

**Working Towards a  
Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve.**

**Report on the Consultation Undertaken by the Southern Uplands Partnership  
and East Ayrshire Woodlands**

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# 1. Executive summary

## 1.1 Outputs in relation to tasks set:

*a) Identification of relevant stakeholders and agree key geographical and sectoral stakeholder groups – particularly in the transition zone.*

Output: a list of all organisations, agencies, major businesses, community groups and particular individuals who may have some interest in the Biosphere concept has been compiled

*b) Prepare engagement plans for key stakeholders.*

Output: An engagement plan was developed based on the AGATE process trialled in Langholm (see annex 10). Experienced facilitators were contracted to share their experience and help draw-up a suitable process to use in the communities of the transition zone. In addition to this we planned to use existing group meetings public open meetings to explain the concept and seek views on it.

*c) Prepare supporting materials for engaging local stakeholders, including as required, leaflets, Powerpoint and audio-visual presentations and maps.*

Output. A leaflet with map was designed with input from all the working group partners. This took considerable time – but the result was considered to be of high quality. 10,000 leaflets were distributed across the BR region.

A Powerpoint presentation was produced and modified for use in different communities during the consultation process. We also made use of a DVD produced by the Cevennes Biosphere project.

*d) Engage with local stakeholders through organising consultations, meetings, exhibitions, site visits, and other appropriate methods to help people understand the benefits and requirements of a biosphere, help define boundaries for a potential biosphere and identify what people want from a biosphere.*

Output. We have held 14 public meetings, 8 in Galloway and 6 in Ayrshire. The first of these were to have formed the basis of the in-depth AGATE consultations referred to above and consisted of invited individual stakeholders. However it became apparent almost immediately that few if any these people were willing to give up more than a single evening. Although a few people did come to more than one meeting – subsequent meetings were promoted much more widely and were planned as one-off events. Attendance in terms of absolute numbers was disappointing – though the quality of attendees was high.

All elected representatives with interest in the geographic area of the BR were written to.

An exhibition was used to promote the BR at a number of shows over the summer and has since been used in libraries.

An informative website was created and promoted. This included a facility for people to record their views. Links to the website have been made from a number of partners' sites.

Press releases were issued to local and national media. Uptake was significant within the transition area and one national paper carried an article. Notice of meetings and 'public notice' advertisements were also placed.

*e) Report back to the BR working group on local stakeholders hopes, fears and offers.*

Output. We made interim reports to the group in March, June and September when a draft final report was presented. This is the final report.

*f) Undertake wider networking, awareness raising and partnership development. This might include "learning journeys" – essentially exchange visits with a working BR and development of a dedicated website.*

Output. A dedicated set of web pages were established at an early stage to allow people to find out more about BRs and to share their views via an online response form and a more detailed online questionnaire.

As the consultation proceeded, we have added a Frequently Asked Questions section to the website and responses to these as well as a summary of the main points being made by people during meetings.

A trip to the Cévennes BR has been arranged on which it is planned to take 10 ‘community champions’ in order that they can meet with local people and BR staff and learn at first hand what a working BR can do.

## **1.2 Summary of findings**

During the consultation exercise we have obtained the views of over 200 individuals or groups on the idea of re-registration of a Biosphere Reserve (BR) in the Ayrshire/Galloway area.

This number is lower than we had hoped but equivalent to the levels of response achieved by two other UK BR’s undertaking similar exercises in England and Wales. Public interest in something that carries no additional resources or powers is low – especially when compared to more contentious issues such as local windfarm proposals which have been subject to recent consultation programmes.

Respondents came from throughout the potential transition zone in both Galloway and Ayrshire and from across a wide range of sectoral interests. Those who were invited to meetings are given in annex 2 and those who attended meetings are given in annex 3. The results of the questionnaire are given in annex 4.

The concept of a BR is not an easy one to grasp, but where an opinion has been made – the vast majority (99%) have been in favour of re-registration.

There are a significant number of local people and small businesses who would like to be engaged in the development of a BR and there is a strong feeling that such a development should not be agency-lead. Those who have so far stated their support are given in annex 8.

Understanding and interest has been growing during the consultation period (ie since May this year) but further awareness raising and engagement will be needed to secure buy-in from other parties who could benefit from the BR project.

A fundamental barrier to engagement with the BR model is the difficulty of quantifying the added value that BR status can deliver and the revenue implications of meeting the Seville Criteria. In our view real interest will only come about when there is a specific project which encapsulates the BR idea and which people can see and relate to. Further work will be needed to identify an appropriate project – but initiatives linked to the idea of “gateway towns” would seem to be something that is likely to find favour from a large number of local people and businesses. The full range of issues that were raised during the consultation are set out in annex 1.

The consultation exercise has not thrown up any particularly strong consensus in respect of a boundary for the Transition Area. Generally it is felt that it should be inclusive of all the communities that have been consulted, but it is probable that communities more remote from the core might also want to be considered for inclusion. The Hambrey report suggested that the transition zone could include a large part of Ayrshire and most of Galloway. We have detected nothing to counter this view, although the opt-in will very much depend on what it is that is on offer. It is not critical to define a fixed boundary to this area in any case. However both the core and

buffer zones do need to be clearly defined and this should be on the basis of strict scientific and ecological principles.

If the Galloway/Ayrshire BR goes forward it might well be the only BR in Scotland and this would be something that would literally put the area on a global map. Such a development might be expected to warrant interest from the Scottish Government. Political support at a local and national level will be needed to make the designation work and effort will be needed to nurture this support.

### **1.3 Recommendations**

- R1 Identify and communicate the ongoing point(s) of contact responsible for liaising with and engaging stakeholders in the ongoing development of the Biosphere Reserve.
- R2 Arrange a seminar with guest speakers from UK MAB and EU & UK Biosphere Reserves to highlight the range of opportunities and management structures to a broad range of local organisations, communities and individuals.
- R3 Investigate potential management models for Biosphere Reserves and attempt to assess their suitability for SW Scotland.
- R4 A working group should be established to review and confirm the core area and to establish appropriate boundary recommendations for the buffer zone(s). This exercise should be undertaken in an open and transparent manner in order that wider public understanding and consensus is achieved.
- R5 Consideration should be given to investigating an assessment of socio-economic impact of selected comparable Biosphere Reserves in western Europe and extrapolating this to the communities and economy of SW Scotland.
- R6 Discussion and awareness raising within the Scottish Government of the aspiration of SW Scotland to seek re-registration as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve should be initiated. This should include application for grant funding to support the ongoing consultation and awareness raising exercise.
- R7 Effort should be made to include reference to Biosphere Reserve status for SW Scotland in strategic rural policy and support mechanisms. In particular this would include the Small Towns strategy; Rural Development Regulation 2007-13 - LEADER; Lowlands and Uplands Scotland Programme 2007-13 – ERDF Priority 4 & ESF; Interreg IV Programme for Cross Border Territorial Co-operation 2007-13 – the border region of Ireland and Western Scotland.

## 2. Introduction

*“I think that the most important thing to get over about a ‘Biosphere’ is that it is not just a special place of environmental importance, but one where people and the environment sustain each other. For me, business people need to get involved in order to ensure that the Biosphere status is used to sustain their business needs. That may be through attracting an increased number of visitors to the area, or through the planning of affordable, energy efficient housing in the area to meet staff needs. But I fear that if businesses don’t get involved, they will only see the Biosphere status as something that will restrict their business rather than assist it.”*

***Wilma Finlay MBE. Cream o’Galloway***

*“The Galloway and Ayrshire Biosphere is a very special designation..it brings with it responsibilities regarding authenticity of food /tourism offerings ....the producers and providers within the Ayrshire Food Network are committed to that authenticity”*

***Howard Wilkinson. Chairman Ayrshire Food Network***

*“Biospheres are internationally recognised designations based on areas of wildlife interest. However the exciting thing about the designation is that it aims to encourage appropriate economic activity in the surrounding areas. It is really important that businesses and communities become involved to see if they could benefit from a biosphere reserve in Galloway Forest Park. “*

***Joan Mitchell. Dumfries & Galloway Tourism Partnership***

### **2.1 Cairnsmore of Fleet/Merrick Kells/Silver Flowe UNESCO Biosphere Reserve - Current Position**

Biosphere Reserve status was conferred on this composite site in 1976. It comprises the Cairnsmore of Fleet NNR (owned by SNH), the Silver Flowe NNR, and the core of the Merrick Kells SSSI (owned by FCS and leased to SNH). Together they occupy 5,010ha although SSSI status extends to a total of nearly 12,500ha.

Falling within the major ecosystem type – Temperate Broadleaf Forests and Woodlands – the Biosphere Reserve encompasses a range of habitats. Cairnsmore of Fleet is representative of unafforested granite massif, low level moorland, montane grassland, and dwarf shrub heath. Silver flowe is a unique bog formation and one of the least interrupted undisturbed mire systems in Europe. It is a designated wetland under the RAMSAR Convention. Merrick Kells contains three habitats of European interest: blanket bog, montane acid grasslands, and wet heath with cross-leaved heath.

They compose the largest area of unafforested upland in South West Scotland and are important sites for breeding bird populations, invertebrate populations and plants at their northern and western limits.

Management involves a combination of non-intervention, controlled grazing and seasonal muirburn techniques. Much of the surrounding land is given over to commercial coniferous forest.

### **2.2 Biosphere Reserve Compliance**

The 1998 Review of UK Biosphere Reserves report produced by Dr Martin Price et al, Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford and published by the UK MAB Committee assessed the Biosphere Reserve for compliance with the “Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves”. This is commonly referred to as the Seville Criteria.

In general it concluded that conservation objectives were largely met however the practices relating to sustainable resource management practices, linked to conservation needs had not been implemented within the context of a Biosphere Reserve policy relating to a broader region.

Specific observations and comments included:

- There is no regular planned, integrated monitoring or research programme in the area but a broad range of research and monitoring projects have been, and continue to be, undertaken by a variety of agencies and NGO's.
- Information exchange and training demonstrations in respect of vegetation management and survey techniques is undertaken.
- Management plans for the core Biosphere Reserve NNR's are in place and that the Forestry Commission's Strategic Development Plan for Dumfries and Galloway District would be in keeping with the Biosphere Reserve concept. Although there was no application of buffer zone and transition area management at the time.

Some concern was expressed about the compatibility of commercial forestry in the vicinity of the core zone with Biosphere Reserve conservation objectives.

The Biosphere Reserve area is largely unpopulated and therefore community involvement is severely restricted. Extension of the reserve concept to include Galloway Forest Park within the transition area would still result in low population levels and limit potential for delivery of sustainable development aims.

The potential for partnership working and shared Biosphere Reserve management between FCS, SNH and Dumfries and Galloway Council was considered significant and could be one that had the ability to develop and deliver appropriate sustainable activities.

### **2.3 Recent Developments in SW Scotland**

The 1976 the UNESCO designation added an international recognition to an area of outstanding natural heritage value but did little else and, since at the time of designation, almost no one has known about the BR and it has done little to benefit the communities or businesses of the area.. Since the criteria for BR designation have changed it is now necessary for BRs to be actively managed to deliver social and economic development as well as environmental protection. Unless this broader set of criteria is delivered, the Galloway BR will have its designation withdrawn. This requirement has stimulated recent discussions on whether or not to take further action.

In 2004 Scottish Natural Heritage commissioned Hambrey Consulting to consider the feasibility of re-designating the existing biosphere under the new criteria – looking at possible zone boundaries, the potential benefits of the designation to the region (and especially to the Galloway Forest Park), to suggest how the low awareness of the Biosphere concept might be addressed and to suggest structures and costs for taking the initiative forward. This report was completed in April 2005 and recommended, amongst other things, that the BR proposal should be explored further and that a working group should be established (including Dumfries & Galloway Council, South and East Ayrshire Councils, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forestry Commission of Scotland).

This working group decided that a community consultation exercise should be commissioned and this work was put out to tender in August 2006. The brief requested

- Identification of the key stakeholders especially in the potential transition zone

- Engagement with these stakeholders through a variety of media so that understanding of the Biosphere concept was developed
- Collection of the views of the stakeholders on the idea of re-designating the Galloway Biosphere
- Collation of views on the potential boundaries of the zones
- Wider partnership development within the area with the aim of establishing a clear understanding of the stakeholders' hopes, fears and offers.

This work was to start in November 2006 and be completed by September 2007.

A joint tender from the Southern Uplands Partnership and East Ayrshire Woodlands was accepted and work started in November 2006.



## **3. Approach and Methods**

### **3.1 Rationale**

The Hambrey Report highlighted the need for community engagement in the idea – and also the low level of understanding of the Biosphere concept. Success of the BR requires buy-in from the people affected and experience suggests that involving local people at an early stage is vital for meaningful engagement. Indeed, the Hambrey report suggested that the very boundaries of the BR zones should be defined only after full consultation. Our main aim was therefore to try to raise awareness of the Biosphere concept and then to get the views of communities and businesses in the likely “transition zone” on whether the BR concept might be of interest to them.

To gain a better understanding of the potential of a Biosphere to bring local benefits, a trip was arranged to the Cévennes Biosphere Reserve in southern France. Here we met officials working for the local biosphere and saw for ourselves some of the projects being undertaken. A report on this trip has previously been circulated and is included as annex 5. This also formed a very useful link which has been further developed by supporting a student work placement from the Cévennes in Galloway for 8 weeks. We plan to take a group of local people to the Cévennes later this year with a view to developing their role as Biosphere Reserve champions within their community. Additionally, a very useful day was spent with the Project Officer for the Eco Dyfi BR project in mid-Wales. The Partners there are carrying out a similar community consultation exercise and our approach has benefited from their experience. Annex 9 describes the consultation process that has been followed in Wales and in Devon.

It was our intention to run a series of community consultations modelled on the recent EU-funded “AGATE” project carried out in Langholm (see annex 10). This approach successfully engaged with a broad range of interested individuals (including many who might be described as “difficult-to-reach”). During a series of evening workshops, they were helped through a process which established visions of possible land-use futures, and went on to consider these through a scenario-planning process. We hoped that the expertise developed by the facilitators of this process in Langholm could be usefully applied to the BR consultation and we budgeted to allow this. We believed this would allow in-depth views to be garnered on the aspirations of local people. The objective being to identify specific outcomes which the BR concept might seek to deliver.

The team arranged a series of training sessions with experienced facilitators and set out to involve as wide a range of interests as possible in these groups – from young people to retired, from a range of businesses and farmers to commuters and land owners. An extensive contact list was compiled. The intention was that this would also allow the identification of local “community champions” so that further development work could take place if a group wished to continue the process, either looking at the potential for the BR or addressing issues that had come up during the consultation process. We felt it was very important that there should be clear benefits for local people even if the application for BR status subsequently failed or was rejected and it was intended that the capacity raising approach suggested would leave a useful legacy.

The BR concept requires significant explanation. The very title is in many ways unhelpful, suggesting that it requires things to be reserved or restricted. Biosphere conjures an image of an Eden-project type glass dome. We engaged two locally-based project officers to meet with land managers, community representatives, businesses and partnership organisations to develop an understanding of the concept and to encourage a degree of trust to be established.

The team then set about designing a leaflet to explain the Biosphere concept, to signpost sources of additional information and to invite comment. Explaining the biosphere concept clearly is so difficult (see annex 4) that the design of the leaflet became a major piece of work in itself – each partner suggesting wording and possible images. The final layout and wording was not completed to all the partners' satisfaction until late April. The leaflets were printed in May. 10,000 of these were quickly distributed across the region – in public libraries, shops, pubs, community centres as well as being posted out to key individuals identified during the scoping stage and to a wide range of groups and associations.

The finalised leaflet was used as the basis of a dedicated website on which information and views have been posted and where views can be collected through an on-line questionnaire. There are also links from the site to other BR projects in the UK and across the World in order that visitors to the site could get a more detailed picture of how BRs function.

We originally proposed a “One-Stop-Shop” perhaps in an appropriate High Street – where the public could seek information, ask questions, view exhibitions etc. In the event, this was not pursued, although materials have been taken to a wide range of public events such as agricultural and countryside shows and temporary exhibitions have been put up in libraries.

A number of press releases were produced and efforts were made to interest other local media. Uptake by newspapers within the suggested transition zone has been favourable. One national paper covered the story. Greater engagement with the media would have helped substantially with raising awareness and public engagement. Ongoing effort should be made to place BR related articles within appropriate media. Examples of press releases and other promotional materials are included in annex 7.

### **3.2 Public meetings**

Whilst the approach varied slightly between Galloway and Ayrshire, initial consultation effort was focused on the larger villages within the suggested transition zone. In both Ayrshire and Galloway we attempted to identify all groups and businesses with a potential interest in the BR (see Annex 2). Where practical, named individuals considered to be representative of stakeholder groups were approached to take part in the workshop process. Invites were posted or e-mailed to these people. It quickly became apparent that for a variety of reasons, people were not willing to commit to attending more than one meeting. The fact that the bulk of the consultation coincided with the summer holiday period was a significant factor, but other issues such as lack of interest, and lack of available time were also put forward by attendees. This meant that the proposed in-depth workshop approach was impractical. Instead it was agreed that we would arrange additional open meetings and seek to engage with key stakeholders through these and through follow-up contact. All the points made at these meetings are set out in annex 1 and notes of each of the meetings are included in the annex 3.

### **3.3 Meeting Statistics**

14 public meetings were arranged with 114 individuals participating. Over 800 groups and individuals were directly invited. Strongest interest came from the Glenkens area with good attendance in St John's Town of Dalry and New Galloway and in Ayrshire from Dalmellington, Maybole and Girvan.

Community Council participation was stronger in Ayrshire with 7 individual CC representatives attending. Shortened presentations were given to New Cumnock, Newton Stewart and Creetown CCs in response to direct requests. The average attendance at these meetings was 12. Elected members from South Ayrshire attended meetings.

14 individual letters or forms of support have subsequently been received from community groups, individuals and business interests.

In D&G a total of 8 meetings were held and 80 people attended

There was considerably more interest shown in the Glenkens area.

The first three were not advertised in the local press, solely by poster and personal invite. Yet it is interesting to note that on average these three meetings attracted the highest attendance

The next five meetings were advertised in local press, but attendances were disappointing

Two community council meetings were attended (Newton Stewart and Creetown) where a short presentation was made to community councillors.

In Ayrshire, 6 meetings were held with 43 attendees. A further short presentation was given in New Cumnock to approximately 15 people but should not be considered as a formal Biosphere meeting.

The most positive support has been from the Dalmellington / Loch Doon area

All meetings were advertised in the local press, with posters distributed widely for the final three meetings.

## 4. Summary of issues that were recorded at these meetings

### 4.1 Main Issues/Recurring Themes

The table below summarises the feedback collected through public meetings and comments on returned questionnaires. A more detailed list is included as Annex 1.

In terms of the three functions of Biosphere Reserves – Conservation, Development and Logistic Support – the community consultation process has largely elicited responses that relate to the development function. That is, issues and themes which impact on the attainment of sustainable development objectives. It is inherent in the concept of sustainability that there is interdependence between economic, social/institutional and environmental aspects of human society, as well as the non-human environment. To assist in the analysis of comments and observations an attempt has been made to place these into one or other category.

