



SOUTHERN AYRSHIRE
BIOSPHERE



Solway Firth Partnership

Bringing in the Rhins Review 2021
February 2022

Biosphere Reserves are renowned for exceptional environments and a high diversity of life. Biosphere Reserves are areas where the special attributes of the area are considered to be potential assets for the local people and local societies. When an area demonstrates good examples of using and preserving these resources, it may be suitable to become a Biosphere Reserve.

UNESCO

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1. The Brief

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere were looking for support in creating a case for inclusion of the Rhins of Galloway (including Stranraer and Luce Bay Ramsar Site) into an extended UNESCO Biosphere Boundary.

This report builds on the natural and cultural heritage opportunities already identified in the Marine Boundary Review 2016 carried out by Solway Firth Partnership (SFP). It includes socio-demographic data for the Rhins / Stranraer and views of local people through a range of engagement, both survey and face-to-face with local communities, businesses, and key stake holder groups in the area.

UNESCO Biosphere staff supported SFP through attending the public event and sharing examples of how the Biosphere is currently working in other parts of the region.

Whilst this report focuses on the terrestrial aspects of the Rhins, stakeholder engagement also included elements linked to the wider marine environment to aid future consideration related to expanding the Biosphere into the marine environment.



Figure 1: Mull of Galloway, southern most point of Scotland

2. Background

The Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere (GSAB) boundaries were set in 2011 as part of the designation process submitted to UNESCO, see Figure 2 below. They were largely based on river catchments and community council areas, finishing at the high-water mark along coastal boundaries. At the time of designation partners elected to not include the marine environment due to a Scottish Government review taking place regarding marine planning which at the time was still some way off reaching a conclusion.

In 2016 Solway Firth Partnership (SFP) were commissioned by GSAB and Dumfries and Galloway Council to consider the opportunities for inclusion of the marine environment within the UNESCO Biosphere.

The report concluded that:

“The combined factors of a rich and delicate ecosystem in the coastal zone along with a concentration of pressures and regulatory divisions makes boundary setting on the coastline unwise. Doing so creates a further division just at the place where integration is most needed. Further, there is a national and international trend towards greater representation of marine areas within the Biosphere network and Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere has the potential to make a valuable contribution in this respect. The inclusion of a marine component within the transition zone strengthens the existing GSA Biosphere by adding a complementary dimension with huge potential to support the objectives of conservation, sustainable development, education and research.”

It specifically highlighted the need for engagement with local communities and businesses to ascertain their support. It suggested initially focusing on designated sites such as the Luce Bay SAC given that it is already subject to management as a unit. It cautioned that the inner Solway with its transboundary management would be a more complex area and could benefit from a phased programme of boundary revisions.

It suggested that any expansion of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere into the adjacent marine area would make inclusion of the Rhins in its entirety essential. Inclusion of this area's rich and diverse coastline would complement the potential development of a complete coastal route within the Biosphere.

Currently the exclusion of the Rhins of Galloway is the area most frequently questioned by local communities, businesses, and MSP's. More recently South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) and the newly formed South of Scotland Destination Alliance have also queried the position. D&G College have expressed positive support for inclusion of the Rhins including Stranraer and therefore bringing the Stranraer Campus within a boundary revision.

At the Biosphere Partnership Board meeting on 28 May 2021, Board members recognised that the decennial Periodic Review, due to be submitted in September 2022, was an opportunity to reconsider the boundaries of the Biosphere and to ask UNESCO for an amendment.

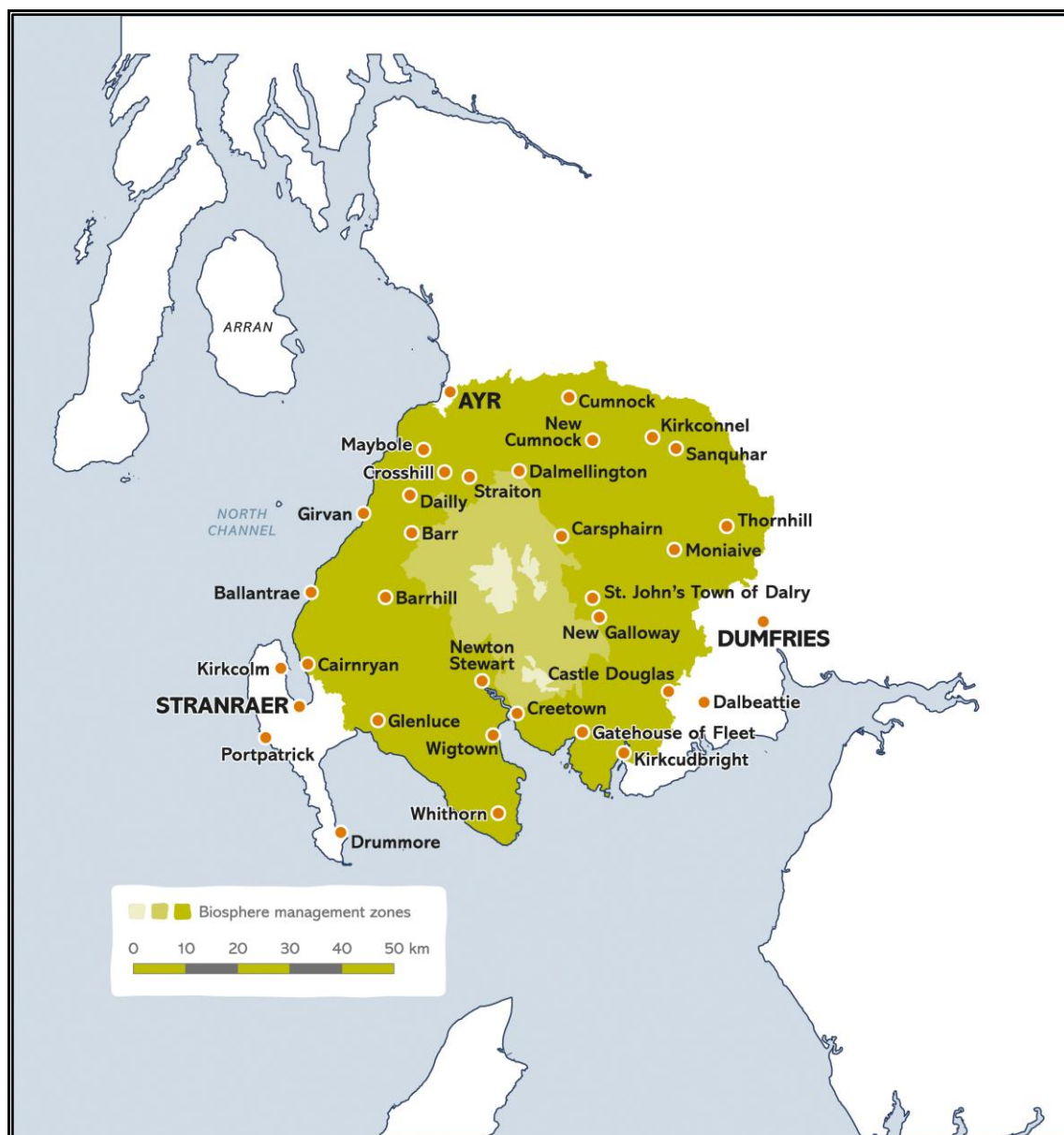


Figure 2: GSA Biosphere map

3. Description

Physical and Natural Heritage

The Rhins of Galloway consists of a hammerhead-shaped peninsula that makes up the western section of Dumfries and Galloway. Even inland the area is strongly maritime in character with the climate and vegetation influenced by the moderating effect of the surrounding sea.

The underlying geology is mostly Ordovician and Silurian greywackes and shales with red sandstone under the Stranraer lowlands. The landscape has been extensively modified by glacial deposition and erosion, producing an undulating landscape of low altitude.

The exposed western coast is rugged and characterised by steep cliffs of varying height, plus raised beaches and rocky foreshores, with small rocky and sandy bays. It is relatively inaccessible, approached only at intervals by a network of narrow lanes which serve scattered farmsteads, plus occasional coastal villages connected by more major roads. The more sheltered eastern coasts with extensive shingle beaches with sandy bays are relatively accessible and there are several camping, caravanning and chalet sites.

Inland the topography is gently undulating, with a pattern of smooth hills and damp hollows with occasional small burns. The landscape is an open one of improved pastures, with large dairy and beef farms with medium sized enclosures bounded by drystone walls or hedges. There are few trees except for policy landscapes around Lochnaw Castle and other estates. The map at Figure 3 shows the EUNIS (European Nature Information System) classification of Land Cover for Scotland [1]. It highlights the dominance of grasslands, especially improved grasslands, in the Rhins of Galloway with only small areas of woodland and coastal habitats.



Figure 3: Section of UK land cover map 2020 ©Crown Copyright [1]

Today's landscape bears traces of thousands of years of settlement including prehistoric forts, medieval churches and castles, historic farmsteads, harbours and lighthouses. The west coast is particularly rich in historic sites where the remains of promontory forts and mottes that are evidence of the importance of the Rhins in the past.

