

# ANALYSIS OF GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism

Deliverable DT3.3.1

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## Good governance in the SHAPE Sustainable Heritage Areas: Results of the Governance Case Studies Questionnaire

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## 1. 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 requires effective frameworks for planning and action, governance is a key theme of the project.

The five 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. The SHAs are: Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, Scotland (GSAB); North Karelia Biosphere Reserve, Finland (NKBR); Nordhordland Biosphere, Norway (NUI); Snaefellsnes Regional Park, Iceland (SNAE); and Wester Ross Biosphere, Scotland (WRB).

UHI has undertaken a comparative analysis of the responses to the governance case studies questionnaire using the criteria agreed in Activity T3.1. The scope of this analysis is to provide clarity on available governance models and their relative impacts, constraints and opportunities for the maintenance of cultural/natural heritage and regional economic development, particularly through tourism. This analysis builds on the SHA case studies developed in Activity 3.2, and the criteria on good governance agreed in Activity 3.1.

The online questionnaire (Annex 1) was distributed through [onlinesurveys.co.uk](http://onlinesurveys.co.uk) and managed by the UHI team. It consisted of 33 questions on the following topics: vision and objectives for the SHA, decision-making, evaluation and reporting processes, ongoing management and resources. The questionnaire included both closed questions, with pre-fixed categories of answers to facilitate comparative analysis, and open-ended questions that allow the narrative and particularities of each SHA beyond standardized answers to be recorded.

Specifically, the questions covered in depth the range of aspects included in the principles of good governance that were highlighted in the report on governance structures (Ferguson 2017) produced in Activity T.3.1. Table 1 shows the principles of good governance detailed in this report and the corresponding questions in the questionnaire.

*Table 1. Principles of Good Governance explored in the questionnaire*

Principles of Good Governance	Questions	Principles of Good Governance	Questions
Rule of Law	2	Performance / Responsiveness	6, 10, 11, 17, 18, 23, 27
Transparency	9,	Conflict Management	16
Communication / Connectivity	28, 29	Efficiency and Effectiveness	24, 30, 31, 32, 33
Participation / Inclusiveness	5, 12, 13, 14, 15	Integration	25, 26
Accountability	17, 18, 19, 20	Resilience / adaptability	8, 21

Legitimacy	5, 22	Leaning mechanisms	8
Direction / Strategic Vision	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 30	Fairness / Equity	13, 14

The next sections detail the results of the analysis. Section 2 offers an overview of the diversity of how the principles of good governance are reflected in the models of governance in the SHAs in the SHAPE project. Section 3 summarises the performance of each SHA regarding the principles of good governance. It should be noted that, as NUI was designated by UNESCO only in 2019, answers to some questions were not possible.

## 2. The principles of Good Governance

### a) Rule of Law and Legitimacy

**Rule of law** refers to the adherence to the overarching legal frameworks of the area (Ferguson, 2017).

From an **institutional** point of view, the SHA governance structures present a range of **forms** with different levels of complexity:

- Charity (GSAB) – Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- Company (WRB) – Private company limited by guarantee without share capital
- Government Project (NUI) – in the Regional Council Board
- Non-profit organisation under a local government (NKBR)
- Social enterprise (SNAE)

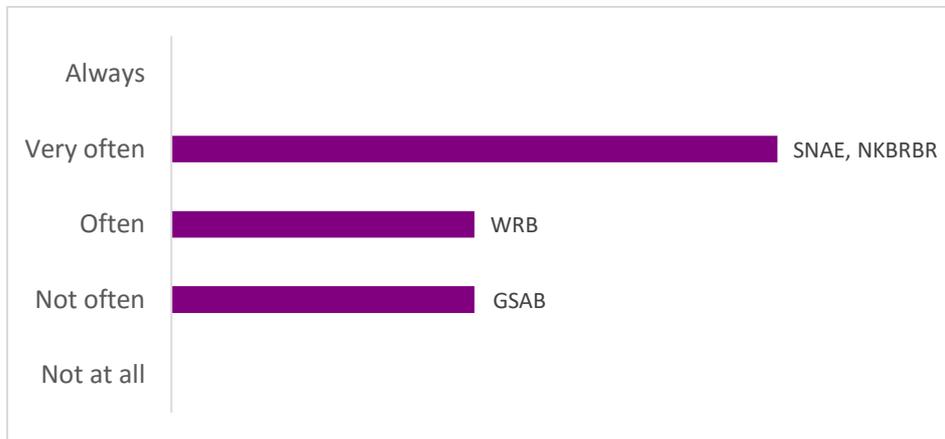
The forms range between the public sector (NUI), the third sector (GSAB, NKBR and SNAE) and the private sector (WRB). Different legislation and bureaucratic rules apply to each particular type of structure in every country.

**Legitimacy** refers to the validity of the SHA's authority in terms of democracy, performance and fairness (Ferguson, 2017).

Regarding **the extent to which the local community and other stakeholders recognise the SHA as a relevant stakeholder for sustainable development** in the region, NKBR and SNAE are recognised very often.

- NKBR points out that it is impossible to work with everyone, so that knowledge about them is sometimes limited; and if they need to work with a specific stakeholder, they actively use their stakeholder networks for this purpose.
- WRB says that it is often recognised as a relevant stakeholder taking into account that it is a very new organisation (established in 2016) and they are still working to communicate their role to relevant stakeholders. However, they expect that this would improve soon as they build a track record and aim to always be considered.
- GSAB says it does not often happen (“some 'get it' others are still learning the value”), as it is still growing in maturity and value to the local community.

Figure 1. To what extent do the local community and other stakeholders recognise your SHA as a relevant stakeholder for sustainable development in the region?



## b) Participation / Inclusiveness and Fairness / Equity

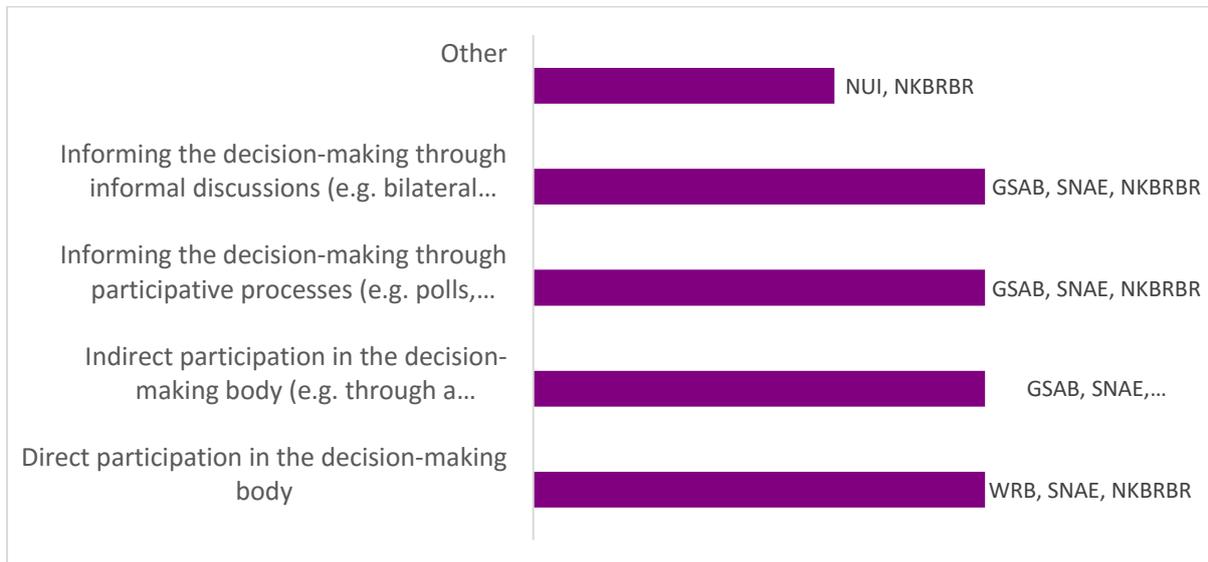
**Participation / Inclusiveness** refers to the stakeholders' participation and engagement in the decision-making process in the SHAs (Ferguson 2017).