ECONOMIC	SOCIAL	ENVIRONMENT
<b>Planning &amp; Business Development</b> Wind Farm/Mineral Ext. Opposition Green/renewable Energy Promotion Lack of Infrastructure Investment National V Local retail Added value for local produce Home based & graduate employment Regulatory control/restrictions Evaluate potential economic impact Employability initiatives Diversion of limited resources	<b>Sustainable Communities</b> Agency facilities/Community use Loss of/less accessible services Impact of demographic changes Need for local employment opportunities Need for affordable housing - 'eco?' Opposition to change/inertia What difference will BR make? Quantify economic/social impact 21 <sup>st</sup> not 19 <sup>th</sup> century communities	<b>Conservation &amp; Land Management</b> Evidence that the core area biodiversity is being sustained/enhanced Concern that shooting/fishing/access maybe restricted Maintenance of quality access routes Public V private land ownership => mistrust/low appreciation of public agencies Increased potential for community input into management
<b>Tourism</b> Lack of infrastructure maintenance New visitor attractions Quality/availability of local facilities Definition of eco-tourism Major part of future local economy Promote regional culture & heritage Impact on peaceful/tranquil character Concern over 2 <sup>nd</sup> Home levels	<b>Community Participation</b> 30 years late? Trust issues – government agencies History of being let down Will our views be given weight? Key contact – continuity Dialogue V information No obvious threat/not contentious Learn from BR case studies	<b>Policy/Strategy</b> Demonstrate SNH/FCS compliance Current BR ineffective Needs long-term commitment Needs appropriate dedicated resources Promote 'green' activity/development Alignment of development policies/ Building control, etc. with Biosphere Reserve principles Align funding programmes to BR
<b>Marketing &amp; Promotion</b> 'Gateway' towns/communities Potential for unifying identity/brand Quality of life/harmony with nature Electronic one-stop shop promotion Name: Merrick, Galloway, Ayrshire? Role of Visit Scotland? One big idea/Unique Selling Point Biosphere Reserve –difficult concept Learn from the past–plan for the future Dereliction & First Impressions 'Remove to improve!' Build on existing initiatives	<b>Transport</b> Coal/timber road haulage issues Deterioration of bus services Failure to pursue rail haulage/travel Seasonal timetables? Station facilities/amenity/no. Road V rail development	<b>Transport</b> Higher volumes of visitors could impact negatively

Sustainability could be defined as: “humanity’s investment in a system of living, projected to be viable on an ongoing basis that provides the quality of life for all individuals of sentient species and conserves natural ecosystems”. Given that the consultation exercise was primarily directed toward engaging communities, land managers and businesses rather than public agencies the focus of feedback has largely been on social/institutional and economic issues and themes.

### **Social/Institutional**

1. Overall participants demonstrated an acute appreciation/awareness of rural community sustainability issues and the urgent need for regeneration. Community Council representatives in particular were keen to make the connections between a Biosphere Reserve and the potential to begin to redress the balance in terms of economically active and younger age groups in the towns and villages; improved access to, and quality of, local services and amenities; countering the unwelcoming impression of empty and derelict buildings, etc.
2. Even well motivated and interested people who were prepared to invest time in meetings found the Biosphere Reserve concept difficult to understand. The “what’s in it for us” hooks are not immediately tangible. There was, and to some extent continues to be, a perception that it is another conservation designation, seemingly driven by Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland that will introduce unknown restrictions or at the very least further levels of bureaucracy. Substantial meat has to be put on the bones of how a Biosphere Reserve might operate and what it can realistically support before significant buy-in will be achievable.
3. There is a substantial trust barrier to be overcome between communities (and other stakeholders) and public agencies before true partnership working can be developed. There is a low level of confidence that their input will be adequately acknowledged and their views given real weight. Channels of communication need to be developed and respected. Agencies should not just expect to inform but be prepared to demonstrate true commitment to partnership working and developing consensus. There seems to be a feeling that a Non-Governmental Organisation should play a role in Biosphere Reserve management.
4. Whilst those participating at meetings were at great pains to express the view that poor turnout should not be interpreted as an indication of a low level of support for the idea, the unbalanced engagement of stakeholder groups does call into question how representative views and comments were. Awareness has been raised but confidence in the process and outcome will only be built by demonstrating flexibility in an ongoing consultation approach. Steering Group partners must be prepared to respond to community requests for more opportunities to feed into the consultation and to respond to the issues raised.
5. It is clear that some activists/lobbyists have aspirations to seek to latch on to UNESCO Biosphere Reserve recognition as a tool/mechanism for pursuing grievances/campaigns related to particular issues such as wind-farm development, raptor control policies, etc. Whilst such debate is valid it may impede progress with developing an appreciation of the Biosphere Reserve concept.

### **Economic**

6. There is a strong desire to see ‘green energy technology’ promoted in relation to development and employment opportunities. There is a feeling that the opportunities for woodfuel, biofuel, solar, geothermal, wind, hydro and wave power generation at a community or ‘micro’ scale have yet to be pursued. The appropriate use of natural and renewable resources is seen to be at the heart of the sustainability ideals of Biosphere Reserves.

7. Tourism is generally seen as a positive, perhaps even vital, part of the future local economy. The sector is considered to be underdeveloped in terms of diversity and quality. There is a need to strike a balance between maintaining the peaceful and natural character of the area without preserving communities in aspic. Increased tourist numbers and revenue is highly desirable, but not to the extent that it overwhelms the capacity of the areas infrastructure to cope and for people to go about their daily working lives.
8. Marketing and branding issues elicited a high number of comments. Interestingly although people often expressed the view that they had an insufficient understanding of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve concept they were keen to embrace the 'reserve' tag. Communities could see real opportunities through marketing themselves as 'gateways' to a high quality natural landscape. The need for modern, 21<sup>st</sup> century, marketing tools such as a 'one-stop' web site that enables visitors to plan their visit, book accommodation/meals, find out about public transport, visitor attractions, local identity and produce, etc was expressed. Strong reservations about the involvement of Visit Scotland in managing such a facility were also expressed.

### **Environment**

9. Whilst there was broad recognition of the area's environmental quality and the landscape's relationship with land management practices some individuals made particular criticism of SNH and FCS. This was both in relation to perception regarding particular policies and practices, and in terms of the commitment of these agencies to work with communities and invest resources in the Biosphere Reserve project. There is a piece of work to be done in reassuring people that the biodiversity objectives are being, and will continue to be, met.
10. It was widely appreciated that pursuing Biosphere Reserve status requires a long-term commitment at national government level. Managing and monitoring the development function will need dedicated and appropriate resources. These should not be diverted from existing budgets but should be additional. Alignment of strategic planning documents to encompass a Biosphere Reserve is essential and that this should be accompanied by policy commitments to, and promotion of, the widest range of 'green' developments within the reserve area. This might encompass, transport, eco-tourism, renewable energy, recycling, countryside access networks, low carbon living, etc.

## **5. Questionnaire and leaflet responses**

### **5.1 Leaflet**

A questionnaire was designed to try to capture people's views on the potential benefits of the BR to individuals or businesses. This was placed on the website and also made available at public meetings where stamped and addressed envelopes were provided in the hope of encouraging people to send back their thoughts. The same questionnaire was available on the website.

The level of response to date has been modest (total responses to date = 55) and while not statistically significant these are shown below to illustrate the degree of enthusiasm from those who involved themselves in the consultancy. Responses are still coming in.

The leaflet included a tear-off reply slip and freepost address and invited a simple range of responses

- Do you support the idea of a BR?
- Do you not support the idea?
- Are you undecided at present?
- Would you like someone to come and talk to your group about the BR idea?
- Would you like to be kept informed of local meetings?

The same questions could be answered on the website. In total we had back 151 responses, most of these through the post but a few via the website.

Between the flier and the questionnaire 206 people expressed a written view on the BR proposal. 203 support the idea. 1 is against and 2 are undecided.

### **5.2 Website hits**

The web pages have been well visited. Between June and the end of September the SUP site had over 20,000 hits with the Biosphere pages being visited over 2,500 times. Because the BR pages require an additional click – this number can be seen as representing people with genuine interest.

The results of the questionnaire are set out in annex 4.

### **5.3 Summary of Results from Questionnaire**

83% of questionnaire responses came in from within the region - 40% S Ayrshire ; 27% D&G; 16% E Ayrshire and 16% elsewhere in Scotland. More detailed analysis by settlement is not particularly meaningful since over 40% of responses did not include a confirmed nearest town or village.

98% of respondents agree that being on a global list of BRs would be very good or quite good for the region.

94% of respondents considered the involvement of local people in the sustainable management of BRs to be vital or a very good idea.

#### **Individuals**

74% of respondents were economically active, 33% being self-employed. ~6% considered themselves to be unemployed (the unemployment rate for Scotland is 2.4%) and 14% were retired.

Meaningful analysis of employment type is not practical since 65% of responses did not state a sector. Of the minority that did agriculture/forestry, Local Authority/defence and arts/crafts and health and education all featured strongly.

65% of questionnaires to date have been returned by the 41-60 age group. 18% were over 61 years of age and ~15% in the 21-40 category. No responses were received from people under the age of 20.

52% of respondents considered 'the natural environment' to be vital for enjoyment of life with a further 44% viewing it as very important. No-one considered it unimportant. This reflects the type of respondent most willing to contribute to this type of consultation, ie environmentally aware.

53% of respondents had visited the Merrick Kells and/or Cairnsmore of Fleet but only 13% had been to Silver Flowe. Again this says something about the type of respondent – but it also suggests that many of these people are aware of the conservation value of the core zone. Almost 90% of respondents have visited the Galloway Forest Park more than once – 44% have been often. 6% have not been at all. 54% recognised that the environment of the area is recognised as being of world class.

The images that people think most appropriate to encourage people to visit the area are wildlife, and landscape. Healthy food and relaxed outdoor recreation are also important. Dynamic outdoor sports, friendly people and arts and crafts were next in popularity. Many considered all these were important.

A surprisingly high 44% of respondents had heard of Biosphere Reserves before the present consultation. We would suggest this reflects the nature of those willing to complete the questionnaire – they are probably rather better informed than the general public where anecdotal evidence suggests that awareness is very low.

Promoting links between local people and the environment within the BR was considered to be likely to benefit 26% of respondents "very much", 46% "quite a lot" and 26% "a bit".

46% respondents would be willing to be involved in any future development and another 31% might be willing. 17% would not wish to be involved. Again this says something about those who completed the questionnaire.

#### Businesses

72% felt the natural environment was either vital or very important to their business.

Images which businesses felt were most relevant to the local environment included wildlife, landscape and relaxed outdoor recreation with healthy food, dynamic sports and arts and crafts also important. This does not differ much from the view of individuals.

Respondents felt that promoting links between the environment and business would benefit their business very much (45%), quite a lot (25%), a bit (16%). Only 14% felt it was not relevant.

A range of names were suggested and these are discussed below.

When asked to state whether they supported the BR concept or not, the vast majority (94%) said they did with a small number of undecided. When the response to the leaflet/flier is added to this – the support rate increases to 99%. 1% said they do not support the idea.



## **6. Discussion**

### **6.1 Identification of stakeholders**

Great efforts were made to engage with a broad spectrum of the people and businesses of the potential BR transition zone during this consultation, although for a variety of reasons (eg time of year, consultation fatigue, lack of controversy, absence of additional BR resources) the number of people willing to take part was not as high as we would have liked. It should be noted that the other Biosphere consultations in Devon and Wales have also found it hard to attract interest and that engagement in Galloway and Ayrshire is at a directly comparable level.

Based on those who did respond, geographic coverage was good with responses from across the potential transition zone and a broad range of employment types. The age range of the respondents reflects the local demography.

Amongst the respondents there was high awareness of the quality of the local environment and a large proportion saw it is of significant importance to their lives and businesses. No one said the environment was not important and a large proportion of local people already make good use of the Galloway Forest Park and a surprising number have visited the existing BR (ie the National Nature Reserves in the core zone).

### **6.2 Stakeholder Engagement and Awareness Raising**

For the majority of those we consulted, a Biosphere Reserve was a completely novel concept. People were well aware of the Galloway Forest Park (which has undertaken a number of community engagement exercises in recent years) and quite high awareness of the high quality environment of SW Scotland generally. There was surprise expressed by many that there had been a BR here for so many years without anyone knowing. It should however be pointed out that there was no specific requirement under the old criteria for BR designation for the engagement of local people.

Few people in the UK have heard of Biosphere Reserves, and generally awareness that there was one in Galloway was low before this consultation started. However 98% respondents could see that being on a global list of BRs would be good for the region and there was also strong support for the idea of making better links between the environment, local people and local businesses. A large majority felt that they would benefit from this approach and a range of potential benefits were suggested.

### **6.3 Stakeholder Benefits**

There are many issues which the BR concept could deliver. Renewable energy – both in relation to windfarms (strong views for and against) but also with regard to biomass and small scale renewables featured strongly. Clearly the Galloway Forest Park represents a huge biomass resource which could be developed in a number of ways and there are potential business opportunities in this.

The idea of “gateway towns” was suggested several times – with notable support from the Ayrshire side. Giving each town a clear opportunity to link itself to the BR and to use this idea to address specific local problems (eg New Cumnock) or opportunity (eg Newton Stewart) clearly links to the Small Towns Initiative and may also mesh with funding opportunities under the New LEADER programme; the Lowlands and Uplands Scotland Programme 2007-13 and other EU, national and local regeneration schemes. The gateway idea could of course also be applied to the Galloway

Forest Park – although the park boundary does not reach out to communities in the same way as a BR boundary could.

Local branding of products or services was also raised by several people as something the BR idea could help. Quite what form this might take or what products might be included is not yet clear but there are opportunities to use the BR brand and link it to other initiatives such as renewable energy, local food, arts and crafts and recreation for example.

#### **6.4 Partnership Development**

We have found that interest in the BR idea has been growing steadily over the last two months. Presumably people are talking about the idea and developing a better understanding of what a BR is and could be. The ideas behind it chime with other current issues – such as the pending Rural Development Contracts for land managers, the Small Towns initiative, the general growing awareness of climate change and implications for more renewable energy and changes to tourism patterns. The recent report from SNH on “Scotland’s Living Landscapes – Places for People” emphasises the need to improve the links between people and the landscapes that make Scotland what it is. There are many reasons why interest in the BR concept might be expected to grow in the coming months and these would add momentum to any bid to re-designate the BR.

There is clearly still a need to raise awareness amongst the wider community of the BR concept – but it is unlikely in our view that interest in the idea will really grow until some specific projects are proposed and something “concrete” is delivered. The Devon Biosphere came about at least in part because it was established at the time that rural businesses were recovering from foot and mouth disease, looking for new ways forward and when “new” resources were available. BR designation brings with it no new resources but it might well increase the chances of attracting existing funding through Leader for example.

A surprisingly high proportion of respondents said that they would like to be involved in the development of the BR if it went ahead and this bodes well because local involvement will be essential if the BR is redesignated.

It is inevitable that this sort of consultation exercise is seen by those with particular concerns (eg wind farms, raptors, grazing issues) or who want to criticise particular public agencies, use public meetings to raise their concerns – even where these have little if any bearing on the BR proposals. Efforts were made to ensure that these contributions were noted – but not allowed to dominate the discussions. This was not always easy. Any future BR will have to be able to cope with individuals who are keen to see particular issues promoted and efforts will be needed to address these in such a way that they do not become dominant and/or distracting.

#### **6.5 Is there support for the re-registration of the Galloway/Ayrshire Biosphere?**

There is support for a new-style Biosphere Reserve in Galloway/Ayrshire. Explaining the concept and the new BR criterion took time, but once it was clear, those who expressed a view were 99% supportive of the idea.

However, so far this support comes largely from a relatively small number of local people who have grasped the concept and understood what it could deliver for them as local residents or businesses. When people reach the stage where they feel able to express an informed view – they are almost entirely in favour of the re-registration. Clearly the need now is to steadily increase the number of people who understand the concept and who will support the re-registration.

We have invited the groups and associations who have expressed interest in the BR to date to confirm their support for the idea in principle and those who have confirmed support to date are listed in Annex 8.

Maintaining and developing this support will be dependant on there being clear community involvement in the development of the BR project. Indeed in our view leadership of any BR project should come from the communities involved rather than from one of the agency partners. This would overcome concerns expressed by some respondents that there could be a “hidden agenda” behind the support for the designation by SNH and Forestry Commission. Such engagement is a slow process but would be needed if the full potential of the BR was to be realised. There is concern that short-term funding would make meaningful community involvement impossible.

### **6.6 A Name for the Biosphere**

A range of names for the Biosphere have been suggested. None of them is particularly novel. There have been comments on whether the word “reserve” should be in the title or not. Some argue that it is needed to say something about the nature of the project and the importance of natural heritage at the core. Others argue that it gives the wrong impression – implying that restrictions will apply. The word “biosphere” is also questioned – several people pointing out that we all live in the biosphere – all life on Earth does by definition which is why UNESCO chose the term. It should be noted that most of the suggestions put forward have included the word biosphere.

### **6.7 Boundaries of the BR**

There seemed to be little consensus on this – most folk seemed happy with the map used in the leaflet – and with the towns it showed as being in the transition zone. To a large extent, it will be up to towns and villages to opt in to the project – and this is not going to happen before there is a project to opt into. It is unlikely that the BR will exclude people who want to join in and we see no particular problem with communities or businesses that are more distant from the core being involved – while others that are closer to the core do not engage.

We received some comments form addresses well away from Galloway – presumably visitors to the area or possibly those with second homes or local connections. These were all supportive of the idea.

## 7. Recommendations

“Conservation – Development” – two words that have been used to explain the role of Biosphere Reserves elsewhere and which we think could be usefully applied here. A Biosphere is about conservation AND development. Conservation not in isolation – but linked to actions that enhance local development. Development of an area with conservation very much in mind.

It is clear that future progress will depend on continued and more effective engagement with communities and businesses. This initial exercise has gone some way to raising awareness of the Biosphere Reserve concept in SW Scotland. The inertia inherent within communities that were previously oblivious to the existing UNESCO BR status and had no knowledge of the Seville Strategy has been disturbed. In order to maintain or even accelerate momentum in favour of the re-registration process, effort and resources will need to be allocated to engagement and involvement objectives. This has to be at a sustainable level.

If the BR project does go forward, the establishment of some sort of Council or Forum of interested parties might act as a debating chamber so that issues can be dealt with and also act as a clearing-house for project ideas. The range of things that a BR project could do is huge. It will not be able to do them all so priorities will need to be set and it will be important that as many people as possible feel these are the right ones.

R1 Identify and communicate the ongoing point(s) of contact responsible for liaising with and engaging stakeholders in the development of the Biosphere Reserve.

R2 Arrange a seminar with guest speakers from UK MAB and EU & UK Biosphere Reserves to highlight the range of opportunities and management structures to a broad range of local organisations, communities and individuals.

R3 Investigate potential management models for Biosphere Reserves and attempt to assess their suitability for SW Scotland.

### Boundaries

The consultation exercise has not thrown up any particularly strong consensus in respect of a boundary for the Transition Area. Generally it is felt that it should be inclusive of all the communities that have been consulted, but it is probable that communities more remote from the core might also want to be considered for inclusion. The Hambrey report suggested that the transition zone could include a large part of Ayrshire and most of Galloway. We have detected nothing to counter this view, although the opt-in will very much depend on what it is that is on offer. It is not critical to define a fixed boundary to this area in any case. However both the core and buffer zones do need to be clearly defined and this should be on the basis of strict scientific ecological principles.