Towards the head of Luce Bay, the largest dune system in southern Scotland can be found at Torrs Warren. The foreshore and sand dunes are designated both as an SPA (part of Loch of Inch and Torrs Warren SPA) and SSSI for features including dune habitat, invertebrates, wintering raptors and waders [2]. The dunes accommodate typical plant species including sea rocket, marram grass and sea holly whilst rarer residents include lesser twayblade and coral root orchid. Greenland white-fronted goose and hen harrier are winter visitors.

There are several excellent beaches in the Rhins include Sandhead where the sandy shore extends for miles, particularly at low tide, and where kite buggying is a popular activity. Ardwell Bay on the west of the peninsula has a fine sandy beach and views towards Ireland. Port Logan also has a sheltered sandy beach bounded by a harbour at one end and Logan Fishpond, a natural rock pool once a larder for nearby Logan House, at the other.

The Mull of Galloway is noteworthy for many reasons including being the southernmost point of Scotland. It hosts plant species at the northernmost and southernmost limits of their range in Britain including Scots lovage and rock samphire and is designated as an SAC [3] for its plant-life. Large areas of maritime heath and grassland create colourful swathes of flowers including spring squill, thrift and sea campion in spring and summer. The views in every direction are spectacular with England, the Isle of Man and Ireland all visible on clear days.

The Mull is an RSPB reserve [4] with its colony of sea birds including guillemots, razorbills and kittiwakes. A few puffins are around in early summer, and peregrines are a regular feature. Mull of Galloway Lighthouse [5] is open to visitors in summer and, along with its cottages and surrounding land, is owned by the Mull of Galloway Trust [6]. The community buy out of the former Northern Lighthouse Board property demonstrates the commitment of the local community to playing an active part in securing a sustainable future for this iconic site.

There are excellent opportunities for wildlife watching all around the Rhins coast. Gannets nest on the nearby Scar Rocks and can be seen plunging into the surrounding waters of Luce Bay. Harbour porpoise are regular visitors to the coastal waters as well as occasional sightings of basking shark, dolphin and minke whale. The sheltered waters of Loch Ryan make it an excellent site for bird watching with species including Slavonian grebe, red-throated diver and eider duck. Additionally, the harbours at Portpatrick and Stranraer are good places to see black guillemot.

The maritime climate and warming influence of ocean currents creates ideal growing conditions for many tender plants with Logan Botanic Garden [7] perhaps the best known of the Rhins gardens and tourism attractions.

Framework for Designations

A range of conventions, directives and commitments set out the framework for conservation of wildlife and habitats on an international scale. These include the Rio 'Earth Summit' where the UK and 167 other countries have pledged, through the Convention on Biological Diversity [8], to take local action to look after wildlife, ensuring its global sustainability.

Protection and conservation of the ecosystems and biological diversity of the maritime area are guided by the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic generally known as the OSPAR Convention [9]. Key European directives include the Habitats Directive [10] and the Birds Directive [11].

The aim of the European Union's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) [12], which was adopted in 2008, was to improve protection of the marine environment across Europe. The directive aimed to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) of the EU's marine waters by 2020 and to protect the resources upon which marine-related economic and social activities depend. The Directive embodied an ecosystem approach to the management of human activities having an impact on the marine environment and integrated the concepts of environmental protection and sustainable use. The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 [13] (adopted in May 2020) aims to strengthen the protection of marine ecosystems and to restore them to achieve “good environmental status”, including through the expansion of protected areas and the establishment of strictly protected areas for habitats and fish stocks recovery.

It is acknowledged that the marine environment is less well understood in ecological terms than the terrestrial environment and conservation management measures such as marine protected areas, many of which were designated in response to the MSFD, are much more recent developments than many land-based conservation initiatives.

UNESCO has urged the use of Biospheres as tools for implementing the main environmental conventions and the delivery of projects that build on MAB's emphasis on the ecosystem approach and sustainable use.

It is acknowledged that the international value of Biospheres could be enhanced by better representation of the marine environment, including marine protected areas, with the functions of research, monitoring and knowledge exchange providing the potential to be particularly beneficial to better understanding of positive marine management for conservation.

In the UK, there is a commitment to contribute to a well-managed network of MPAs in the North-east Atlantic [14]. MPAs for the conservation of wildlife and habitats in UK waters comprise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) and nature conservation MPAs (MPAs). MCZs are sites designated in English waters under the Marine and Coastal Access Act while nature conservation MPAs are sites in Scottish waters designated under the Marine (Scotland) Act.

Solway designations

European conservation designations apply to Luce Bay and Sands SAC [15] which is a European designated site in the outer Solway Firth selected for its diverse seabed and dune habitats while Torrs Warren at the head of the bay carries an SPA designation [2]. At the southern end of the Rhins is the Mull of Galloway [3] which is designated as an SAC for its sea cliffs and the flora of its maritime heath and grassland.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are areas of protected land or water defined by the European Union's Habitats Directive as containing unique species or habitats of high scientific value for conservation. There are 7 SSSIs in the Rhins. [16]

In addition to these international designations a regional designation for landscape includes the Rhins Coast Regional Scenic Area. It comprises the attractive rocky coastlines of the Rhins Peninsula from the Wig in the northeast round the whole of the west coast past the Mull of Galloway in the south and includes the southern peninsula to Ardwell.

There are also 4 Local Wildlife Sites on the Rhins which have been identified to raise awareness of habitats and species and encourage positive management [17].

Moving northwards, Clyde Sea Sill Marine Protected Area (MPA) [18] is a designation under the Marine (Scotland) Act and stretches from Corsewall at the northern end of the Rhins to the Mull of Kintyre. The area encompasses a distinctive sill across the seabed where the North Channel meets the Firth of Clyde and is of importance to fish species. The designation also reflects the importance of the area for black guillemots.

The high number of marine and coastal nature conservation designations on the seaward edges of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere demonstrates the extremely rich biodiversity value of this diverse area. The responsibility to ensure such valuable areas are well managed also results in many challenges.

Fisheries

The Solway supports a diverse mixed fishery, resulting in local fishermen targeting a wide range of fish and shellfish species. Commercial fishing boats work out of Solway ports including Stranraer, landing scallops and *Nephrops* from nearby waters. The Solway is also fished by boats from further afield including the Isle of Man, Ireland and larger ports to the north and south such as Girvan and Fleetwood. As well as commercial sea fishing by vessels, hand-gathered cockle, mussel and winkle fisheries also operate on the Solway shores. Although the main fishing activity of scallop fisheries is based further east, smaller amounts of shellfish are landed in Stranraer, including lobsters, whelks, razor clams, oysters and crabs.

Despite there being very little marine aquaculture along the whole North Solway Coast, Loch Ryan has the only wild native oyster fishery in Scotland. This produces about 20 tonnes of high-quality native oysters each year. It directly employs 2 members of staff but has a wider impact on the economy through the annual Stranraer Oyster Festival.

In Scotland, Inshore Fisheries Groups (IFGs) have been established to provide a voice for fishermen in marine planning and to develop sustainable inshore fisheries management. West Coast Regional IFG is supported by local sub-groups which are developing local management initiatives in their areas.

Local produce is seen as an integral part of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere offer, with top quality produce from the region. Seafood has the potential to play a stronger

part in the food offer of the Biosphere with some high-quality artisan smokehouses and restaurants already featuring local catch. However, much of the seafood landed into the Biosphere is exported abroad with comparatively little finding its way into local shops and restaurants or subject to local branding to make the most of its provenance. The inclusion of the coastal waters where commercial fishing takes place has the potential to enhance the opportunities to use the Biosphere status as a way of branding high quality, sustainable seafood.

Recreation

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in less international travel and a growth in stay-at-home tourism and recreation in 2021. This has seen the number of visitors to the Rhins of Galloway increase. A range of tourist activities and sites are located here including sea angling, sailing, tourist boat trips, gardens, wildlife reserves, lighthouses, beaches and walking routes. Plans for water sports centre at Loch Ryan, an expansion of the Stranraer marina and the development of the Rhins of Galloway Coast Path by Dumfries and Galloway Council will further increase the attractions on offer.

The Rhins of Galloway Coast Path is an ambitious project to improve access to the coast and create an 83-mile circular walking route. When complete, in 2022/23, the public will be able to experience all the stunning scenery of Scotland's southwest coast from the windswept cliffs of the Mull of Galloway to the sheltered waters of Loch Ryan. [19]

In Scotland the right to responsible access to the countryside allows people to enjoy the coastline for recreation, as long as they follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. [20] Although there are many popular coastal paths in the Rhins there are also sections which have obstacles and no obvious route.

The Rhins of Galloway Coast Path Project is tackling existing barriers by providing way-markers, installing gates, building bridges and clearing vegetation. Dumfries and Galloway Council are working in partnership with local farmers and communities to develop the route with an aspiration to link the Rhins of Galloway Coast Path to a wider network of long-distance routes, including the Southern Upland Way and the Ayrshire Coastal Path, to become one of Scotland's Great Trails. [19]

Cultural Heritage

The Rhins of Galloway has a rich cultural past which is reflected in a wide range of important heritage sites. These sites include prehistoric forts, medieval churches and castles, historic farmsteads, harbours and lighthouses and Second World War military installations.