The SHAs report different means of **involvement of stakeholders in the development of the SHA vision**<sup>1</sup>.

- NKBR and SNAE report **direct participation**. NKBR emphasises that its governance model includes an extensive local-oriented partnership co-operation (also called the NKBR partners). SNAE reports that a consultation process including key stakeholders (the community, municipalities and representatives of businesses) was followed in the making of the regional plan, combining direct and indirect participation.
- GSAB and WRB both report **indirect participation** in the development of the vision. In GSAB, the vision was produced by a subgroup of the board who subsequently agreed alterations to the final wording. In WRB, there was a workshop with the board members, with a professional facilitator, to determine vision statement.

<sup>1</sup> NUI did not respond to this question.

Figure 2. What opportunities do stakeholders have to participate in decision-making and influence it?



Beyond the vision, the **opportunities that stakeholders have to participate in general in decision-making and influence it** are diverse across SHAs.

- Direct participation in the decision-making body is reported in WRB, SNAE<sup>2</sup> and NKBR. In WRB, there are thematic subgroups (i.e. cultural heritage, natural heritage, sustainable development) which are open to wider stakeholder involvement. In NKBR, relevant partners and stakeholders are involved in the process of preparation and regional stakeholders participate in decision-making and influence the regional actions. Stakeholders in NKBR are also encouraged to participate in events, collaborate in projects that could be of benefit for them, and have fair chances in becoming a biosphere partner.
- Indirect participation in the decision-making body is reported in NKBR and GSAB (through sectoral interests represented on the partnership board).
- Participative processes informing decision-making are reported in GSAB (forums and events for key interest areas - e.g. land use priorities in Biosphere, Business in the Biosphere), SNAE and NKBR.
- Informal discussions are reported to influence decision-making in GSAB (particularly regarding technical decisions: meetings with key technical partners for advice and guidance), SNAE and NKBR.

<sup>2</sup> SNAE does not give details in its response.

Figure 3. Which of the following stakeholder groups are represented in the governance body of your SHA?



Regarding the **representation of stakeholders in the governance body of the SHA**, GSAB, SNAE, WRB and NKBR indicate a wide range of stakeholders. NUI has not decided yet how this will be done.

- Local public authorities and special interest groups (including NGOs) are represented in the governance bodies of GSAB, WRB, SNAE and NKBR.
- Regional public authorities, sectoral agencies, SMEs and business support organisations are included in the governance bodies of GSAB, WRB and NKBR.
- WRB and NKBR include representatives of education / training centres.
- Individual citizens, through their associations, are represented in the Scottish biospheres (GSAB and WRB).
- The governance body of NKBR includes representatives of infrastructure and public service providers.
- There is no representation of national authorities in the governance bodies of any of the SHAs.

**Fairness** refers to the respect and attention for the stakeholders' views, being linked with participation and equal opportunities (Ferguson 2017).

Regarding how **clear and accessible decision-making processes** are, all the SHAs report openness, highlighting different issues:

- In GSAB, final decision-making rests with the board, who make decisions based on a majority vote.
- In WRB, there is a clear hierarchy. Subgroups comprised of elected and invited stakeholders are governed by chairs who have a responsibility to report to the full board.

- NUI plans to have open meetings in every municipality to elaborate their first strategy and that, when it is finalised, an open hearing where comments will be invited.
- In SNAE, meetings are held regularly for stakeholders to attend, and each municipality has consultation processes to engage with their residents. Both the farmers’ association and the tourist association have participatory engagement methods, as well as the regional union.
- In NKBR, the highlight is on the fairness of actions, that build on governmental rules and are open and transparent, obeying the same rules/laws as all others.

Regarding the **type of participation and the groups of stakeholders** that are **involved** in the governance processes, in general, SHAs place particular emphasis on engaging peripheral communities and groups.

- WRB involves indigenous people, peripheral communities, young people and marginalised / at-risk groups (Gaelic speakers). “Indigenous” is hard to define, but individuals with strong local family ties are represented on the board as well as those who are relatively new to the area.
- SNAE involves peripheral communities, and is preparing engagement processes to reach immigrants (the 20% of the inhabitants) through schools, workplaces and NGOs.
- GSAB notes out that they do not target particular social or minority groups for membership. Instead, they target skills, knowledge, experience and geographic spread.
- NUI has not decided yet how this would be developed in the future.

Figure 4. Which of these groups of stakeholders are involved in governance processes?



### c) Accountability and Performance / Responsiveness

**Accountability** refers to the responsibility for decisions and actions and reporting (Ferguson 2017).

When asked about **how often governance structures are evaluated**, the SHAs’ responses are diverse.

- In GSAB, they are evaluated once a year following a significant change in 2016/17. Since then, review has been annual, with additional tweaks and improvements approved by the board.
- In NKBR, goals and results are evaluated every five years, and changes are made according to evaluation.

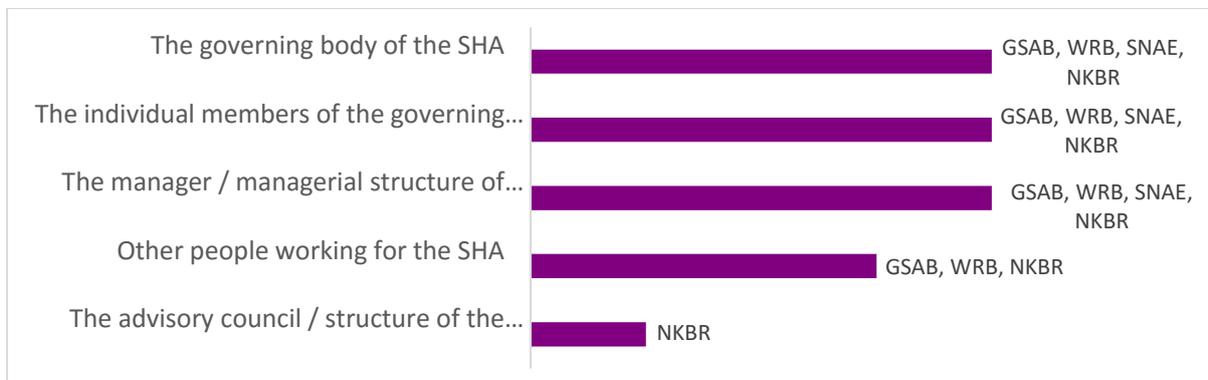
- In SNAE<sup>3</sup>, the Board evaluated the work of the previous five years and prepared a report that sets out the pros and cons of the governance structure. The report was then presented to the shareholders (local municipalities who own the park) who decided upon which changes needed to be made.
- WRB has not yet carried out an evaluation of the governance structures. NUI does not yet have one in place to be evaluated.

Figure 5. How often are governance structures evaluated?



**Roles and responsibilities for the governing body of the SHA**, the individual members of the governing body, and the managerial structure are clearly defined in GSAB, WRB, NKBR and SNAE.

Figure 6. Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined for...?



In GSAB, the constitution lays out the role of Trustees and Partnership Board members; those of the manager and staff are guided by job descriptions approved by board. In WRB, the company articles clearly set out rules for directors and members and the manager (coordinator) has a clearly defined job description as do any project officers/other employees.

The roles and responsibilities of other people working for the SHA are also detailed in WRB, GSAB and NKBR. NKBR also has defined roles and responsibilities for the advisory council.

