




GALLOWAY AND
SOUTHERN AYRSHIRE
BIOSPHERE

Welcome to the
Sense of Place Toolkit.
Its purpose is to help
you understand and
benefit from the
***Galloway and Southern
Ayrshire Biosphere***
designation.

This Toolkit will help
you discover the special
qualities of this area,
and how to use them to
develop and promote your
business or community.

SENSE OF PLACE TOOLKIT

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION...



Welcome to the Sense of Place Toolkit. Its purpose is to help you understand and benefit from the **Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere** designation.

This Toolkit will help you discover the special qualities of this area, and how to use them to develop and promote your business or community.

WHAT IS A BIOSPHERE?

A 'Biosphere' is a special status awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to places where communities can demonstrate a passion for living and working that benefits people and nature. Biospheres are created to fulfil three main purposes:

- Conservation:** promoting the preservation of wildlife, habitats, and landscape.
- Learning:** supporting a better understanding of nature and global issues.
- Development:** fostering a sustainable economy and society.

Biospheres are places of cooperation and collaboration between people to show that a sustainable way of living is not only possible but already happening.

Not everywhere has the right ingredients to become a Biosphere – the status is given only to places where communities share the responsibility for helping to safeguard their environment, and aspire to making it better for people and nature. There are only four other Biospheres in the UK. This makes the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere very special and offers great potential for local people and organisations to benefit from its world class status.

For more information visit www.gsabiosphere.org.uk

For more information about Biosphere status visit www.unesco.org and search for "biosphere".

WHAT IS A 'SENSE OF PLACE'?

A 'sense of place' is the term used to describe the emotions and experiences we associate with places. It's how places make us feel.

A sense of place is 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. It changes when we travel from home to work, or from the city to the countryside, or when visiting familiar or new places. One way of understanding it is to think about how you might describe the area where you live – which words would you use, what would you focus on, how does it make you feel when you picture it in your mind? That's a sense of place.

HOW IS THIS RELEVANT TO ME?

A sense of place is all about how places make us feel and it plays a role in influencing the choices we make over where to live, work and spend our holidays. It can influence the value placed on products and services offered by local businesses. It contributes to our culture and the identities of local communities. It can even impact on people's health and quality of life.

Everyone has their own understanding of sense of place, whether they use the term or not. If you are an individual with an interest in the local area, or you belong to a community group, business or organisation, then the more you develop an understanding of your area the more you will appreciate its qualities. This can benefit you and your community in a number of ways. For example it can:

A sense of place is particularly relevant to tourism.

If visitors connect with a place they are more likely to develop an affinity for the area, which in turn means they are likely to spend more time there, spend more money, tell their friends about it and visit again in future. In this way, promoting a strong sense of place can benefit the local economy.

- Help bring communities together and connect people with the land
- Provide inspiration for education, interpretation and the creative arts
- Improve the 'welcome' and local knowledge offered by frontline staff
- Add value to local products and services – and help businesses develop new products
- Strengthen the identity or 'brand' of an area by encouraging different groups to work together in promoting a place and its special qualities

WHO IS THE TOOLKIT FOR ?

The Sense of Place Toolkit is intended for use by everyone including community groups, businesses and organisations operating within or near to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere.



START HERE: HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This section explains how to get the most out of the Sense of Place Toolkit.

WHAT IS THE SENSE OF PLACE TOOLKIT AND WHAT CAN IT BE USED FOR?

The Sense of Place Toolkit is a collection of examples and resources to help you benefit from the special qualities of the Biosphere. We use the word 'toolkit' because it is focussed on practical outcomes. In the same way that a plumber's toolkit contains different tools for different jobs, the Sense of Place Toolkit can be adapted to your individual needs and interests.

You don't need any special skills or expertise to use this Toolkit. It's simply about making use of local knowledge and enthusiasm in new and practical ways. All you need is a passion for your local area and a willingness to do some detective work or be creative!

The Toolkit is not designed to be read from cover to cover like a book. Instead, think of it as a recipe book that you can 'dip into' whenever you need some fresh ideas and inspiration.

You might like to use the Toolkit when:

- Creating publicity materials, such as a leaflet, website or advertisement
- Informing your customers or visitors about your local area
- Developing a plan, proposal or strategy
- Providing training to your staff or colleagues
- Working with your local community



STEP 1: DECIDING WHAT'S RELEVANT TO YOU

This Sense of Place Toolkit is organised into different sections, each one focussing on a different special quality of the Biosphere:

Wildlife & Natural Beauty:

the diversity of the natural environment – from hill tops to coastline, its wetlands, lochs and rivers are all bursting with life.

Heritage & Culture:

exploring the places where people and events have shaped the character of the area – from historical, industrial and religious heritage, to famous connections and local stories.

Inspiration:

the importance of the area for inspiring the creative arts, both past and present.

Tranquillity:

the area's special sense of peace, quiet and remoteness.

Recreation & Enjoyment:

the range of outdoor activities that can be enjoyed locally, including walking, cycling, wildlife watching, sailing, fishing and golfing.

Local produce:

the abundance of quality food and crafts that are produced locally. Produce ranges widely from Ayrshire potatoes, artisanal cheese and ice-cream to meat from local breeds such as Galloway cattle. The area is also renowned for its crafts from pottery to spinning, weaving and knitting.



