



CASE STUDY OF GOVERNANCE OF GSAB

Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism

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1. 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.

2. 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.

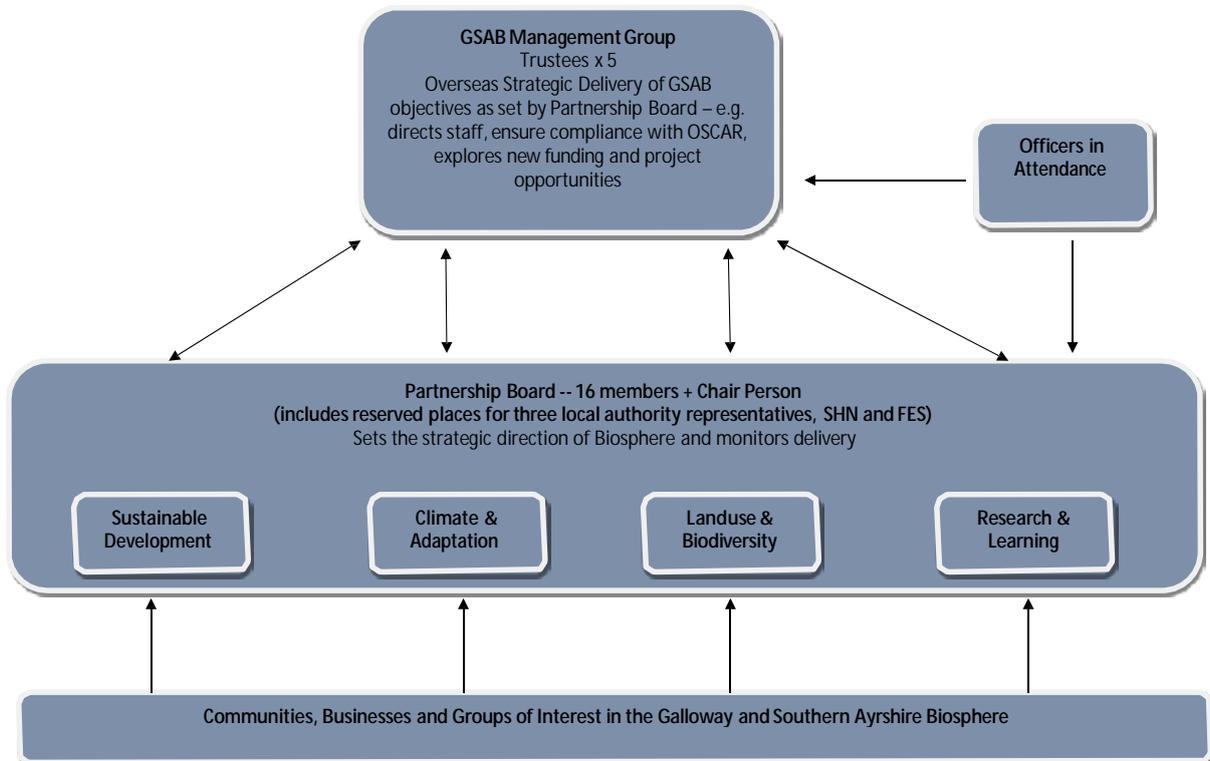
3. SHA Governance Structure

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.



4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.