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) published Archaeological Sites and Monuments series for the West Rhins (1985) identified and described 245 sites. Since 1985 RCAHMS and more recently Historic Environment Scotland have recorded additional sites. Details are available on the Pastmap site [21] which contains descriptions of protected sites of national importance including scheduled monuments, listed buildings and 20th century military sites.

Loch Ryan was a significant site for military activity during WW2. If the military bases at the Clyde or in Liverpool were destroyed by enemy raids it was designated as the replacement site. Although it was never called upon to fulfil this role, at the end of the war the Atlantic U-boat fleet surrendered in Loch Ryan and was towed to the North Channel and scuttled [22].

The locally distinctive policies associated with historic houses and estates are protected as Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes, as designated by Historic Environment Scotland in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. [23] These grounds which were consciously laid out for artistic effect are an important element of Scotland's historic environment and landscape. Such spaces play a big role in our heritage.

There is scope to develop the cultural offering of the Rhins to a wider audience.

Rhins Communities

The map at Figure 4 shows the geographical spread of the main communities within the proposed extension of the GSA Biosphere into the Rhins of Galloway. The proposed extension covers the majority of the Dumfries and Galloway Council designated, Stranraer and the Rhins Ward, an area of 335.8 km², along with a small area within the Mid Galloway and Wigtown West Ward.

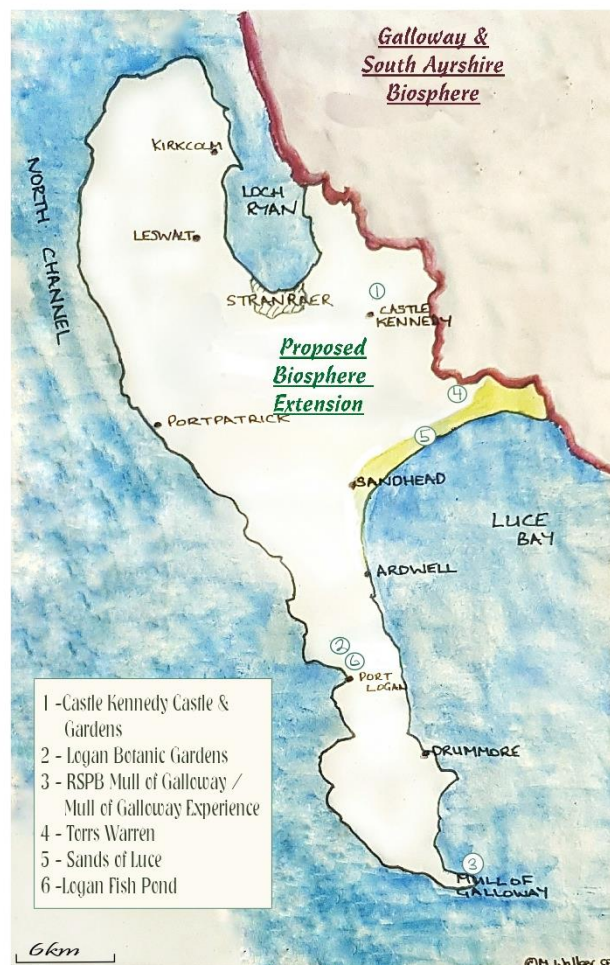


Figure 4: Map of Proposed Rhins extension showing communities, important sites and attractions

The intensification and mechanisation of agriculture has led to loss of employment in the rural areas of west Galloway including the Rhins, along with the centralisation of services and the consequent loss of local shops, banks and post offices.

There are 10 primary schools in Stranraer and the Rhins and 1 at Castle Kennedy along with one secondary school in Stranraer. [24] [25] The area has one of the highest travel times to school recorded in Dumfries and Galloway, with some children having to travel over 50min to reach their nearest Primary school. [26]

The decline of manufacturing has led to loss of jobs and diminishing local populations. Poor public transport links creates a reliance on cars; there is a shortage of affordable housing, and an outward migration of young people in pursuit of jobs. [26] This combination of factors has resulted in an increasingly elderly population demographic. Despite this, it is recognised that there is a strong sense of community spirit and a high level of creativity within the region. However, there is a pressing need for rural coastal communities to find new ways to ensure they have a sustainable future.

The main towns and villages in the area include:

Drummore has a population of 310. It lies to the south of Stranraer on the A716, and has a range of facilities including a harbour, public house/ restaurant and shop. It also lies within the Rhins Coast Regional Scenic Area. It is the gateway to the Mull of Galloway Trust tourist attractions including an operational lighthouse. It is amongst the many popular launch points for sea angling vessels in the area which is renowned for its diverse range of sought-after species including tope, bass and pollock [27].

Kirkcolm is located to the north of Stranraer overlooking Loch Ryan and is within the Rhins Coast Regional Scenic Area. The village has a shop, bowling green, public hall and hotel/restaurant.

Leswalt is in the upper Rhins area and has several facilities including a hall and shop.

Portpatrick has a population of 534 and is located southwest of Stranraer on the A77 overlooking the Irish Sea, was an earlier crossing point to Ireland in the days when North Channel shipping traffic was lighter [28]. It has a conservation area with several historic buildings. It is a popular tourist destination, and a busy harbour town. Facilities include a primary school, public hall, bowling green, tennis courts, shops and restaurants. The Portpatrick Harbour Benefits Society have bought over the harbour and transferred assets including land at the ward shore and the public toilets.

Stranraer is the main settlement in the Rhins and the second largest town in Dumfries and Galloway with a population of 10,160. It functions as the main service centre for the western part of Dumfries and Galloway. The town contains a number of facilities including a community hospital, leisure centre, a wide range of shops including supermarkets, a library and museum as well as many other businesses. It is located on the banks of Loch Ryan and has good access onto the A75 and A77 trunk roads. It is currently undergoing significant investment in new waterfront facilities including an expanded marina and water sports centre as part of a wider strategy for regeneration of the town in response to changes in ferry routes. The potential for Stranraer to play a significant part in the 'blue economy' of the west coast of Scotland has been recognised and its history as safe haven for sailors looks set to continue with an enhanced role in water sports and recreational boating in the future.

Sandhead lies to the south of Stranraer on the A716, overlooking Luce Bay. The settlement offers a number of facilities including primary school, bowling green, shop and cafe [24].

Castle Kennedy is in the Mid Galloway and Wigtown West council ward. It has a population of 352 and is a small estate village formed on the land of Stair Estates which also includes Lochinch Castle. Both the Castle and Castle Kennedy Gardens are very popular tourist and event attractions, and the settlement also includes a shop, petrol station and a primary school. [25]

Socio demographic information

Much of the socio-demographic information available relates to council administrative areas including wards and data zones as well as post codes. The existing Biosphere boundary does not follow these boundaries. In particular, the information relating to N Rhins (Appendix 6) will be approximate as the Northern end of it including Cairnryan is already included within the Biosphere. [29]

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data ranks areas from 1, the most deprived area in Scotland, to 6976 the least deprived. Deprived does not just mean 'poor' or 'low income'. It can also mean people have fewer resources and opportunities, for example in health and education. SIMD is useful for organisations and communities to identify the things that are important in their area [30].

Stranraer, the second largest town in Dumfries and Galloway had a population of 10,160 in 2020, accounting for 64% of the Rhins' residents. 19% of Stranraer's inhabitants were considered income deprived, and 58% were of working age of which 14% were employment deprived. [31]

Given its size Stranraer has a very large SIMD range with ranks between 81 and 5176. The town is split into 13 data zones. Three of these fall into the 2% most deprived areas of Scotland, whilst one is in the top 35% of least deprived areas. This mixed socio-economic profile is reflected in much of the data. For example, Stranraer contains a data zone with housing that ranks in the top 10% in Scotland; whilst another area of the town is in the lowest 2% for income. [31]

Since 2012, the overall SIMD ranking of the town has significantly decreased with the number of data zones falling into both the 10% and 5% most deprived areas of Scotland increasing. [31]

The SIMD ranks for the Rhins (excluding Stranraer) only varies from 1864 to 3361. All the data zones are slightly below average in terms of deprivation, but the average is brought down significantly by the score for lack of geographical access. Most of the other metrics are just below the Scottish average in the South Rhins and just above average in the North. [31]

The population of the North Rhins was 3,652 in 2020 and the South Rhins was 1,226. The percentage of working age was comparable to Stranraer with 57% and 59% respectively. In the North 11% were income deprived and 8% were employment deprived whilst in the South it was 14% and 10% respectively [31].

It should be noted that for rural areas this data cannot be relied on for identifying people experiencing disadvantage, only to identify the problems inherent in specific areas for decision making and targeting of resources [32] Full details of the analysis of the SIMD data can be found in Appendix 6.