Start by reading the introduction to each section and decide which are most relevant to you and your interests. Then move on to Step 2.

STEP 2:

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Each section of the Toolkit contains three types of information:



- **Context**, providing a short description of the special quality and explaining why it is important to the Biosphere's sense of place. This background information provides a 'snap shot' for you and your customers or visitors. This information (including many of the images contained in the Toolkit) is available for you to download from the Biosphere website and use free of charge in your own publicity materials.



- **Examples**, suggests some favourite places and things to do as recommended by local people. This information is intended to inspire you to use your own knowledge to identify the popular activities and interests that people in the Biosphere enjoy locally. A case study demonstrates how local facilities, attractions or communities have used the special quality to promote a business, place or event.
- **Information**, suggests actions you can take and places to search to find out more about your own special place.
- **Worksheets**, (attached separately), provide step-by-step guidance on how to get the most out of the Toolkit and customise its resources relevant to you and your interests. Each section of the Toolkit has its own worksheet, which includes suggested activities, useful contacts, references and links to further about information the special qualities of the Biosphere.



You may have already decided which sections of the Toolkit are relevant you. Now read over your chosen sections in detail and use the relevant worksheet(s) to put together a simple plan of how you are going to use the Toolkit.

STEP 3:

ACTION!

The Sense of Place Toolkit can help you to understand the special qualities of the Biosphere and develop an action plan of how to benefit from them. The final step in the process relies on **you** to put **your** plan into action.



Using the Toolkit isn't necessarily about doing new things from scratch. It's often more important to look at what you are already doing and make improvements by simply doing things a little bit differently: small steps, rather than giant leaps.



Refer to the worksheet(s) you have completed and start with the actions that are easiest to complete.

A good way to start is by including information about the Biosphere and its special qualities in your own publicity materials, using the resources available in the Toolkit. This can be done very easily the next time you update your website, social media, printed literature and so on. This adds a sense of place to your publicity. People prefer to deal with organisations they can identify with and relate to – promoting your local sense of place helps people to do this. If you are a business, it can also give you an advantage over competitors and encourage customers to place greater value on your products and services.

Another simple idea is to get out and explore your local area for yourself.

We often take for granted the special qualities of the place in which we live and work. Try looking afresh at your area and imagine you are visiting for the first time. What time is the shop open; what special produce is on the menu in the local pub; where's best to go for a walk; are there any local stories that people like to tell; what breed are those cows down the lane? Collect your own information about your area and use it when talking to customers or visitors. Share your knowledge and enthusiasm, make a connection and celebrate what's special about your place!

There are lots of other simple steps you can take using the Toolkit. Examples include:



If you are a community group...

- Use the special qualities of the Biosphere as a way of describing what's special about your area to other people – it can help them understand the landscape better and what it has to offer.
- Set up a project exploring the sense of place of your local area. This can be a great way of bringing a community together and enabling everyone to share and celebrate what's special about their place.
- Keep a record of information that might be useful for updating the Sense of Place Toolkit in future. This is **your** place and we want to know why it's special to **you!**



If you are a business...

- Develop materials to help your customers explore the area and get more from their stay. Perhaps a map of your favourite local walks and places to visit; or an I-Spy sheet and other games for families with children.
- Tell the story of your own family or business – and use this story to 'personalise' your products and celebrate your own local heritage.
- Consider the benefits of using local suppliers and produce next time you review your supply chain – and make a feature of these local links in your marketing.



If you are an organisation...

- Consider the special qualities of the Biosphere when developing or updating your organisation's plans and strategies – how can you help to support and enhance these qualities, both now and in the future?
- Use the Toolkit to improve your team's own understanding of the Biosphere, its special qualities and sense of place. Encourage colleagues to use the Toolkit when providing information to visitors and communities.
- Help put the Biosphere 'on the map' by promoting the area and its special qualities at every opportunity! The Biosphere is a brand new status for the region, so please help to raise awareness of its local benefits, national importance and international connections.



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A PLACE OF WILDLIFE & NATURAL BEAUTY



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This section helps you promote the landscape and nature of the Biosphere: from its remote hills, through its network of burns, lochs and rivers to the coast, the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere is a special place for wildlife. Use this information to bring to life the beauty and diversity of this nationally important natural environment and help people understand why a living landscape is much more than 'just scenery'.



Context

The landscape of the Biosphere has been shaped by geological forces over millions of years. From rugged coastline to large domed hills it is water that has provided the 'lifeblood' of the area. Bogs and lochs, tumbling upland burns and rivers in broad valleys, radiate out from the hills and provide habitats for a rich diversity of plants and animals. These features create a distinctly Scottish landscape at a scale that is easy for visitors to access and get close to nature.

Read on to learn more about Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere as a place of wildlife and natural beauty...



Examples

The variety of the scenery in south west Scotland is undoubtedly the greatest contribution to the natural beauty of the Biosphere and provides a home to an amazing range of wildlife. With so much on offer it is useful to focus on special places or unusual species to help identify your locality as being distinct from other destinations, but in truth the interest extends far beyond these.