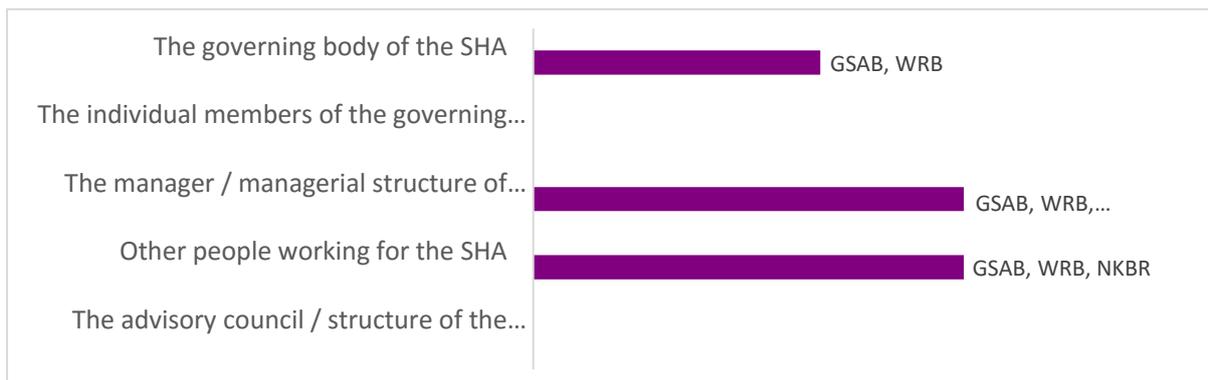
**Performance reporting** is in place for the managerial structure and other people working for the SHA in GSAB, NKBR and WRB.

<sup>3</sup> SNAE response to question 17 (figure 6) is “Never”, but the detailed explanation in question 18 states that the Board evaluated the work of the previous five years.

- In GSAB, the manager reports to the trustees / board every six weeks, and the other staff report to their manager weekly.
- In WRB, subgroups are required to report to the board and are thus held to account. The manager (coordinator) also reports to the board at each meeting and is thus held to account. Line management is provided to all employees to ensure the quality of performance.
- In NKBR, people who are directly employed always report to (and are evaluated by) the employer.
- WRB and GSAB also have performance reporting for the governing body of the SHA. In GSAB, the governing body reports to Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) annually, and in WRB, the board of directors annually reports to the membership and are thus held to account.
- SNAE has informal reporting of ongoing projects and processes, but not formal performance reporting. As the regional park is growing, they are in the process of incorporating formal performance reporting.

There is no performance reporting in place in any of the SHAs for the individual members of the governing body or the advisory council.

Figure 7. Is there performance reporting for any of these roles and responsibilities?



**Performance** refers to the achieving of the objectives as planned (Ferguson 2017). For this, the setting of the objectives and monitoring processes are relevant.

In terms of **measurable targets in place to monitor progress towards their objectives** on different topics, there is variation among the SHAs and issues, although the lack of specific measurable targets is predominant<sup>4</sup>.

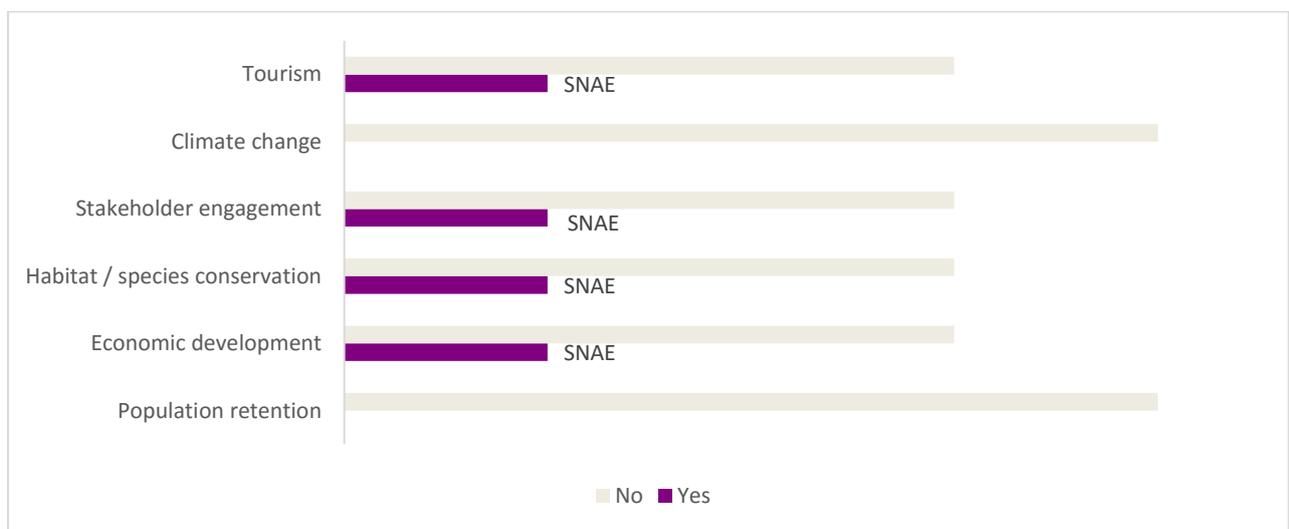
- None of the SHAs has concrete targets in place for climate change or population retention.
- SNAE has specific targets in place for tourism, stakeholder engagement, habitat/species conservation and economic development.
- WRB indicates that it is developing a Destination Management Plan which will include concrete, measurable targets for tourism, economic development and stakeholder engagement. Subgroups have been formed to set objectives/targets for climate change,

<sup>4</sup> There are no responses from NUI on this topic.

habitat/species conservation (sustainable development and natural heritage groups) and population retention (sustainable development)

- GSAB points out that most objectives in the strategic plan are simply focused on 'improving', 'promoting', 'developing' but do not have “hard numbers”.
- On a similar note, NKBR highlights that there are no resources to make/follow the extensive plans existing in the Biosphere. Instead, their role is to be an initiator and catalyst of various local and regional processes and changes or a facilitator in promoting existing good goals.

*Figure 8. Have concrete measurable targets been set in place to monitor the progress towards the different objectives for the following topics in your SHA?*



Regarding the **frequency for reporting and evaluating plans**, GSAB, SNAE and NKBR have yearly reports.

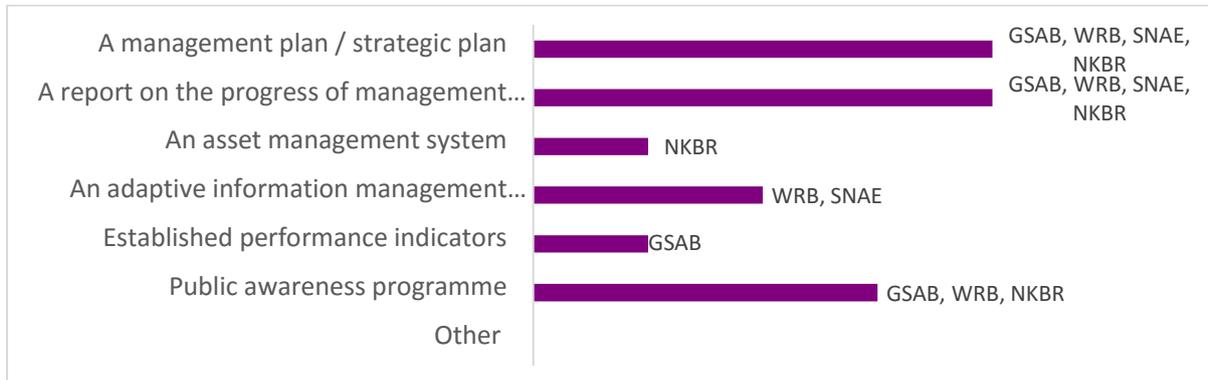
- WRB highlights that their strategic plan will run for five years before a complete review is conducted and each theme will have a monitoring and evaluation plan.
- In the case of GSAB, officers lead the review of the first draft, and then board members follow with a further review and input.
- In NKBR, plans and the targets set will be followed by the working committee (and if necessary, in the steering committee) and adjusted accordingly.
- In SNAE, the shareholders of the regional park annually elect the board, which is responsible for presenting the annual project and financial plans for the shareholders to agree.
- In WRB, measurable targets are set, and a named organisation/individual is tasked to conduct monitoring and evaluation.