R4 A working group should be established to review and confirm the core area and to establish appropriate boundary recommendations for the buffer zone(s). This exercise should be undertaken in an open and transparent manner in order that wider public understanding and consensus is achieved.

### Benefits

A fundamental barrier to engagement with the Biosphere Reserve model is the difficulty of quantifying the added value that BR status can deliver and the revenue implications of meeting the Seville Criteria.

R5 Consideration should be given to investigating an assessment of socio-economic impact of selected comparable Biosphere Reserves in western Europe and extrapolating this to the communities and economy of SW Scotland.

R6 Discussion and awareness raising within the Scottish Government of the aspiration of SW Scotland to seek re-registration as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve should be initiated. This should include application for grant funding to support the ongoing consultation and awareness raising exercise.

R7 Effort should be made to include reference to Biosphere Reserve status for SW Scotland in strategic rural policy and support mechanisms. In particular this would include the Small Towns strategy; Rural Development Regulation 2007-13 - LEADER; Lowlands and Uplands Scotland Programme 2007-13 – ERDF Priority 4 & ESF; Interreg IV Programme for Cross Border Territorial Co-operation 2007-13 – the border region of Ireland and Western Scotland.

## **Annex 1. Results from Public meetings**

**The range of issues raised at various meetings have been grouped here under broad headings of Economic, Environmental and Social – with sub headings where these seemed useful.**

### **ECONOMIC**

#### Planning & Business Development

- Major concerns with wind farm developments, despite strong local opposition. In particular, several proposed schemes in the Dalmellington area are subject to the turbine developments NOT taking place.
- "We are in complete agreement with the aims of the Biosphere project but see little point in any of it if the whole region is going to be covered with giant windturbine factories such as proposed for Blackcraig and the surrounding area! We would like to think your organisation would add it's voice to the many objectors to these projects!"
- The designation could restrict potential wind farm development which can bring much needed revenue into the area.
- There are too many wind farms in the area and this designation may help readdress the imbalance.
- Can Biosphere status stop the increasing amount of wind-farm developments which are scarring our countryside?
- Does Biosphere status bring further planning restrictions and designations?
- Local initiatives in the past have been restricted and ultimately failed due to the restrictions and pressure placed upon them by Food Standards Agency / Health and Safety etc.
- Large supermarkets are undermining village shops
- Lack of investment in the area
- There is currently very little development to attract businesses such as business parks, or other such incentives
- There is a danger that the area is becoming an “environmental museum”, with designations of all types swamping the area and potentially restricting economic development May further restrict wind farm or other green energy development.
- May help draw down funding
- Opportunity to add value to local products
- Potential to support home based businesses
- The view was expressed that the Doon Valley could be used as a test case for Community development within the Biosphere, to give projects and initiatives the support to demonstrate the enthusiasm and diverse range of ideas that local people want to see succeed.
- There is a need to evaluate the Biosphere Reserve in terms of ‘Best Value’
- There is a need to demonstrate added value from BR status – will it attract or enhance access to resources that are currently inaccessible?
- A great need for new initiatives to receive support and backing and to include training and employment opportunities, particularly in terms of renewable energy such as biomass / woodfuel for the benefit of the south west, rather than adding to the already heavy haulage traffic.
- The new harbour development at Girvan could be of particular importance to the Galloway and Ayrshire Biosphere in the future.
- More support should be given to green initiatives, such as bio-fuels and wood-fuel, in order to maximize the return from areas of felled spruce plantation.
- The local economy is failing
- Lack of quality jobs, young people with degrees are leaving because of the lack of graduate level posts in the area

- To be successful the biosphere will need financial resources. There may be a danger of more needy causes such as transport infrastructure, schools and other services losing out as a result.

### Tourism

- There is concern that existing tourist attractions / facilities (i.e. features such as the installations & sculptures within the Galloway Forest Park) around the area are not maintained and do not provide outside visitors with a positive view.
- It was strongly felt that projects such as the Dalmellington Book Town and the Dunaskin Heritage Centre should have had the support and commitment to have been major tourist attractors within the Doon Valley.
- Concern was raised about the standard of local facilities in terms of attracting locals and tourists to the area. One example being the facilities around Loch Doon and the lack of a functioning official camping / caravan site, despite several years of discussions.
- More tourists will bring road congestion and pollution from extra traffic.
- National and International recognition might help bring more tourists.
- If more tourists are attracted to the area, shops and basic services may well benefit
- Inflexible definition of Ecological Tourism
- Growth of number of second homes is bad for the economy
- Maybole needs something to kick start its tourist & visitor potential
- Concern that the peace and quiet of the south-west could be lost if it became as attractive to tourists as the Lake District
- There is a desperate need for a heritage centre, to interpret the rich natural and mining / industrial heritage of the area, especially with the history of Burns, Wallace and Mary Queen of Scots.
- The Lochside Hotel is the only decent standard hotel in the area and is outside New Cumnock
- The only limited shopping and tourist facilities exist in Cumnock
- Most visitors head straight for Ayr, after seeing the poor state of New Cumnock
- The only hope to save New Cumnock is tourism

### Marketing & Promotion

- The lack of a clear focus in terms of organization and marketing has led to the many ideas and initiatives failing in the past, particularly where tourism projects and opportunities have been concerned.
- Real opportunities exist in terms of the branding and development of 'gateway' towns.
- Vital that any title should have the word 'Reserve' in it or it becomes meaningless. "The subheading 'Special places for people and nature' is excellent, as it explains the concept better".
- The Biosphere may support current efforts to develop a tourism brand
- Good management of the environment (our biggest asset) under the Biosphere banner might create a more sustainable local economy, encouraging younger people to settle in the area
- A communities website was extremely important as a branding tool for the many initiatives, businesses, products and events happening in local communities throughout the Biosphere area.
- Some considered that the 'Galloway Biosphere' would be a suitable name, as it would surround Galloway Forest Park and is a term used by Burns to describe the area, including Ayrshire & Dumfries and Galloway, while other suggestions have been 'Galloway & Ayrshire', 'Ayrshire & Galloway!', 'Galloway & Carrick' & 'South West Scotland Biosphere'.

- Visit Scotland should not be in charge of promoting the Biosphere
- “It’s vital that the name has RESERVE as part of it or it becomes meaningless. At present, most people in the UK imagine a glass dome of some sort and an immediately understandable and meaningful name is needed. To use Biosphere alone is daft, as the whole world is ‘living in the biosphere’
- “Link in with (green?) tourist scheme run by Visit Scotland”
- “Could future leaflets etc include the excellent subheading ‘special places for people and nature’ (As on the UNESCO MAB book), it explains the concept better.”
- “Concentrate on formulating one big idea. We have great people, landscapes etc. Lots of people think that but how do you differentiate yourself?”
- “I agree with the first comments under the future management views and to educate locals, gain funding and create a place people want to care for and come to for a holiday”
- “This may be a bit ahead, but I like the idea of a Biosphere as a new paradigm for living – conserving & sustainability. Preserving the best for the past / changing and renewing the future. A cultural border.”
- A dedicated, multilingual website is vital for the Biosphere to grow as a whole and be a resource for tourists from all over the world.
- The Biosphere concept is still difficult to understand
- That it is difficult for local communities to fully grasp the concept of the Biosphere and the opportunities that it presented.
- People do not really understand what a biosphere is and what it does. There was considerable debate about the apparent lack of rules and guidelines for a biosphere.
- That the word ‘reserve’ has to appear in any future title
- A vital need for a Biosphere website to pull all the ideas, facilities and attractions together, without giving VisitScotland the opportunity to under promote the area.
- That places such as Girvan and Newton Stewart could be valuable ‘Gateway’ towns.
- That Galloway & Ayrshire has some high quality eco-tourism opportunities and these need to be promoted as a whole.
- Local people do not understand the Biosphere concept and what it can mean to the area.
- Thought the Biosphere was another ‘Eden Project’
- Area is rich in landscape value and heritage sites that need to be promoted
- That it is difficult for local communities to fully grasp the concept of the Biosphere and the opportunities that it presented.
- The promotion of local produce would not be viable in the very south west as the climate is not favourable to ensure regular success
- That farmer’s markets have declined greatly and more support should be shown to resurrect these
- Most people still hear Biosphere and think of the Eden Project
- That many communities are already producing their own promotional material and have websites, but these could still link in well with a Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere website.
- That ‘Gateway’ towns were a very good way of marketing the Biosphere brand, in a similar way to the Lake District or Loch Lomond
- Suggested Names included ‘Merrick’ and ‘Galloway & Ayrshire’
- Demolition of derelict buildings needed.
- New Cumnock provided a terrible view of East Ayrshire to visitors from Dumfries & Galloway
- The main street was described as a ‘pig sty’ and an embarrassment
- There were too many boarded up / burnt out buildings



- The biosphere might support local produce through a quality standard scheme or simply by adding value to the natural product.
- Marketing a world class environmental designation could increase the number of visitors to the region
- The current designation has done nothing to promote the area.
- Biosphere status might support funding applications to promote the area

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### Conservation & land management

- That the existing core areas of Cairnsmore of Fleet / Merrick Kells and Silver Flowe are being managed in such a way that the habitat for which they were initially designated is being adversely affected.
- Will the designation bring further restrictions on shooting/fishing?
- Does Biosphere create "no-go" areas?
- Risk of land being owned by increasingly limited few
- Current poor land management practices
- Could give local people a stronger voice in local land management
- The Glen Afton footpath was in a terrible state
- The removal of grazing animals from the core areas has upset the balance of nature.
- Too much land in the hands of agencies such as the Forestry Commission, who can in effect block progress.
- There is considerable dispute between conservationists and farmers, the biosphere might open dialog and help facilitate solutions.
- The programme will help preserve our local biodiversity
- Statements by SNH that heather depletion at Dromore are a result of over grazing is incorrect. At Cuil we have a well stocked farm and heather is in abundance. On a healthy well managed-and regularly burned-hillside.
- Forestry commission planting around lochs and rivers is responsible for the loss of fish, which were in abundance before planting took place.
- Proposals that encourage people living around the core areas to manage land in a sensitive way that supports the core area conservation, needs to be developed and open to public debate.

### Policy & strategy

- Concern that the policies of SNH and Forestry Commission are not compatible to a successful Biosphere Reserve project.
- Will a further designation mean increased bureaucratic requirements?
- More restrictions on such as housing and planning will further restrict growth
- Previous Biosphere status was ineffective
- Concern about the level of monetary support available from the Scottish Executive, SNH and FCS among others. There was also concern about the level of support financially and the long term sustainable commitment from the Ayrshire Councils and Dumfries and Galloway Council.
- "Are we trying to hit a moving target? It seems as if existing Biospheres have been de-listed because the goalposts have moved. The Ayrshire & Galloway Biosphere could potentially cover a much greater area than many of the existing Biospheres. Maybe this is not a problem if this is the way Biospheres are going – Green buffer zones around a core area already adequately protected by other designations."

- There should be a major emphasis on everything ‘green’ within the Biosphere, from eco tourism to green fuels, renewable energy and recycling.
- Are there the resources and the support to make any initiatives and schemes sustainable?
- Future developments within the Biosphere area should have basic renewable energy requirements and standards, whether ground source heat pumps, solar or domestic turbines.
- The programme is not supported by investment and as such may not get off the ground to be really effective
- Need for long term commitment and funding to have any lasting positive effect on the area.
- Other renewable energy sources are not considered, such as wave power and solar, providing both community benefit and potential tourist attractors.
- That any future Biosphere should be strictly adhered to in terms of future development which is inappropriate to the landscape for which it was originally designated
- The current Biosphere status is not being adhered to as a result of agency policy in the area and as such there is suspicion as to whether there would be any change.

### Transport

- Danger of increased pollution from extra traffic

## **SOCIAL**

### Sustainable Communities & Services

- The views that SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage) and FCS (Forestry Commission Scotland) are not supportive of community initiatives and the sustainability of local communities and individuals, certainly in terms of use of FCS buildings and visitor centres for community initiatives outwith the Summer months when they are usually closed.
- We are losing local services such as schools and post offices because of agency and government policy.
- Access to services is becoming more difficult, such as further distance to travel
- Worries that there are few sustainable jobs in the area
- Ageing population creating extra pressures on communities
- Some areas still don't have Broadband access
- Local people being forced out of housing market because of high prices
- Retired incomers and second home owners who don't want change are opposing business development and job creation
- Ageing population in towns and villages intolerant of younger people which further alienates young people
- Young people are leaving the area because of the lack of jobs and affordable housing
- “One of our members asked us to complete this survey, but it is clear that the growing development trust movement in the south west involves many communities who are dependant on and wish to promote, the natural environment of the sw so as to achieve sustainable, community led regeneration in their area. The natural environment is a key resource for them in terms of generating income, improving quality of life and taking pride in their local area.”
- Selfishly, I am keen to see a greater emphasis on enviro-affordable housing and developing communities prepared to live in harmony with the earth. Have a look at earthships. Five earthships in Dumfries & Galloway would be a great public relationships coup as well as a great opportunity to show your green credentials.”

- Is there any evidence that Biosphere status has made any difference to other areas and communities worldwide?
- Concern that FC Galloway conservancy have blocked community initiatives in the past, notably a wood fuel scheme for elderly people around Newton Stewart.
- Concerns that there were no considerations given to particular community benefit such as one or two turbines specifically installed to provide power for small communities.
- Desperate need for a new health centre & doctors surgery
- The community want the town hall building for the use of local people, which also has the potential for use as a tourist information centre.
- New Cumnock has no facilities – there are no public toilets and all the cafes have closed down
- There are no facilities for 12-18yr olds and a youth club is desperately needed.
- More and more shops are closing, with the largest, the co-op also about to close down, which will see the last clothing shop leave New Cumnock
- The population has more than halved from 7800 to 3000 and this will continue without regeneration and support.
- New Cumnock has 7 or 8 years to be saved as a town and a community
- Forestry commission policy has removed people from the landscape over the last fifty years or so. This is in contradiction to the MAB ideal of man living and working in the biosphere.
- The growth of second homes and the arrival of wealthy retired people has inflated house prices. As such there is little or no affordable housing in the area.
- We can not live in a tourist attraction or environmental museum; it must be a working environment which changes over time to suit the needs of the people living here.

### Community Participation

- Communities should always have been a major part of the existing Biosphere, and this has been documented in minutes of past meetings and discussions since the award of Biosphere status in 1976.
- The view that community initiatives in the past have been restricted and have ultimately failed due to lack of support and marketing from SNH, FCS and Visit Scotland (which came in for particular criticism).
- There was a general feeling that the views of communities were not being listened to, with one recent example of the recent nearby wind farm, which was opposed by local people but only because of the location chosen. Alternative locations suggested nearby, it was felt, were not considered.
- Future management of a Galloway and Ayrshire Biosphere should have a major input from the communities (or representatives from each community within the Biosphere area) involved but this should be under the guidance of ideally an individual who is fully supportive of community development initiatives, a good communicator with the genuine ability to listen and work alongside communities to realise their ambitions, rather than acting as a barrier to progression and expression.  
It was not considered as an option for such a post to be a short term fixed contract as this would undermine the whole concept of developing sustainable communities within the Biosphere.
- Local communities have possibly reached information ‘saturation point’ due to the past and recent efforts to restrict wind-farm developments. There is a feeling that there have been token attempts to consult on these issues.
- There is a lack of information and communication between communities, particularly where parallel ideas and initiatives are concerned.

- There is initial and understandable mistrust about schemes such as the Biosphere, following several unsuccessful campaigns against wind-farm development
- Greater need for better communication between communities.
- Local communities have possibly reached information 'saturation point' due to the past and recent efforts to restrict wind-farm developments. There is a feeling that there have been token attempts to consult on these issues
- That the lack of numbers in attendance should not be taken as representative of the potential local enthusiasm for status to continue.
- That greater numbers would have attended if it was a contentious issue such as a wind-farm development
- The Biosphere Reserve consultation period is too short and will not therefore engage with the greater public
- Questioned why nothing had been heard from MSP's in support of the Biosphere
- Lack of numbers at meeting maybe due to the misconception that we were independent consultants working for the council, with no link to Ayrshire
- That the lack of numbers in attendance should not be taken as representative of the potential local enthusiasm for status to continue.
- That greater numbers would have attended if it was a contentious issue such as a wind-farm development
- Local initiatives have no backing from East Ayrshire council
- The agencies are completing a tick box exercise and failing to recognise the real issues; Such as the loss of grazing animals in the core areas.
- Communities are being asked to support a designation which they don't understand. There needs to be more education on the subject.
- Suspicion that communities won't have enough input into the project and the agencies will deliver what they see as the best model.
- The project management structure is an opportunity for local people and agencies to work closer together.
- It would be useful to see options developed for the biosphere so communities can better judge what the project might entail

#### Research & Education

- Biosphere status might increase our knowledge of the environment and create educational opportunities
- "It would be useful to see ideas from case studies for Biospheres around the world"
- The core areas have a very important scientific value and as such could become a valuable educational and research resource
- There is the potential to create quality jobs within the educational and research programme.
- The biosphere could provide a valuable educational resource to local schools and help raise awareness about our environment amongst local children.
- The biosphere could help develop International links with other research groups

#### Transport

- Concerns with the amount of timber & coal road haulage around Ayrshire in general and Barrhill / Girvan area in particular. Lack of public transport and in particular, rail facilities for both communities and freight / timber.
- Deterioration in public transport
- The closure of the Solway Coast rail line, together with other, smaller branch lines has affected both local communities and tourism opportunities.

- There are poor standards of public transport throughout the area and that there is far too much haulage traffic.
- Greater emphasis must be placed upon the reopening of disused railway lines, which could significantly reduce the amount of traffic, particularly during the summer, tourist months.
- That the south west in general has suffered from the rail line closures of the past, with many routes that would have provided great tourism potential, particularly along the Solway Coast.
- That many badly needed transport opportunities, for both tourists and local residents are now impossible due to the desire to concentrate efforts on trunk road improvements, which in many cases has removed large sections of former mineral / disused railway lines which could have been valuable assets.
- It was interesting to hear that Dalmellington had the aspiration to use former mineral railway lines for tourist use, as local people also had a similar initiative they hoped to have support for, with a rail line up to Turnberry and a similar tourist scheme towards Dalmellington.
- Local people still campaigning to have new halts / re-opened stations for communities such as Pinwherry
- That the proposed haulage rail head at Barrhill should have been opened long ago, as the amount of haulage traffic on our roads is horrendous
- The railway station and rail line are major assets, but the rail station is an unwelcoming, deserted eyesore
- Public transport and transport infrastructure are very poor. We need rail and air links as well as a quality road system.

