



CASE STUDIES OF GOVERNANCE

Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism
Deliverable DT3.2.1

SHAPE

May 2019

SHAPE, 2019

Acronyms

SHAs Sustainable Heritage Areas

Introduction

One of the objectives of the SHAPE project is to establish enduring stakeholder partnerships that maintain and develop cultural and natural heritage assets in SHAs through ecotourism initiatives that contribute to the sustainable growth of local communities. As this all requires effective frameworks for planning and action, governance is a key theme of the project.

The SHAs in SHAPE have each prepared a case study based on the template developed in the project (SHAPE DT. 3.1.2) to assess the development of their governance structures including vision objectives, structure, decision making process, communication and resources. This report is a compilation of those case studies.

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1. Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve

(Marie McNulty and Ed Forrest, Southern Uplands Partnership, Scotland)

Brief Introduction to SHA

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere is located in SW Scotland. It covers 5268 square km and has a population of 95,000 people who mainly live in small towns and around its outer edges. The region is typified by gentle rolling hills rising to a peak of 843m. The core area is predominantly rough grassland and peat bogs that can be rich in biodiversity. There is a high concentration of commercial forestry in the region and increasingly intensive agriculture aligned to the dairy industry. There is a rich cultural heritage in the region linked literature and art.

SHA Vision and Core Objectives

Our Vision: “To demonstrate our passion for living in a way that benefits people and nature”

1. **Partnership Board:** Providing clear guidance and strategic direction to maximise the benefits delivered within the Biosphere, whilst demonstrating the values of the Biosphere and creating a positive framework for engaging with local communities and stakeholders to promote the ethos of the Biosphere clearly.
2. **Climate and Adaption:** Working to pilot and promote strategies and projects focusing on climate adaption and mitigation across the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere.
3. **Land Use and Biodiversity:** Promoting and creating opportunities to enhance and protect the regions natural resources, through effective and positive management and engagement
4. **Research and Learning:** Networking and Knowledge, including research, monitoring and education to support the development of a knowledge base and the mechanisms to share and learn
5. **Sustainable Development:** Encouraging local communities, businesses and other Biosphere stakeholders to understand and value their natural environment, increase awareness of the Biosphere allowing collaboration in designing and implementing projects that support sustainable development and business growth.