Regarding the management planning processes and tools in place, **management or strategic plans and reports on its progress** are in place in GSAB, WRB, SNAE and NKBR.

- A public awareness programme is in place in the biosphere reserves GSAB, WRB and NKBR.
- WRB and SNAE have adaptive information management systems.
- GSAB also has established performance indicators.

- NKBR has an asset management system to assist with infrastructure, or capital works planning, insurance, etc.

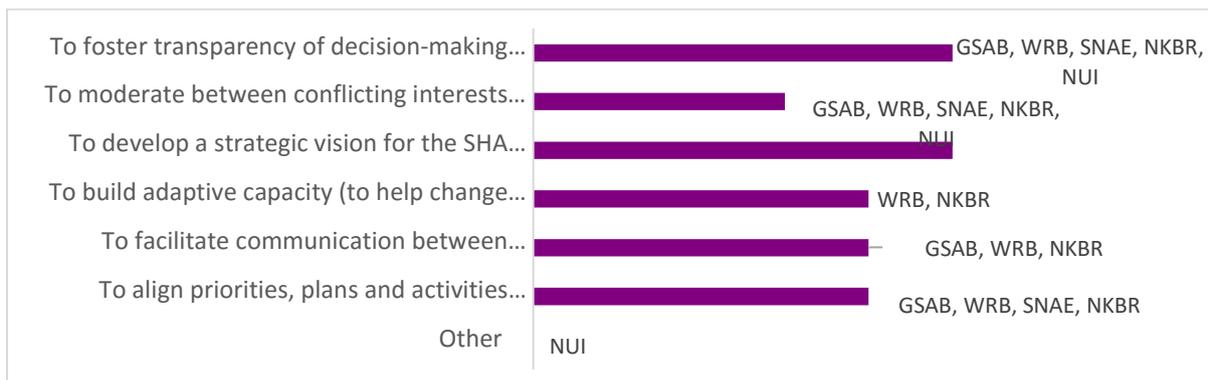
Figure 9. Which of the following management planning processes / tools are in place?



As an example of performance, SHAs were asked about the **governance events that had happened since 2016** within the SHA.

- All the SHAs reported having had board meetings and annual reports.
- Stakeholder participatory forums were reported in GSAB, WRB, SNAE and NKBR. NUI also pointed out having had stakeholder meetings.
- The three longer-established biosphere reserves (GSAB, WRB and NKBR) also reported having had other committee meetings. Advisory committee meetings were held in WRB and NKBR.
- None of the SHAs had had an external audit review.

Figure 20. What governance events have happened in your SHA since 2016?



#### d) Direction / Strategic vision, Integration, Resilience / Adaptability, Learning Mechanisms and Conflict Management.

**Strategic vision** refers to direction, goals and actions in the long term (Ferguson 2017).

All of the SHAs have one or several plans in place.

- GSAB has a vision, a Communication Strategy, a Strategic Plan, a Natural Heritage Management Plan, a Climate Ready Biosphere Action Plan, and a Research Priorities Plan.

- WRB has a vision statement and a strategic plan.
- SNAE has a regional development plan (strategic planning) according to the Icelandic Planning Act and also 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.
- NKBR has a vision statement and a sustainable development model in place.
- NUI has the plan included in the application for becoming a biosphere reserve and, while waiting for it, they started the process for a strategic plan to be implemented after designation. The plan will also define how the Biosphere will be organized and how the decision-making processes should be structured.

Regarding **regional, national and international strategies or policies** that have been incorporated in the objectives for the SHAs, all have incorporated regional, national and international **environmental** strategies or policies in their objectives, but there is a range of situations among SHAs and fields.

*Table 2. Environmental strategies and policies incorporated in the objectives of the SHAs*

SHA	International	National	Regional
GSAB	Lima Action Plan	Scottish Government Strategic Outcomes 2016	Local Biodiversity Action Plan - D&G and Ayrshire Councils FCS – Galloway District Strategic Plan 2014-17
WRB	The Lima Action Plan, UN Sustainable Development Goals	national/regional objectives identified by Scottish Natural Heritage	
NUI	Sustainable Development Goals	Not detailed	Not detailed
SNAE	UN Sustainable Development Goals, Earth Check <a href="http://www.nesvottun.is">www.nesvottun.is</a> (an environmental certification destination management), European Landscape Convention, several international conventions e.g. Bern 1979, Ramsar 1971, Paris 1950	The Icelandic Planning Act, Icelandic Law on Nature Conservation	Regional plan for Snæfellsnes
NKBR	UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves is also used to achieve the objectives	Environmental impacts from economic developments have been the driving forces for Finnish environmental regulations over the years. The Finnish legislation already sets a weighty ground for regulation of possible environmental impacts of companies.	There are three law-based regional programmes or strategies in Finland. Since 2010, the main acceptable ones in NKBR are: Regional Strategic Programme 2030, Regional development programme 2021 (POKAT) and Regional land use plan. There are several ongoing projects in addition to studies and researches based on sustainable development in institutions and universities across North Karelia.

All the SHAs report also having incorporated international, national and regional **social** regulations into their objectives.

Table 3. Social strategies and policies incorporated in the objectives of the SHAs

SHA	International	National	Regional
GSAB	Lima Action Plan	Scottish Government Strategic Outcomes 2016	D&G Local Development Plan 2014 South Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2014 East Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2014
WRB	Indirectly we have written our strategic plan with consideration to the Lima Action Plan, UN Sustainable Development Goals	national/regional objectives identified by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Community Councils, Local Development Companies and the Highland Council.	
NUI	Sustainable Development Goals	Not detailed	Not detailed
SNAE	UN Sustainable Development Goals, Earth Check <a href="http://www.nesvottun.is">www.nesvottun.is</a> , Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)	The Icelandic Transportation Strategy	Regional Plan for Snæfellsnes
NKBR	International project partners, international institutions, and the network of biosphere reserves	Every man's right/Public access rights	Regional strategic programme 2030 aimed at fostering wellbeing of North Karelians

Regarding **economic** objectives, all the SHAs report having taken into account national and regional regulations, but only GSAB, WRB and NKBR identify international strategies.

Table 4. Economic strategies and policies incorporated in the objectives of the SHAs

SHA	International	National	Regional
GSAB	Lima Action Plan	Scottish Government Strategic Outcomes 2016 Scottish Government – “A Nation with Ambition” Program for Government 2017-18	D&G Regional Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 Ayrshire and Arran Tourism Strategy 2012-17
WRB	Lima Action plan, UN Sustainable Development Goals	National/regional objectives identified by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Community Councils, Local Development Groups and Visit Scotland	
NUI	-----	For the Budget we have involved national and regional level	
SNAE	-----	Althingi Resolution on Strategic Rural Development	Regional plan
NKBR	International project partners, international institutions, and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.	Finnish law, which is applicable within the NKBR is quite strict. Therefore, when operating within the local market in Finland, the strategic integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can usually be applied as	Not detailed

		<p>innovations (CSR innovations) in compliance with regulation and legislation. Innovative SMEs therefore often internalize the obligations, by turning the issues of SD into business opportunities through their drive for lean technology, recycling, renewable material maximization among other, hence focusing more on responsibility based value creation, often referred to as CR-driven innovation.</p>	
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All the longer-established SHAs (GSAB, WR, SNAE and NKBR) have a **publicly available vision in place**. The only one which does not (yet) is NUI.

