an area its identity and makes it different from elsewhere. It is made up of the different landscapes, wildlife, history, people, sights, sounds, smells, tastes, memories and many other 'things' that contribute to our experience of a place."

When we use it with Biosphere Communities they take part in a facilitated Sense of Place workshop, exploring the six key themes of Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere and considering local examples relevant to the community and immediate environs.

JHI has observed the delivery of workshops utilising the information generated through the discussions for research purposes. Researchers have also used participants at the Sense of Place workshops to give feedback on a pilot version of a survey about people and special places in the landscape that JHI is developing as part of the work on cultural eco-system service mapping.

JHI has found the Sense of Place process an interesting methodology and is keen to attend a further workshop in 2019, focused on a larger community to explore how residents experience and value natural resources and their social and natural environment, and trial a training programme on Digital Storytelling - a simple, creative process through which people with little or no experience of computers can document life experience, ideas, or feelings through the use of story and digital media.

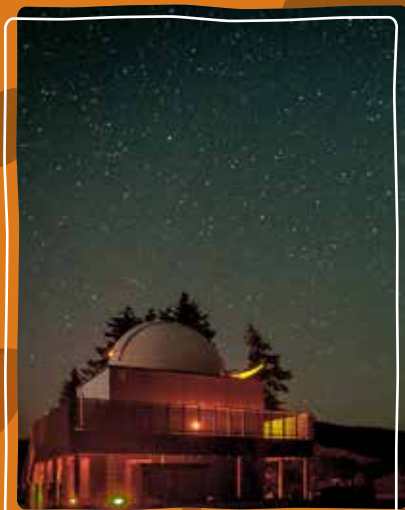


SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Sustainable development in the Biosphere covers a huge area bringing together aspects such as health and wellbeing, the local economy and how we impact on our natural environment.

It is fundamental to much of what we do and is one of the key ways that we actively seek to link people with the natural environment in ways that will help support the local economy.



'THE GLOBAL VALUE OF UNESCO BIOSPHERES TO SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND'



► **June 2018 was an extremely exciting time for the Biosphere Team**, as it marked the culmination of almost two years work in developing a legally recognised trademark that could be used by local businesses in the Biosphere that could demonstrate that they were actively embracing and delivering against the environmental and sustainability principles of UNESCO Biospheres. This really was a first for GSAB as no other UNESCO Biosphere in the UK had gone down this route of actively working in partnership with local businesses to develop a scheme to add value to their products and services.

The new scheme was piloted with three local businesses from the Accommodation, Food and Drink, and Outdoor Activity sectors; Balkissock Lodge Bed and Breakfast, Adventure Centre for Education; and Salad Brew which is a hydroponic salad and vegetable grower. The businesses using the Certification Mark spoke positively about how the certification process had encouraged them to review their own operations and how they hoped in the future to be able to attract a premium value or more discerning customers to their products.

The Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, officially launched the Certification Mark at an event attended by organisations and businesses from across South West Scotland at Culzean Castle in South Ayrshire. It was an opportunity to highlight the global value of the UNESCO designations and the potential of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere to support sustainability, economic development and tourism in south west Scotland.

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, said:

"This certification award from Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere is a significant development which aligns with our priority to further promote the south of Scotland and Ayrshire as a tourism destination. As the first area in Scotland to receive UNESCO Biosphere status and with its wide variety of natural landscapes, cultural heritage and wildlife, the Biosphere has much to offer to local and international visitors. I am confident the new award will bring many opportunities to both businesses and communities in the area, ensuring our unique biosphere is preserved and promoted as a place of international significance for locals and tourists alike."

She was joined at the event by Dr Beth Taylor, Chair of the UK National Commission for UNESCO, who said: "UNESCO's Biosphere Reserves are the world's only globally recognised designation for demonstrating excellence in sustainable development. Biospheres bring value to their communities by leveraging the powerful UNESCO brand and collaborating with the global UNESCO network. Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere is leading the way in developing a quality mark linked to sustainability for businesses in the region. Congratulations on a great achievement!"