Glentrool

Bruce's Stone overlooking Glentrool is an easily accessible location to see distinctly Scottish scenery of loch, wooded slopes and heather clad hill tops. Glentrool is so much more than scenery, with its link to Robert the Bruce, as well as the start of walking routes to the Merrick (highest hill in the Biosphere) and oak woodlands teeming with wildlife.



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Electric Brae

Where the landscape plays tricks and mysterious forces appear to alter the rules of gravity. Also known as Croy Brae the landform creates an optical illusion so that water poured onto a gentle incline appears to go up hill!

Osprey

One of our most iconic birds of prey, ospreys have been returning to the Biosphere to nest in various locations providing the possibility of seeing them at close hand. While some nests can be seen via CCTV (Wigtown), others can be seen from viewing points (Threave Castle and Loch Doon cafe). New opportunities to see these magnificent birds are appearing every year.



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Red squirrel

Disappearing from many parts of the UK the red squirrel still has a strong-hold in the Biosphere. Often difficult to spot in the summer when food is plentiful and there are leaves on the trees, this striking creature is more visible at other times of the year and can be easily tempted down to feeders in the winter.



CASE STUDY

Watson Birds Project, *St Johns Town of Dalry*

Aiming to promote the legacy and passions of artist Donald Watson and his family there are walks and trails available that highlight Donald's favourite places. Many locations have been captured in his paintings and illustrate how the land has changed over time. Information on the walks and other information including upcoming events and activities throughout the year are available on the website.

www.watsonbirds.org



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More ideas

- ➔ The rocks beneath our feet often reveal much about how the landscape is shaped and offer opportunities to take a closer look. Fascinating fossils at Girvan, minerals at Wanlockhead and Creetown, interpretation at Cairnsmore visitor centre all contribute to our understanding of what lies beneath our feet.
- ➔ Where the sea meets the land is always a dynamic place and the Ayrshire Coastal Path provides opportunities to see geology, coastal plants and rare butterflies.
- ➔ Lowland raised bogs and upland blanket bogs are nationally important habitats with characteristic plants such as bog asphodel and the carnivorous sundews and butterwort found across the Biosphere ranging from RSPB Airds Moss, FCS Carrick Forest Drive and SWT Carsegowan Moss.
- ➔ With such a wide range of habitats in a small area there are opportunities to see many varieties of birds without travelling too far. Winter migrants such as swans and geese are particularly attractive to birdwatchers and can be seen at Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve and RSPB Ken/Dee Marshes.
- ➔ Riverside walks such as River Ayr Way provide opportunities to see wildlife and enjoy the countryside.



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Action

Help others find out more about the landscape and wildlife...

- Share your knowledge and enthusiasm, or point people in the direction of local wildlife experts.
- Find out where the best places are to visit and experience our natural environment, often a less well known 'secret' location is better than some of the usual visitor attractions.
- Promote local guided walks or events run by wildlife organisations.
- Encourage wildlife into your grounds.



Search

The following websites provide useful information but why not visit local nature reserves and viewpoints to check them out for yourself.

Wild Seasons

<http://wildseasons.co.uk>

Scottish Natural Heritage

www.snh.gov.uk/about-snh/snh-in-your-area

Scottish Wildlife Trust reserves

<http://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/visit/reserves>

RSPB

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature>

Forestry Commission Scotland

<http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/visit>



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A PLACE OF HERITAGE & CULTURE



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This section helps you promote the heritage and culture of the Biosphere: from ancient stone circles and ruined castles to the often quirky stories of places associated with people from the past, the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere is a special place for history. Use this information to raise awareness of events that have shaped the ever changing landscape and help people feel connected with their past.



Context

The landscape of the Biosphere is steeped in a rich built and cultural heritage. From archaeological evidence of early settlers to emigration of people from the uplands to seek new lives across the globe, and from memorials to those caught up in religious turmoil to the remains of heavy industry, the landscape has been shaped by events from the past. Visitors can explore many places with links to famous people or ordinary folk whose influence has been felt across Scotland and beyond.

Read on to learn more about Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere as a place of heritage and culture...



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Examples

A land inhabited for thousands of years its cultural significance has many layers which can be revealed to help people feel a connection to the area. Every place has an interesting story to tell even if they have not played a pivotal role in national events.

Cairn Holy, *nr Gatehouse of Fleet*

Across south west Scotland ancient stone circles, burial cairns and mysterious carved cup and ring marks can be found. Remains of tombs and temples at places like Cairn Holy give us a glimpse of prehistoric life and death.

Martyrs' Monument, *nr New Cumnock*

Our Christian heritage is marked by many monuments such as ruins of abbeys or graveyards providing a direct link to those who lived on the land in the past. Perhaps the most poignant are those erected in desolate hills to Covenanters who were killed for their deep beliefs.

Dumfries House, *Cumnock* Culzean Castle, *Maybole* Drumlanrig Castle, *Thornhill*

Stunning 18th century country houses and their surrounding grounds show the splendour achieved by landed gentry and their influence on the surrounding countryside.