All the SHAs have **established objectives regarding governance**.

- To increase the quality of decisions, to foster transparency of decision-making, and to develop a strategic vision for the SHA and implement it are objectives shared by the five SHAs.
- To empower people living in the SHA through participation, to build adaptive capacity by encouraging learning and exchange of ideas, are objectives for all the SHAs except SNAE.
- To facilitate communication and align priorities across governance structures and to align priorities, plans and activities across governance structures to enhance efficiency is an objective for all the SHAs except NUI.
- To moderate between conflicting interests and differing views of regional stakeholders is an objective for all the longer-established biosphere reserves (GSAB, WRB and NKBR).

Figure 31. What are the objectives of your SHA for governance?



The **governance priorities** have been **adapted or reviewed** in WRB, SNAE and NKBR<sup>5</sup>.

- WRB reviewed its governance priorities to anticipate and manage threats, opportunities and risks. In particular, the WRB is planning to undertake a review of its governance priorities to

<sup>5</sup> GSAB did not answer this question.

build capacity for entrepreneurial activities. These are purely to ensure long-term core funding for the WRB.

- SNAE reviewed its governance priorities to incorporate new knowledge and learning and to reflect on performance.
- NKBR reviewed theirs to incorporate new knowledge and learning, to anticipate and manage threats, opportunities and risks, and to reflect on performance.

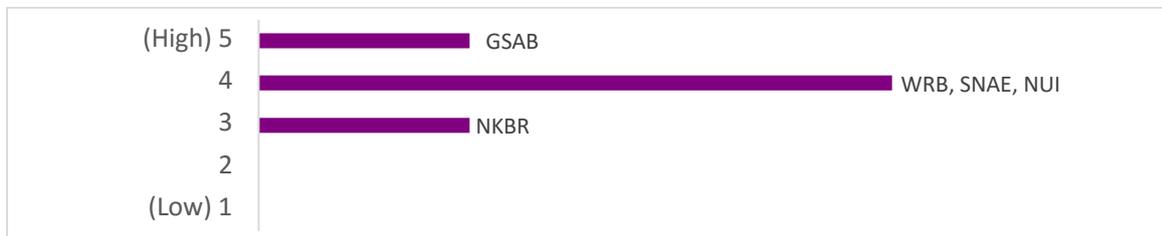
The SHAs have different views regarding their **Strategic Plan**. On a scale 1 (low) to 5 (high), the strategic plan is rated four by GSAB, WRB and SNAE. In NKBR is rated as 3 (in the middle), and for NUI is low (1).

Figure 42. Score your SHA 1-5 on the Strategic Plan where 1 is low and 5 is high.



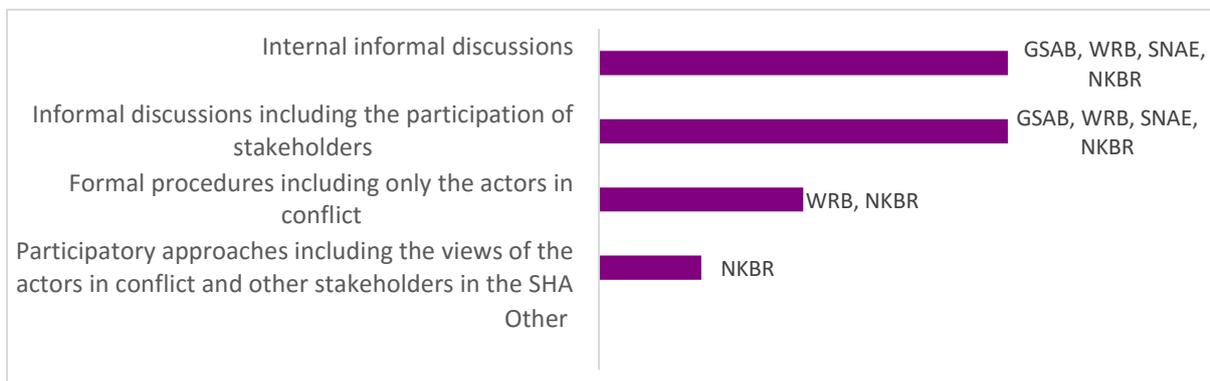
In the case of **leadership**, on a scale 1 (low) to 5 (high), it is rated as high (5) by GSAB, 4 by WRB, NUI and SNAE, and 3 by NKBR.

Figure 53. Score your SHA 1-5 on leadership on your SHA where 1 is low and 5 is high.



**Conflict management** refers to moderation between conflicting and differing views and interests (Ferguson 2017).

Figure 64. Which mechanisms do you usually use in your SHA to moderate conflicting views and interests?



The **mechanisms** that the SHAs use to moderate conflicting views and interests are varied.

- SNAE and GSAB use informal discussions (internal and including stakeholders).
- GSAB notes that most issues are raised at partnership board meetings, where a discussion takes place with all parties providing input. This has occasionally led to interested parties attending a meeting outside the formal board meetings, with additional external input. For instance, new high voltage transmission lines across the Biosphere were first discussed at length by the partnership board, weighing up the pros and cons and likely impact. Then, the developer was invited to speak to a subgroup to address additional concerns and the board agreed on a formal response to the proposal. On other 'hot issues,' discussion in the board has led to agreed formal position statements (e.g. windfarms) which are made publicly available through their website.
- WRB indicates they use formal procedures. Interests are declared to avoid conflicts and, if necessary, actors leave discussions when decisions are taken. The chair gets a casting vote when conflicts arise during meetings. Informal disputes are dealt with at subgroup level.
- NKBR indicates the use of a combination of formal and informal procedures: informal discussions including the participation of stakeholders; formal procedures including only the actors in the conflict; and participatory approaches including the views of the actors in conflict and other stakeholders in the SHA.

**Integration** refers to the alignment of objectives, plans and activities (Ferguson 2017).

Different **strategic fields** (tourism, local economy/development, land uses, biodiversity / natural heritage, cultural heritage and community engagement) have different priorities across the SHAs.

- In general, community engagement and tourism are the two strategic fields with the highest average scores (4.6 – between high priority and essential). Still, local development is the field that is considered essential in more SHAs.
- Tourism is considered essential in WRB, SNAE and NKBR and a high priority in GSAB and NUI.
- Local economy/development is essential in GSAB, WRB, SNAE and NKBR. However, for NUI is considered a low priority.
- Land uses are considered essential only for WRB, a high priority in GSAB, NUI, and NKBR, and medium priority in SNAE.
- Biodiversity / natural heritage is considered essential in WRB and NKBR, a high priority in GSAB and SNAE, and medium priority for NUI.
- Cultural heritage is considered essential in WRB, and a high priority in the others.
- Community engagement is considered essential in WRB, NUI and NKBR, and a high priority for GSAB and SNAE.

Regarding how the governance models reflect those priority scores, in GSAB, the members of the Biosphere Partnership Board all broadly represent key areas of interest for the Biosphere (sustainable development (business and community), learning and research, biodiversity and land use, climate change)

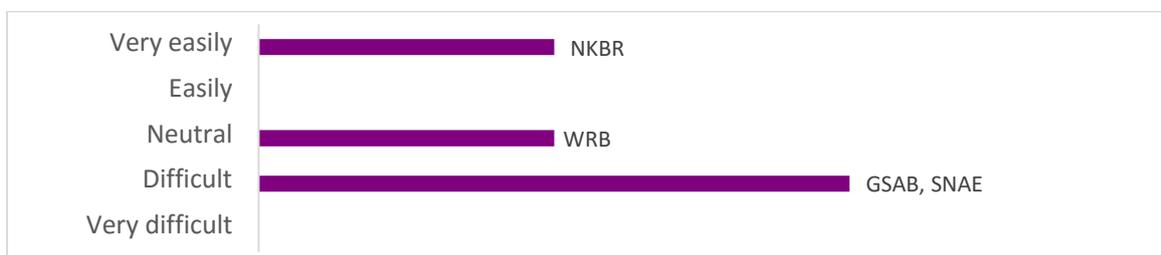
In WRB, where all the strategic fields studied are considered essential, there are sub-groups for Tourism, Sustainable Development, Natural Heritage (includes a Local Biodiversity Action Plan), Cultural Heritage and Communication (community engagement). Land use is considered synonymous with sustainable development and natural/cultural heritage.