In 2020, Stranraer and the Rhins have the highest number of homeless requests in Dumfries and Galloway, as well as 19.2% of the population with no qualifications and 16.9% income deprived. [26]

As mentioned above, despite there being very little marine aquaculture along the whole North Solway Coast, Loch Ryan has the most important site with the Loch Ryan Oyster Fishery Company Ltd which produces about 20 tonnes of high-quality native oysters each year. It directly employs 2 members of staff but has a wider impact on the economy in particular through the annual Stranraer Oyster Festival.

Loch Ryan is also the centre of the main shipping activity in the area with two ferry companies running services to Larne and Belfast out of Cairnryan. As the shortest ferry crossing to Northern Ireland, they make over 1.5 million passenger journeys each year, along with a large volume of freight. Approximately 750,000 vehicles move through the region each year as a result of the ferry crossing. [33]

There is also some defence activity and employment at the Ministry of Defence West Freugh weapons test and evaluation range on Luce Bay

4. Biosphere Stakeholder engagement

To maximise staff time and to overcome changing covid-19 restrictions, stakeholder engagement for the project consisted of:

- A questionnaire which was prepared for members of public to complete. It consisted of simple questions in a survey and information through Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) devised in agreement with the Biosphere staff, see Appendix 1 for the questionnaire and FAQs.
- A media campaign was undertaken to raise awareness of the proposal – this included issuing a press release with links to the survey, engaging through social media and providing copy for the Dumfries and Galloway Council Community eNewsletter, see Appendix 2 for press releases and other copy.
- Stakeholder engagement took place by email / phone / face to face (depending on availability and wishes of stakeholder) with a wide range of local business, residents, visitor attractions, See Appendix 3 for the full list of stakeholders engaged with.
- Engagement with both young people and the wider community was undertaken by holding drop-in sessions at Dumfries and Galloway College and the Ryan Centre, both Stranraer on 9 November 2021: Staff from SFP and the Biosphere were on hand to answer queries, provide support with the questionnaire and reach as many young people and wider community as possible.

The stakeholder engagement ran from August to the end of November 2021. Results from the online survey were collated and analysed at the end of this period (Section 6).



Figure 5: Twitter post of drop-in at DGC College, Stranraer

5. Results of Stakeholder Engagement

In total 111 responses were received from the stakeholder engagement exercise. Of these only 66 % were already aware of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Awareness of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere

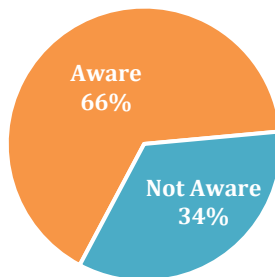
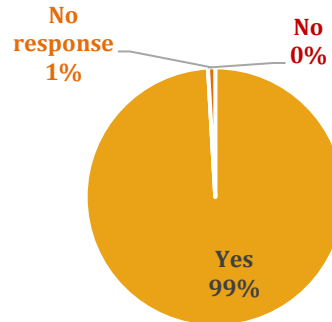
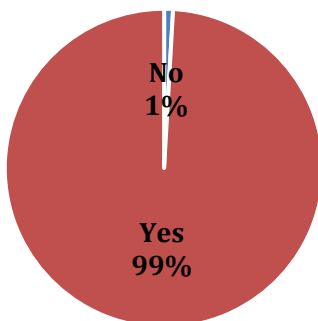


Chart 2: Do you support extending the land boundary of the Biosphere into the Rhins?



Everybody who expressed a view was in favour of extending the land boundary into the Rhins of Galloway (Chart 2).

Chart 3: Do you feel the marine environment should be included in the boundary extension?



Similarly, only 1 person responded that they did not feel that the marine environment should be included in any boundary extension (Chart 3).

When asked more specific questions about supporting the local economy, businesses, environment, and communities less than 2% felt that there wouldn't be any benefits (Charts 4 & 5).

Chart 4: Do you think that the UNESCO Biosphere designation will help support and promote the local economy and environment within the Rhins?

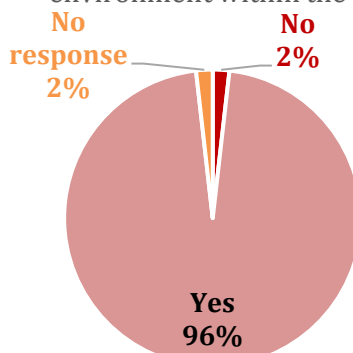
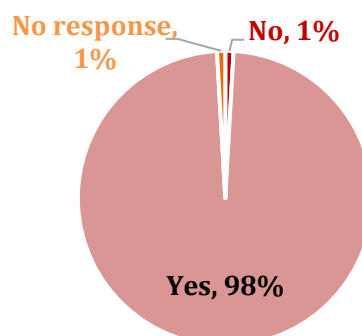
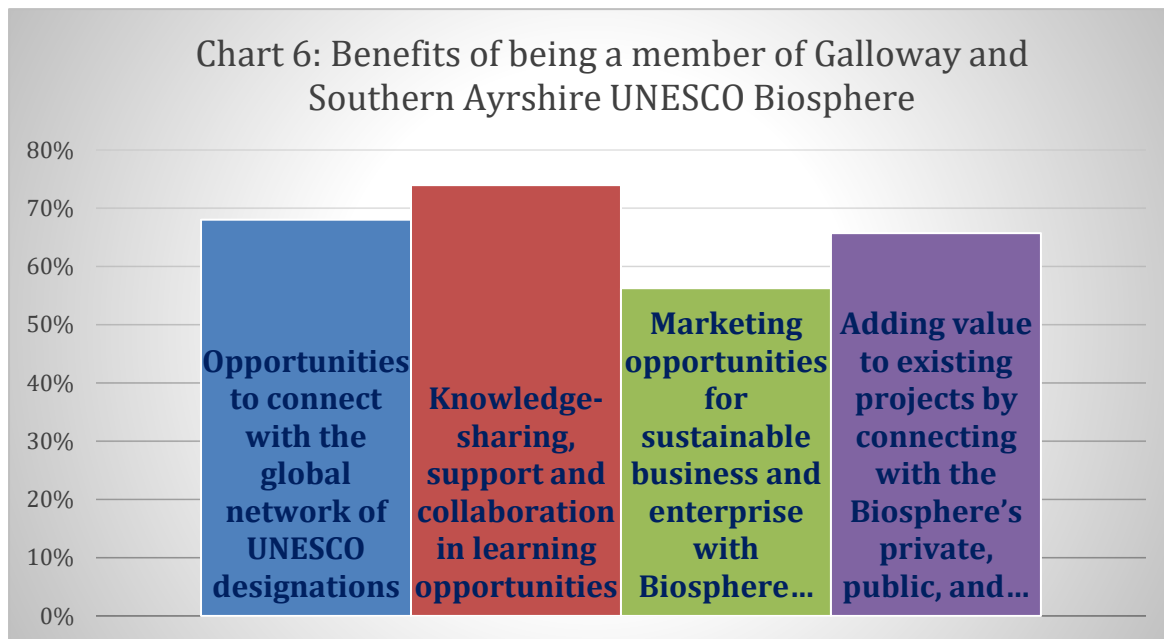


Chart 5: Do you think that the UNESCO Biosphere designation will help support and promote local businesses and communities within the Rhins?





From Chart 6, it can be seen that most people felt that there was personal benefit to them or their community by being a member of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere in the Rhins of Galloway. In particular, knowledge sharing, support and collaboration in learning opportunities was highly valued by those answering.

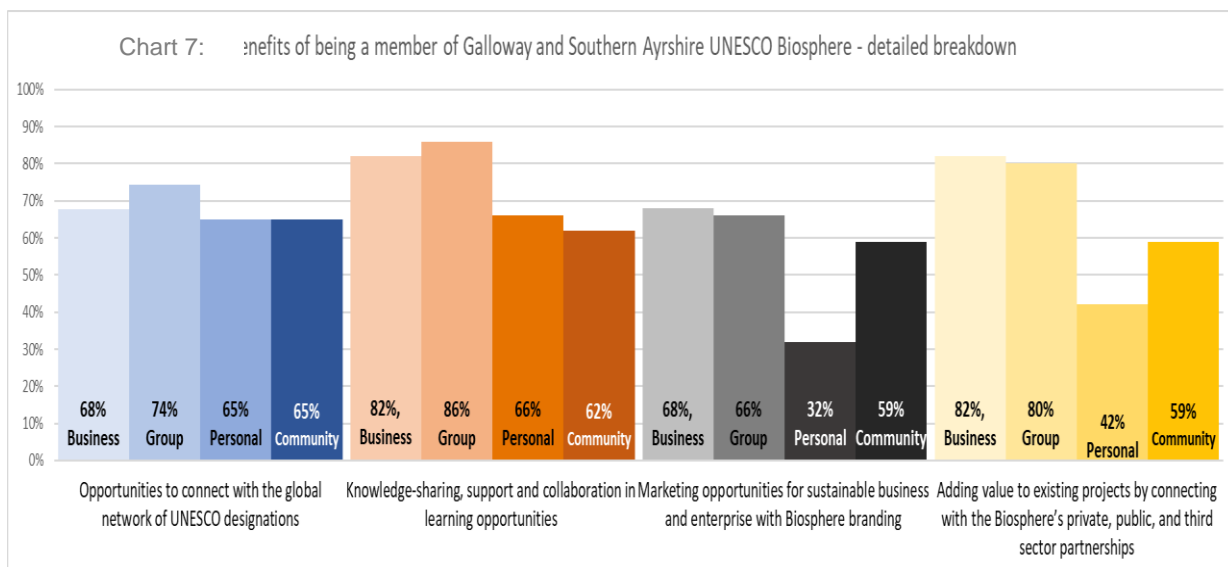


Chart 7 gives further breakdown of each of these categories which shows that businesses and those belonging to community or interest groups feel there is the most to gain from all aspects of Biosphere inclusion.