Following the formal launch, new applicants were invited to apply for certification and a further eight businesses have gone through the process.



DARK SKY CONFERENCE



► **Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere has worked closely with the Galloway Dark Sky Park since its designation in 2012.**

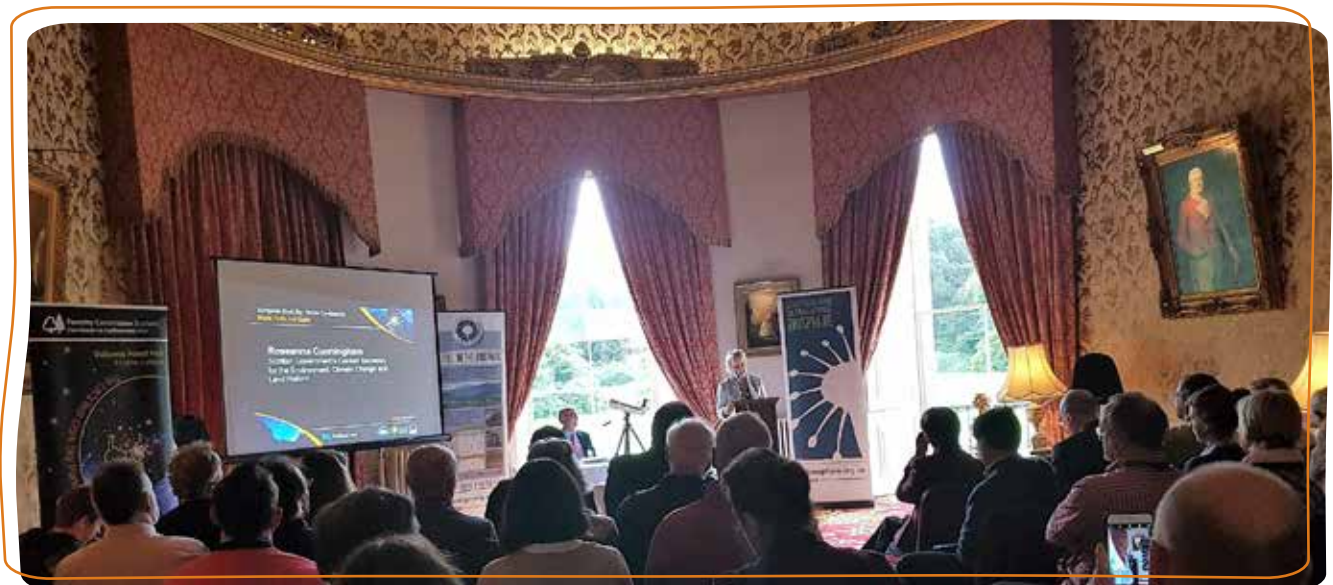
Forming the heart of the UNESCO Biosphere, the Galloway Forest Park is equal in size to around 75,000 football pitches and was designated Dark Sky Status back in November 2009. The Dark Sky Park is an integral part of the UNESCO Biosphere - between them they offer a 24/7 attraction in south west Scotland, offering the opportunity to celebrate and explore the region's landscapes and wildlife during the day and the dark skies at night.

We jointly developed a training programme for freelance Biosphere Dark Sky Rangers who work with local businesses developing bespoke experiences for their guests to experience the Biosphere and Dark Skies. So it was no surprise when the Biosphere, in partnership with local representatives from Forest Enterprise Scotland and the International Dark Sky Association, came together to be the first location in Europe to hold an International Dark Sky Park Conference in September 2017.

The event brought together some of the world's top dark sky experts with the aim of promoting rural development, tourism and tackling light pollution issues. Astronomers, town planners, lighting specialists, environmentalists and academics, all attended the international conference to discuss the benefits that Dark Sky status can bring.