**Resilience** refers to the capacity of the SHA to adapt to changes before it changes its form or function (Ferguson 2017). **Learning mechanisms** in good governance refer to social learning and co-management through the participation of stakeholders (Ferguson 2017).

Regarding **how easily can the governance system in the SHAs absorb disruption and respond to changes**, the situation differs across SHAs.

- For GSAB and SNAE, it is difficult. GSAB points out that, in a rural area with a limited number of skilled people available to support the board, the loss of key individuals can result in a loss of key knowledge. A particular issue at present is loss of key individuals from public sector partners through austerity who have previously been 'champions' of the integrated nature of the Biosphere.
- In SNAE, there is only one key employee. This can be a high-risk factor for the organisation and, as the Regional Park grows, operational responsibilities will be distributed among more staff. The ownership structure also presents some risks - for example, changes of personnel within the municipalities can affect the governance ability to make decisions.
- In NKBR, if a stakeholder is off the right track, the reason is clarified and possible correcting actions are made and a new stakeholder can be involved whenever needed (if one exists).
- In WRB, the situation is regarded as neutral: as the WRB is governed by 15 volunteers who are elected by and from the membership pool, it is very resilient to disruption and change. This is because those individuals who put themselves forward are determined and have time to commit. The most disruptive occurrence would be the loss of the Biosphere manager/coordinator. There is perhaps an over-reliance on this one individual.

Figure 15. How easily can the governance system in your SHA absorb disruption and respond to changes (e.g. loss of key stakeholders)?



## e) Efficiency and Effectiveness, Communication/ Connectivity and Transparency

**Transparency** refers to the availability of relevant knowledge and information so the stakeholders can be informed about the decisions that affect them (Ferguson 2017).

All the SHA have a **publicly available vision** except NUI.

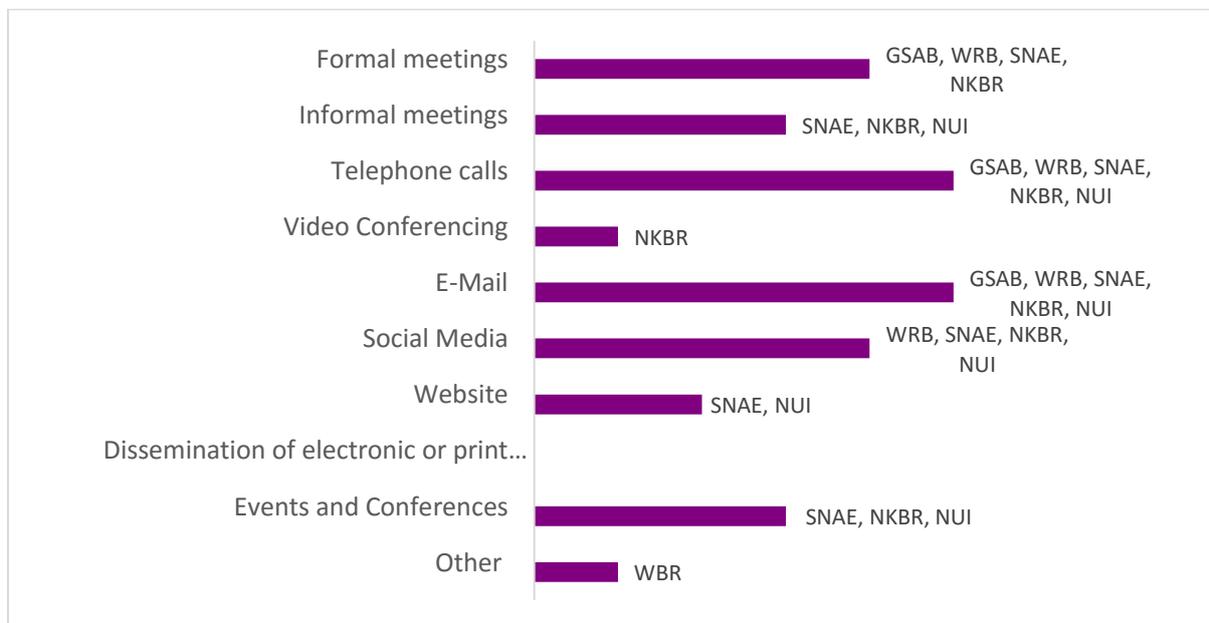
All the SHAs have **transparent planning processes**. The mechanisms reported being used to make the planning process transparent are varied.

All the SHAs report having a representative governance structure.

- Two SHAs (NKBR and SNAE) also report that the decision papers are made public.
- NKBR also indicates that it is part of the governmental structure and informs the regional centre about ongoing and planned activities (must comply with laws, regulations and add to centre goals)
- NUI indicates that they have planned to have open meetings and hearings.

The **Communication / Connectivity** principle refers to the need for effective communication with internal and external stakeholders through a range of media, including technology (Ferguson 2017).

Figure 76. What are the most important means used for internal stakeholder communication in the SHA, with which purpose, and frequency?



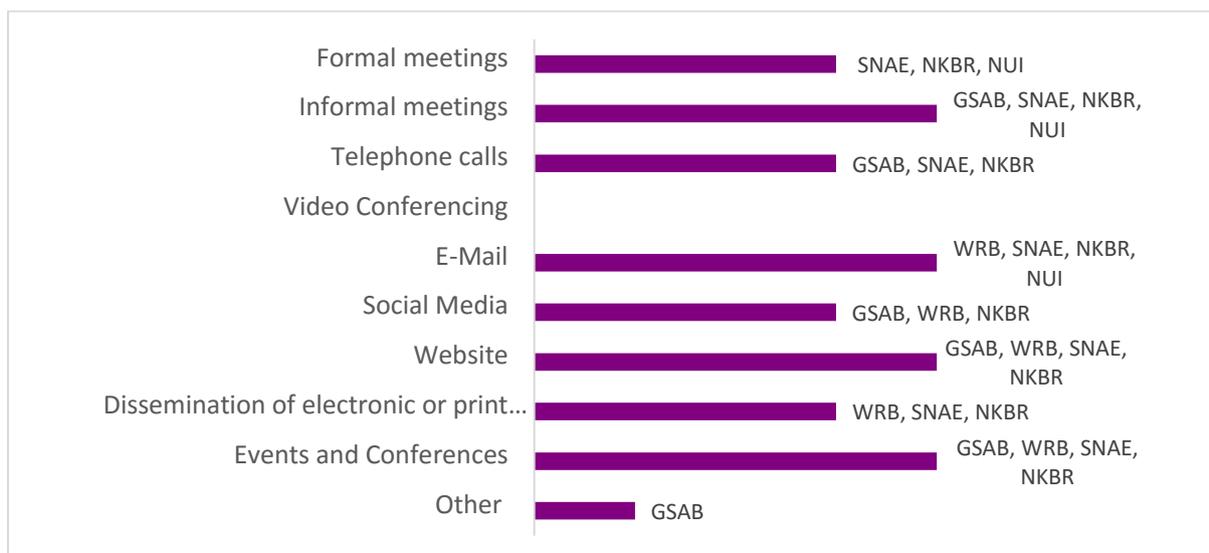
Regarding **internal communications**, the SHAs report using a range of means.