CASE STUDY



Scottish Industrial Railway Centre, *near Dalmellington*

A “living museum” at Dunaskin celebrates the role taken by steam and diesel locomotives from our industrial past. The centre is a work in progress with restoration undertaken by a team of dedicated volunteers demonstrating the passions that our heritage can capture. The regular Steam Days allow visitors to experience rides pulled by a steam engine in an authentic setting.

www.scottishindustrialrailwaycentre.org.uk

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More ideas

- ➔ As well as ruins of fine abbeys the area has many parish churches, often with medieval remains in the churchyard. Inscriptions on monuments and headstones make a connection between people and places, telling us about how people saw themselves and their place in the world.
- ➔ Although south west Scotland is known for its agriculture and forestry it has a history of heavy industry, evidence of which can still be found in our towns and villages. For example the cotton mills of Gatehouse of Fleet, the abandoned lead mines at Woodhead near Carsphairn or the Barony Colliery A Frame at Auchinleck.
- ➔ Famous for the exploits of nationally celebrated characters like Robert the Bruce the area has many more heroes; from the explorer Joseph Thomson, born in Penpont, to the founder of the Labour Party, James Keir Hardie, buried at Cumnock cemetery.
- ➔ Other historical characters, like Sawney Bean and his clan, are remembered for their gruesome deeds of murder and robbery and for using a sea cave hideout.

There are many other local tales which can help bring 'magic' to the area.



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Action

Help others find out more about heritage and culture...

- Research the history of your premises and local area and share your discoveries, or point people in the direction of local history experts.
- Find out where the location and opening times of nearby heritage sites. Sometimes less well known places are the most interesting.
- Promote local guided walks or events run by heritage organisations or history societies.



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Search

The following websites might be useful.

Future museum and local authority museums
www.futuremuseum.co.uk

National Trust for Scotland
www.nts.org.uk/Visits

Historic Scotland
www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/places



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A PLACE OF INSPIRATION



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This section helps you celebrate the importance of the Biosphere to the creative arts: novelists, poets, painters, musicians and sculptors have been inspired by the area which hosts Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere. Artists continue to add to the vibrancy of the area and you can use this information to promote galleries, festivals and events and help others enjoy the landscape in new ways.



Context

It is easy to see why south west Scotland is considered to be a place where creative minds have found inspiration. People, places and folklore have influenced the work of many painters, sculptors, writers and poets, both past and present so it is no surprise that the Biosphere is home to a variety of arts based events and exhibitions.

Read on to learn more about Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere as a place of inspiration...



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Examples

Whether it's the barren hills and lonely lochs of the uplands or meandering rivers and rugged coast of the lowlands, the landscape and people who make a living from it, have fired the imagination of creative minds for centuries.

National Poet

Robert Burns, sometimes known as the 'Ploughman Poet' or 'Bard of Ayrshire', found his homeland a great source of inspiration. His work features the countryside he loved, the wildlife he observed and the places he visited as well as the women he wooed.

Environmental Art

Andy Goldsworthy travels all over the world to carry out art commissions but it is the landscape around his home in Dumfriesshire that remains at the heart of his work. The self-supporting stone arch is a recurring theme that appears as 'Striding Arches' on the rounded hills of Cairnhead, Moniaive.



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Festival Fun

Events of all shapes and sizes provide a focus for activity in the Biosphere, from agricultural shows to music and arts festivals. The biannual Environmental Art Festival Scotland celebrates our relationship with landscape through a series of events. Ayrshire's Boswell Book Festival is the world's only festival of biography and memoir. Taking place annually at Dumfries House, it places people's life stories past and present at its heart, just as people's stories were at the heart of James Boswell's writing.

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Open Studios

Spring Fling is Scotland's most successful visual art and craft open studios event demonstrating the importance of the area as a creative place for artists and makers. By inviting people into their studios a link is forged between artists, communities and their inspirational surroundings.

www.spring-fling.co.uk



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More ideas

- ➔ The themed towns of Wigtown, Scotland's National Book Town and Kirkcudbright, The Artists' Town provide a good introduction to the creative arts in the Biosphere area. However, there are many other places where you can see what has inspired others and perhaps be inspired yourself.
- ➔ Seek out artwork locations in Galloway Forest Park including The Eye by Colin Rose and Quorum by Matt Baker close to Black Loch, near Newton Stewart.
- ➔ Search for some of the carved stones on 7stanes mountain bike trails at Bruntis Loch, Kirroughtree and Loch Dee, Glentworth.
- ➔ Experience some of the local music events including the Girvan Folk Festival or Moniaive Michaelmas Bluegrass Festival to Sanctuary, an experimental The Dark Outside FM broadcast in Galloway Forest Park.

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Action

Help others find out more about inspirational places or events...

- Research literary or arts connections to your local area and share your discoveries.
- Find out where the location and opening times of local events, including local galas, horticultural shows or folk nights at the local pub. Sometimes the more intimate events are the most rewarding.
- Promote local art exhibitions or events run by arts societies.



Search

There are many 'what's on' websites which provide information about events that might inspire, but the following websites might be useful.

Open studios Ayrshire

www.openstudiosayrshire.com

Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival

www.dgartsfestival.org.uk



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A PLACE OF TRANQUILLITY



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This section helps you promote the Biosphere as a place to escape from the bustle of everyday life: from the wilderness of the open hills to the dark skies of the Galloway Forest Park or the windswept coastline, the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere has many places to get away from the bustle of everyday life. Use this information to suggest places with a peaceful character and help people to find tranquillity.