The event, held at the Cally Palace Hotel in Gatehouse of Fleet, was about far more than just the solar system; speakers spoke about how light pollution can affect local ecology, how it impacts on our own health and wellbeing, how it can be used for immersive art events and how different businesses and regions are using the Dark Skies to stimulate their local economies. Evening sessions involved star gazing, bat walks and astrophotography.

With over 60 people attending the three-day event, and some coming from as far away as Japan and Chile, it was recognised as a huge success that really put the Biosphere and Dark Sky Park firmly on the map.



UNESCO MAB WORLD YOUTH FORUM



► **A key objective of all Biospheres around the world is to learn from each other, supporting new ideas and looking for shared solutions.** So in September 2017 when the inaugural UNESCO Man and Biosphere World Youth Forum was taking place, we were keen to ensure that young people from our Biosphere were given the opportunity to take part.

We invited young people working in our Biosphere to apply for two fully funded places to attend the event held in the PO Delta Biosphere near Venice.

The two people selected were Daisy Whytock from East Ayrshire Coalfield Environment Initiative (CEI) and Dr Emily Taylor from the Crichton Carbon Centre. The aim of the Forum was to bring young people together from across the international network of Biospheres, determine a collective youth vision for the network and the UNESCO Biosphere programme and write a Youth Declaration.



The declaration asks all Biosphere Reserves to commit to creating attractive and long term opportunities linked to the values of Biosphere Reserves, involving local enterprises and cooperating with local stakeholders.

The conference was attended by 282 representatives under the age of 35 from 142 Biosphere Reserves in 85 countries.



NEXT STEPS



Going forward our priorities continue to be guided by our Strategic Plan 2016-2022 (available to download from www.gsabiosphere.org.uk). The Strategy takes the international vision and aims of the 2016 Lima Action Plan, that all UNESCO Biospheres worldwide are working towards, and reflects them at a local level to benefit the people and environment of South West Scotland.



We will continue to focus on raising the profile of the UNESCO Biosphere both locally and further afield as a sustainable tourism destination. Key to this is continuing to develop greater awareness of what the Biosphere represents and how individuals, groups and businesses can use it to benefit themselves. The Biosphere Communities, Certification Scheme and development of new tourism products such as Biosphere Experiences will all be fundamental to this.



Equally important is the natural and cultural heritage backdrop against which these opportunities are promoted. The rich and varied wildlife, habitats, landscapes and history that we enjoy are critical components of not just the region's tourism economy, but also the health and well-being of all who live and work here. Guided by the priorities of our Natural Heritage Management Plan, we will continue to encourage a more balanced approach to address the competing priorities of the land-based industries on whose partnership working much of this depends.

However, covering such a huge area and big remit is challenging with such limited resources so we will continue to push for greater recognition of the value that the UNESCO Biosphere designation brings to South West Scotland and the need to support it properly at both a local and national level.

WHAT IS A BIOSPHERE?

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere has been recognised internationally as a world class environment for people and nature. This special designation is awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and is the centre piece of the international Man and Biosphere Programme that brings together over 660 Biosphere worldwide.

The UNESCO Biosphere designation is recognition of the fantastic array of landscapes, wildlife, cultural heritage and learning opportunities that South West Scotland offers for communities, businesses and visitors to experience and celebrate in a sustainable way.

The Biosphere designation brings no new rules or regulations but rather encourages us to work together to create a better future for people and nature.

By visiting the Biosphere website and signing up to the Charter you will demonstrate that you are a Proud Supporter of the Biosphere and can play your part in promoting and developing the sustainability of the area:

The six principles of the Biosphere Charter are:

- Help conserve the natural resources of the Biosphere
- Support the economy to benefit people and nature
- Promote cultural heritage and local products
- Contribute to health and wellbeing of the community
- Develop knowledge, understanding and research
- Raise awareness of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere



GALLOWAY AND
SOUTHERN AYRSHIRE
BIOSPHERE

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