- Formal meetings are used in all the SHAs except NUI. The frequency of these meetings varies among SHAs. GSAB has quarterly board meetings and trustee meetings. WRB has board meetings every six weeks on progress review and monitoring the strategic direction; and

also has sub-group meetings, of variable frequency, that usually happen between board meetings to monitor progress operational tasks and projects. NKBR reports having 5 or 8 board meetings in a year.

- Informal meetings are used in NUI, SNAE and NKBR. NUI notes monthly informal meetings to give information about the biosphere reserve and discuss collaboration. NKBR reports tens of informal meetings per year.
- Telephone calls are used in all the SHAs. They are used as required but in most cases, weekly (GSAB and NUI). WRB details that they are dedicated to quick catch-ups. NKBR says that there can be hundreds per year.
- Video Conferencing is only reported in NKBR (monthly).
- Email is also used in all the SHAs. This is used as required, but in most cases weekly (GSAB and NUI). WRB details that email is used for more formal discussion between meetings. NKBR reports daily emails.
- Social media is used to inform internal stakeholders by WRB through the use of a private Facebook group for chat and document sharing. Also, Basecamp/Samepage being trialled for more formal project coordination. NKBR says they use social media regularly, and NUI also reports the use of social media every month. SNAE reports social media as well.
- The use of the website is reported by NUI (monthly) and SNAE.
- NUI, SNAE and NKBR report the use of events and conferences (occasionally in the case of NKBR, and four times a year in the case of NUI).
- None of the SHAs reports the use of dissemination of electronic or print materials.

Figure 87. What are the most important means used in the SHA for communications with your external stakeholder, with which purpose, and frequency?



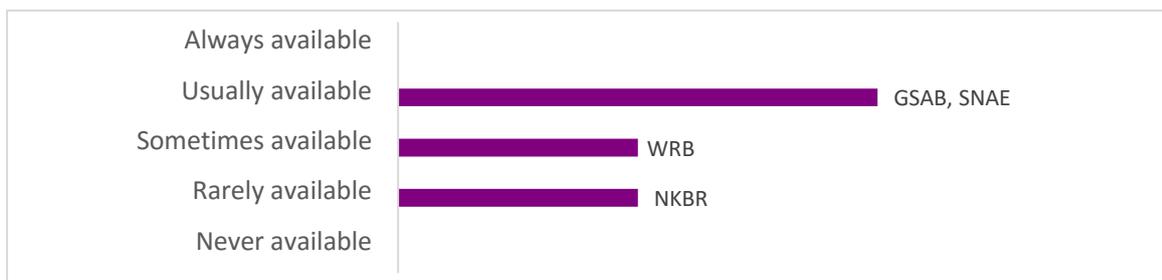
Regarding **external communications**, the SHAs report using a range of means.

- Formal meetings with external stakeholders are reported in NUI, SNAE and NKBR (5-8 per year).

- Informal meetings are used in GSAB, NUI, SNAE and NKBR. GSAB says that informal meetings happen as required, NUI every month, tens per year for NKBR.
- Telephone calls are used in GSAB (as required), SNAE and NKBR (hundreds per year).
- Email is used to communicate with external stakeholders in all the SHAs except GSAB. WRB indicates that email is used to communicate with members around general meetings. The frequency in the use of email varies: NUI indicates monthly emails while NKBR indicates daily use.
- Social media is used to communicate with external stakeholders by GSAB (2 or 3 times a week), WRB and NKBR (regularly). WRB reports that Facebook and Twitter platforms are the most active method for regular communication.
- The website is used to communicate with external stakeholders by GSAB (monthly updates), NKBR (occasionally), SNAE and WRB. WRB indicates that the website is currently being developed to make it a more effective communication tool.
- GSAB publishes an e-newsletter every two months.
- Dissemination of electronic or print materials is used by WRB, SNAE and NKBR (occasionally). In WRB, information about events and workshops is disseminated in the local press (printed) and online (social media and web).
- Events and conferences are used by GSAB (2 or 3 times a year), WRB (several times per year), SNAE and NKBR (occasionally).

**Efficiency and effectiveness** refer to the delivery, implementation and communication of the actions of the SHA about outcomes and resources (Ferguson 2017).

Figure 18. To what extent is sufficient information available for management planning in your SHA?



Regarding the **sufficiency of the information available for management planning in the SHAs**, the situation is diverse<sup>6</sup>.

- SNAE and GSAB report that sufficient information is usually available. In GSAB, other partners who are carrying out actions that impact on the Biosphere (both positive and negative) often do not realise this and do not provide information to the Biosphere that it could then use.
- WRB indicates that sometimes can be very difficult to gain access to information archives, as there has been a high staff turn over in the Highland Council and HIE over the past decade.

<sup>6</sup> NUI did not respond to this question.

- NKBR indicates that sufficient information is rarely available.

The **resources for management in the SHA** are generally considered to be insufficient or inadequate. (GSAB, WRB, NKBR, SNAE). Only NUI believes them to be sufficient.

The **distribution of those resources** across the different activities or objectives in the SHA is considered inadequate or insufficient (GSAB, NUI, SNAE, NKBR) or very insufficient (WRB).

In the same vein, the **number of staff** to deliver the key strategic plans in considered insufficient in all the SHAs.

- GSAB indicates that, as core staffing in the SHA is only 1.4 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE), any extra time is from projects developed by the core team. They therefore spend a disproportionate amount of time seeking funding to maintain staff in the Biosphere.
- WRB points out that they have no core funding and so, as a management body, they rely on volunteers and one part-time coordinator, and are striving to achieve stable funding.

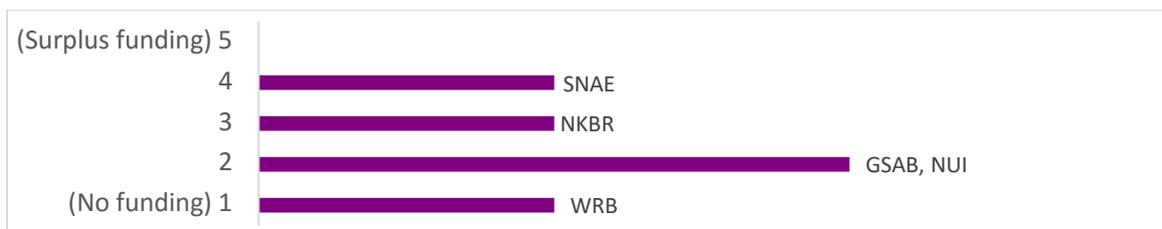
Nevertheless, the **staff's required knowledge and skills** are considered sufficient/adequate (SNAE, NKBR) or more than sufficient/adequate (GSAB, WRB, NUI). WRB points out that the staff's required knowledge is enough to coordinate the work of project officers/volunteers/consultants who would be appointed in the future to deliver on specific objectives of the strategic plan.

Figure 19. The staff's required knowledge and skills are...



Regarding the **availability of core funding**, the situation of the SHAs is diverse. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is no funding and 5 is surplus funding, none of the SHAs indicates 5. WRB scores 1, GSAB and NUI score 2, NKBR scores 3 and SNAE scores 4.

Figure 90. Score your core funding on a scale 1 to 5, where 1 is no funding and 5 is surplus funding



Regarding **project funding**, WRB, NUI and SNAE score 3 and GSAB and NKBR score 4.

Figure 101. Score your project funding on a scale 1 to 5, where 1 is no funding and 5 is surplus funding



Regarding the **evolution of resources**, the SHAs report different situations since they began.