Context

The area's geography of remote moorland, serene lochs, quiet woodlands and picturesque villages all contribute to its peaceful character. The best places to experience tranquillity are nearly always those that you won't find advertised in tourist brochures – the “secret” places that must be discovered through personal exploration or the recommendation of local people.

**Read on to learn more about
Galloway and Southern Ayrshire
Biosphere as a place of tranquillity...**



Examples

Dark Sky Park

The Galloway Forest Park is very dark which means the stars appear to be very bright in the centre of the Biosphere. Here you can gaze at the magic of the night sky and discover wonders that people in built up areas never get a chance to see.



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Rosnes benches

Sometimes finding the time and space to appreciate what is around you. Rosnes benches are both sculpture and a chance to experience the Biosphere from a different angle. Located in 12 locations they offer an opportunity to look up at the sky, feel the breeze, smell the trees and listen to sounds around you.

Coastline

There is something about the shore that is tranquil even when the sea is far from calm. Seek out rocky coves or secret sandy bays to experience the one of the few truly wild places in south west Scotland.

CASE STUDY



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Glenapp Castle

Glenapp Castle, set in its tranquil grounds, offers its guests luxurious accommodation and an opportunity to meet 'the stars' when night sky enthusiasts are invited to enjoy a special star gazing package. The offer includes expert guidance and advice from an astronomer as well as an evening getting familiar with the constellations.

www.glenappcastle.com



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More ideas

- ➔ You do not have to travel far off the beaten track before you find peace and quiet in ancient oak woodlands with gnarled trees dripping with moss. A carpet of bluebells in the spring can provide a magical experience at places like NTS Culzean Castle and Country Park, RSPB Wood of Cree Nature Reserve near Newton Stewart and SWT Carstramon Woods, Gatehouse of Fleet.
- ➔ Waterfalls and rapids in deep gorges provide opportunities for contemplation and awe. Ness Glen and Dalcairnie Falls near Dalmellington or the Grey Mare's Tail at Talnotry near Newton Stewart are some of the many places to experience the calming powers of gushing water.
- ➔ The open hills and remote lochs in the heart of the Southern Uplands can be a challenging environment to visit but with some careful planning an expedition to some of the most remote areas in the UK will mean you can be alone with the mewing of buzzards and whistle of the wind.



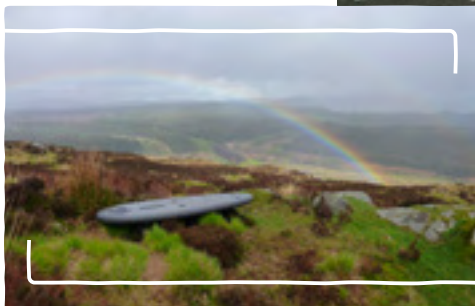
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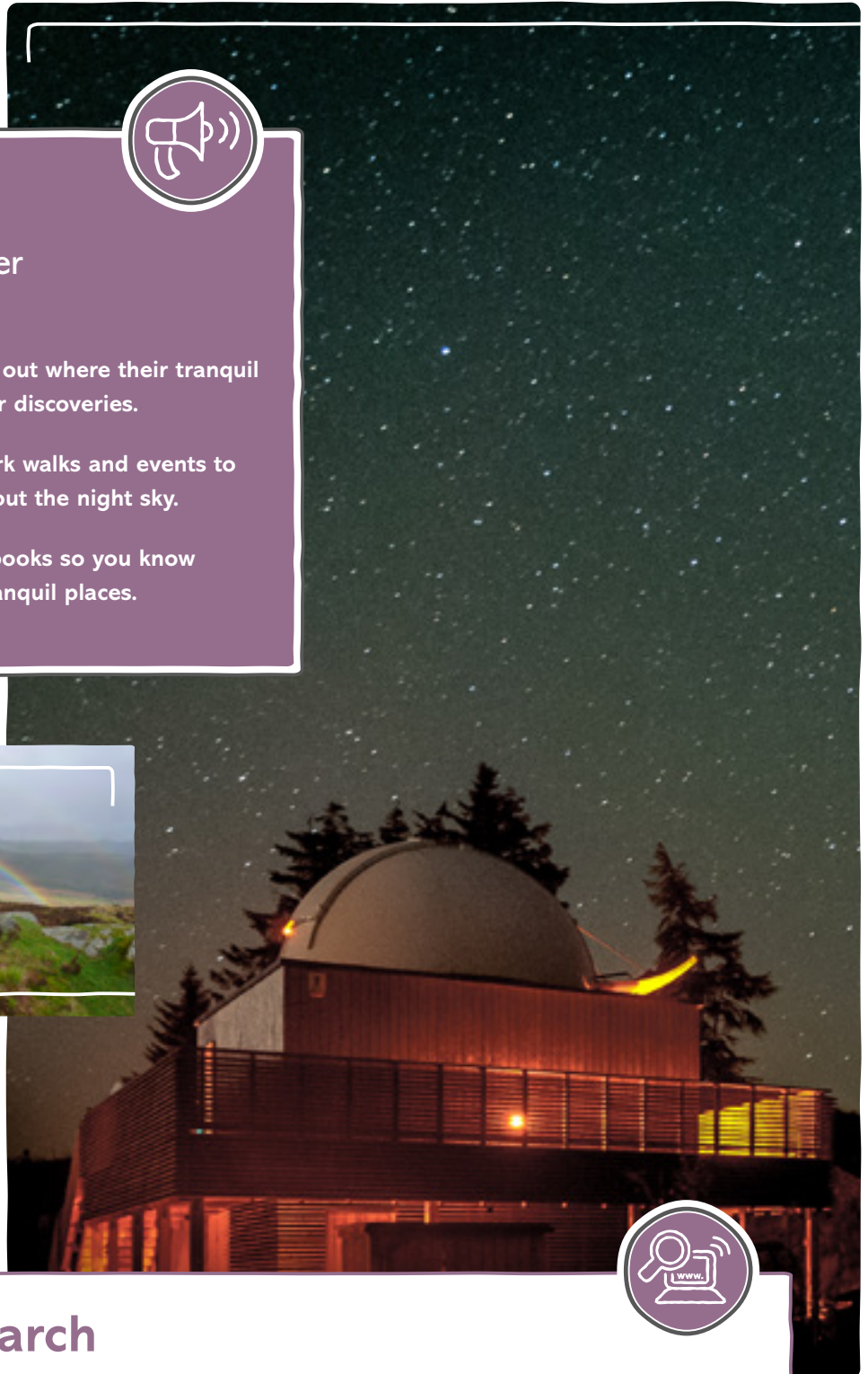
Action