#### **GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE/TRANSITION ZONE BOUNDARY**

- Il of the map area should be included, also taking in the Lowther hills
- Area should have, as boundary towns, Girvan, Crosshill, Dalmellington, New Galloway, Gatehouse & Wigtown and include Lendalfoot complex of SSSI's
- Area should include Barrhill, Barr, Dailly, Straiton, Carsphairn, Dalry, New Galloway, Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbright, Gatehouse, Creetown, Wigtown & Newton Stewart
- Area should include Barrhill, Barr, Dailly, Crosshill, Straiton, Dalmellington, Carsphairn, Dalry, New Galloway & Newton Stewart
- Area should include everywhere on the map, including Thornhill & Moniaive, up to Cumnock, though excluding Ayr, Dumfries, Dalbeattie, Kirkcudbright, Wigtown, Whithorn, Glenluce, Cairnryan, Stranraer & Portpatrick

#### **GENERAL**

- Surprise that places such as Skye were not Biospheres, as many seem to fit the criteria

## Annex 2. The key Stakeholders and contextual materials collated during the consultation.

<b>Method of contact</b>	<b>Dumfries and Galloway</b>	<b>Ayrshire</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
Personal meeting Invitation by Letter	80	89	169
Email Invite	74	128	202
Personal Phone Invitation	29	12	41
<b>Contact type</b>			
Groups contacted/Community Council's/Environmental Group's/Community Group's	34	45	79
(Farmers & Farming groups)	17	17	34
Individuals contacted who expressed an interest	63	48	111
Businesses contacted	69	37	106
Dumfries and Galloway Councillors contacted	47	17	64
<b>Total</b>			<b>806</b>

## Leaflet distribution

Leaflets posted to Community Council's/Environmental Group's/Community Group's	875	941	1816
Leaflets delivered to schools/libraries/post offices	2250	1463	3713
Leaflets delivered to shops and general outlets	1125	643	1768
Leaflets handed out at events and meetings	140	992	1132
<b>Total</b>			<b>9235</b>

**NB A full list of key contacts (including businesses, Councillors, Community Councilors etc) as well as facilities, venues and promotional outlets has been produced but has not been included here for want of space. It is available as an excel spreadsheet and will be a useful tool for future consultation and engagement.**

## **Annex 3. Public meetings**

### **Galloway Consultation Events**

Meetings were held at Gatehouse of Fleet, New Galloway, Newton Stewart, Dalry and Wigtown between 9<sup>th</sup> July and xxxx September. The meetings were promoted by a number of means. Letters were sent to 48 regional councillors inviting them to attend the meetings. Advertisements were placed in the local press. Leaflets (4,100) were distributed to local schools, tourist points, shops, libraries, post offices, forestry outlets, SNH, garages and local initiative offices. Posters (80) were distributed to relevant towns where meetings held. Personal phone calls were made to 30 individuals who had expressed an interest or who we thought might be interested. Emails were sent to 85 organisations and individuals. All community council's were written to and presentations were made to the two Community Councils that responded at their regular monthly meetings. Letters were sent to 32 people who had no obvious email or phone number available. This group included farmers, individuals and organisations. As a result of this publicity a total of 62 people attended the initial five consultation meetings.

The meetings in Gatehouse of Fleet, New Galloway and Newton Stewart followed the same format. First a PowerPoint presentation explaining the concept of Biosphere Reserves and the current situation regarding the Galloway and Ayrshire Biosphere and a 20 minute film on the Cévennes National Park and biosphere. This was followed by open discussion about issues affecting the area at the moment, how these issues might develop and whether biosphere status might benefit the area. To close all those attending were asked to provide written comments (paper and stamped envelop were provided) or to fill in the questionnaire on the web site or the response slip on the flyer. The format for the Dalry and Wigtown meetings was modified in the light of the first meetings with a revised PowerPoint presentation giving more information about Biosphere Reserves and an open discussion about how the Biosphere project might be developed. Again all those attending were asked to provide written comments (paper and stamped envelop were provided) or to fill in the questionnaire on the web site or the response slip on the flyer.

### **Ayrshire Consultation Events**

The consultation process in Ayrshire was initially publicized and promoted through articles in the local press, the Cumnock Chronicle and Carrick Gazette, as well as on the SUP Biosphere website and East Ayrshire Woodlands website. Unfortunately, the Daily Express was the only national newspaper that, to our knowledge, printed, the Biosphere article, though in a more sensationalized way than was envisaged. Despite two attempts from East Ayrshire Woodlands and a further attempt from East Ayrshire Council, the Ayrshire Post has, for some unknown reason, failed to include any article about the Biosphere. Reluctantly, we are to purchase advertising space to ensure some promotion.

All community councils, Councillors, hotels and other accommodation providers including campsites, b&b's were sent the consultation leaflet, together with schools, post offices, libraries, special interest groups, landowners, rural business groups and representatives, conservation groups and groups / individuals from the tourism, leisure, crafts industry. Many establishments have been provided with a stock of consultation leaflets and laminated poster(s), though it is difficult to assess how many places actually have placed information on display.

All the libraries with the Ayrshire Biosphere area have been advertised as information / response points for the consultation, both in local shop windows, on our website and in the local press.

Over 100 specific invite letters and emails were sent out to the identified key stakeholders in invitation to the consultation meetings. The lack of response from certain individuals and groups has been disappointing and this resulted in the planned workshop proposals being modified.

All attendees at meetings received copies of the consultation flier and an information response pack including evaluation forms, questionnaire & other response forms. Copies of UNESCO / UKMAB publications were made available, though not all were appropriate to help with the understanding of Biosphere Reserves. The promotional banners, intended for two specific events, did not arrive in time but were used in subsequent events.

In both Ayrshire and Galloway it quickly became clear that people were not willing to commit to attending more than one meeting. The reasons for this included the fact that the bulk of the consultation coincided with the summer holiday period, but other issues such as lack of interest, and lack of available time were also suggested. This meant that the proposed in-depth workshop approach was not possible. Instead it was agreed that we would arrange additional open meetings and seek to engage with key stakeholders through these and through follow-up contact. It is interesting to note that whereas the general public's awareness of BRs is very low – the proportion of questionnaire respondees who claimed to have previous knowledge of BRs was relatively high – about 50%.

## **Meeting notes**

### **Meeting Notes Dumfries and Galloway**

#### **July 9<sup>th</sup> Mill on the Fleet. 7.30 to 10.00**

#### **Present**

Andrew Ward (Project Officer Creetown Initiative)  
Steven Lecuyer (Work place student from Cevennes National Park & Biosphere)  
Julian Watson (Manager Mill on the Fleet)  
Mary Armstrong  
Bill Mitchell  
Jackie Cartright  
Sandra Collette  
Jez Noad  
Roy Callandine  
Wendy Callandine  
Shaun Burnie  
Duncan Mcleod

#### **Format**

- Introduction by Andrew Ward
- Cevennes Film
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Open discussion

#### **Meeting Summary/Points to note**

1. Concern that Biosphere would create more Red Tape in areas such as planning or from agencies like SNH.
2. Concern that group's such as SNH and the Forestry Commission would lead the project, excluding community groups, local business and individuals



3. Current policy by SNH and the Forestry Commission is not inline with current Biosphere guidelines. Doubt as to whether they would change
4. Some doubt as to whether a Biosphere would realistically support business and job creation
5. Our Biosphere core areas are not particularly high profile and some doubt as to whether they ever would be, in comparison to say Ayers Rock, which has a high worldwide profile
6. Providing resources were allocated to the project, Biosphere could be the umbrella and catalyst for projects
7. It may support the drawing down of funds for unrelated projects.
8. Could bring national and international recognition.
9. Opportunity to develop branded tourism within the green tourist Market

**July 11<sup>th</sup> Kenbridge Hotel New Galloway 7.30 to 10.00**

**Present**

Andrew Ward (Project Officer Creetown Initiative)

Steven Lecuyer (Work place student from Cevennes National Park & Biosphere)

Gordon Hill

Peter Kelly

Roz Hill

Alan Rumble

Katie Polkington

Kathryn Peace

Jon Nimmo

Bob Peace

Teri O'Loughlin

Christine Birch

Mike Kaye

Calum Murray (RSPB)

Maggie Kaye

Mary Armstrong

Godfrey Smith

Daye Tucker

Robin Ade

**Format**

- Introduction by Andrew Ward
- Cevennes Film
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Open discussion

**Meeting Summary/Points to note**

1. Confusion about the rules which govern Biosphere Status
2. Concern about the local economy and ageing population. Therefore some enthusiasm expressed that Biosphere Status might present an opportunity to attract investment and help regeneration projects
3. Wind farm development might be restricted
4. Biosphere Reserve as a title does not convey the full concept of the MAB programme
5. It was felt that if the Buffer Zone and Transitional Zones were too extensive, it might dilute any real impact
6. The Biospheres future development needs to be publicised and open to public debate, because in effect the public are being asked to support a very vague concept at this point in time
7. Still areas without broadband.
8. Lack of investment in the area.

**July 12th Crown Hotel Newton Stewart 7.30 to 10.00**

### **Present**

Andrew Ward (Project Officer Creetown Initiative)  
Steven Lecuyer (Work place student from Cevennes National Park & Biosphere)  
Joan Mitchell  
Mary Armstrong  
Graham McClymont  
Peter Woodfield  
Linda Woodfield  
Kirsty Hirst

### **Format**

- Introduction by Andrew Ward
- Cevennes Film
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Open discussion

### **Meeting Summary/Points to note**

1. Loss of grazing animals within the proposed biosphere area has led to an imbalance of nature, will the Biosphere help redress this
2. Support of raptures by agencies such as RSPB has damaged local wildlife
3. Why doesn't UNESCO support the programme with grants
4. Surprised that no regional councillors at this meeting
5. Would it restrict fishing and shooting
6. We have a beautiful area which is not that well known, nationally and internationally. The biosphere may be the chance to promote the area
7. Comes without funding support, so how will it deliver projects and benefits.
8. Possible building and planning restrictions.
9. Support a workable farming policy, which is mutually agreed by conservationist and farmers alike.
10. Support a mutually agreed conservation plan between farmers and conservationists.
11. It might help job creation, especially quality jobs.
12. It may help to attract more visitors to the area.

### **22<sup>nd</sup> August County Buildings Wigtown 7.30 to 9.30**

### **Present**

Andrew Ward (Project Officer Creetown Initiative)  
Peter Hopkins (Cree valley Community Woodland)  
Anna Johnson (Dumfries and Galloway Council)  
Sandy Binks  
Mary Armstrong  
Mary McKenzie

### **Format**

- Introduction
- PowerPoint presentation
- Open discussion

### **Meeting Summary/Points to note**

1. Potential to create research and development posts
2. A frame work for the projects future development should have been presented to these meetings
3. The biosphere can only be a good thing providing it has resources. It wont change things over night but it could support gradual change and encourage new projects
4. The current Biosphere status is not being adhered to as a result of agency policy in the area and as such suspicion as to whether there would be any change.
5. Lack of understanding about the process. Are people being asked to rubber stamp the Biosphere or is this the start of the consultation.
6. Suspicion as to who would lead the Biosphere project and that there would not be further involvement of communities after this consultation.
7. Lack of jobs, particularly quality jobs, would the Biosphere help in this issue and if so, how

**23<sup>rd</sup> August Dalry Town hall 7.30 to 10.00**

**Present**

Andrew Ward (Project Officer Creetown Initiative)  
 Jools Cox  
 G Maclauy  
 Kathryn Peace  
 E H Green  
 Bob Peace  
 Peter Stoner  
 Pat Rigg  
 Ralph Rigg  
 Peter Kelly  
 Jamie Dent (Dumfries and Galloway affordable housing partnership)  
 George Norris  
 Richard Wilson  
 Mike Kaye  
 Maggie Kaye  
 Mary Armstrong  
 Andrew Belinski  
 Pip Tabor

**Format**

- Introduction
- PowerPoint presentation
- Open discussion

**Meeting Summary/Points to note**

1. To retain Biosphere Status we need to put people back on the land, such as hill farmers
2. Will the Forestry Commission allow areas of land to be returned to their natural state and open up access to the countryside
3. Some old croft buildings should be restored and people encouraged to live in them
4. If we did not notice the Biosphere before, what difference will we see now, what's so different
5. School children be taught about Biosphere Reserves
6. Why doesn't UNESCO put more into the Biosphere idea

7. The consultation period should have been over a longer period and started by a series of lectures about what a Biosphere Reserve is
8. There are a growing number of second homes which inflates house prices, how will the biosphere help.
9. Retired incomers against business development and growth.
10. More road traffic causing pollution.
11. More red tape which restricts development.
12. Fishing and shooting bans might be introduced.

### **7th Sept Waverlay Hall Creetown 7.30 to 9.30**

#### **Present**

Andrew Ward (Project Officer Creetown Initiative)  
Robert Purdie  
Nicky Lawton  
Mary Armstrong  
Honor McConchie  
Christine McClymont  
Graham McClymont  
Dorothy Scherrer  
Ian McConchie

#### **Format**

- Introduction
- PowerPoint presentation
- Open discussion

#### **Meeting Summary/Points to note**

1. What backing has Dumfries and Galloway council given to this project
2. Does Biosphere status restrict building
3. Why have SNH and Forestry Commission not sent representatives to these meetings
4. Why do we need another designation, we already have too many
5. Biosphere Status might help attract investment
6. The area is becoming an environmental museum.
7. Loss of grazing animals in core areas.
8. Removal of hill farmers from core areas.
9. Loss of basic services such as post offices and schools.
10. Too many wind farms/Not enough wind farms.

### **17<sup>th</sup> Sept Kenbridge Hotel New Galloway 7.30 to 10.00**

#### **Present**

Andrew Ward (Project Officer Creetown Initiative)  
Mary Armstrong  
Roy Hooker  
Andrea Hooker  
Peter Kelly  
Ruth Paterson (SCVO)

#### **Format**

- Introduction
- PowerPoint presentation
- Open discussion

### **Meeting Summary/Points to note**

1. Wind farms are taking over our countryside, will the biosphere help redress this issue
2. The project will need to be financed, who will finance it
3. Worry that project will be led by a group that will not be open to public comment. It was suggested at this point that a group such as SUP should lead the next stage
4. The Biosphere Reserve consultation period is too short.
5. The agencies are completing a tick box exercise and failing to recognise the real issues, such as the loss of grazing animals in the core area.
6. People do not understand what a biosphere is and what it does. There was considerable debate about the lack of distinct rules and regulations that might come with Biosphere designation.
7. Young people leaving the area because of the statutory agencies policies.
8. No affordable housing in the area.
9. Poor public transport.
10. Money distracted from areas more needy, such as supporting local schools.
11. Educational resource.
12. Help local businesses by attracting more visitors.
13. Support the conservation of local biodiversity.
14. Promote awareness of local biodiversity amongst young people, especially School children .

### **18<sup>th</sup> Sept Macmillan Hall Newton Stewart 8.00 to 9.00**

#### **Present**

Andrew Ward (Project Officer Creetown Initiative)  
Peter Robinson

#### **Format**

- Introduction
- PowerPoint presentation
- Open discussion

### **Meeting Summary/Points to note**

1. What other Biospheres are there in the UK and do they work.
2. Support for local produce by the introduction of a quality brand label. Grown or made in the biosphere.
3. Return people to the land
4. Manage forestry policy better. For example the reinstatement of some farming crofts.
5. Create a Biosphere management structure involving all sections of the community which might initiate projects and tackle problems

## **The Bowling Club, Dalmellington**

### **Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2007 7pm – 10.30pm**

A total of 73 individuals were specifically invited to the two initial meetings planned in Dalmellington and Girvan. These included people from a diverse range of backgrounds including all Local Councillors, Community Councils, Landowners, Farmers, Fishermen, Hoteliers, Craft workers, people from the leisure industry and special interest groups. Following this, the meetings were publicly advertised.

#### **Present**

Mark Davies (Community Liaison Officer, East Ayrshire Woodlands)  
Alison Calcott (East Ayrshire Woodlands)

Daye Tucker (SRPBA, Rural Leadership Convenor)  
Peter Kelly, New Galloway  
Kennedy Ferguson, Dalmellington  
Tommy Loudon (FWAG)  
Geoff Forrest (Sustainable Design Crafts) Loch Doon  
Jane Savage (Sustainable Design Crafts) Loch Doon  
Gordon McCracken (Dalmellington Community Council)  
Anne Johnstone (Dalmellington Community Council)  
Mary Armstrong (Heart of Galloway / Galloway Preservation Society)

#### **Apologies Received**

Howard Wilkinson (Ayrshire & Arran Food Network)  
Frank McHugh (Scout Leader)  
Mark Gibson (Craigengillan Estate)

#### **Initial Planned Format**

- Introductions
- Biosphere Powerpoint Presentation
- Cévenne DVD
- Workshops scenarios in Groups

#### **Meeting summary.**

The Cévenne DVD was cut short after approximately 10 minutes viewing as the view was expressed that there was minimal relevance to the issues of concern around the Doon Valley / Dalmellington area. Following a brief discussion it was decided that the format of the meeting would be far more beneficial and productive if it became an open floor discussion as, in principal, all attendees were very enthusiastic and supportive of the Biosphere project but had several major concerns;

1. That communities should always have been a major part of the existing Biosphere, and this has been documented in minutes of past meetings and discussions since the award of Biosphere status in 1976.
2. That the existing core areas of Cairnsmore of Fleet / Merrick Kells and Silver Flowe are being managed in such a way that the habitat for which they were initially designated is being adversely affected.

3. The views that SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage) and FCS (Forestry Commission Scotland) are not supportive of community initiatives and the sustainability of local communities and individuals, certainly in terms of use of FCS buildings and visitor centres for community initiatives outwith the Summer months when they are usually closed. There was also concern that existing tourist attractions / facilities (i.e. features such as the installations & sculptures within the Galloway Forest Park) around the area are not maintained and do not provide outside visitors with a positive view.
4. The view that community initiatives in the past have been restricted and have ultimately failed due to lack of support and marketing support from SNH, FCS and Visit Scotland, which came in for particular criticism.
5. Local initiatives in the past have been restricted and ultimately failed due to the restrictions and pressure placed upon them by Food Standards Agency / Health and Safety etc.
6. The lack of a clear focus in terms of organization and marketing has led to the many ideas and initiatives failing in the past, particularly where tourism projects and opportunities have been concerned.
7. It was strongly felt that projects such as the Dalmellington Book Town and the Dunaskin Heritage Centre should have had the support and commitment to have been major tourist attractors within the Doon Valley.
8. There was a general feeling that the views of communities were not being listened to, with one recent example of the recent nearby wind farm, which was opposed by local people but only because of the location chosen. Alternative locations suggested nearby, it was felt, were not considered. There was also concern that there were no considerations given to particular community benefit such as one or two turbines specifically installed to provide power for the Dalmellington area.
9. Concern was raised about the standard of local facilities in terms of attracting locals and tourists to the area. One example being the facilities around Loch Doon and the lack of a functioning official camping / caravan site, despite several years of discussions and frustration.

### **Views on Future management of a Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere**

10. There was a strong feeling that any future management of a Galloway and Ayrshire Biosphere should have a major input from the communities (or representatives from each community within the Biosphere area) involved but this should be under the guidance of ideally an individual who is fully supportive of community development initiatives, a good communicator with the genuine ability to listen and work alongside communities to realise their ambitions, rather than acting as a barrier to progression and expression.

It was not considered as an option for such a post to be a short term fixed contract as this would undermine the whole concept of developing sustainable communities within the Biosphere.

11. The attendees accepted that it is hard to place specific figures on funding opportunities in a new look Biosphere, apart from the fact that such a designation would enhance 'points scoring' in many funding cases. However, there was concern about the level of monetary support available from the Scottish Executive, SNH and FCS among others. There was also concern about the level of support financially and the long term sustainable commitment from the Ayrshire Councils and Dumfries and Galloway Council.

12. It was agreed that a communities website was extremely important as a branding tool for the many initiatives, businesses, products and events happening in local communities throughout the Biosphere area.

13. It was suggested that simply the 'Galloway Biosphere' would be a suitable name, as it would surround Galloway Forest Park and is a term used by Burns to describe the area, including Ayrshire & Dumfries and Galloway.