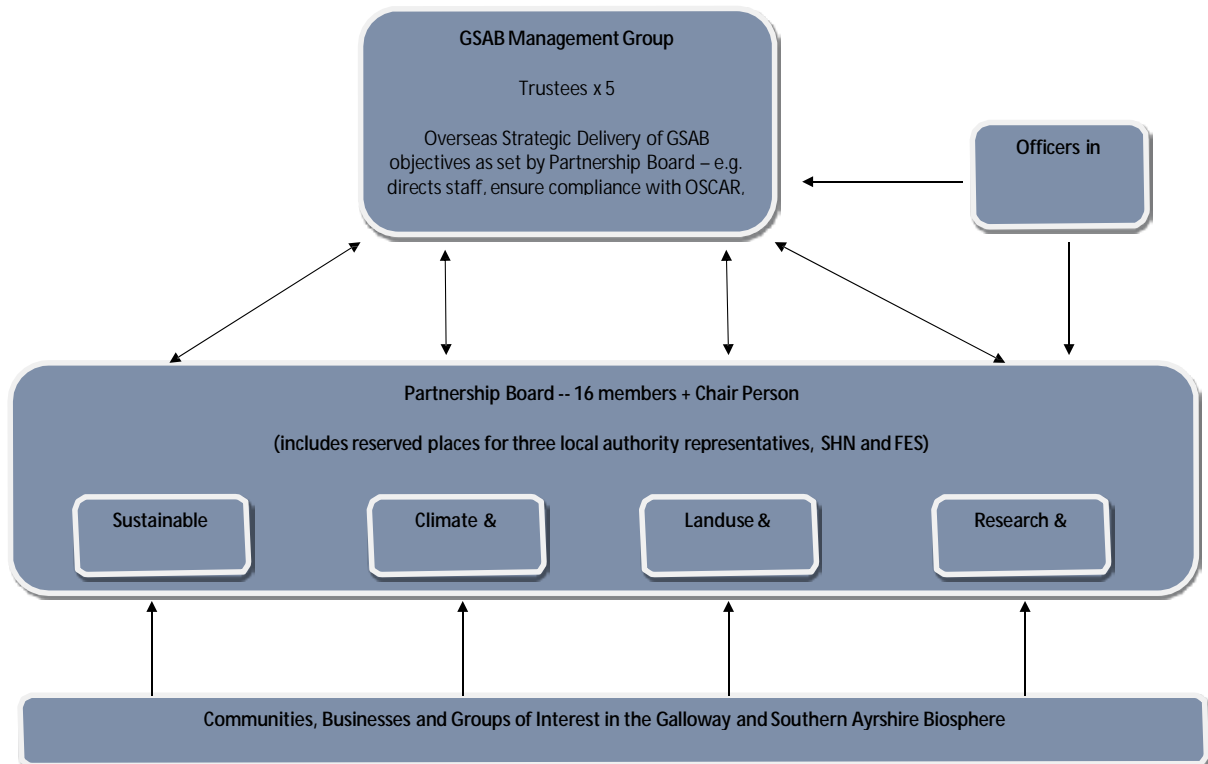
SHA Governance Structure

In 2016 the Partnership Board reviewed their Governance set up recognising that having in excess of 26 members, some of whom were unreliable attendees was making it difficult to facilitate good decision making.

The Biosphere Partnership now consists of 16 people and an independent chair. Five representatives are from the key public sector agencies involved in the region who have reserved seats. They provide a direct link with local government and the public agencies who are have influence over substantial land holdings in the Biosphere. The remaining 11 seats are representatives of community, business and non-governmental organisations who represent the four primary areas of interest in the Biosphere.

The Partnership Board has elected five of its members (public agencies are not eligible) as Trustee to form a management group who oversee delivery of the Biosphere Strategic Plan and guide officers employed on behalf of the Biosphere. The Trustees are also legally responsible for ensure the Biosphere Partnership fulfils its duties to the Office of Scottish Charities Register.

The Board and Trustees share an independently elected chair person.



Decision Making Process

The Biosphere Partnership Board meets quarterly to consider and debate key issues associated with the Biosphere. The agenda for meetings is circulated in advance and Board members can request key items to be added to the agenda. All meetings are open to members of the public to observe although decision making is restricted to existing Board members. Under the terms of its charitable position a quorum of 40% of board members is required to ratify decision making.

In addition, the Biosphere facilitates public meetings to debate key topics of interest. In January 2018 it brought together a range of representatives from National Farmers Union, Commercial Forestry and Scottish Land and Estate with an audience of communities, tourism businesses and conservation bodies to debate conflicting pressures with land use in the biosphere. The facilitated discussion covered a wide range of topics with audience participation and led to agreement from all parties that a more integrated approach to future land management in the Biosphere was required and that this

could potentially be achieved through the formation of a Regional Land Use Forum, which has now become a new Strategic Objective for the Partnership Board to achieve.

Communication

As well as Board meetings and focussed events, the Biosphere supports short life focus groups to deliver key projects or explore new initiatives. It makes good use of social media with periodic e-newsletters. Minutes from Board and Management meetings are available to all Partnership Board members. The Biosphere Strategic Plan is reviewed annually with all Board members involved in reviewing the previous year's progress and identifying the following years priorities.

Resources

The Biosphere is fortunate in having a very active Partnership Board with individuals who will take responsibility for helping to deliver actions. What it lacks is the surety of funding to ensure continuity of employment for salaried officers.

2. Nordhordland Biosphere Candidate

(Kari Evensen Natland, Nordhordland Biosphere Candidate, Norway)

Brief Introduction to SHA

Nordhordland Biosphere Candidate is situated on the western coast of Norway, between Bergen (the country's second largest city) and the Sognefjord (the deepest and longest fjord in Norway). The area is approx. 6 700 km² and 55 000 people are living here in 11 different municipalities.

SHA Vision and Core Objectives

We have been working towards nomination as a UNESCO biosphere reserve and we are aiming to get our designation in June 2019. This spring we will develop our first strategic plan and we hope that it will be ready for implementation this autumn. In our application we have set the main goal and pointed out 10 subsidiary goals. These are wide and are more pointing out directions for the work to be done in the biosphere area. The strategy process will be based on these goals and the outcome will be the prioritized activities for the first years of the biosphere area.

MAIN GOAL

Nordhordland Biosphere Reserve will be based on the best from the past and will pave the way for a future-oriented societal development that ensures the sustainable use of all types of resources for the benefit and pleasure of both the present inhabitants and future generations.

