ACHIEVING A CLIMATE READY BIOSPHERE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Case study: Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere

This case study describes how the partners of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere identified the challenges and opportunities presented by a changing climate, and the method they used to create and share a positive vision for how the communities, the natural environment and economy can adapt and thrive.

How will the climate change in West Scotland?

UK Climate Projections 2009 data for West Scotland suggests that, under a medium emissions scenario, by the 2050s the region may see:

- An increase in summer mean temperatures of around 2.4°C, and of winter temperatures of around 2.0°C;
- A 15% increase in winter mean precipitation and a 13% decrease in summer mean precipitation.

Source:http://ukclimateprojections.metoffice.gov.uk

Adaptation Scotland
supporting climate change resilience

What is a Biosphere?

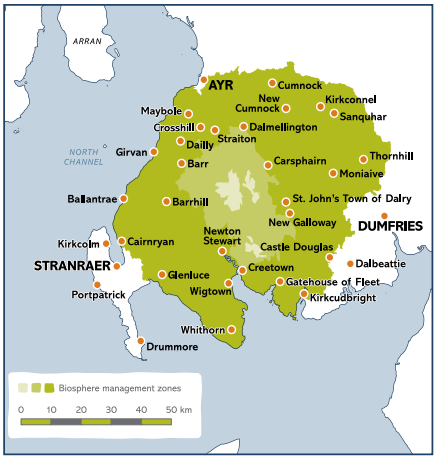
Biosphere Reserves, usually referred to as Biospheres are places with world-class environments that promote sustainable development based on local community efforts and sound science. They are established through the UNESCO Programme on Man and the Biosphere and must be nominated by a national government. The Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, designated in 2012, was a first for Scotland. It is one of 651 Reserves in 120 countries. It has three main functions; to conserve the biodiversity of the local environment, to pioneer more sustainable ways of living, and to support a better understanding of nature and global issues.

Putting climate change impacts on the agenda

Severe weather impacts are not new to the region covered by the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, and the expected impacts of climate change will affect all areas of life in the area. Following one particular weather event, officers felt that the Biosphere had the ability to act as a pilot area, to identify the possible effect of a changing climate. They also recognised the role the Biosphere could take in raising awareness, engaging with the community, gaining stakeholder buy-in, and supporting the role of the Biosphere in pioneering more sustainable ways of living alongside a changing climate. Biosphere officers contacted Adaptation Scotland to develop a project to raise awareness of the need to adapt to climate change, and build capacity for joint planning and action.

A key characteristic of the Biosphere is to bring together people and organisations across a geographical area. Taking a partnership approach was crucial to achieving this, developing a shared vision and identifying possible actions.

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere is taking action on climate change as part of the Adaptation Learning Exchange (ALE). The ALE was set up by Adaptation Scotland to support the public sector plan for the impacts of a changing climate.



The process

A series of three workshops were held to take participants on a journey from recognising and understanding what climate change is, through to options for adaptation to counter threats and making the most of the opportunities.

The three workshops were:

- Introducing Climate Change and Adaptation
- Showcasing Action and Identifying Opportunities
- Our Shared Vision and Next Steps

Who was involved?

The Biosphere board provided important leadership and endorsement of the project and the Biosphere staff played a crucial role in involving a wide range of organisations, businesses and communities in the project. Participants included public sector organisations, local community groups, businesses and academics.

Adaptation Scotland provided support throughout the project, working with the Biosphere to design the workshops and build momentum through creating a Climate Ready Biosphere vision and setting up a Task Group to develop an action plan.

Why is this important for climate change adaptation?

Partnership working is crucial to a climate ready future for the Biosphere. This project demonstrates that partners with diverse backgrounds and interests can work together to identify shared challenges and opportunities and make progress in taking action.

The importance of climate change and adaptation in biospheres is reflected in a proposal going forward to the World Congress of Biospheres to take place in Lima in 2016. This will make it a fourth objective for all biospheres worldwide.

What has changed as result of this process?

The impacts of climate change in the Biosphere are now more widely understood with challenges and opportunities identified, and a positive vision of a climate ready future is established.

An action plan has been developed to go alongside the vision. Whilst there is still a long way to go in resourcing and implementing actions, a strong start has been made which would not have been possible without the engagement and buy-in developed through the project.

Recommendations

1. Involve a broad cross section of organisations and individuals to help identify adaptation challenges and opportunities, and establish a clear vision for the future.

2. Use recent experiences of the impacts of severe weather events on the region to recognise that climate change will affect all areas of life in the Biosphere.

3. Acknowledge good work that's already happening, for example, the workshops included lots of examples of how partners are contributing towards increased climate resilience, such as the success of community resilience in Dumfries and Galloway.

4. Adaptation Scotland's input was valuable, their expert facilitation helped to keep the process moving forward, looking for positive solutions and not dwelling on the negatives.

Next steps

The vision for a Climate Ready Biosphere and accompanying action plan will be launched later this year.

One of the first priorities will be to establish a baseline from which to measure progress against our vision and action plan.

Information about this project will be shared with Biospheres worldwide, demonstrating Scotland's leadership in adapting to climate change and, inspiring others to do the same.

Further information

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For details see:
www.gsabiosphere.org.uk
www.adaptationscotland.org.uk/3/192/0/Climate-Ready-Biosphere.aspx

Adaptation support

The Adaptation Learning Exchange (ALE) Network is a programme to support organisations with adaptation planning, enabling them to address common adaptation challenges and explore opportunities. For more about the ALE, visit our website or contact **sophie@sniffer.org.uk**

www.adaptationscotland.org.uk

Adaptation Scotland
supporting climate change resilience

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