Help others discover tranquil places...

- Speak to others and find out where their tranquil places are and share your discoveries.
- Take part in Dark Sky Park walks and events to discover and enthuse about the night sky.
- Collect maps and guide books so you know where to find walks to tranquil places.



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Search

The following websites might be useful.

Dark sky park

<http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/forest-parks/galloway-forest-park/dark-skies>

Rosnes benches

www.rosnesbench.com

Scottish Dark Sky Observatory

www.scottishdarkskyobservatory.co.uk



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A PLACE OF RECREATION & ENJOYMENT

RECREATION & ENJOYMENT



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This section highlights the wealth of opportunities for recreation in the Biosphere: from the challenge of mountain biking to a leisurely stroll in the countryside the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere offers many ways to enjoy the outdoors. Use this information to promote a variety of local activities and match the interests of your visitors with the options on offer.



Context

Whatever your interest, one thing is certain, there is always somewhere you can enjoy the outdoors in the Biosphere. It is a great place to explore and get off the beaten track to marvel at nature up close, or perhaps seek an adventure by trying a breath-taking challenge. From adrenaline sports to gentle days out there is a lot more to discover than you might think.

Read on to learn more about Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere as a place of recreation and enjoyment...



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Examples

Mountain bike trails

World-class mountain bike routes can be found at Drumlanrig or the 7stanes centres at Kirroughtree and Glentworth in Galloway Forest Park. All offer a variety of routes from technical single track to more leisurely trails which have become favourite family destinations.

Road cycling

The hill roads of South Carrick form Scotland's first road cycling park. Popularly referred to as 'The Ayrshire Alps', the terrain offers fantastic scenery, cycle friendly roads, and a tough cycling challenge.

Walkers

The long distance Southern Upland Way offers walkers a range of experiences from short stretches suitable for people wanting a gentle stroll to more challenging stretches of forest and hilltops for more experienced walkers.



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CASE STUDY

Newton Stewart WalkFest

The Newton Stewart Walking Festival is a week-long event held annually in early May, offering a series of guided walks in the Galloway countryside. Firmly established as the biggest walking festival in south west Scotland it provides a range of walks from the challenge of a true hill walking experience to less demanding coastal and woodland walks many of which have specific themes. Information on the walks and upcoming events are available on the website.

www.newtonstewartwalkfest.co.uk



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More ideas

The Biosphere is a great place for getting out and about.

- ➔ Favourite rides include those around the Machars which offers marked routes on a maze of minor roads on easy terrain, featuring a wealth of history, culture and wildlife, as well as spectacular views over mountain, moor and sea.
- ➔ For walking try the River Ayr Way which follows the route of the river from open moorland to shaded river gorges.
- ➔ The Ayrshire Coastal Path allows walkers to experience one of the finest panoramic coastlines in Britain. It is steeped in history and teeming with wildlife.
- ➔ Merrick Hill Path from Loch Trool is the easiest route to the top of the highest summit in southern Scotland. It offers spectacular views over Galloway Forest and far away.
- ➔ Many other opportunities exist for outdoor recreation including water sports at places like Loch Ken which is particularly popular for all forms of water sports including, sailing, water skiing, power boating and canoeing.

There are so many more things to do. Don't forget golfing, bird watching, fishing or horse riding!



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Action

Help others get out and about...

- Discover the area yourself so you know what local footpaths and cycle routes to recommend.
- Find out where other outdoor facilities are located, what they offer, opening times and costs.
- Promote walking and cycle festivals.
- Visit your local Information or Visitor Centre for information about guided walks and other outdoor activities.



Search

The following websites might be useful.

