

**AYRSHIRE JOINT PLANNING STEERING GROUP
26 MAY 2011**

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Update

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To update the Steering Group on progress with the proposed UNESCO Biosphere in Galloway and Southern Ayrshire.

BACKGROUND

2. In summer 2010 the Biosphere Officer Member Steering Group identified and endorsed a number of key tasks which have formed the priorities for the work programme of the partners over the last year. The tasks have related to the fundamentals of the case which needed to be presented to the Minister in November 2010 (see Ministerial Briefing at www.gallowayandsouthernayrshirebiosphere.org.uk) in order to secure Scottish Government approval as well as to progressing the case and Nomination for Biosphere status to UNESCO. These tasks are in summary:
 - **to continue the process of consultation and engagement** with communities; organisations; businesses and other stakeholders to raise awareness/understanding and where possible to secure support. This is an ongoing process which will be developed further, particularly through the LEADER funded 'Building Opportunity in the Biosphere' project.
 - **to identify and secure a Biosphere delivery and funding mechanism** through the LEADER Programme. Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway LEADER have approved a £290,000 application from Southern Upland Partnership, acting on behalf of the Biosphere Partnership, for a Joint Cooperation Project between the 2 LAGs.
 - **to identify and establish a governance structure and organizational arrangements** for taking the Biosphere forward. The approach adopted recognises that the public sector cannot deliver everything and that a 'partnership approach' means that decisions will be acceptable for the majority. The public sector partnership operating through the Biosphere Steering Group has been instrumental in exploring the case and galvanizing and progressing the process towards Biosphere status so far. However, it was recognized that a much broader public/private/community partnership would be required to take the process forward following preparation and submission of the Nomination. It was agreed and

endorsed by stakeholders and communities that a broadly based Biosphere Partnership Board (BPB) working to the remit of a Biosphere Charter would be the most appropriate vehicle to provide strategic direction to the process.

- **to progress the Biosphere application**, a series of draft Nominations were prepared and circulated to all interested parties during December 2010 and early January 2011. A Final Draft was circulated to all partners for approval at the inaugural meeting of the Biosphere Partnership Board on the 21st January 2011 and then formally submitted to UK Man and the Biosphere Committee. Following approval and sign off by UKMAB the Nomination was submitted for endorsement by Scottish Government which was given on the 24th February 2011. The application has now been formally submitted to UNESCO well in advance of the September deadline. A final decision on Biosphere status is anticipated in late Spring 2012.

FUTURE WORK

3. Future work will relate closely to the new organisational and Governance arrangements for the Biosphere. These arrangements are aimed at developing a process which will be a community driven and partnership led balance between bottom up and top down priorities. Over the next two years, the BOB LEADER Project will develop capacity at a grass roots level in the community, business and land management sectors to work in partnership with Local Authorities and Public Agencies. It is these partnerships which will be the key driver of future initiatives and the key to the future success of the Biosphere.

Biosphere Partnership Board

4. The Biosphere Partnership Board (BPB) Chaired by Professor Roger Crofts held it's inaugural meeting on the 21st January 2011. The Structure of the BPB is in summary: 3 Councillors; 6 Community Representatives; 4 Public Sector Agencies; 4 National Organisations; 4 Business Representatives; 3 Tourism Representatives; 2 Academic/Research Organisations.

The meeting discussed and approved the following:

- Biosphere Vision, Aims and Charter
- Organisational Governance arrangements for Biosphere
- Final Draft of Biosphere Nomination

The Board agreed that the Vision, Aims and Charter will provide the terms of reference for the BPB. The BPB will provide the overall strategic direction for the Biosphere. The following summarises the main responsibilities of the BPB:

- Work to the principles of the Biosphere Charter
- Provide strategic direction to the Biosphere
- Provide a framework for the Biosphere Working Group
- Establish Partnership links between the BPB and Community Planning Partnerships; Single Outcome Agreements; SRDP/RPACs; River Basin & Catchment Management Planning; Flood Plans; Land Use Plan and processes relating to the Climate Change Act and Marine Planning.

- Identify, develop and secure sustainable funding
- Provide guardianship of resources
- Monitor outputs and outcomes
- Disseminate awareness and understanding of the Biosphere
- Promote an annual Biosphere Community and Stakeholder Forum
- Promote international networks

It is anticipated that the BPB will meet every 4 to 6 months. It has been agreed that the meetings will rotate between the 3 Council who will host the meetings in turn. AJPU will continue to provide a coordinating role for the BPB and links with the BWG.