The questionnaire had further categories for “general” and “other”. These categories were more difficult to analyse and so the additional benefits identified (which tended to be more general in nature) were added into the comments section (see Appendix 4).

Full details of the results from all the surveys are included in Appendix 5.

Quotes from participants in the stakeholder engagement –

“Thank you for giving us the opportunity to complete the survey on the inclusion of the Rhins of Galloway in the Biosphere. I am a strong supporter of this and really appreciate the opportunity to say so!” **Jane Sloan, Chair, Aldouran Wetland Garden**

“The environmental credibility of the Biosphere designation is important to the Rhins. Within the SSDA they are looking to support a sustainability project with the Biosphere which would give sustainability credentials throughout the south of Scotland.” **David Ibbotson, Chair of South Scotland Destination Alliance (SSCA) and owner of the business at Knockinaam Lodge, Portpatrick**

“The Galloway area is world renowned for its environment, Sense of Place and the unique communities. The landscape has been shaped by land use and the community over 1000s of years. I fully recognise the benefits that could come with the extension of the Biosphere into the Rhins. I feel that the Biosphere team has done well on a limited budget and so with funding behind it they can fully support the businesses and communities in the Rhins.” **Finlay Carson, MSP for Galloway and West Dumfries (Constituency), Convenor of Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee**

“A Marine extension would help link in with RSPB seas programme targeting sustainable fisheries, better marine management for nature etc.” **Andrew Bielinski, Area Manager, Scottish Lowlands & Southern Uplands, RSPB**

“The Biosphere in the Rhins would be well placed to support sustainable community planning that covers social, economic and environmental considerations.” **Martin Donaldson, Kirkmaiden Community Council, Biosphere Partnership Board Member, Business Owner in Biosphere**

“Considering land and sea in isolation from one another is usually to the detriment of both and leads to siloed thinking in terms of the protection and restoration of Nature. Adding marine areas to the Biosphere designation will prompt people to think of the Biosphere not just as landscapes or seascape but a ‘wholescape’ than covers source to sea.” **Sean Clement, Ocean Restoration Project Officer, WWF**

See Appendix 4 for all the comments received.

6. Challenges and Opportunities

During the stakeholder engagement exercise discussions took place around the key challenges and opportunities that the Biosphere could support / address. A summary of these are highlighted below.

6.1. Challenges

- **Funding** - A major challenge around increasing the extent of the Biosphere is ensuring resources are available to implement and support the Biosphere aims within the extension. Stakeholders were overwhelmingly supportive of Bringing in the Rhins but comments were made with regards to funding and staff capacity:

“Funding and staffing is required to ensure the Biosphere designation is properly implemented.”

- **Infrastructure** – There are many heritage assets in the Rhins of Galloway, however existing infrastructure in the area is currently limited and not set up for large numbers of visitors. For example, car parks which may be adequate in low season can be overflowing in peak season. Cars will park in front of gates and other access points making it difficult for landowners / managers to access and manage their agricultural land. Additionally, the inadequate quality of the main arterial road and rail links were frequently mentioned during public consultation. This is a rurally remote area which may need infrastructure enhancement to be able to cope with an influx of visitors. A local comment was:

“The infrastructure is struggling to cope with visitor numbers at the moment. At the Mull of Galloway we are almost at breaking point!”

- **Community Engagement** – The Rhins of Galloway is a rural area where communities often feel unconnected from decision makers. Several respondents in the survey commented that it is vital that the community of the Rhins of Galloway is fully included in every stage of the extension development process.
- **Digital exclusion** - This is an ongoing issue in many areas of rural Dumfries and Galloway including the Rhins of Galloway. This is a combined problem of lack of broadband and mobile infrastructure and lack of digital skills due to limited learning opportunities.

6.2. Opportunities

The extension to the UNESCO Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere to include the Rhins of Galloway provides a range of opportunities for groups and organisations within the Rhins area.

- **Natural Heritage** - There are opportunities to promote the natural heritage of the Rhins, some of which were highlighted by participants in the stakeholder engagement. In particular RSPB and Logan Botanic Garden could see the opportunities for the public to engage more with the natural heritage of the area. It was generally felt that the RSPB Mull of Galloway, Luce Bay and Logan

Botanic Gardens make a great trio of attractions. Some specific comments on natural heritage from stakeholders include:

“RSPB Mull of Galloway can see an opportunity to raise profile of reserves to an international audience. The extension opens the potential for new partners / those partners that RSPB wouldn’t normally work with. It provides an opportunity to talk to people.”

“There are some unique species at Logan Botanic Garden including lichens / bryophytes along with access to experts in those subjects. This would link to Biosphere’s natural heritage aims. The Garden does a lot of conservation work in Scotland and abroad, which would give good links with other Biospheres, both national and international.”

“The environmental credibility of the Biosphere designation is important to the Rhins. Within the South of Scotland Destination Alliance they are looking to support a sustainability project with the Biosphere which would give sustainability credentials throughout the south of Scotland.”

- **Sustainable Fisheries** - There is an opportunity to promote sustainable fisheries through the Biosphere designation. Some specific comments on fisheries from stakeholders include:

“A marine extension would help link in with RSPB seas programme targeting sustainable fisheries, better marine management for nature etc.”

“Stranraer is home to native oysters, celebrated by the Stranraer Oyster Festival. Being part of the Biosphere extension would create a recognition of the sustainability that is being used to promote and help encourage sustainable tourism.”

“The inclusion of the coastal waters where commercial fishing takes place has the potential to enhance the opportunities to use the Biosphere status as a way of branding high quality, sustainable seafood.”

- **Cultural Heritage** - The cultural heritage of the Rhins of Galloway provides a special selling point of the area. Historic sites on the coastal boundary of the Biosphere abound with cairns, caves, promontory forts, mottes, abbeys, tower houses, lighthouses, castles, gardens and estates amongst this rich heritage. The linked promotion of the Biosphere’s historic sites along with other aspects of the coast in the form of themed trails is an opportunity that could be promoted.
- **Local Produce** - There are opportunities to enhance the development of the area through promotion of local produce, arts and crafts. A specific comment on local produce from stakeholders include:

“Local arts and crafts could be promoted (as in Harris Tweed)”

7. Summary

A wide range of stakeholders were engaged during the 'Bringing in the Rhins' Review. This was achieved through a combination of an online questionnaire; a media campaign; email / phone / face to face meetings with a wide range of local business, residents and visitor attractions; and engagement with both young people and the wider community through drop-in sessions at Dumfries and Galloway College and the Ryan Centre, in Stranraer.

The results of this stakeholder engagement overwhelmingly supported the extension of the current Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere boundaries to include the Rhins of Galloway. With 111 surveys completed, 99% of participants supported the extension of the land boundary of the Biosphere into the Rhins of Galloway.

Of these 96% felt that the extension into the Rhins of Galloway would support the local economy and environment. Whilst 98% of participants felt that the extension into the Rhins of Galloway would support the local businesses and communities.

In addition, 99% of participants felt that the marine environment of the Rhins of Galloway should also be included in any boundary extension.

The surveys also identified that most participants felt that there was personal benefit to them or their community by being a member of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere in the Rhins of Galloway. In particular, knowledge sharing, support and collaboration in learning opportunities was highly valued by those answering.

A range of challenges and opportunities were identified during discussions both at public engagement sessions and with interviews with key local stakeholders. Comments from participants, some of which are highlighted above, show that the natural and cultural heritage of the Rhins of Galloway are key assets. These will provide opportunities within the Biosphere setting for the promotion of the local environment, business and communities.

8. Conclusions

Reviews of previous information, appraisal of local environmental, heritage and socio-economic factors, analysis of public engagement, discussions with key stakeholders and consideration of the challenges and opportunities identified lead to the conclusion that there is overwhelming support and rationale for the inclusion of the Rhins within the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere.

There is further support and rationale for extending this into the marine environment.

A Final Comment by a local stakeholder

“Thank you for undertaking this important survey. - it would be highly beneficial to include the marine environment in the extended Biosphere; - I find it remarkable that the Rhins was not previously included in Galloway and South Ayrshire Biosphere.”