14. The view was expressed that the Doon Valley could be used as a test case for Community development within the Biosphere, to give projects and initiatives the support to demonstrate the enthusiasm and diverse range of ideas that local people want to see succeed.

### **Facilitators Summary**

It is clear that there have been many ideas and initiatives around the Doon Valley area over several years and the vast majority of these have failed due to lack of support, funding and commitment. The biosphere could well offer a way to bring together many existing initiatives and develop new ideas, should there be the sustainable commitment and support from the larger conservation and tourism organizations, together with the three local authorities and the Scottish Executive.

The concerns about the initial designation of the three 'core' areas are extremely relevant but should not initially become such a focus that may lead to the opportunities for community development in terms of local products, facilities and tourism being lost by the subsequent delisting of the Galloway and Ayrshire Biosphere.

It is clear that a major input from communities would be required in the future management of the Biosphere, but under guidance from an individual who would bring understanding and wherever possible, harmony rather than potential conflict.

There are clear issues with the way that previous schemes and projects have been marketed and a specific website that could easily develop into a valuable visitor resource, would be extremely beneficial as a single resource with world wide easy access and would remove many of the concerns with the current marketing of visitor opportunities.

This could cover every relevant project, business, accommodation provider, craft information, local produce manufacturer, visitor attraction, transport information, weather information, leisure activities such as walking routes, fishing, cycling, horse riding in a generalized format such as – where we are, what we are, where to stay, where to eat, what to do, what to see etc.

Enthusiastic support from the Doon Valley area does exist, but with many of the concerns and conditions mentioned earlier, as there is a fear that this may be another project which fails due the lack of commitment, funding and support from others.

Since the consultation meeting, we have been assured that support in the Doon Valley area has been increasing significantly, with key stakeholders, notably Craigengillan Estate, being particularly active in raising enthusiasm for Biosphere status to continue. However, the common issue of wind-farm development remains and several projects which would have relevance to the Biosphere criteria are subject to the turbine development not taking place around Dalmellington.

**Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere meeting Royal Hotel, Girvan  
Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2007 7pm – 10pm**

**Present**



Mark Davies (Community Liaison Officer, East Ayrshire Woodlands)  
Bruce Davidson (Project Manager, East Ayrshire Woodlands)

Jim Loch (Girvan Community Council)  
Howard Wilkinson (Ayrshire & Arran Food Network)  
Councillor John Allan (South Ayrshire Council)  
Councillor Mairi Low (South Ayrshire Council)  
Isabel Archbold (Crosshill, Kirkmichael & Straiton Community Council)  
Ken Gibb (South Ayrshire Council)  
Councillor John McDowall (South Ayrshire Council)  
Harriet Ellis (Colmonell resident)  
John K Whiteford (Daily Community Council)

### **Apologies**

Mark Gibson (Craigengillan Estate)

### **Initial Planned Format**

- Introductions
- Biosphere Powerpoint Presentation
- Cévenne DVD
- Workshops scenarios in Groups / discussion

### **Meeting summary.**

It was pleasing that there were three local councillors in attendance, together with representatives from 3 community councils. The numbers were not conducive to group workshops, so a general discussion followed the viewing of the DVD.

### **The following points were noted:**

1. The area continues to suffer large numbers of heavy haulage by road, with the continued lack of rail facilities at Barrhill.
2. Is there any evidence that Biosphere status has made any difference to other areas and communities worldwide?
3. Can Biosphere status stop the increasing amount of wind-farm developments which are scarring our countryside?
4. There should be a major emphasis on everything 'green' within the Biosphere, from eco tourism to green fuels, renewable energy and recycling.
5. A dedicated, multilingual website is vital for the Biosphere to grow as a whole and be a resource for tourists from all over the world.
6. The closure of the Solway Coast rail line, together with other, smaller branch lines has affected both local communities and tourism opportunities.
7. The Biosphere concept is still difficult to understand
8. Are there the resources and the support to make any initiatives and schemes sustainable?

9. Does Biosphere status bring further planning restrictions and designations?

**Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere Presentation S Ayrshire Sustainability Forum  
Wednesday 15th August 2007 2pm – 4pm**

**Present**

Mark Davies (Community Liaison Officer, East Ayrshire Woodlands)  
Bruce Davidson (Project Manager, East Ayrshire Woodlands)  
Councillor Alec Oattes (Girvan & South Carrick)  
Ken Gibb (South Ayrshire Council)  
Yvonne Irvine (SEPA)  
Liz Marquis (Energy Agency)  
David Rackham (SAC, Auchincruive)  
Gus Collins (Girvan Connections Partnership)  
William McKissock (Rural Development Officer, South Ayrshire Council)  
Councillor Helen Moonie (Prestwick)  
Fiona Ross (South Ayrshire Council)  
Annabel Beattie (South Ayrshire Council)

**Meeting summary.**

Unfortunately, apologies were received from several members, some of which had also been contacted previously about the consultation, with no response. Prior to the presentation, we were advised that it would be more beneficial to follow an open floor discussion format, following the powerpoint presentation, rather than have workshops.

The powerpoint presentation is now available on the sustainability forum website.

The issues raised were generally concerning planning, land management and funding opportunities. It is hoped the minutes will be available on the South Ayrshire Council website in the near future.

**Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere meeting Boar's Head Hotel, Colmonell  
Tuesday 23rd August 2007 7pm – 10pm**

**Present**

Mark Davies (Community Liaison Officer, East Ayrshire Woodlands)  
Roger Pirrie (Local resident)  
Claire Pirrie (Local resident)  
Harriet Ellis (Artist, Local resident)  
Victoria Boyle (Local resident)  
Sue Marshall (Local resident)  
Paul Kerrigan (Local resident)

**Apologies Received**

None

**Meeting summary.**

A disappointing turn out, despite the meeting being widely publicised with posters, local press and a further 60+ invite letters being distributed. There was a community council meeting also taking

place that evening, which unfortunately I was not aware of. This may have been a more appropriate meeting to attend if the opportunity had arisen.

Due to the low attendance level, the meeting took the form of an informal run through of the Biosphere presentation, with discussion throughout.

The following points were noted:

1. That the lack of numbers in attendance should not be taken as representative of the potential local enthusiasm for status to continue.
2. That it is difficult for local communities to fully grasp the concept of the Biosphere and the opportunities that it presented.
3. That greater numbers would have attended if it was a contentious issue such as a wind-farm development.
4. Local communities have possibly reached information 'saturation point' due to the past and recent efforts to restrict wind-farm developments. There is a feeling that there has been token attempts to consult on these issues.
5. There are poor standards of public transport throughout the area and that there is far too much haulage traffic.
6. Greater emphasis must be placed upon the reopening of disused railway lines, which could significantly reduce the amount of traffic, particularly during the summer, tourist months.
7. That the word 'reserve' has to appear in any future title
8. There is a lack of information and communication between communities, particularly where parallel ideas and initiatives are concerned.
9. A vital need for a Biosphere website to pull all the ideas, facilities and attractions together, without giving VisitScotland the opportunity to under promote the area.
10. A great need for new initiatives to receive support and backing and to include training and employment opportunities, particularly in terms of renewable energy such as biomass / woodfuel for the benefit of the south west, rather than adding to the already heavy haulage traffic.
11. Concern that FC Galloway conservancy have blocked community initiatives in the past, notably a wood fuel scheme for elderly people around Newton Stewart.
12. That places such as Girvan and Newton Stewart could be valuable 'Gateway' towns.
13. There is initial and understandable mistrust about schemes such as the Biosphere, following several unsuccessful campaigns against wind-farm development
14. That Galloway & Ayrshire has some high quality eco-tourism opportunities and these need to be promoted as a whole.

15. The new harbour development at Girvan could be of particular importance to the Galloway and Ayrshire Biosphere in the future.

16. More support should be given to green initiatives, such as bio-fuels and wood-fuel, in order to maximize the return from areas of felled spruce plantation.

17. Suggested names: 'Galloway & Ayrshire', 'Ayrshire & Galloway'

### **Facilitators Summary**

Despite the low attendance, the meeting was enjoyable and productive. Many of the issues & concerns voiced, were raised at previous meetings, in particular, inappropriate development, lack of support for initiatives & projects and communication issues between communities. It is pleasing to see such a well produced leaflet to promote the Stinchar Valley, which would be a valuable asset in any future development of the Galloway and Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve.

## **Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere meeting Maybole Town Hall Monday 27th August 2007 7pm – 9.45pm**

### **Present**

Mark Davies (Community Liaison Officer, East Ayrshire Woodlands)

David Kiltie (may-tag)

Jan Sinclair (Heal The Earth Ayrshire)

B. Robertson (Maybole Resident)

Peter Lynn (Maybole Mens Health Forum)

Alex Kelly (Maybole Community Council)

Carol Davies (Bailey Guitars)

John Sommerville (Renewable Energy Consultant)

### **Apologies Received**

None

### **Meeting summary.**

The community council were kind enough to arrange the town hall as a venue, though despite details of the meeting being communicated through the CC and through posters and local press, there were 7 people in attendance.

### **The following points were noted:**

1. Local people do not understand the Biosphere concept and what it can mean to the area.
2. The consultation process is too short
3. Questioned why nothing had been heard from MSP's in support of the Biosphere
4. Thought the Biosphere was another 'Eden Project'
5. Maybole needs something to kick start its tourist & visitor potential
6. Area is rich in landscape value and heritage sites that need to be promoted
7. Future developments within the Biosphere area should have basic renewable energy requirements and standards, whether ground source heat pumps, solar or domestic turbines.

8. That the south west in general has suffered from the rail line closures of the past, with many routes that would have provided great tourism potential, particularly along the Solway Coast.
9. Concern about levels of support and funding available
10. Lack of numbers at meeting maybe due to the misconception that we were independent consultants working for the council, with no link to Ayrshire
11. Need for long term commitment and funding to have any lasting positive effect on the area.
12. Greater need for better communication between communities.

### **Facilitators Summary**

Those present were not comfortable in progressing the meeting into workshop style group scenarios, as there was still a lack of clear understanding about Biosphere status and how it could benefit and promote the area.

David Kiltie from May-tag & Maybole community council was extremely supportive of the Biosphere and was to send out a press release and photographs from the meeting. MD supplied, on request, the Biosphere advert and short article to go in the Maybole Community Newspaper.

Other attendees took stocks of the information pack and consultation flier with them to further promote the consultation process.

The opportunities for renewable energy and the subsequent training and employment opportunities were at the forefront of discussions, together with uncertainty concerning the sustainability of support and funding from local authorities and other organisations.

## **Daily Community Centre Tuesday 28th August 2007 7pm – 9.30pm**

### **Present**

Mark Davies (Community Liaison Officer, East Ayrshire Woodlands)

J. Siddell (Pinwherry & Pinmore Community Council)

Bill Gray

### **Apologies Received**

Chris Saunders

### **Meeting summary.**

A very disappointing turn out, despite the meeting being widely publicised with posters, local press and a further 60+ invite letters being distributed. The perception that the meeting may compete with the bingo also taking place in the community centre did not materialize, as this was also cut short due to lack of numbers.

Due to the low attendance level, the meeting took the form of an informal run through of the Biosphere presentation, with discussion throughout.

### **The following points were noted:**

1. That the lack of numbers in attendance should not be taken as representative of the potential local enthusiasm for status to continue.
2. That it is difficult for local communities to fully grasp the concept of the Biosphere and the opportunities that it presented.

3. That greater numbers would have attended if it was a contentious issue such as a wind-farm development.
4. Local communities have possibly reached information 'saturation point' due to the past and recent efforts to restrict wind-farm developments. There is a feeling that there have been token attempts to consult on these issues.
5. Concerns that there were no considerations given to particular community benefit such as one or two turbines specifically installed to provide power for small communities.
6. Other renewable energy sources are not considered, such as wave power and solar, providing both community benefit and potential tourist attractors.
7. That any future Biosphere should be strictly adhered to in terms of future development which is inappropriate to the landscape for which it was originally designated.
8. That many badly needed transport opportunities, for both tourists and local residents are now impossible due to the desire to concentrate efforts on trunk road improvements, which in many cases has removed large sections of former mineral / disused railway lines which could have been valuable assets.
9. The promotion of local produce would not be viable in the very south west as the climate is not favourable to ensure regular success.
10. That farmer's markets have declined greatly and more support should be shown to resurrect these.
11. Most people still hear Biosphere and think of the Eden Project.
12. That many communities are already producing their own promotional material and have websites, but these could still link in well with a Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere website.
13. It was interesting to hear that Dalmellington had the aspiration to use former mineral railway lines for tourist use, as local people also had a similar initiative they hoped to have support for, with a rail line up to Turnberry and a similar tourist scheme towards Dalmellington.
14. Local people still campaigning to have new halts / re-opened stations for communities such as Pinwherry
15. That the proposed haulage rail head at Barrhill should have been opened long ago, as the amount of haulage traffic on our roads is horrendous.
16. That 'Gateway' towns were a very good way of marketing the Biosphere brand, in a similar way to the Lake District or Loch Lomond.
17. Concern that the peace and quiet of the south-west could be lost if it became as attractive to tourists as the Lake District.
18. Surprise that places such as Skye were not Biospheres, as many seem to fit the criteria.

19. Suggested Names included 'Merrick' and 'Galloway & Ayrshire'

### **Facilitators Summary**

Due to the disappointing attendance, it is hard to gauge the response from the Dailly area, though I was assured that this did not signify apathy to the Biosphere.

Many of the concerns and issues raised in previous meetings, were expressed here. Likewise, many of the initiatives, opportunities and positive views were also expressed. In particular, it is felt that Pinwherry & Pinmore community council could be extremely supportive and may prove to be an important contact for further consultation and discussion.

## **New Cumnock Community Centre Thursday 23rd August 2007 10.15am – 11.45am**

This meeting was part of a community regeneration consultation, where there was the opportunity to give a very short talk on the potential benefits of a Biosphere Reserve to, in particular, New Cumnock and to arrange a presentation to New Cumnock Community Council.

The main concerns and negative issues raised about New Cumnock were as follows;

- Demolition of derelict buildings needed.
- New Cumnock provided a terrible view of East Ayrshire to visitors from Dumfries & Galloway
- Local initiatives have no backing from East Ayrshire council
- Desperate need for a new health centre & doctors surgery
- The community want the town hall building for the use of local people, which also has the potential for use as a tourist information centre.
- New Cumnock has no facilities – there are no public toilets and all the cafes have closed down
- There is a desperate need for a heritage centre, to interpret the rich natural and mining / industrial heritage of the area, especially with the history of Burns, Wallace and Mary Queen of Scots.
- The main street was described as a 'pig sty' and an embarrassment
- There were too many boarded up / burnt out buildings
- The Glen Afton footpath was in a terrible state
- There are no facilities for 12-18yr olds and a youth club is desperately needed.
- More and more shops are closing, with the largest, the co-op also about to close down, which will see the last clothing shop leave New Cumnock.
- The Lochside Hotel is the only decent standard hotel in the area and is outside New Cumnock.
- The only limited shopping and tourist facilities exist in Cumnock
- Most visitors head straight for Ayr, after seeing the poor state of New Cumnock
- The local economy is failing
- The population has more than halved from 7800 to 3000 and this will continue without regeneration and support.
- New Cumnock has 7 or 8 years to be saved as a town and a community
- The railway station and rail line are major assets, but the rail station is an unwelcoming, deserted eyesore.
- The only hope to save New Cumnock is tourism.

There was guarded but enthusiastic support for the development of a Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere, as it seemed to provide the potential to justify all the above negative issues receiving attention from the local council if New Cumnock was to be considered worthy of inclusion within the Biosphere.

Many of the schemes and initiatives that the Biosphere could promote seemed to justify the urgent need for these issues to be addressed, so that New Cumnock could become not only an important gateway to Ayrshire / East Ayrshire, but also a welcoming gateway to the Biosphere, such is its location on a main trunk road and the rail facilities.

A meeting with the community council is planned for mid September, when further issues and opportunities will be discussed.

### **Overall summary**

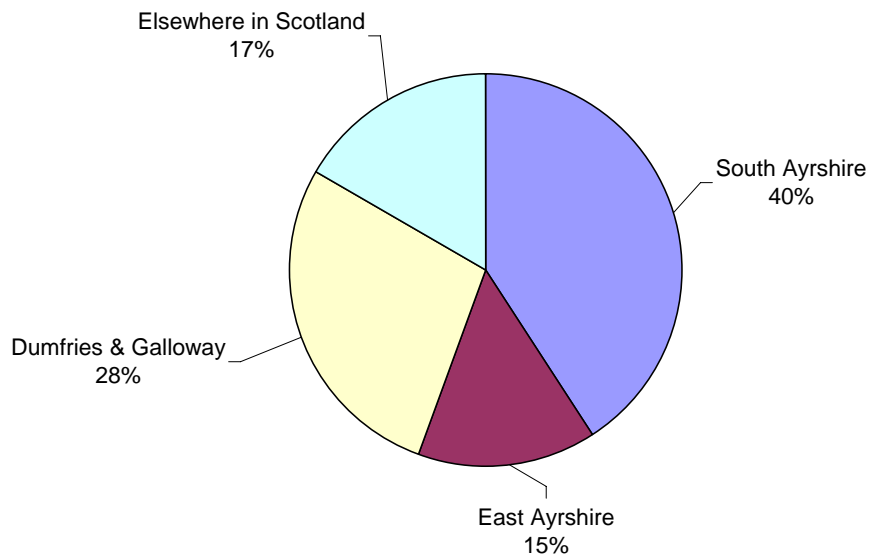
- **There is a clear lack of understanding about Biosphere status and how it affects local communities within the proposed area.**
- **There are a number of longstanding issues, particularly where previous schemes, projects and initiatives have failed due to lack of support from the Local Authorities and other organisations.**
- **Community councils in particular, feel that there are inadequate means of communication and accountability, which is something that must be addressed if the status is to continue with their support.**
- **Inappropriate development against the wishes of communities is a major issue, as is the problems associated with open-cast mining and timber haulage.**
- **In East Ayrshire, recreation and tourism is seen as the way of building sustainable communities and safeguarding both jobs and population figures for the future.**
- **High profile publicity would have helped the level of awareness and understanding prior to the public meetings.**
- **It is clear, however, that support and enthusiasm is growing in and around local communities, with many potential initiatives identified, particularly around the New Cumnock and Dalmellington areas, where the opportunities that Biosphere status may promote could revitalize the tourism and economy of both towns.**