Biosphere Working Group

5. The Biosphere Working Group (BWG) replaces the Biosphere Steering Group. Elected representatives from the Steering Group now have membership on the BPB. The BWG is principally a working group of seconded officers drawn from the public sector partners. It has been agreed by partners that the previous Biosphere Steering Group arrangements will continue with the BWG being Chaired by Dumfries and Galloway and Coordinated by Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit. BWG will provide:
 - Operational oversight of Biosphere actions on behalf of BPB eg projects such as Building Opportunity in the Biosphere
 - Integration and coordination of the work of Thematic Groups
 - Operational complementarity and links with CPPs; SOAs; LUPs; INTERREG; LIFE; Heritage Lottery; LEADER; SRDP/RPAC; RBMP/Catchment Plans; Flood Plans; Integrated Habitat Networks; Central Scotland Green Network.
 - Support strategic project development and coordination
 - Maximise opportunities for operational and funding integration and complementarity with other actions and initiatives
 - Identify appropriate measures for monitoring outcomes and progress
 - Reporting to BPB on the above

6. It is anticipated that the input of Partners to the BWG will develop and change over time as the priorities of the Biosphere emerge from the BPB and the Thematic Groups. It will be essential that Partner organisations keep their representation on the BWG under review, as the work of the BWG develops, to ensure that it is appropriate to the task in terms of areas of expertise and level of influence within their organisation. It will be the responsibility of individual partner representatives to update and network within their own organisations and at a wider level in relation to all matters concerned with the Biosphere. The resource implications of the BWG for partner organisations will relate primarily to officer time. Arrangements for hosting meetings will continue as at present, rotating between the three Council areas in turn. It is expected that meetings will normally be scheduled on a bi-monthly basis with the flexibility for additional meetings as and when needed.

Thematic Groups etc

7. A fundamental component in the development of the Biosphere will be the emergence of participatory engagement structures and processes which are owned by stakeholders and embedded in local communities. While it is envisaged that this is likely to take many

forms, facilitating this process through the establishment of a series of pan-Biosphere Thematic Groups covering the following broad areas will be an immediate priority:

- Business and Renewable Energy
- Tourism, Food and Crafts
- Farming Forestry and Land Based Business
- Schools/Education
- Research and Monitoring
- Community
- Environment

While these groups may have a particular focus none are self contained and will inevitably overlap, while some Themes are cross cutting. This is something which will be encouraged and developed. It is also envisaged that sub groups and 'Task & Finish' groups will be established to address particular issues as needed. A Biosphere Stakeholder Forum will be established as an annual event to encourage widespread stakeholder involvement, draw together the various themes and to mark and disseminate progress. This work will be funded, initially through LEADER.

LEADER Project Building Opportunity in the Biosphere

8. The Project is aimed at facilitating processes of awareness raising, understanding, capacity building and practical action during the period in which the UNESCO Nomination for Biosphere status for Galloway and Southern Ayrshire is progressing. Notification of Biosphere status is unlikely to be before mid 2012. In order to maintain momentum and avoid frustrating Biosphere stakeholders it will be important to begin to develop and realise opportunities which the concepts underlying Biosphere status present. During this period and before formal Biosphere status is conferred the area will have 'Biosphere Candidate' status, a term approved by UNESCO. The BOB project will employ 2 Biosphere Development Officers to continue the process of raising awareness, developing knowledge and understanding of the Biosphere and facilitating the identification, development and bringing forward of projects by communities, businesses and other stakeholders. The focus will be around bringing greater understanding of, enhancements to and benefits from Galloway and Southern Ayrshire's natural environment and the ecosystem goods and services that the area provides.
9. The project will seek to develop community and stakeholder processes to unlock the opportunities which undoubtedly exist in the assets and potential of the area in the form of ecosystem goods and services – visitor attractions (coast & country); natural environment; arts and crafts; renewable energy; food related SMEs; renewable energy; carbon trading; water quality, flood control, forestry - and in the people and the strong sense of community and culture of the area. The ultimate goal being to work towards a model for regional development in South West Scotland which is community and stakeholder driven and fully integrates people, communities, jobs, culture and nature in a way which is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

RECOMMENDATION

10. The Ayrshire Joint Planning Steering Group is asked to note the contents of this report.

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