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Appendix 1- Survey and Frequently Asked Questions

The Questionnaire



GSA Biosphere Boundary Expansion - Public Consultation

UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are described as 'learning places for sustainable development'.

There are currently 714 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves around the world, with the first in Scotland being awarded to Galloway and Southern Ayrshire in 2012.

The UNESCO Biosphere designation is awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. It was awarded to Galloway and Southern Ayrshire in recognition of the area being a world class environment for people and nature.

The Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere is now approaching its 10-year review, which is an opportunity to reconsider its geographical boundaries as well as establish if there is support from the community and businesses for any proposed changes.

The Rhins of Galloway has been identified as a suitable area to be included in the Biosphere area. We would like to know what you think, and invite you to take part in the survey below.

For more information, please take a look at our [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

About You

- Please provide the first three digits of your postcode.

E.g., DG8

- Are you taking part as a – (please tick all that apply)

Individual

☐

Business Owner

☐

– small / medium / large (delete as appropriate)

Community ☐

- Community Council / other local interest group *(delete as appropriate)*

Other

– please specify ☐

Your Opinions

Q1 – Were you aware of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere before taking part in this questionnaire?

Yes ☐

No ☐

What the Biosphere means to businesses and communities

Businesses and community groups within the Biosphere have the option to get involved in a range of different ways to suit their own needs and capacity, including:

- signing up to the Proud Supporter scheme - open to individuals, businesses and community groups
- becoming a Biosphere Community - promoting natural and cultural heritage and supporting the local economy
- taking part in Business Conversations, Sense of Place workshops and other public events
- applying for the Biosphere Certification Mark, awarded to business who share Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere's commitment to sustainability and enabling businesses to market their goods and services under the GSA Biosphere brand.

Q2 – Which benefits of becoming part of a Biosphere would be of interest to you and / or your business / community? (please tick all that apply)

	to me	to my business	to a group I belong to	to my community	in general
Opportunities to connect with the globally-recognised network of UNESCO designations					
Knowledge-sharing, support and collaboration in learning opportunities					

Marketing opportunities for sustainable business and enterprise with GSA Biosphere branding					
Adding value to existing projects through connecting with the GSA Biosphere's private, public, and third sector partnerships					

Q3 – Do you think that the UNESCO Biosphere designation will help support and promote local businesses and communities within the Rhins?

Yes ☐

No ☐

What the Biosphere means to the economy and environment

The Biosphere designation encourages people to make the most of the opportunities it offers for local people and visitors to celebrate the area in a sustainable way, including:

- supporting the green economy and regional Net Zero goals
- promoting sustainable tourism and increasing visibility of local produce, activities, and visitor attractions
- delivering learning projects focused on the region's unique nature, culture, and heritage
- supporting outdoor, experiential education, green skills training, and sustainable employment opportunities
- strengthening the local network of farmers, growers and producers
- partnership working in sustainable land management and conservation
- contributing to the health and wellbeing of communities as a whole, making the Biosphere a desirable place to live, work and play.

Q4 – Do you think that the UNESCO Biosphere designation will help support the local economy and environment within the Rhins?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q5 – Do you support extending the land boundary of the Biosphere into the Rhins?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q6 – Many UNESCO Biospheres also include the marine environment which offers new partnership opportunities to fishing and seaside communities and potential for increased conservation work in these areas.

Do you feel the marine environment should be included in the boundary extension?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q7 – Do you have any other comments to make on the proposed extension to the Biosphere into the Rhins of Galloway?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. If you would like more information on the Biosphere visit www.gsabiosphere.org.uk or email info@gsabiosphere.org.uk.

Your replies will be used to inform decisions about the extension to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere and will only be shared with that organisation. The information will be used and stored in line with Solway Firth Partnership's Privacy Notices which can be found [here](#) and in line with GSA Biosphere's Privacy Policy which can be found [here](#).



Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Biosphere and what is its purpose?

A Biosphere is a special designation awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

It means that Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere has been recognised internationally as a world class environment for people and nature.

The UNESCO Biosphere designation in SW Scotland is a recognition of its fantastic array of landscapes, wildlife, and cultural heritage. The purpose of the Biosphere is to encourage people to make the most of opportunities it offers for communities, businesses, and visitors to celebrate the area in a sustainable way.

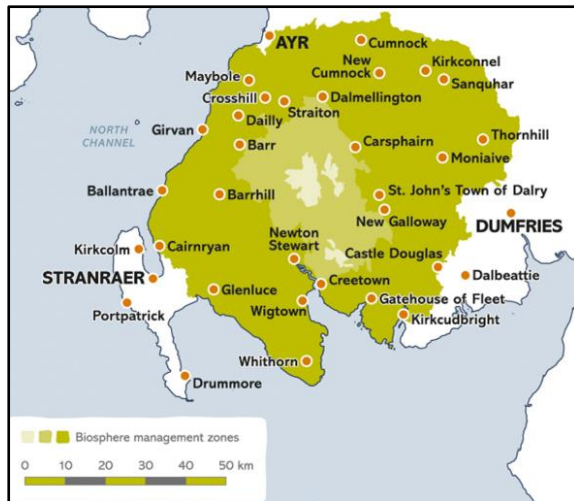
You can read more about the global network of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves [here](#).

Are there other Biosphere designations?

There are currently 714 Biosphere Reserves in 129 countries that belong to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Some nearby include Wester Ross, Isle of Man and North Devon.

Why was the Rhins not included in the first boundary?

The current Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere boundary embraces diverse countryside surrounding the Galloway Hills. It was originally defined by the rivers radiating out from the hills and their catchment areas, with the rivers providing a common theme to connect the natural environment with the cultural identity of the people who live and work in the region. Since these rivers do not reach the Rhins, this area was not included within the Biosphere's original boundary.



Map of current Galloway Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve

Why is now a good time to review the boundary?

A 10-year periodic review is required by UNESCO (taking place in 2022) which offers an opportunity to take another look at the current boundary of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere. It is recognised that by omitting the most southerly part of SW Scotland the Biosphere boundary implies that the Rhins does not have a world class environment for people and nature when the opposite is very much the case. Over the last ten years the possibility of including the Rhins has been one of the Biosphere's most frequently asked questions, by individuals, visitors, and by community groups.

What new rules and regulations does a Biosphere impose?

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. There are no costs involved.

What benefits does the Biosphere designation bring to my community / business?

The designation recognises SW Scotland as a special place using the globally respected UNESCO brand. A key goal of the Biosphere is to foster a sustainable economy and society by offering new opportunities for businesses and communities to 'do things differently' and safeguard the environment for future generations.

If you want to find out more about Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, here are some useful links:

www.gsabiosphere.org.uk

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Instagram](#)

Appendix 2 – News Release and Copy

Press Release 1



Bring in the Rhins? Biosphere boundaries come up for review.

With its 10th anniversary approaching in 2022, Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere is reviewing its geographical boundaries and the question of whether to make the Rhins of Galloway part of the designation has been raised. Following discussion by the Biosphere Partnership Board in May, the proposal is now moving into the early stages of public consultation with the launch of a digital survey to test public opinion on the potential benefits of 'bringing in the Rhins'.

In its present form the Biosphere covers 5,268 km² of south-west Scotland across the three local authority areas of Dumfries and Galloway, East and South Ayrshire. It is part of a family of more than 700 Biosphere designations around the world, recognised by UNESCO for the commitment of their local people to live and work in harmony with their precious landscapes, wildlife and cultural heritage.

The Biosphere brings with it no regulatory control, rather it works in partnership with other agencies in delivering a programme of initiatives which support sustainable land use and local enterprise, as well as developing research and learning opportunities, and enhancing community resilience to local climate change impacts.

The current Biosphere boundaries were based on river catchments which resulted in the Rhins being left out of the original designation, a decision which has been questioned on a number of occasions in recent years. Including this region would bring in Luce Bay and the Mull of Galloway, Scotland's southernmost point. Kirkcolum, Portpatrick, and Drummorie would be brought into the fold, as would Stranraer, which with its population of approximately 13,000 would become the largest Biosphere town.

The time to discuss bringing in the Rhins is opportune, as Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere has its 10-yearly review with UNESCO in 2022. The Biosphere team are keen that as many local residents as possible can participate in the consultation, and are inviting people to take part in an online survey at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BiosphereBoundaryReview. The Biosphere is working with [Solway Firth Partnership](#) to create a range of both in-person and digital forums so that everybody who wishes to respond to the expansion proposal has ample opportunity to do

so. Some of the most [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about what the UNESCO Biosphere designation means have been collated for public perusal, in order to help people decide whether or not they support the idea. More information is available at gsabiosphere.org.uk or can be requested via email to info@gsabiosphere.org.uk

Notes to editors:

The Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere

- Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere has been recognised internationally as a world class environment for people and nature.

The UNESCO Biosphere designation was awarded in 2012 in recognition of the fantastic array of landscapes, wildlife, cultural heritage and learning opportunities that SW 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.