VisitScotland 7stanes

www.7stanesmountainbiking.com

Ayrshire Alps

www.ayrshirealps.org



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A PLACE OF LOCAL PRODUCE

LOCAL PRODUCE



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This section helps you make the most of regional produce found in the Biosphere: food, drink & crafts reflect the diversity of the landscape in the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere for you to enjoy. Use this information to explain the link between a special environment and high quality produce and experience the difference.



Context

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere is an area famous for its food produce, much of which is unique to the region and recognised around the world for its quality and local flavour. It is perhaps best known for its dairy produce and the brown and white Ayrshire cows but an authentic food and drink experience includes beef, lamb, whisky, beer, potatoes and even chillies.

Read on to learn more about Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere as a place of local produce...



Examples

Community / Farm Shops

The Biosphere is a place of abundant good quality food, drink and crafts that are produced locally. The range of traditional, and not so traditional, local products reflects the diversity and unique character of the countryside in the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere. The many community and farm shops offer a choice of home grown and homemade products. Most include seasonal vegetables, local meat and traditional farmhouse cooking.



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Producers and farmers markets

There are many opportunities to find local ingredients being used to make distinctive products as well as the people with a passion for producing them. Check out the regular producers and farmers markets can be found at Ayr, Ballantrae, Creetown, Cumnock, Gatehouse of Fleet, Girvan, Glenkens, Kirkcudbright and Wigtown.



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Smokehouses

Several smokehouses have an on-site cafés serving fine quality smoked salmon and scallops as well as meats and cheeses.



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Woollen products

The area was famous for hill sheep and even the lichens used to produce dyes. Today you can find the distinctive two coloured patterns of Sanquhar knitting or find fabrics made from hand spun yarns coloured with natural dyes.



CASE STUDY

Finlay's Cheese

The Finlay family at Rainton have a long tradition of cheese production but after a break of 40 years they have reintroduced the art of hand-made cheeses. Using the beautifully creamy milk their organic herd produces, they make delicious varieties of Finlay's Cheese with local names like Black Douglas, Cally Crowdie and Carrick.



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www.creamogalloway.co.uk/finlays-farm



▲ Sample image caption © and copyright



More ideas

- ➔ South west Scotland has a reputation for producing high quality beef cattle, including heritage breeds such as the hardy Galloway, and its striking cousin the Belted Galloway, that are well adapted to living on the upland pastures and windswept moorlands of the region.
- ➔ One of the best known crops in the Biosphere is Ayrshire 'tatties'. Known for their earthy, sweet flavour, they are some of the earliest new potatoes grown in Scotland.
- ➔ Several hand crafted beers are now brewed in the area joining the southernmost whisky distillery in Scotland.
- ➔ Castle Douglas is one of the area's favourite market towns and is themed a Food Town. It offers a range of independent and speciality food and craft shops in a traditional high street setting.



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Action

Help others find out more about local producers...

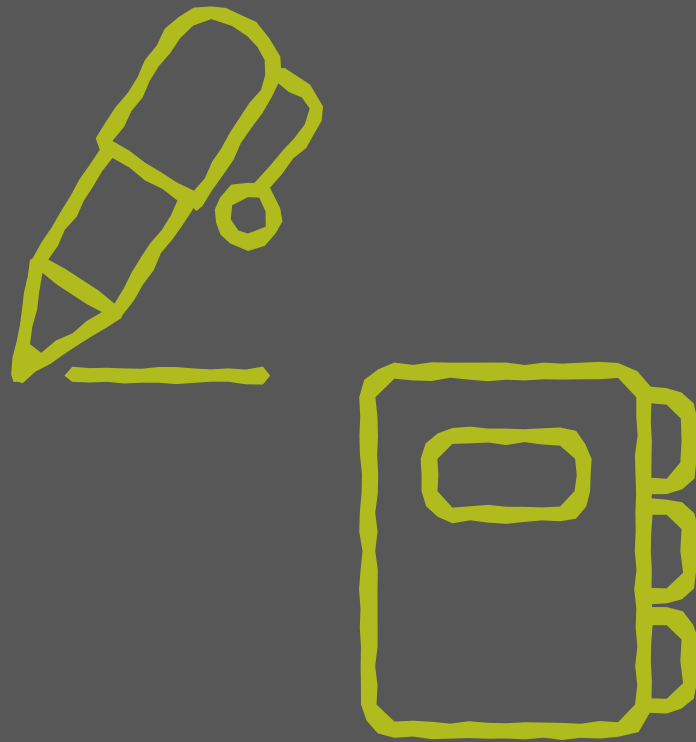
- Seek out local producers and suppliers and buy from them when possible.
- Encourage visitors to try local produce by recommending places that offer local produce such as farmers markets, tearooms and restaurants.
- Find out about local produce and tell others about what you find and how it helps support the rural economy.
- Ask local shops and food establishments to stock and use local produce.