SHA Governance Structure

Through the application period (from 2013 and still), work on the proposed Nordhordland Candidate has been organized as a project owned by the Nordhordland Regional Council (comprising the mayors of the nine municipalities in the region). The administration of the Regional Council, Nordhordland

Development Company IKS (NUI), has been project managers. NUI has appointed a project working group which has been in operation since June 2013. The Regional Council appointed a steering committee for the project, with representation from central stakeholders. These are:

- Three mayors
- The manager of Nordhordland Development Company IKS (NUI)
- One representative from the University of Bergen
- One representative from the County Governor's Office in Hordaland
- One representative from Hordaland County Council
- Two representatives from industry and commerce
- One representative from NGOs

The project working group is led by NUI and consists of representatives from this company and from the University of Bergen.

We have described the organizational structure that exists today, but will emphasize that the steering committee for the biosphere project has provided guidelines for the final organization of the biosphere reserve:

- How the Nordhordland Biosphere Reserve should be organized when designated, must be viewed in direct relation to the tasks and the function of the biosphere reserve. Before the final organizational form is adopted, the purpose and statute of association of the organization shall be in place.
- The organization model must be designed to serve the purpose of the biosphere reserve on a long term base. It should be dynamic so that it can be adapted to various future scenarios.
- It is important with great transparency and that everyone (especially NGO's) is included in the management of the biosphere reserve.

Decision Making Process

We don't have a defined decision making process in place yet. In the period UNESCO is considering our application, we will have a process going on to get a strategic plan for the BR in place. The plan will contain:

- a vision
- goal(s) and perhaps subgoals
- strategies
- actions

The plan will be based on the work we have done in the years of planning our application and the opportunities we have identified for Nordhordland as a BR. It will be central for the work to be done and the priorities to be made.

The Biosphere candidate is based on broad engagement and involvement. In such a process, it is natural to involve municipal politicians and administrative staff, local businesses and NGO's. In addition, Hordaland County Council and the County Governor of Hordaland should be invited to take part, as well as important partners at the University of Bergen and other research institutions. It will be one stakeholder meeting/workshop in each municipality. The inputs will be summarized and prioritized in one big meeting where a representative group of stakeholder takes part.

To obtain suggestions and interest for the plan, communication through different media will be organized as part of the process. A period for open consultation will be set apart before the plan is adopted.

The strategy plan must be evaluated and updated on a regular basis. It will be decided how this should be done during the strategy process.

Communication

We have a website www.nordhordlandbiosphere.no where we publish information, news and share stories. We also use facebook. During the strategy process these channels will be important. We will also use our local papers to be able to reach more people. Also all the meeting with different stakeholders is a part of this communication strategy for the process.

Resources

From what we have experienced so far the key resources that is needed is:

- Staff – We want Nordhordland to be an active biosphere reserve, that matters for the region and that spread knowhow about sustainable development. Then we need staff, more than one! We have good access to qualified staff.
- Funding – to get funding through project is easier to get the 'corefunding 'in place, but we need the corefunding to be able to deliver effective governance. This is a hard task, and we are working on how to solve this in a long term way.
- Engaged stakeholders and a good network between them - this will make it easier to implement projects and ideas. To obtain this we need to work constantly to make stakeholders involved, interested and engaged.
- Knowhow – we need to be updated on latest knowledge of the different task within the governance. This will also be an ongoing thing, to make sure that we are 'up to date'.

3. North Karelia Biosphere Reserve

(Daisy Silvennoinen and Timo Hokkanen, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, Finland)

Brief Introduction to SHA

North Karelia Biosphere Reserve (NKBR) is located in North Karelia province, Eastern Finland. The territory of the reserve is about 7 900 km². This area includes municipalities of Lieksa, Ilomantsi and Joensuu (Tuupovaara district), with overall population of approximately 21000 people. The Biosphere Reserve (BR) activities occur in the whole North Karelian province.

SHA Vision and Core Objectives

NKBR seeks ways of improving the overall relationship between North Karelians and their environment. All activities are aimed at creating regional sustainable development solutions for better economy and the environment. The key objectives are:

- **Exchange and transfer of ideas and knowledge on sustainability** (core areas are Diversity, Natural resources, Energy and Climate Change).
- **Sustainable development (SD) solutions for better economy and the environment** (using projects, studies and researches).
- **Awareness that helps the inhabitants focus more on sustainable solutions** (the BR promotes a learning culture by encouraging more voluntary actions).