- GSAB started with two years funding for two project officers. At the end of that period, no other funding was forthcoming and momentum in the Biosphere ground to a halt. After 12 months negotiation, partners put together a three-year project package for three project officers. As that period came to an end, significant discussion took place to secure longer-term core funding. This resulted in a five-year agreement for 1.4 FTE officers; this will see the SHA through to the end of March 2022. This funding, while welcome is only just sufficient to maintain the status quo, and does not allow for growth and development without additional project funding. Continued support post-March 2022 is precarious.
- The WRB has never had core funding. This is set against a backdrop of an austerity agenda in the UK and increasingly squeezed budgets in the UK and Scotland. The WRB is building political will and promoting the value of UNESCO Biospheres to attract core funding and remains hopeful that it will be able to achieve this through public and commercial funds. This includes raising funds through commercial activities.
- NUI has had adequate funding through the project period, but is now working on financing the BR when designated; it is not an easy task getting core-funding in place.
- In SNAE, the core funding has been stable for the past few years. Project funding has been varied between years. However, it has played an essential role in developing the regional park.
- In NKBR at the beginning, the paradigm and activities were different; the organisation and internal funding were relevant; at present co-operation and project funding are the key to success. Plenty of project money is available; their use is limited by the resources for permanent staff.

### 3. Performance of the SHAs

#### GSAB

Principles	Strengths / Good practices	Weaknesses / Aspects to consolidate
Rule of Law and Legitimacy		- Recognition by the local community and stakeholders as a relevant stakeholder for sustainable development in the region
Participation / Inclusiveness and Fairness / Equity	- Wide participation of stakeholders in the governance body of the SHA	- Inclusion of minority groups
Accountability and Performance / Responsiveness	- Roles and responsibilities clearly defined in the SHA and performance reporting in place. - Management / strategic plans in place. - Yearly reports and evaluations of plans and governance structures	- Development of measurable targets to monitor progress towards the objectives in the different fields. - Scope to incorporate management planning processes and tools. - Scope to incorporate an advisory committee/council
Direction / Strategic vision, Integration, Resilience / Adaptability, Learning Mechanisms and Conflict Management	- Publicly available strategic vision in place. - International, national, and regional policies on environmental, social and economic policies and objectives incorporated. - Clearly defined objectives regarding governance	- No formal mechanisms in place for conflict management. - Difficult to absorb disruption and respond to changes.
Efficiency and Effectiveness, Communication / Connectivity and Transparency	- Good availability of project funding - Good range of internal and external communications.	- Resources for management in the SHA, including number of staff and core funding, and distribution across activities / objectives are inadequate / insufficient. - Scope to make planning processes more transparent beyond the representative governance structure.

## NKBR

Principles	Strengths / Good practices	Weaknesses / Aspects to consolidate
Rule of Law and Legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition by the local community and stakeholders as relevant stakeholder for sustainable development in the region</li> </ul>	
Participation / Inclusiveness and Fairness / Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wide participation of stakeholders in the governance body of the SHA.</li> <li>- Mediating character of the organisation</li> </ul>	
Accountability and Performance / Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Roles and responsibilities clearly defined in the SHA and performance reporting in place.</li> <li>- Management / strategic plans in place.</li> <li>- Yearly reports and evaluations of plans and governance structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of measurable targets to monitor progress towards the objectives in the different fields.</li> <li>- Scope to incorporate management planning processes and tools.</li> </ul>
Direction / Strategic vision, Integration, Resilience / Adaptability, Learning Mechanisms and Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publicly available strategic vision in place.</li> <li>- International, national, and regional policies on environmental, social and economic policies and objectives incorporated.</li> <li>- Clearly defined objectives regarding governance.</li> <li>- Governance priorities reviewed.</li> <li>- Formal and informal mechanisms in place for conflict management.</li> <li>- Very easy to absorb disruption and respond to changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>
Efficiency and Effectiveness, Communication / Connectivity and Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good range of internal and external communications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sufficient information for management planning is rarely available.</li> <li>- Resources for management in the SHA, including number of staff, and distribution across activities / objectives are inadequate / insufficient</li> </ul>

## NUI

Principles	Strengths / Good practices	Weaknesses / Aspects to consolidate
Rule of Law and Legitimacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formalisation</li> <li>- Recognition by the local community and stakeholders as relevant stakeholder for sustainable development in the region</li> </ul>
Participation / Inclusiveness and Fairness / Equity	Open participative process planned for elaborating the first strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation of stakeholders in the governance body of the SHA to be defined</li> </ul>
Accountability and Performance / Responsiveness		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of measurable targets to monitor progress towards the objectives in the different fields.</li> </ul>
Direction / Strategic vision, Integration, Resilience / Adaptability, Learning Mechanisms and Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The plan included in the application is a starting point to develop a strategy plan incorporating international, national, and regional policies on environmental, social and economic policies and objectives incorporated.</li> <li>- Clearly defined objectives regarding governance.</li> </ul>	
Efficiency and Effectiveness, Communication / Connectivity and Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Moderate range of internal communications.</li> <li>- Sufficient resources for management in the SHA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of a publicly available vision.</li> <li>- Formal meetings.</li> <li>- Number of staff and core funding, and distribution across activities / objectives are inadequate / insufficient.</li> </ul>

## SNAE

Principles	Strengths / Good practices	Weaknesses / Aspects to consolidate
Rule of Law and Legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition by the local community and stakeholders as relevant stakeholder for sustainable development in the region</li> </ul>	
Participation / Inclusiveness and Fairness / Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wide participation of stakeholders in the governance body of the SHA.</li> <li>- Decentralised consultation processes in each municipality.</li> <li>- Preparing a plan to engage immigrants.</li> </ul>	
Accountability and Performance / Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Roles and responsibilities clearly defined in the SHA and performance reporting in place.</li> <li>- Management / strategic plans in place.</li> <li>- Yearly reports and evaluations of plans and governance structures</li> <li>- Measurable targets in place for tourism, stakeholder engagement, habitat/species conservation and economic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly define roles and responsibilities of other people working in the SHA</li> <li>- Development of measurable targets to monitor progress towards objectives in climate change and population retention.</li> <li>- Scope to incorporate management planning processes and tools.</li> <li>- Scope to incorporate an advisory committee /council.</li> </ul>
Direction / Strategic vision, Integration, Resilience / Adaptability, Learning Mechanisms and Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publicly available strategic vision in place.</li> <li>- International, national, and regional policies on environmental, social and economic policies and objectives incorporated.</li> <li>- Clearly defined objectives regarding governance.</li> <li>- Governance priorities reviewed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No formal mechanisms in place for conflict management.</li> <li>- Difficult to absorb disruption and respond to changes.</li> </ul>
Efficiency and Effectiveness, Communication / Connectivity and Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good range of internal and external communications.</li> <li>- Sufficient availability of core funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources for management in the SHA, including number of staff, and distribution across activities / objectives are inadequate / insufficient</li> </ul>

## WRB

Principles	Strengths / Good practices	Weaknesses / Aspects to consolidate
Rule of Law and Legitimacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition by the local community and stakeholders as relevant stakeholder for sustainable development in the region</li> </ul>
Participation / Inclusiveness and Fairness / Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition by the local community and stakeholders as relevant stakeholder for sustainable development in the region.</li> <li>- Involvement of a range of groups in the governance processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is scope for participative processes informing the decision-making</li> </ul>
Accountability and Performance / Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Management / strategic plans in place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluation of governance structures to be considered.</li> <li>- Development of measurable targets to monitor progress towards the objectives in the different fields.</li> <li>- Scope to incorporate management planning processes and tools.</li> <li>- Scope to incorporate an advisory committee /council.</li> </ul>
Direction / Strategic vision, Integration, Resilience / Adaptability, Learning Mechanisms and Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publicly available strategic vision in place.</li> <li>- International, national, and regional policies on environmental, social and economic policies and objectives incorporated.</li> <li>- Clearly defined objectives regarding governance.</li> <li>- Governance priorities reviewed.</li> </ul>	
Efficiency and Effectiveness, Communication / Connectivity and Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good range of internal and external communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources for management in the SHA, including number of staff and core funding, and distribution across activities / objectives are inadequate / insufficient</li> </ul>