**Mark Davies. Community Liaison Officer. East Ayrshire Woodlands, September 2007.**

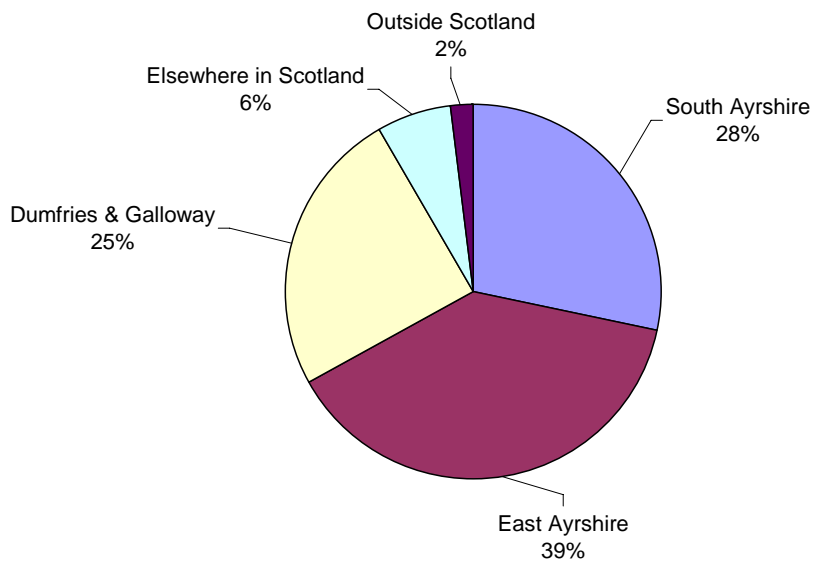


## Annex 4 Questionnaire Responses

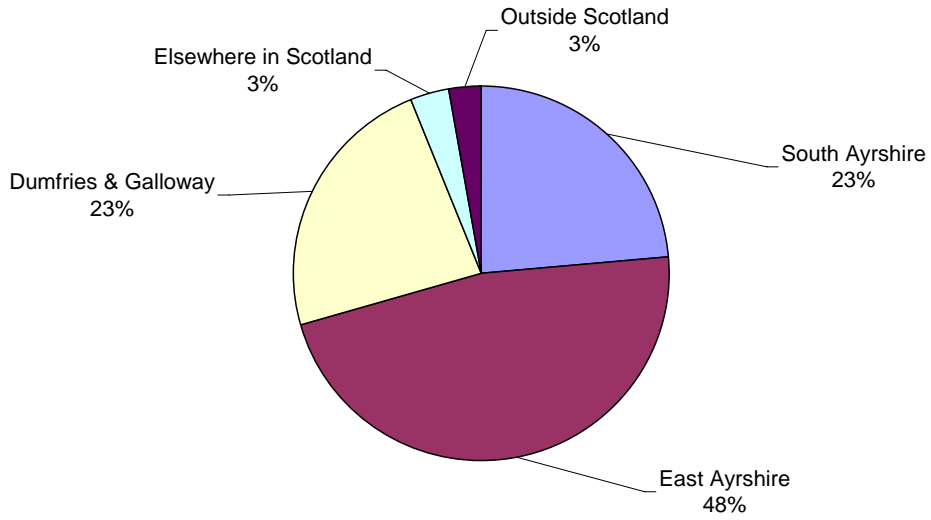
### 1a. Where do you live? (Questionnaire responses)



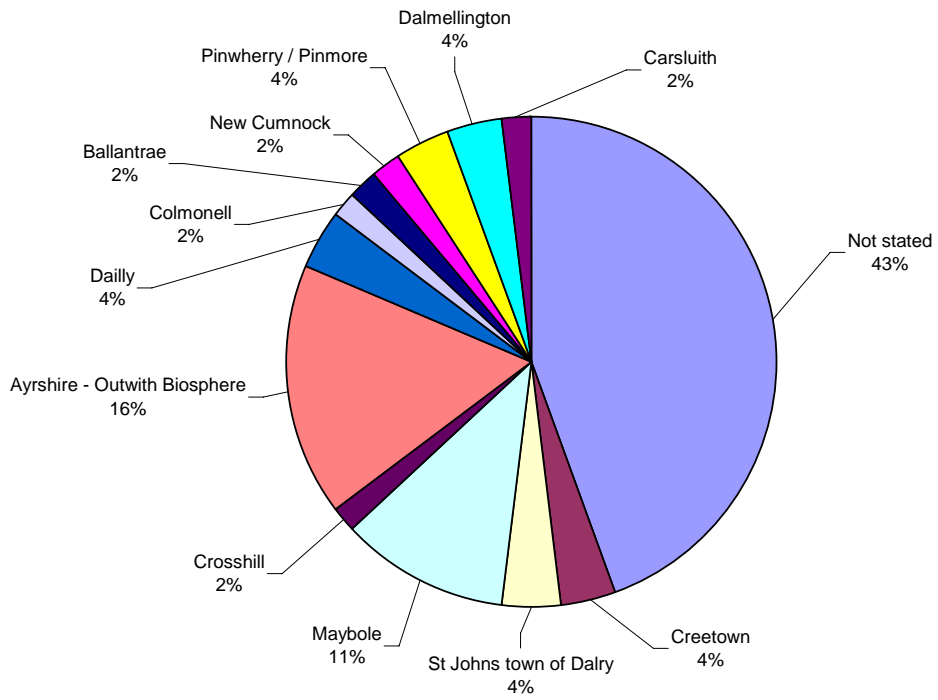
### 1a(2) Where do you live (All responses)



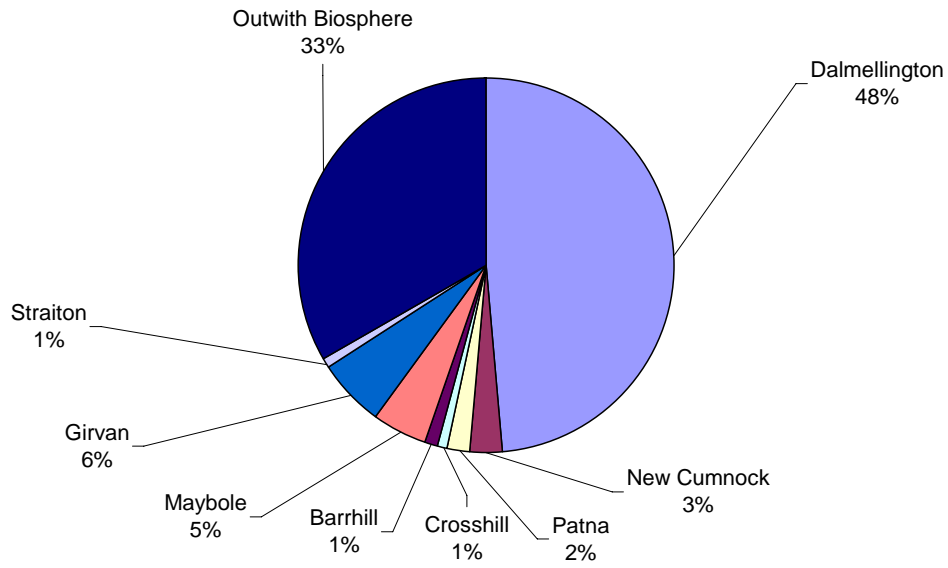
**1a(3) Where do you live? (Flier responses)**



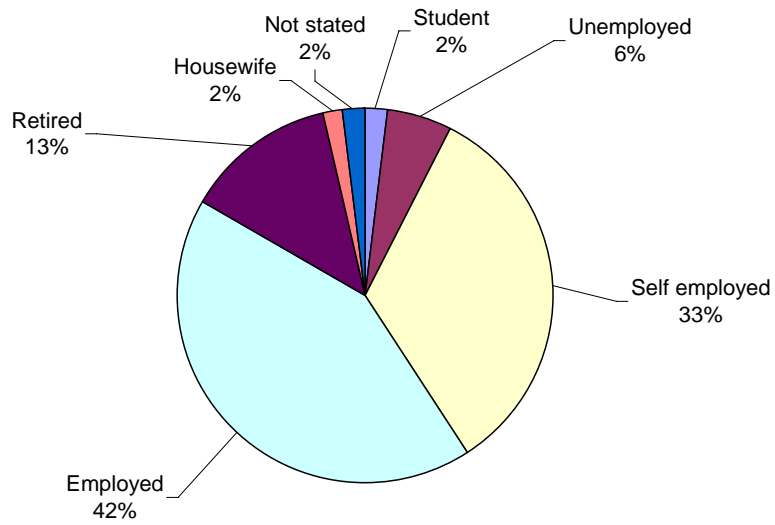
**1b. Which town or village do you live nearest to?**



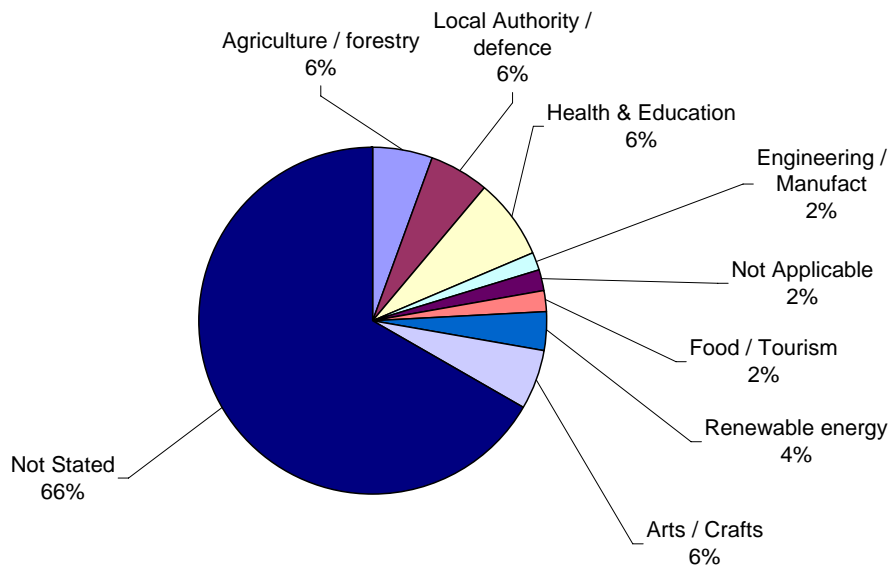
**1b(2) Nearest town (Ayrshire only - flier only)**



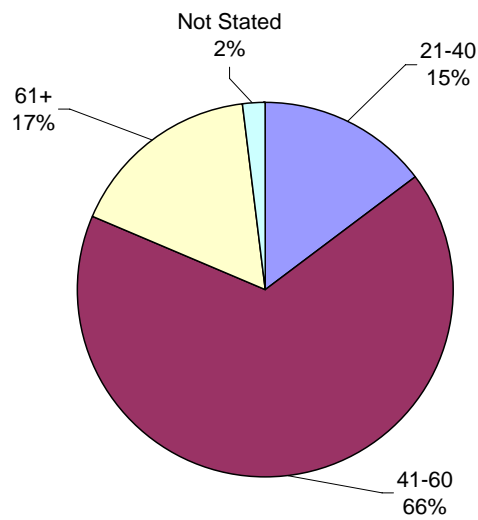
**2a. What do you do?**



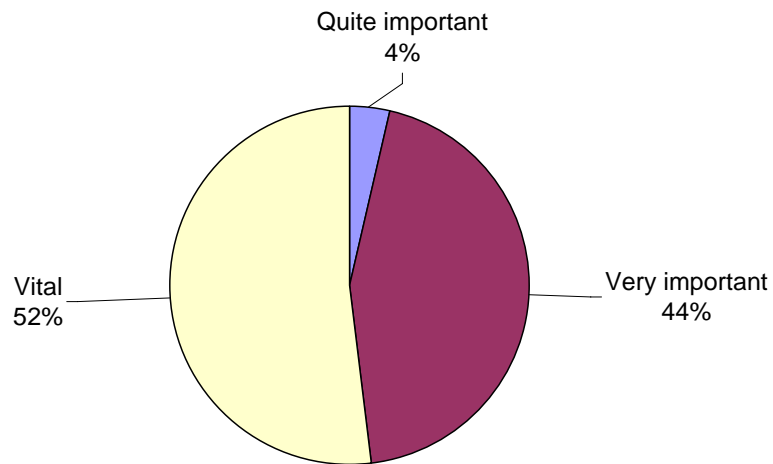
**2b. Which industry sector would you say best describes your occupation?**



**3. Which age range do you belong to?**



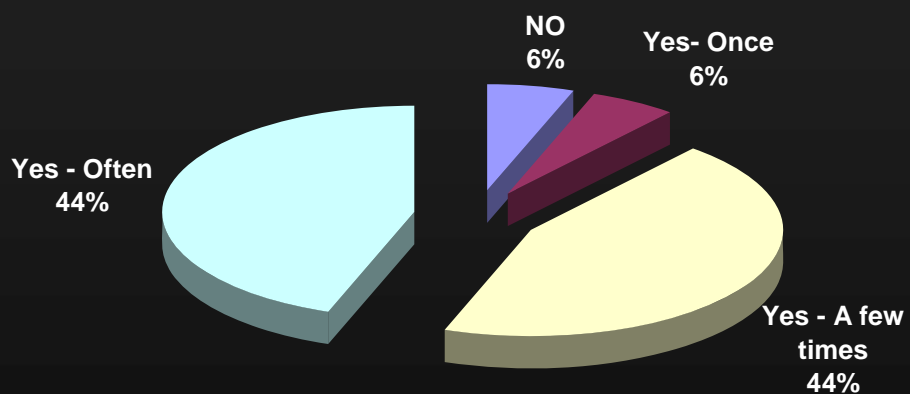
4. How important is the natural environment to your enjoyment of life?



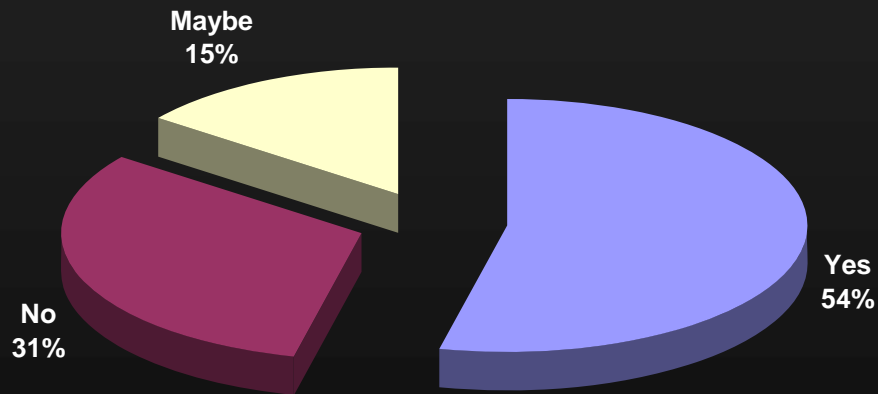
5. The existing Biosphere designation focuses on 3 sites. Have you visited?

	% Yes	% No
<b>Merrick Kells</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Silver Flowe</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Cairnsmore of Fleet</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>52</b>

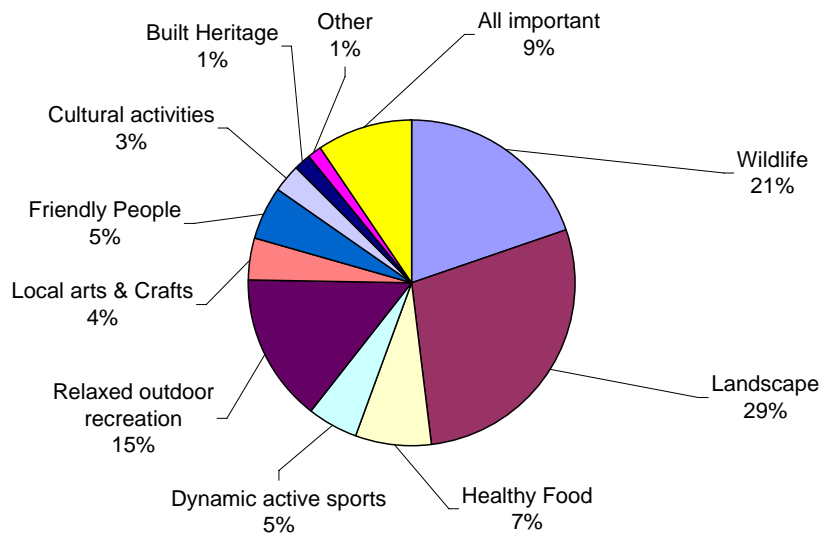
6. Have you visited Galloway Forest Park



7. Are you aware that the environment in your area is recognised as being of world class?



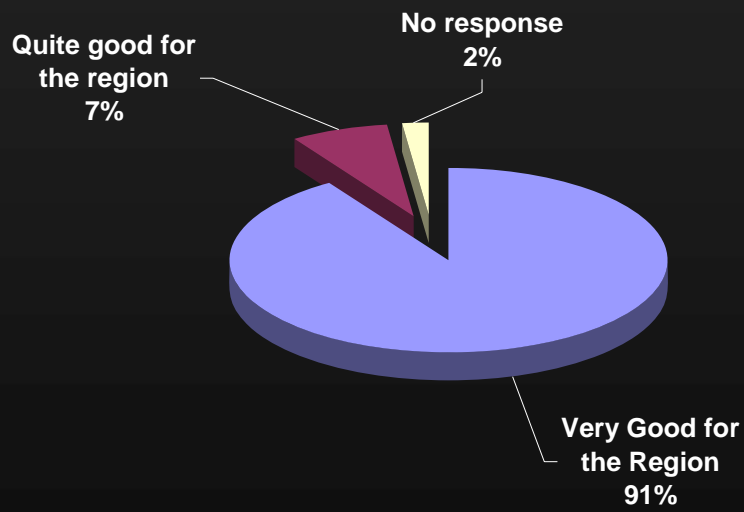
8. If you were going to try to encourage people to visit this area - what images would you want to use?



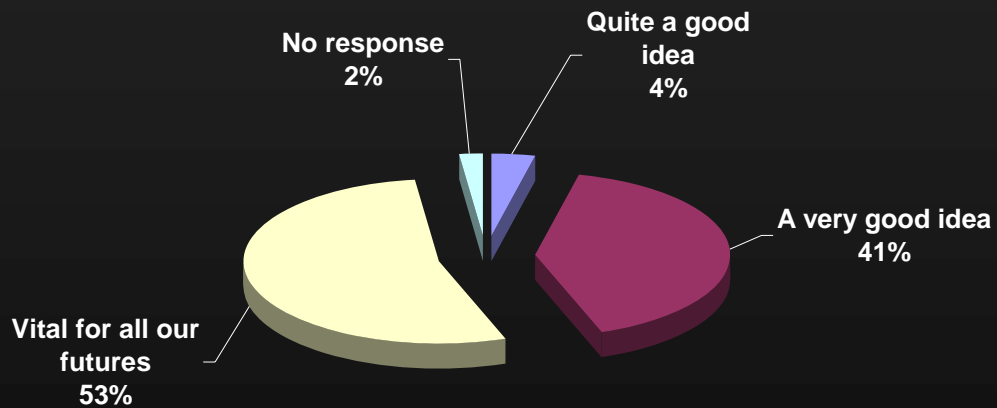
9. Had you heard of a Biosphere before the current consultation?

- Yes 44%
- No 56%

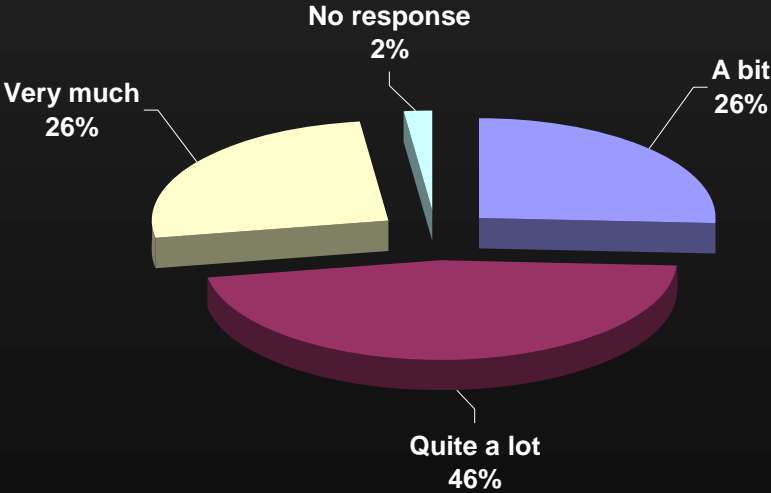
10. Would redesignation as a Biosphere be?