SHA Governance Structure

Steering committee:

- a yearly meeting day organised in one of the BR municipalities (circulating); 25 permanent participants (voluntary) from stakeholder organisations and partners + varying number of experts and other visitors (municipalities, universities, businesses, NGO's, agencies etc)
- what has been done in the BR & is still going on, where to go next – presentations and discussions for future actions

Working committee (board):

- 5-8 times a year, 8 members (chairperson and members are voluntary and come from key organisations) + a secretary (employed); visiting experts are invited as needed
- working committee makes BR operational decisions along the lines of the steering committee

“BR office”:

- coordinator, project staff; located in the Centre of Economic Development, transport and the Environment for North Karelia (regional, governmental unit) where the office is located

- office takes care of the most of practical work

Project structure:

- projects and co-operation are the tools for that allow the BR to exist and be visible and topical
- BR has own projects together with various partners; BR takes part in others' projects and processes

The NKBR acts as an intermediary between North Karelians (stakeholders) and MaB programme and National Mab Committee, but it also has close relationships with government's regional activities. The administration has changed several times during 25 years, and funding has changed according to political changes. UNESCO MaB guidelines for setting up a BR have been followed all the way.

Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for North Karelia has been the key actor together with municipality of Ilomantsi, City of Lieksa and City of Joensuu since the last admin change. Regional stakeholders responsible for governing the BR have been included in the governance as well as businesses and NGOs.

At present BR's governance model combines the regional network of sustainability projects, interdisciplinary research, and extensive local-oriented partnership co-operation (the NKBR partners). The BR covers officially the city of Ilomantsi, Lieksa, and Joensuu's Tuupovaara areas, although the activity extends almost to the whole of the province; with governance consisting representation of region's stakeholders that form the NKBR steering committee.

Decision Making Process

There is no single organisation responsible for the NKBR area. BR is a unit of co-operation, which works on voluntary basis according to the prevalent legislation and rules, and in co-operation with those who are legally responsible for management, development, and conservation, etc of the area. We are not landowners nor "managers", except for cases which are agreed with those responsible for management. BR decisions are, however, done in the working committee. BR coordinator is the secretary and the committee decides.

There are tens of persons doing management decisions in BR organisations.

Communication

North Karelia Biosphere Reserve has both internal and external communication plans. The steering committee consists of a representation of key stakeholders (government, private institutes, education, SMEs, etc) who define the BR goals and actions, as well as issues at hand. The outcomes of the internal communication is then shared with interested parties (depending on the issue at hand), using the mode rendered as most efficient for spreading that information (specific target group, or public). The external communication have been for example in form of a press release, online documents, articles, or using BR's social media. The BR also has a yearly magazine that features ongoing and upcoming actions by the BR, as well as good practices from the region. These are distributed around mid-summer to over 10,000 households across North Karelia.

Resources

The basics with present structure are 1) maintaining the office, steering group, working group and getting the project funding for existing 2) running the projects for practical BR results & visibility

With the present limited funding our options are fully in full use – more project money would be available, but we have no capability to handle it. Money for each more permanent person would directly increase visibility and opportunities to help the local actors and increase the project funding 5-8 fold as related to the money used for employing the person.

4. Snæfellsnes Regional Park

(Ragnhildur Sigurðardóttir, Svæðisgarðurinn Snæfellsnes, Iceland)

Brief Introduction to SHA

Snæfellsnes regional park was stifted 2014. It is situated on the west part of Iceland. Around 4000 people live here, in 5 different municipalities.

SHA Vision and Core Objectives

We have regional plan (strategic planning), according to the Icelandic planning Act, from 2014 – 2026. These goals are wide and pointing out directions for the work to be done in the regional park. The strategy process is based on these goals and every year the board prioritizes activities for the next year. Also there is an operational agreement between the owners of the regional park which sets out the structure of the governance of the park and the operational understanding.

SHA Governance Structure

Social enterprise owned by five municipalities, three farmers associations, tourist association of Snæfellsnes and the regional union.

Decision Making Process

The shareholders of the regional park annually elect the board. The board is responsible for presenting the annual project and financial plans for the shareholders to agree.

Communication

Website: Snæfellsnes.is, where we publish information, news and share stories. We also use facebook. We use our local papers to be able to reach more people. Lot of meetings with different stakeholders.

Resources

Engaged stakeholders: And a good network between them. Easier to implement projects and ideas. We have to work constantly to make stakeholders involved, interested and engaged.

Staff: To make Snæfellsnes an active regional park we need more than one member of staff. We have good access to qualified staff.

Funding: We have corefounding and our job is now to get more founding through projects.