- A UNESCO Biosphere:
 - is a special designation awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to areas renowned for their exceptional environments which are valued by local people. They are places of cooperation and collaboration that show that a sustainable way of living is not only possible but already happening.
 - has four main functions:
 - 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.
 - Climate Change: supporting mitigation and adaptation in a changing global environment
 - is an area that demonstrates a way of living and working that benefits people and nature.
- The Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere was the first in Scotland and is part of a family of over 700 Biospheres worldwide.
- The Biosphere Partnership is a charity with representation from communities, businesses, organisations and agencies that have an interest in the region.
- For More Information www.gsabiosphere.org.uk

Press Release 2 - Solway Firth Partnership Press Release for Drop-in Sessions

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

BRINGING IN THE RHINS – HAVE YOUR SAY!

With its 10th anniversary approaching in 2022, the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere is reviewing its geographical boundaries and considering 'Bringing in the Rhins'. Come along to our drop-in sessions in Stranraer on Tuesday 9 November to have your say!

We are discussing 'Bringing in the Rhins' now, as Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere has its 10-yearly review with UNESCO in 2022. The Biosphere is working with Solway Firth Partnership to talk to as many people as possible about the expansion proposal.

Drop-in sessions will be held on **Tuesday 9 November** at: -

Dumfries and Galloway College, Stranraer campus from 12.00noon to 2.00pm

Ryan Centre, Stranraer from 3.00pm to 5.00pm

Both sessions are open to the public so come along and have a chat with us! We can answer any questions you might have about the designation and what it might mean to you and your business. You will then have the opportunity to complete the survey, either online or by providing us with your feedback.

The Biosphere team are keen that as many local residents as possible can participate in the consultation. If you aren't able to come to a drop-in session, why not take part in an online survey at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BiosphereBoundaryReview

Ends.....Ends.....Ends.....Ends

Notes for editors

- For further information about this article contact Clair McFarlan at clair@solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk
- More photos of the Rhins are available, please contact Clair for other images
- Some of the most [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about what the UNESCO Biosphere designation means have been collated for the public



More information is available at gsabiosphere.org.uk or can be requested by email: info@gsabiosphere.org.uk.

Wigtown Free Press Article

church. The embroidery is of the standard of work by the Royal College of Needlework and the motifs may have been bought ready-made to sew on to the frontal. The fragile silk has been backed and conserved for future years.

The very first wedding which took place at All Saints was between Alexander Dunlop and Charlotte Cooper on February 4, 1873. The church has records of marriages, baptisms and funerals, and the cemetery layout featuring graves of the Earls of Galloway, as well as Commonwealth War Graves for local heroes from both World Wars.

Gerry Ewen, Chair of All Saints Vestry said: "We are really looking forward to taking part in the Doors Open Event and hope that the displays we are organising to celebrate the history of our beautiful church will encourage visitors to come and either renew their acquaintance, or see it for the first time."

The church will be open on Saturday, September 4 from 11am-4pm and Sunday, September 5 from 12 noon (following normal Sunday Service at 10.30am) to 3.30pm. There is free car parking, disabled access and a toilet. Further information is available on the Doors Open website.

Shona Sneddon, a spokesperson for the charity said: "Alzheimer Scotland Stranraer and Wigtownshire were fortunate enough to be the benefactors of a very successful fun walk organised in aid of us by Mr Bobby McKie and his friends and family at Kirkcolm Bowling Club. "A huge thank you to

walk to take place on his land at Corsewall Estate. "The total to date is £2,825 which is absolutely amazing we cannot thank Bobby his family and friends and the generosity of the community enough, we look forward to sharing with them in the future what their money has allowed us to purchase."

PLANS TO BRING THE RHINS INTO BIOSPHERE

WITH its 10th anniversary approaching in 2022, Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere is reviewing its geographical boundaries and the question of whether to make the Rhins of Galloway part of the designation has been raised.

Following discussion by the Biosphere Partnership Board in May, the proposal is now moving into the early stages of public consultation with the launch of a digital survey to test public opinion on the potential benefits of 'bringing in the Rhins'.

In its present form the Biosphere covers 5,268 km² of south-west Scotland across the three local authority areas of Dumfries and Galloway, East and South Ayrshire. It is part of a family of more than 700 Biosphere designations around the world, recognised by UNESCO for the commitment of their local people to live and work in harmony with their precious landscapes, wildlife and cultural heritage.

The Biosphere brings with it no regulatory control, rather it works in partnership with other agencies in delivering a programme of initiatives which support sustainable land use and local enterprise, as well as developing research and learning opportunities, and enhancing community resilience to local climate change impacts.

The current Biosphere boundaries were based on river catchments which resulted in the Rhins being left out of the original designation, a decision which has been questioned on a number of occasions in recent years. Including this region would bring in Luce Bay and what the Mull of Galloway, Scotland's southernmost point. Kirkcubbin, Portpatrick, and Drummore would be brought into the fold, as would Stranraer, which with its population of approximately 13,000 would become the largest Biosphere town.

The time to discuss bringing in the Rhins is

opportune, as Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere has its 10-yearly review with UNESCO in 2022. The Biosphere team are keen that as many local residents as possible can participate in the consultation, and are inviting people to take part in an online survey at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BiosphereBoundaryReview. The Biosphere is working with Solway Firth Partnership to create a range of both in-person and digital forums so that everybody who wishes to respond to the expansion proposal has ample opportunity to do so. Some of the most Frequently Asked Questions about what the UNESCO Biosphere designation means have been collated for public perusal, in order to help people decide whether or not they support the idea. More information is available at gsabiosphere.org.uk or can be requested via email to info@gsabiosphere.org.uk.



The UNESCO Biosphere does not include the Rhins at present


Twitter post and Analytics

Tweet activity


Solway Firth Partnership @Solwaytweets
Have your say about including the Rhins in the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere on Tuesday 9th November in Stranraer. pic.twitter.com/qcgTEd8oVO

Impressions	295
Total engagements	14
Media engagements	7
Likes	4
Retweets	3

Facebook Post – Advertising survey

**Solway Firth Partnership**
Published by Zoho Social · 14 August · 🌐

The [#gsabiosphere](#) is working with us at Solway Firth Partnership to maximise reach and accessibility in the public consultation on whether to bring the Rhins of Galloway into the [#UNESCOBiosphere](#). They have just posted a feature article on their website with links to FAQs about what a Biosphere is and does, and what it might mean to communities and businesses in the [#Rhins](#) to become a part of it. The online survey is also linked in the article. Please do share and join in th... See more



[GSABIOSPHERE.ORG.UK](#)
Bring in the Rhins? The Biosphere's boundaries are up for review... | Galloway and Southern Ayrshire...
With its 10th anniversary approaching in 2022, Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere is reviewing its regional boundaries and the question of whether to make the Rhins of...


449
People reached

27
Engagements


—
Distribution score

Boost post

Facebook Post – Drop in session

**Solway Firth Partnership**
Published by Nic Coombes · 31 October at 15:48 · 🌐


Have your say about including the Rhins in the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere on Tuesday 9th November in Stranraer.



GALLOWAY AND SOUTHERN AYRSHIRE BIOSPHERE

Bring in the Rhins? Meet the Biosphere team and have your say!

Find out more about our UNESCO Biosphere and what it would mean to make the Rhins of Galloway part of this international designation



Tuesday 9th November
D&G College, Stranraer Campus, 12 noon - 2pm
Ryan Centre, Fairhurst Rd, 3pm - 5pm

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Unesco Biosphere
30 October at 15:01 · 🌐
Next year marks the 10-year anniversary of our [#UNESCOBiosphere](#) and is a great opportunity to review our current geographical boundaries. The Rhins of Galloway ... See more


419
People reached

15
Engagements

—
Distribution score

Boost a post

SFP Website News Item



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Working **together** towards a **sustainable** Solway Firth

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

Bringing in the Rhins – Have Your Say!

Posted 3rd November 2021 by solwayfirthpartnership

Bringing in the Rhins – come along to the Stranraer drop-in sessions to have your say.

With its 10th anniversary approaching in 2022, the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere is re-viewing its geographical boundaries and considering 'Bringing in the Rhins'. Come along to our drop-in sessions in Stranraer on Tuesday 9 November to have your say!

We are discussing 'Bringing in the Rhins' now, as Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere has its 10-yearly review with UNESCO in 2022. The Biosphere is working with Solway Firth Partnership to talk to as many people as possible about the expansion proposal.

Drop-in sessions will be held on **Tuesday 9 November** at: –

Dumfries and Galloway College, Stranraer campus from 12.00noon to 2.00pm

Ryan Centre, Stranraer from 3.00pm to 5.00pm

Both sessions are open to the public so come along and have a chat with us! We can answer any questions you might have about the designation and what it might mean to you and your business. You will then have the opportunity to complete the survey, either online or by providing us with your feedback.