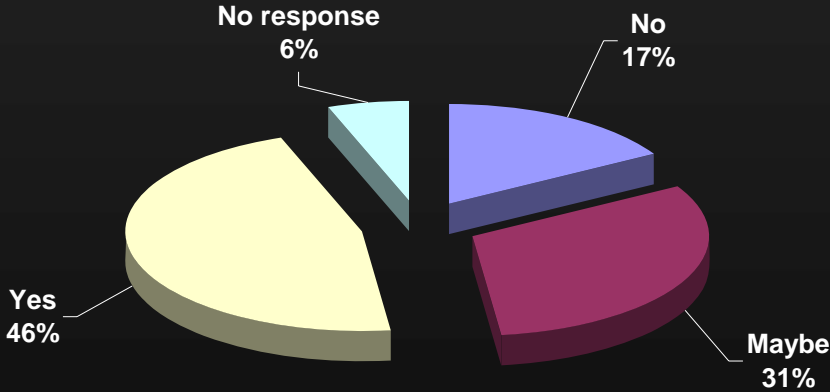
11. UNESCO is keen to encourage local people to manage important natural areas in sustainable ways. Would you describe this as:



12. Promoting the important links between local people and the environment is a key opportunity that the Biosphere designation offers. Do you think you would benefit from this as an individual?

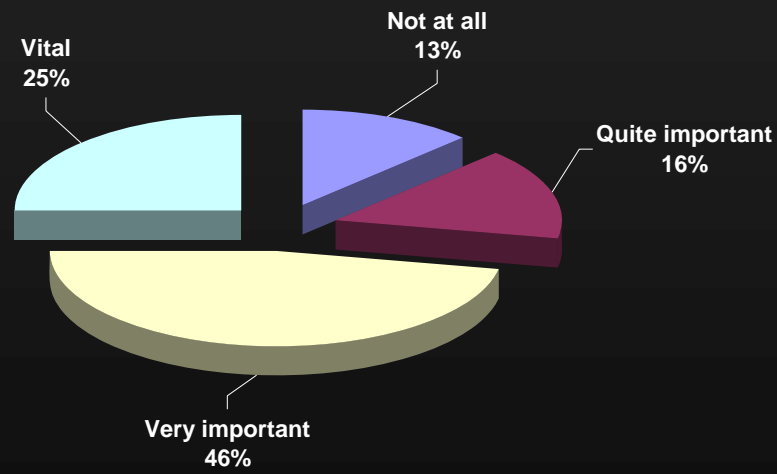


13. Would you be willing to get involved in the process of developing a Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere by attending and contributing to a series of meetings?

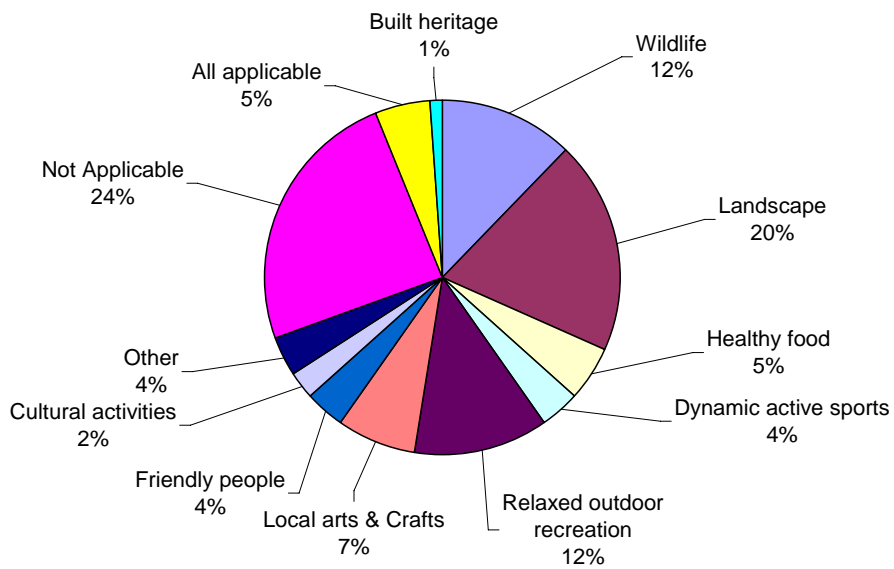




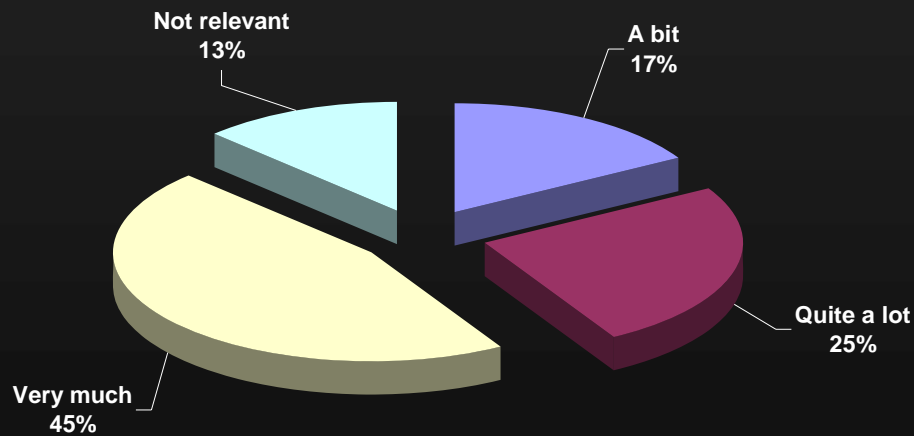
**14. How important is the natural environment to you for your work / business?**



**15. If you were going to use the high natural heritage value of the area to market your product - what images would you want to use?**



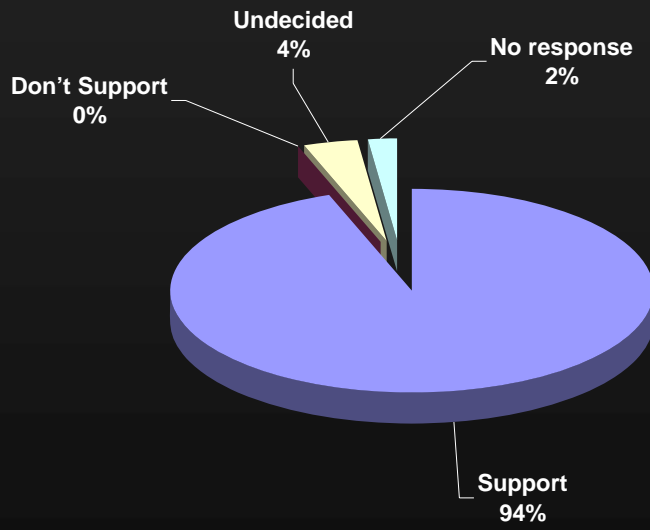
16. Promoting the links between the environment and local business is a key opportunity that the Biosphere designation offers. Do you think you would benefit from this as a business?



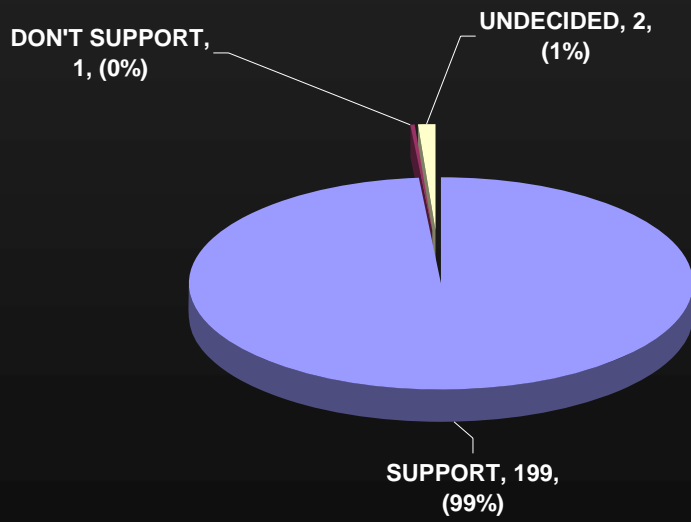
17. 'Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere' is a working title for the project. The current Biosphere title is ' Cairnsmore of fleet / Merrick Kells / Silver Flowe'. We would very much welcome a better name - one that said something about the uniqueness of the area and the fact that it is shared between D&G and Ayrshire. If you have any suggestions - please note them here.

- Galloway and Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve
- Galloway and Ayrshire Biosphere
- South West Scotland Biosphere
- Highlands of SW Scotland Biosphere Reserve
- Scotlands Secret Garden
- Border Biosphere
- Merrick Biosphere
- Bordersphere
- Include "Dumfriesshire"
-

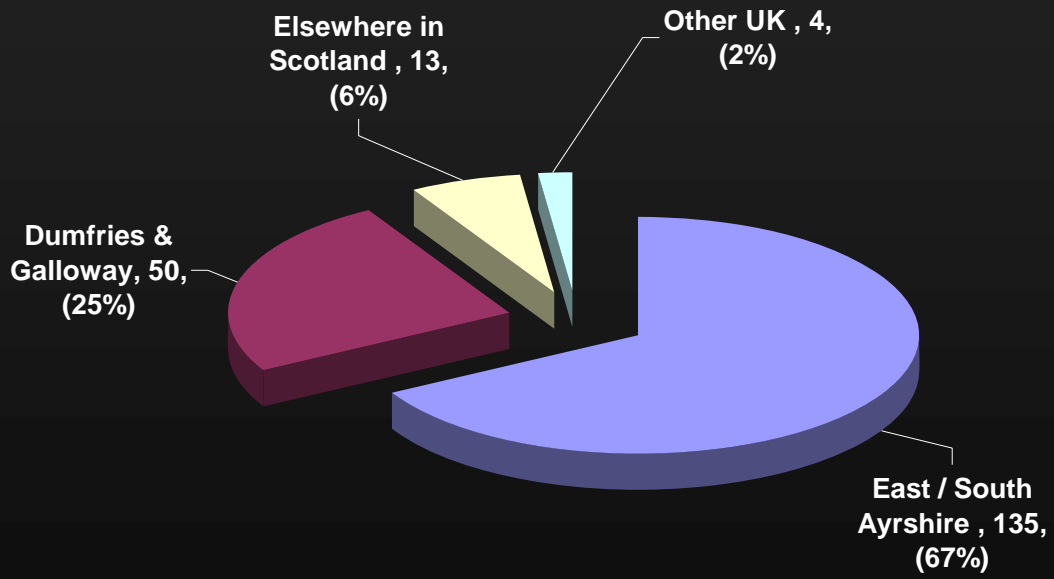
### 18. Support or don't support (Questionnaire only)



### Total Support (Flier & Questionnaire)



## TOTAL CONSULTATION RESPONSES BY AREA



## **Annex 5 What is a Biosphere?**



United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization

### **Introduction**

Biosphere Reserves are areas established by countries working with the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, based on local community efforts and sound science. They are much more than just protected terrestrial and coastal ecosystems of international or regional importance. Biosphere Reserves serve in some ways as 'living laboratories' for testing out and demonstrating integrated management of land, water and biodiversity. They are places which seek to reconcile economic development, social development and environmental protection, through partnerships between people and nature. Operating at the regional scale, the aim is to bring knowledge of the past to the needs of the future, and to demonstrate ways to overcome the problems of the sectoral nature of our institutions.

Biosphere Reserves are nominated by national governments and remain under their sovereign jurisdiction. Reserve status does not impose additional restrictions in terms of Development Control. National, Regional and Local Planning Policies as well as the existing conservation protection regulations on the core habitats still apply. Biosphere Reserves are not intended to restrict or inhibit development but rather to place any such proposals within a wider, more integrated and sustainable context.

Collectively, Biosphere Reserves form a World Network. Within this network, exchanges of information, experience and personnel are facilitated. There are around 500 Biosphere Reserves in over 100 countries. The United Kingdom currently lists 7 reserves of which only 1, Braunton Burrows, has successfully demonstrated compliance with the criteria set out in the Statutory Framework.

### **Biosphere Reserve Functions**

Each Biosphere Reserve is intended to fulfill 3 complimentary and mutually reinforcing functions:

- Conservation - to protect those genetic resources, species, ecosystems and landscapes which require protection
- Development - to foster sustainable economic and human development compatible with the first function
- Logistic - to facilitate demonstration projects, environmental education and training, research and monitoring in support of the first two functions.

### **Biosphere Reserve Criteria**

1. Should encompass a mosaic of ecological systems representative of major bio-geographic regions, including a gradation of human interventions
2. Should be of significance for biological diversity conservation
3. Should provide an opportunity to explore and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development on a regional scale
4. Should have an appropriate size to serve the three functions
5. Biosphere Reserves must be organized into 3 interrelated zones:

Only the core area requires legal protection and hence can correspond to an existing protected area such as nature reserve or a national park. This zonation scheme is applied in many different ways in the real world to accommodate geographical conditions, socio-cultural settings, available legal protection measures and local constraints. This flexibility can be used creatively and is one of the strongest points of the Biosphere Reserve concept, facilitating the integration of protected areas into the wider landscape.

- **Core area(s)** – securely protected sites for conserving biological diversity, monitoring minimally disturbed ecosystems, and undertaking non-destructive research and other low-impact uses (such as education)
  - **Buffer zone** – clearly defined and usually surrounding or adjoining the core areas, it will be supported by a national conservation policy or designation to allow intervention if necessary, or be in the ownership of a public body. It may support a variety of uses which promote the multiple functions that define a Biosphere whilst being managed in line with sound ecological practices that ensure the protection and natural evolution of the core area(s)
  - **Transition area** – this surrounds the core and buffer and is the area in which sustainable resource management practices are promoted and developed. It is not delimited in space, but rather varies in size, according to the issues that arise over time. It is where stakeholders (local communities, public agencies, NGO's, cultural groups and economic interests, etc.) are encouraged to work co-operatively to “add value”.
6. Organisational arrangements should be provided for the involvement and participation of a suitable range of *inter alia* public authorities, local communities and private interests in the design and carrying out the functions
  7. Provisions should be made for:
    - mechanisms to manage human use and activities in the buffer zone or zones
    - a management plan or policy for the area as a Biosphere Reserve
    - a designated authority or mechanism to implement this plan or policy

programmes for research, monitoring, education and training

## **Annex 6. Report non a trip to visit the Cevennes Biosphere Reserve March 2007**

Bruce Davidson, Andy Ward, Pip Tabor and Damien Wilson travelled to the Cevennes on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2007.



Bruce Davidson, Damien Wilson, Pip Tabor, Didier Lacuyer and Andrew Ward

We were met there by Didier and Sandra Lecuyer. Didier manages the Man and Biosphere project and is in charge of projects in a number of local communities. Didier is actually employed by the Cevennes National Park Authority and the Park and Biosphere boundaries are very similar.

The first afternoon was spent in Nimes and we were then taken to our hotel in Ales – about 90 minutes drive away.

Day one was spent visiting a number of projects based on the chestnut which was widely grown as a food in the past, but which has since become naturalised and now clothes the hills. Another common tree species is the Maritime pine which was planted to produce timber for the coal mines before these were closed.

First stop was at a working chestnut “museum” – where the traditional practice of chestnut collection, drying, shelling and grinding are still carried out.

The steep slopes of the valleys have been terraced by small-holding farmers who would have grazed and cultivated the resulting plots. Chestnuts fitted well into this system – as did mulberry trees which supplied leaves for the local silk-industry.

After an entertaining lunch with the community of St Martin de Baubaux – which included chestnut soup and some excellent singing – we went on to meet Serge Brugliere – a local basket maker and chestnut enthusiast and he showed us over the small holding he is restoring. Here he is clearing the scrub, removing the pines, thinning the chestnuts and grafting better varieties of the species onto the existing root stock. Some of the trees are several hundred years old and clearly show signs of earlier grafting. He is also keen to repair some of the drystone terracing which has been damaged by timber extraction, sheep and wildboar – often exacerbated by the torrential rains of late summer. Serge is President of the “chestnut trail” – a loose collection of other enthusiasts who are trying to develop tourist attractions based on the tree and its products.

Day two started with a film on the Galeizon Valley which is serving as a pilot area for the Biosphere philosophy. We then met Stephane Garnier who is the project manager of the inter-

council committee for the conservation and development of the Galeizon Valley ( SIACVG). He gave us an overview of the programme of sustainable development set up in compliance with the Man and Biosphere programme and some of the issues he faces. While progress has been slow, he was confident that the approach was the right one and he strongly emphasised the need to maintain local support and buy-in.

We then met the manager of “Les Jardins du Galeizon”, a youth employment scheme in Cendras, based on forestry management. This was an interesting approach to addressing the need to develop a biomass supply-chain. Local un-employed people (up to 14 mostly aged over 25) were taken on and paid a stipend while they learnt how to handle chainsaws and other equipment. They learnt while clearing land owned by the local communities and turning the timber into woodchip. This in turn would be used to heat the local town hall and school buildings once the boilers were fitted.

We had lunch with Yannick Louche, President of the SIACVG and Mayor of Cendras, a key figure in driving forward a number of local initiatives around Cendras. We then met Cathy O’Neill at the Pont de la Fage – an old pack-horse bridge which has recently been renovated by local dry stone walling specialists. Cathy’s role is to support individual dykers to work together to provide training, undertake specific projects and to liaise with drystone dykers from other parts of Europe – including Northumberland and Cumbria. The overall objective of the project is the raising of status and standards within the profession and demonstrating construction tolerances and flexibility to a wider engineering and building sector. The walling association is working to put in place nationally recognized qualification levels and this is the reason for a pending visit to the Lake District.

- (a) On the third day we drove to the village of Peyremale and the Mercoire hamlet where we were given a presentation on Cévennes Ecotourism, a committee for the development of the sustainable tourism in the Cévennes. Brigitte Mathieu is its president. She runs a small “gites” business which is marketed on the basis of being “green” (endorsed by WWF). She is one of about 60 businesses in the Park which have been recognised as meeting various criteria of sustainability. Together they employ staff to audit the businesses and to provide training to improve performance. Brigitte generates additional income by providing space and care for the national collection of mulberry trees on terraced fields which they are restoring.

Finally we drove to Florac, headquarters of the Cévennes national park and Biosphere Reserve via the Route des Crêtes. Here we met Louis Olivier, director of the Cévennes national park and Biosphere Reserve, and then Bruno Daval, head of Country planning and community assistance department. Monsieur Olivier was a bit of a bureaucrat. Bruno was in charge of delivering Local Agenda 21 in all the communities of the National Park – a task which is likely to take some decades – but which may well bring about some worthwhile outcomes.

We drove back to Ales by the main road, through the Col de Jalcreste, and on Wednesday 14th March we returned to Nîmes airport and flew home.

#### **The main lessons we learnt were:**

The Biosphere Reserve idea is really a philosophy – a way of approaching rural development which has now been adopted by the National Park. The BR on its own can do things, but it is much more likely to succeed if it is backed-up by mechanisms which can deliver actions.