Search

The Biosphere operates a Biosphere Charter scheme which encourages the use of Biosphere brand by those who support the organisation's principles. See www.gsabiosphere.org.uk

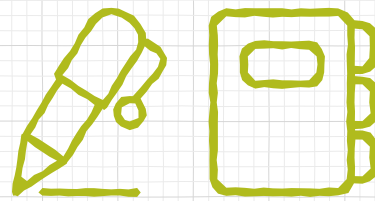


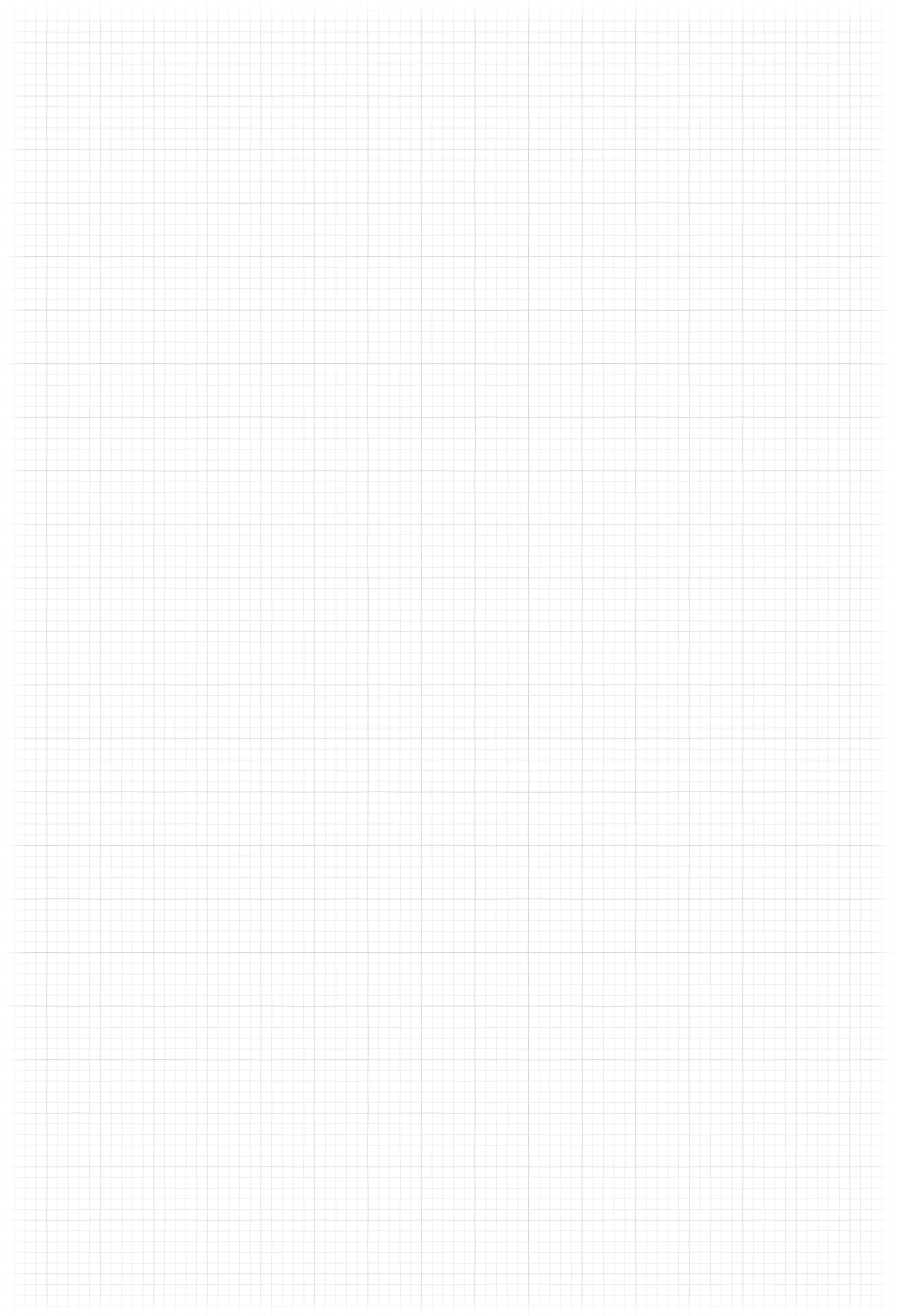


YOUR NOTES & CONTACTS

Use this section to include your own notes and any contacts you make within the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere.

YOUR NOTES & CONTACTS





A 'Biosphere' is a special status awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to places where communities can demonstrate a passion for living and working that benefits people and nature.



GALLOWAY AND SOUTHERN AYRSHIRE BIOSPHERE

The Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere is guided by a partnership made up of representatives from communities, local organisations, businesses, the local authority and public agencies who are all working together to develop the opportunities that the Biosphere status brings.

This Toolkit has been produced for the Biosphere Partnership by consultants Countryside and is based on information collected through discussion with local people to discover what is special about the Biosphere area, including their favourite places, things to do, local produce, landscape and scenery, heritage, culture and events. This information was then used to develop the different special qualities or sense of place 'themes' that form the basis of this Toolkit.

The information collected during the study is invaluable to the Biosphere Partnership and we would like to thank everyone who contributed to the project. We are happy to share this information to inspire you to use your own local knowledge and sense of place to benefit your work, your community and the Biosphere as a whole.



For further information about the Sense of Place Toolkit and the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere and for contact details please visit:

www.gsabiosphere.org.uk

designed & produced by
countryside 