The Biosphere team are keen that as many local residents as possible can participate in the consultation. If you aren't able to come to a drop-in session, why not take part in an online survey at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BiosphereBoundaryReview

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[May 2021](#)

[April 2021](#)

Appendix 3 – List of Stakeholders Engaged With

The following Stakeholders were contacted:-

- Ward Officers - Ward Officer for Stranraer and the Rhins / Ward Officer for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
- Development Trusts - Stranraer Development Trust / Kirkcolm Community Trust / Portpatrick Community Development Trust / Mull of Galloway Trust
- Community Groups - The Portpatrick Harbour Community Benefit Society / Scottish Woman's Institute
- Community Councils – Cairnryan / Stranraer, Ochtrellure and Belmont / Kirkcolm / Leswalt / Portpatrick / Lochans / Stoneykirk / Old Luce / Kirkmaiden / Castle Kennedy
- Elected Members - Finlay Carson MSP (Constituency) / Emma Harper MSP (Region) / Sharon Dowey MSP (Region) / Craig Hoy MSP (Region) / Colin Smyth MSP (Region) / Brian Whittle MSP (Region) / Carol Mochan MSP (Region) / Martin Whitfield MSP (Region) /
 - Alister Jack MP
 - DGC Councillors – Stranraer and the Rhins / Andrew Giusti / Willie Scobie / Tommy Sloan / Ros Surtees
 - DGC Councillors – Mid Galloway & Wigtown W - Katie Hagmann / David Inglis / Jackie McCammon / Jim McColm
- Other organisations -
 - RSPB, Area Manager, Scottish Lowlands & Southern Uplands
 - Logan Botanic Garden, Curator
 - Castle Kennedy Gardens
 - Luce Bay and Sands, MOD West Freugh – QinetiQ
 - Rhins Coastal Path
 - NatureScot
 - NFUS, Regional Manager Dumfries and Galloway
 - D&G College (Stranraer Campus), External Liaison Officer and Campus Manager
 - Galloway Static Gear Fishermen's Association
 - Aldouran Wetland Garden
 - Harbour Master Stranraer
 - West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group
 - Galloway Fisheries Trust
 - Scottish Wildlife Trust - Public Engagement Officer (Living Seas Marine Conservation)
 - Marine Conservation Society Scotland
- Businesses
 - South of Scotland Destination Alliance
 - Visit SW Scotland
 - Sea Fishing Charters

Appendix 4 – Comments from Stakeholder engagement

Public Engagement	Online	Arranged Interviews
The Rhins is a amazingly diverse area both culturally and environmentally and should be recognised.	Community must agree to this and engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand why the original boundary was made but makes no sense to exclude the Rhins.
<p>Why wasn't the Rhinns included in the first place</p> <p>Needed ASAP</p> <p>I would like to see it extended to include the Urr valley</p> <p>Hugely important for heritage, wellbeing and future of the whole area.</p> <p>Be bold for nature</p> <p>This can't happen soon enough. I'm already trying to embody the egos of the Biosphere here in the Rhins but I think the networking would help spread awareness of other local businesses that could 'buy in'.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good to include more communities in the Biosphere with more engagement. RSPB Mull of Galloway Reserve is part of Rhins. Maybe an opportunity to raise profile of reserves to an international audience. A Marine extension would help link in with RSPB seas programme targeting sustainable fisheries, better marine management for nature etc. If Biosphere can help deliver better land management through policy at local / government level it would be good. Opens the potential for new partners / those partners that RSPB wouldn't normally work with. Provides an opportunity to talk to people. <p>On a general note, it has to be stressed that if we're going to extend the Biosphere is needs to be done properly with funding and staffing. He feels that at present the Biosphere has a low profile. From a business point of view he has not often seen the Biosphere much in the news or focussing on engagement with community e.g. At Logan Botanic Garden there has only been a couple of communications about it. This is probably due to a lack of funding. The profile of the Biosphere needs to be raised to be influential.</p>

I have resided as a short-term resident in South Rhins and have a good impression and knowledge of the area. Extension of the Biosphere boundary to include the Rhins would be a significant inclusion and one I would wholeheartedly support.

It's a surprise that it was left out! A quirky decision. The Rhins is very much part of the area. It is very special and unique. It has a wonderful land and sea environments and communities that all deserve the support that the Biosphere can provide. It should definitely be included as part of the Biosphere.

I feel that an extension to the East, to include Dalbeattie and the Colvend Coast should also be considered.

The Rhinns supports many plant species that are at their northern or southern limits in the UK and which occur nowhere else in the current Biosphere. The same may be true of other groups of organisms
aircraft noise ruins the whole area

I feel it is strange it was omitted in first place

I have always felt that the Rhins should have been included in the first place. They are a natural part of the area. (I would be keen to see the eastern boundary extended by a little to include the River Urr down to the sea - no further east than that).

As above, key to link into the National Park work. Also bring on the SSDA to the board and make links with equivalent Ayrshire organisations.

Can't come soon enough. Our environment is in crisis and we must do everything we can to minimise the damage we are doing. Then the planet will have a chance to stabilise naturally.

- Key to the extension is Luce Bay, felt that such an important site for biodiversity as Luce Bay should have been in the original designation.

- There are some unique species at Logan Botanic Garden including lichens / bryophytes along with access to experts in those subjects. This would link to Biosphere's natural heritage aims. The Garden does a lot of conservation work in Scotland and abroad, which would give good links with other Biospheres, both national and international.

- Logan Botanic Garden was the first garden in the UK to build a green conservatory – fits sustainability theme of Biosphere

- Logan Botanic Garden was the first public garden in Scotland to have electric charging points – leading way in sustainability

- The Garden encourages the reduction of plastic consumption with a refill water bottle station etc.

- The main work of the Garden - Education / conservation / research / visitor attraction

- RSPB Mull of Galloway adds value to educational resource, sea birds / Luce Bay and Logan Botanic make a great trio of attractions

Martin feels that the Biosphere in the Rhins would be well placed to support sustainable community planning that covers social, economic and environmental considerations.

He said that for the Biosphere to be a success it needs to provide a good local presence especially in the South Rhins where the communities are geographically isolated. The Rhins is more of an island community as it's surrounded by water on three sides.

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, Bringing in the Rhins Review 2021

Good proposal but the infrastructure is struggling to cope with visitor numbers at the moment. At the Mull of Galloway we are almost at breaking point!

Stranraer is home to native Oysters, celebrated by the Oyster festival. Being part of the Biosphere extension would create a recognition of the sustainability we aim to promote and help encourage sustainable tourism.

I feel it is long overdue.

I feel it would be an important addition to the Biosphere designation

The landowners need to stop killing wildlife. They only want pheasants and there are thousands of them reared at the expense of all the native wildlife. Not a fox/stoat etc to be seen as they trap and shoot them with regular night hunts to make sure the non native pheasants only get killed by men shooting them. It's not a biodiverse region as the 'lairds' are all the same. It has great potential to be a wonderful biodiverse habitat but the lairds don't want that. Quick cash from shooting is what drives them. Conservation means conserving their bank account and nothing to do with wildlife. Good luck changing that but until you do then the region cannot get a false label.

Thank you for undertaking this important survey. - it would be highly beneficial to include the marine environment in the extended Biosphere; - I find it remarkable that the Rhins was not previously included in Galloway and South Ayrshire Biosphere.

Drummore has a local community hub which could host Biosphere staff visits or online meetings.

Not always obvious to see benefits of the Biosphere to land management. Would like to see the Biosphere getting involved in bigger land management issues eg. Consider getting involved in having an input/opinion on areas of concern such as planting conifers / siting wind farms on sensitive habitats. Feel that this might be something that should tackled within the objectives of the Biosphere.

The Galloway area is world renowned for its environment, Sense of Place and the unique communities. The landscape has been shaped by landuse and the community over 1000s of years. Finlay fully recognises the benefits that could come with the extension of the Biosphere into the Rhins. He feels that the Biosphere team has done well on a limited budget and so with funding behind it they can fully support the businesses and communities in the Rhins.

- The Rhins looks as though it has been left out of the original Biosphere boundary. There didn't appear to be any logical reason why it wasn't included. It appears negatively to the region to have left it out.
- The environmental credibility of the Biosphere designation is important to the Rhins. Within the SSDA they are looking to support a sustainability project with the Biosphere which would give sustainability credentials throughout the south of Scotland.

By expanding the discussion it helps to promote the understanding of the Biosphere brand.

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, Bringing in the Rhins Review 2021

There are two major tourist attractions in the area plus major links to Nth Ireland and on to Europe

I don't think it should have been left off in the first place and think its even more important that it is included with the new coastal path being put in place.

- bringing further recognition to the heritage and development potential of this neglected section of our unitary council area; - raising sensitivity and bringing intelligence to issues of sustainability and environmental protection as they fall under the consideration of council planning and commercial development.

Bringing together learning from heritage and sense of place: something bigger than the sum of the parts.

I think this needs to link in closely with any Galloway National Park designation. Local arts and crafts should be promoted (as in Harris Tweed)

Would become a Biosphere supporter if the Rhins is included. It would help support the environmental credentials of business .

Appendix 5 - Collated results from all public engagement

Appendix 6 – SIMD Data