Knowhow: We need to be updated on latest knowledge of the different tasks

Wester Ross Biosphere

(Laura Hamlet and Natasha Hutchison, Wester Ross Biosphere, Scotland)

Brief Introduction to SHA

Wester Ross, located in northwest Scotland, is dominated by rugged mountains, remote glens and long, steep sided straths (valleys), which extend down to the sea. The conditions are exposed and the terrain difficult to cross and cultivate, leaving the area very sparsely populated – with around 8,000 people over 5,200 km². People here have been managing the landscape for centuries, and their historical and present knowledge are vital to the future of our economic, cultural and environmental well-being.

SHA Vision and Core Objectives

Vision: “To help people and communities to work together with our natural and cultural landscape to create a positive future.”

Mission: “The Wester Ross Biosphere provides a framework for residents, organisations and businesses to work together for the sustainable development of our area along with the conservation of its natural and cultural heritage.”

Objectives (summarised from the 2019-23 strategy):

- 1) Raised awareness of the Biosphere designation and MAB programme in public, private and third sectors
- 2) Promote sustainable economic, social and environmental practices
- 3) Increase community awareness and understanding of the importance and value of our shared natural and cultural heritage
- 4) Support research and knowledge exchange with partners within and outside of WRB

SHA Governance Structure

The WRB Board are elected by and from the WRB Membership. At present these individuals represent a wide range of interests including community council, community development, business, NGOs, conservation groups, regional council and business. The Informal Advisory Group are made up of representatives of the Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, University of the Highlands and Islands and Scottish Natural Heritage but this is fluid arrangement based on organisational requirements. Members of this group are kept informed of developments but do not always have regular input unless needed.

Thematic groups of the board meet regularly to develop operational themes outlined in Figure 1. These groups report back to the core board. Tourism is a discrete sub group within the Sustainable Development group. This model was designed shortly after the inception of the organisation.

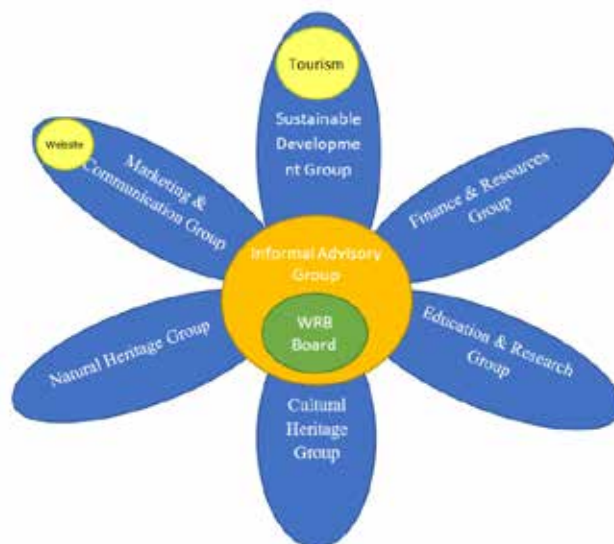


Figure 1: Governance Model of the WRB

Decision Making Process

The WRB membership is open to all residents within the WRB boundary and to others via special application. From this membership pool board members are elected at an Annual General Meeting and given decision making control. The board then sets the strategic direction of the WRB. To ensure objectives are representative of the community interests, stakeholder interviews and workshops are carried out. Once strategic objectives are agreed by the main board members the broad plan is agreed at an Annual General Meeting. Implementing plans involves further decision making (for example actions that should be included in a Destination Management Plan or path building project); these decisions are guided by the thematic groups of the main board who then in turn consult with members and wider stakeholders. This includes interviews, questionnaires, attending meetings of stakeholder groups (for example a community council meeting to ask a question) and organised workshop style meetings where workshop techniques such as Borda Counta are deployed to take decisions. Depending on the impact of a decision, powers can be delegated to staff members, the Biosphere Coordinator and the thematic groups, but ultimately the WRB board are responsible for decisions.

Communication

- Posters in community hubs such as shops, village halls etc
- Local and regional news outlets
- Social media, both our own pages and shared in community pages
- Our own website
- E-newsletter to members

Resources

(What are the key resources you require to deliver effective governance in your SHA, what is currently missing?)

- A full time permanent Biosphere Coordinator plus a part time administration assistant
- Accountant
- Expenses for local meetings and advertising
- Expenses for national and international meetings, particularly participation in EuroMAB and NordMAB

We current do not have any resources beyond ring fenced project funding. Our Biosphere Coordinator is part time and contributes many voluntary hours.