A co-operative approach within sectors and for land management is being fostered. Economic development appears to be very much a bottom up approach which is then supported by the public



sector bodies to maintain momentum. Buy-in is from local government as well as communities. The need for long-term commitment to partnership working was clear.

In the Cevennes a number of tools are being used to deliver the BR concept – including the NP mechanism, the Local Agenda 21 process and the use of WWFN and other endorsements.

The BR concept itself is not well understood by local people other than those who have been actively engaged in the pilot project (the Galeizon Valley).

Funding for projects has come from the National Park – but also from a wide range of other sources including Leader+.

The issues facing the rural area of the Cevennes mirror many of those we face in Galloway. As such there is mileage in keeping close ties in order to exchange ideas and share good practice. Having said that we saw no evidence of projects having a significant impact. The projects seemed very low key and localised. In many ways they were behind D&G and groups/projects like SUP/Sulwath Connections who can point to significant projects with measurable impacts.

At the same time they have a better understanding of the essence or spirit of Biosphere Reserves. The difficulty we have is selling the essence/spirit. Continentals seem to accept conceptual ideas without the need for practical application. Brits need a bit more.

A very positive step and example was the partnership with WWF. The idea of endorsements from groups such as WWF is very appealing and could become a selling point. For example might Greenpeace endorse the Sustainable Office Project or the Scottish Wildlife Trust might endorse a local hotel that provides wildlife trips/holidays. It would be worth exploring this to see what bodies we can engage with and establish whether they will put their names to projects.

We were struck by the relatively simple management structure in France, National Park--- Biosphere. We are in danger of having an over complicated array of designations. SSSIs, National Scenic Areas, Biosphere Reserve, NNRs, ESAs, Ramsar and so on. Then there is site management, some are Council some are SNH and so on. It is complicated and complexity brings about potential duplication between managing agencies. It also makes it harder for local people/farmers/groups wishing to develop a project who are then faced with a wall of agencies they have to consult.

Finally it was interesting to hear about projects, such as the youth biomass boiler fuel project. What we didnt get a grip of was funding. I thought they were coy about funding and wonder if we should write and ask a direct question. Who provides your funding for projects such as etc etc

## Annex 7. Promotional materials and press releases

**GALLOWAY & AYRSHIRE BIOSPHERE**  
A special place for people & nature

Time is running out for you to have your say on the future of the UNESCO Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere, which must demonstrate community support to maintain this important global status within South West Scotland.

Please submit your views online, by visiting [www.sup.org.uk](http://www.sup.org.uk), telephone 01750 725154  
or  
Andrew Ward (Dumfries & Galloway)  
01671 820654, email: [creetown@btconnect.com](mailto:creetown@btconnect.com)

Mark Davies (Ayrshire)  
01290 426973, email: [mark.davies@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:mark.davies@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)  
[www.eastayrshirewoodlands.co.uk](http://www.eastayrshirewoodlands.co.uk)  
IT'S YOUR AREA - WE NEED YOUR VIEWS



### Example letter

Theresa Dougall  
SRPBA  
50A Holmston Road  
Ayr  
KA7 3BP

16<sup>th</sup> July 2007

Dear Theresa,

You may be aware that the Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere has been recognized as a globally important habitat since the 1970s and UNESCO reviews the status of Biosphere Reserves around the world every ten years. As the criteria has now changed to involve people and communities, a public consultation is required to gather support for a new application to UNESCO to maintain this globally important status.

As part of a public consultation for the Galloway and Ayrshire Biosphere, we are seeking the valuable views from a wide range of people living and working in and around the area and I would like to invite you to attend one of our forthcoming meetings.

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> July Dalmellington, Bowling Club 7pm

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> August Girvan, Royal Hotel 7pm

Further information on the Galloway & Ayrshire Biosphere Consultation can be found at [www.sup.org.uk](http://www.sup.org.uk) and more detailed information and directions for the meetings can be found at [www.eastayrshirewoodlands.co.uk/biospheremeetings.htm](http://www.eastayrshirewoodlands.co.uk/biospheremeetings.htm). Please confirm your attendance by telephone or email as numbers will be strictly limited at both meetings, though we will be happy to arrange additional meetings should there be sufficient interest. I have enclosed a consultation leaflet.

Look forward to seeing you there and please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours Sincerely

Mark Davies  
Community Liaison Officer

## **A Future for the Galloway – Ayrshire Biosphere?**

A Biosphere Reserve is a UNESCO designation awarded to areas of globally important habitats and wildlife – rather like World Heritage Sites are recognised sites of outstanding natural or cultural significance. The Cairnmore of Fleet, Merrick Kells and Silver Flowe are currently designated as a Biosphere Reserve although few people are aware of it.

Under the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme, the biosphere criteria have been broadened to recognise that long-term conservation of nature requires a change in the way that we use the environment. To retain the designation, UNESCO want to see communities, businesses and agencies working together to value the wildlife, habitats, high quality landscapes and the traditional land management that has supported them. This might mean realising the potential for tourism or developing new approaches to marketing. The aim is to nurture the local economy at the same time as caring for the high quality environment. Sustainable development is what the Man and Biosphere programme is all about.

The Councils of Dumfries and Galloway, South Ayrshire and East Ayrshire, together with Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland are keen to canvas views on the future of the Biosphere in South West Scotland. The Southern Uplands Partnership and East Ayrshire Woodlands have been asked to collect views on the future of the Galloway – Ayrshire Biosphere and they are now inviting people to find out more. The consultation will include presentations and meetings through which more information will be provided. Examples of communities within the Biosphere area include Dalmellington, Dailly, Newton Stewart and New Galloway.

Information leaflets are being widely circulated and a website has been developed. The aim is to make local people aware of the issue, consider the benefits that the designation might bring and to voice an opinion. It is hoped that as many people as possible can take part in the exercise.

[www.sup.org.uk/biosphere](http://www.sup.org.uk/biosphere).

If it can be shown that there is local support, an application will be made to UNESCO to retain the designation under the new criteria. If support is not there, the designation will be lost.

Biosphere status is entirely voluntary. No application will go to UNESCO without community support. The Partnership is appealing for as many people and organisations as possible to send in a response so that it can assess the level of support.

For more information please visit [www.sup.org.uk/biosphere](http://www.sup.org.uk/biosphere)

ENDS

For further press information

Contact Pip Tabor (piptabor@sup.org.uk ) or Bruce Davidson (bruce.davidson@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

Call 01750 725154.

Or visit [www.sup.org.uk/biosphere](http://www.sup.org.uk/biosphere)

This work is being part funded by D&G Leader+ as well as by SNH, S Ayrshire Council and E Ayrshire Council.

## **Annex 8**

Letters of support have so far been received from the following

VisitScotland – Delia Holland CEO

David Martin MEP

Bailey Guitars, Maybole, South Ayrshire  
Wilma Finlay, Cream o’Galloway

Billy McKissock, Ayr  
Roger & Claire Pirrie, Pinwherry, Girvan  
John & Ann Sommerville, Maybole  
Andrew Marnie & Karen McDonald, Ayr  
Carol Davies & Mark Bailey, Culroy

Johnny & Fiona Warrender, Minuntion Estate, Pinmore  
Mark Gibson, Craigengillan Estate

New Cumnock Community Council  
Dailly Community Council  
Dalmellington Community Council  
Pinwherry & Pinmore Community Council  
David Kiltie, Maybole Community Council  
Cree Valley Community Council

Coylton WRI

## **Annex 9.**

# **Community Consultation in the Ecodyfi Biosphere and Braunton Burrows BR**

Article II. In July this year the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership came to a decision that they had enough support in the area to apply to UNESCO for re-registration. They are now summarising all the information they have received and are getting ready to write up a draft application.

Last Autumn they held 9 different meetings across the Valley and between 15 and 45 people attended each meeting.

In May this year they decided to hold more meetings to launch a detailed consultation document they had created. (see [www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk](http://www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk)). Fliers were sent out to every household and business in the valley (the transition zone) advising of meetings and promoting the consultation document. The meetings were run as drop-in sessions where people could call in to get a copy of the document and have a cup of tea and a chat. Attendance was low.

The consultation document included a questionnaire for completion and return. The most important question was the last one...should we apply to UNESCO for re-registration. Over 750 of these documents were printed and distributed and they have had back roughly 170 of them. All but 2 of them were positive about the idea. The project is now seeking ideas for projects and ideas so that they can start planning how the Biosphere will develop once the application is successful. They are currently working on a further document summarising the response from the latest questionnaire and this will be produced shortly.

The Ecodyfi consultation has had a fulltime project officer for over a year and during this time awareness has clearly grown and with it community engagement. There are lessons to be learnt from this.

## **Article III.**

The situation in Devon is different in that the idea of the BR there came about just as the Foot and Mouth outbreak was ending in 2001 and local people were struggling to recover from the impact of the disease. The BR was seen as an exciting opportunity to develop an alternative approach to rural development, and because funds were available, action on the ground was relatively easy to instigate and support followed from this.

There has been much progress since that time but even now the concept is apparently little understood by local people.

## **Annex 10. The AGATE process can be summarised thus:**

The proposed methodology is called 'Prospective-Preventive' and was developed in France in rural development settings. The method engages a wide range of stakeholders and individuals in a community (of interest or geographical) in developing predictions of what is likely to occur during the next 10 – 20 years.

People are able to build up scenarios and identify warning signals as well as actions that might lead to positive outcomes for a community. People are taken through a process of reflection and questioning and are asked to validate what is emerging at various points in the process. The process itself can lead to new insights for the people involved, and enable them to make different choices in their work or lives.

We can think of this method as a way of helping understand and predict 'Community Futures'. Local facilitators can be trained in this methodology and mentored through the process.

This approach brings people together who don't normally come together, leading to new connections being made between people. It also ensures that environmental, economic and social issues are considered and it allows local knowledge to be brought out. The methodology, by recognising the importance of the complexity of social dynamics, ensures that a holistic picture is built up and creates realistic scenarios that members of the group can agree are valid. This can lead to new approaches to action being adopted.

## **Annex 11 Report on the Trip to the Cévennes Biosphere Reserve – November 2007**

### **Those attending:**

Anna Johnson	D&G Council National Scenic Area Officer
Andrew Watson	Barholm Arms Creetown
Anne Johnstone	Dalmellington Community
Alec Hewitson	Shepherd, Cairnsmore of Fleet NNR
Brian Robertson	Maybole Community
Don Smith	Ayrshire Food Network
Geoffrey Crolley	New Cumnock Community Council
Ian Johnson	Ayrshire Joint Planning Manager/Chair Biosphere Steering Group
Cllr Peter Convery	South Ayrshire Council
Cllr Robert McDill	East Ayrshire Council
Pip Tabor	Southern Uplands Partnership
Andrew Ward	Creetown Initiative and consultation coordinator
Mark Davies	East Ayrshire Woodlands and consultation coordinator
Derek Hextall	Kirkconnel Parish Heritage Society and film maker

### **PURPOSE OF THE TRIP**

- 1. To learn more about what a Biosphere Reserve is**
- 2. To see what a functioning Biosphere Reserve looks and feels like**
- 3. To meet some local business-people and community representatives so that we can learn how they regard and use the Biosphere designation – pros and cons.**
- 4. To identify examples of Biosphere-type projects that might be applicable in SW Scotland.**
- 5. To inspire key people from SW Scotland so that they return ready to help take the Galloway-Ayrshire Biosphere project forward.**
- 6. To foster positive links between people from Ayrshire and Galloway and between SW Scotland and the Cévennes.**

Derek Hextall filmed the visit and will be producing a DVD for future use at meetings and hopefully available on the SUP website to help people in Scotland get a better understanding of what a Biosphere is about.

November 3<sup>rd</sup>. The group were met at Montpellier by Sandra Lecuyer and traveled by minibus to St Jean du Gard where the group stayed. In the afternoon Didier Lecuyer gave an introductory talk on the Cévennes Biosphere explaining the origins of the biosphere concept and the relationship to the National Park. This was followed in the evening by the arrival of a group of walkers who had just completed the last leg of the Stevenson Trail – a long distance walk through the Cévennes following the route of Robert Louise Stevenson and his donkey – described in his 1879 book “Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes”. This was the end of the Festival Stevenson – and the hotels in town were offering Scottish food in celebration. It was interesting to see how local businesses were using this theme to co-operatively market themselves – whether they were accommodation providers, camping groups, restaurants or donkey hirers. There was a reception for all concerned in the local Chateau –after which we heard more about the initiative from the Chair of L’Association Stevenson (Chretienne Nourry) who was keen to make links with long-distance routes elsewhere. There are clear links here with the Southern Upland Way and the way it has started to market itself and possible future walking routes associated with Burns in SW Scotland. Broader ideas for twinning were discussed, in particular the development of the existing link between the local town of Arles and Kilmarnock. The Stevenson theme is clear in St Jean – with hotels, and bars named after the man and images of him and his donkey apparent across the town.



On day two we went to visit “Terroir Cévennes”, a 15 year old producers co-operative on the edge of the village. Here, in a very attractive, purpose-built shop, 38 local producers of food and crafts sell their wares. Jice Robin, president of the association spoke of the importance the cooperative placed in the producers running the business in their own way – including manning the shop themselves. They employ no staff – taking it in turns to administer the shop. Sales are recorded so that each member effectively sells direct to the public. Members support each other in terms of product design and labeling – and we were struck by the high quality of everything there. A key aspect of the business was the fact that they are not over burdened by EU requirements on health and safety. They maintain the standards required under French law – and are working towards meeting the higher EU standards which have already been imposed in the UK. This made it possible for the producers to adapt to the new requirements gradually – with shared workshops and processing rooms being considered and planned for. The French Government was not rushing to adopt the EU regulations. The contrast with often over-zealous national and local government departments which often restrict or hamper business or project development through strict adherence to regulations was noted. It is very obvious that in the Cévennes the agencies take a relaxed view about rules, using a common sense approach whilst not losing sight of standards and good practice.

From the co-operative it was a short walk past the new community hall to the HQ of the local ranger service. Here information on local paths was available, mountain bikes could be hired and guides could be found for groups wishing to be shown around. There was a good range of booklets, maps and natural history books available. The three buildings in the area dedicated to both community, tourism and retail on a main axis road through the Cévennes is a theme in several rural villages providing both a focal point, and a small number of jobs in areas with little other industry. It was noticeable that although marketed primarily for tourism, the farming co-operative also served as a local shopping facility.

After lunch we drove to visit Gerard Lamy who had restored a house at St Germain de Calberte and now ran a number of Gites which had WWF endorsement because they were managed in a sensitive manner. His clients come mostly from France but also from other countries, and the WWF link helps him promote his business. It would be worth checking the criteria used by WWF to see if businesses in Galloway/Ayrshire could use this opportunity to promote themselves should the Biosphere proceed.

Elsewhere in the village, the association of dry stone masons had just completed a training course and we met Marc Dhombre association president, who showed us the result of several years worth of courses – the restoration of several terraces. The steep slopes of the Cévennes make water management of vital importance. 8 inches of rain can fall in a matter of days and this needs to be allowed to drain away quickly to prevent major erosion or destruction of terraces. Equally in the dry season, irrigation is needed to allow terraced beds to be fertile and systems of irrigation work alongside systems of drainage. The local masons have developed good links with drystone dykers in the UK and elsewhere and are now developing construction standards that will allow walls to be guaranteed and specified by architects and engineers. There are signs that the demand for dyking is growing and there are now some full time dykers working within the Cévennes where previously dyking has always been done alongside other trades.

Day three we were out early and drove to where we visited a 300 hundred year old traditional Cévennes house. The house used to have three silkworm lofts – with small windows under the eaves to allow

light in for the “worms” but also to keep them warm. The house would have had stock in the group floor and several families sharing the first floor. It retained many of the original features – including crude chestnut timbers in the roof and a wonderful old fireplace. In the garden stood a veteran chestnut tree before a fine view down over the valley. The houses in this isolated part of the Cevennes were gradually being brought back in use and a design guide for owners and builders had been produced to allow traditional forms of building to be used. The village was currently experiencing a severe water shortage due to the exceptionally dry autumn with water having to be trucked in from some distance away. The risk of fire was also high and there had been some debate over how this might be reduced although there were difficulties because of the fragmented ownership of land – with some owners living well away from the area.

From here we went on to Cendras – the main village in the Galeizon project where we were given a talk by Stephane Garnier the project officer with the Inter-Council Committee for the Galeizon Valley – a political grouping of five communities and the main pilot project of the Biosphere. He emphasized the importance of the Biosphere Reserve in attracting resources to the area (including the project officer) – for a range of projects. One of these was a new scientific “observatory” which was recording data on the most important species of the valley so that progress towards sustainability could be monitored.

From here we drove to the river where we had a picnic lunch provided by the mayor beside the water and then some of the group ventured downstream to try to find signs of the local beaver population. River management is of vital importance to the area because of the tendency of the river to flood. If trees are not kept back from the watercourse – floods can carry them downstream where they block or even demolish bridges. A river management technician is therefore employed by the local community to deal with fallen trees – cutting them into chunks that will not do damage. We found many signs of beavers – willow and alder that had been felled leaving characteristic teeth marks. 4 pairs of beavers are established in the Galeizon Valley – along with a single otter! Much of the tourism in the area is based on the use of the river bank for swimming/general leisure during the hot summers and access points had been created to encourage its use.

In the afternoon we climbed up through chestnut woods to the top of a local hill from which the whole biosphere could be seen and where there was a building from where fire-spotters could monitor for fire – calling water-dumping planes in from Marseilles if necessary.

Back in Cendras we met Yannick Louche, the Mayor of Cendras and President of the Inter-Council, Committee and also Jose a previous Galeizon valley project manager who invited questions from us on the Biosphere. There focused on the benefits to the region of the biosphere and on the way that the various committees and complicated layers of Government related to each other. The Mayor firmly believed that the Biosphere had helped bring people together to bring about positive change.

It was also emphasised that in the Cevennes the Biosphere Project has successfully levered funding from other sources and indeed the inter-council committee was now considered to be “quite wealthy” as a result of successful fund-raising on the back of the Biosphere Reserve. The experience of the success of this project is now spinning off into other parts of the Cevennes, where other valleys are moving ahead with their own community initiatives.

We then drove back to Montpellier so as to make a short journey to the airport the following morning.

Main points that I took from the trip:

The Biosphere is a part of a much wider integrated approach to rural development in the Cévennes. Few people know about the Biosphere – but this doesn't matter. The philosophy is the main thing – and the Biosphere allows additional resources to be secured and to be better targeted.

There are strong similarities between the Cévennes and Galloway/Ayrshire, including:

- the recent loss of mining and textile industries
- the loss of young people from rural communities and an aging population
- the urgent need to diversify – and a tendency to over rely on tourism
- the opportunity to add value to local heritage and culture

Engaging rural businesses so that they take control of projects seems to be vital for project success. Both the “Terroir Cévennes” and the “L'Association Stevenson” project had local business people taking the initiative and making things work for themselves – rather than being led by agencies (although one suspects that Didier Lecuyer and his colleagues have made significant contributions to many such projects). This bottom-up approach is essential but in my view will require support if it is to develop locally.

High quality was apparent in much of what we saw. Products, presentation and marketing were all valued. The co-operative approach worked well – and we can learn from this even though the tradition of co-operation is less strong in Scotland.

Pip Tabor  
Project Manager  
Nov 2007