

SUP Autumn Newsletter November 2019

SUP News

The 18th AGM of the Partnership took place in October and we welcomed three new members to the SUP Board. They introduce themselves below. The AGM also agreed some significant changes to the way the Partnership functions. We have increased the size of the Board to 15 which we hope will allow us to bring in additional skills and experience. We have also done away with the membership subscription to make it easier for people to become members. All you have to do to register your support is to 'Update your Preferences' at the bottom of this newsletter and tick the box to become a member. If you have already paid your membership fee for this year and would like this refunded, please contact sheila@sup.org.uk to arrange this. If you currently subscribe by Direct Debit, please feel free to cancel this, although donations are always very welcome and help towards developing new projects. We are in the process of updating our website to allow donations to be made online through Golden Giving.

SUP has also established a wholly-owned trading arm, Southern Uplands Partnership Services Ltd (SUP Services Ltd) which will allow us to undertake work that does not exactly fit our charitable objects as a way of generating funds for the charity. This body has its own Board (currently three members) but has seven places, so if you are interested in getting involved in what is effectively a new business venture, please get in touch. In fact, if you are interested in joining either Board, we would be very pleased to hear from you. Email piptabor@sup.org.uk for more information or phone Pip on 01750 725154.

SUP had a turn-over of over £0.7 million in the financial year to March 2019 which meant we had to have a full audit of the accounts, which is a lot of additional work. Sheila Adams, our Finance Manager, has done an excellent job of seeing this process through and we are pleased that we have been given a clean bill of health.

The Partnership currently employs 16 people and you will see below that we are currently recruiting for a new Wild Land post and two part-time Stakeholder Engagement Officers for the South of Scotland Golden Eagle project. At the same time, the Equestrian Tourism project is due to end in December (although we are working hard to secure funds to keep it going).

Project News

Our equestrian tourism project "**Ride Scottish Borders**" has been short-listed for a Thistle Award which is largely due to the efforts of Project Officer, Gowan Miller. The project has developed a really positive profile and we are now seeking support to allow it to extend across the rest of South Scotland with the aim of establishing a network of routes linking the east and west coast.

Our work around the **Talla Hartfell Wild Land Area** has reached a key point and we are now advertising for a Community Engagement Officer.

Initially for one year, the successful applicant will work with the businesses, landowners and communities in the area to develop ideas for a local economy based on the wild nature of the area. Full details are available at www.sup.org.uk. Closing date for applications is noon on Friday 29th November.

SRUC recently completed its study into the current economy of the area and the direction it is currently taking. The report will be available on SUP's website shortly.

SHAPE (Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnership for Ecotourism) is a project involving the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere (GSAB), funded by the European Commission. It aims to bring together communities, local authorities, tourism providers and conservationists from Scotland's two UNESCO Biospheres (GSAB and Wester Ross) with counterparts from similarly designated areas in Finland, Norway, Iceland, Greenland and Canada.

The £1.5 million project is supporting a number of international exchanges over three years aiming to boost eco-tourism in South West Scotland and the other participating countries.

Delegates from Finland and Iceland recently paid a fact-finding visit to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere (GSAB) to see examples of communities trying to build their economies and reverse rural decline in a sustainable way. Part of the visit focussed on initiatives taking place in Glentworth which has suffered depopulation and the loss of its School. The Glentworth and Bargrennan Community Trust described plans for the village, tourism and visitor accommodation. There was a visit to the studio of potter Andy Priestman and guided nature and heritage walks as examples of how tourism experiences can be built on an area's natural and cultural assets. The guides involved were trained under a Biosphere initiative.

The visitors also learned about tourism development around the Galloway Dark Sky Park, the flora and fauna of the ancient native woodland at Wood of Cree and the historical significance of Loch Trool and Bruce's Stone.

Heidi Koponen of the Ilomantsi Museum Foundation in Finland cautioned against underestimating things that may be taken for granted. "Sometimes ordinary is extraordinary," she said. "You have amazing things so keep on valuing them. Loch Trool, the guided nature walk and the star gazing were impressive. Although I am Nordic, I really hadn't realised that the 'cloud' in the night sky I was seeing was the Milky Way!"

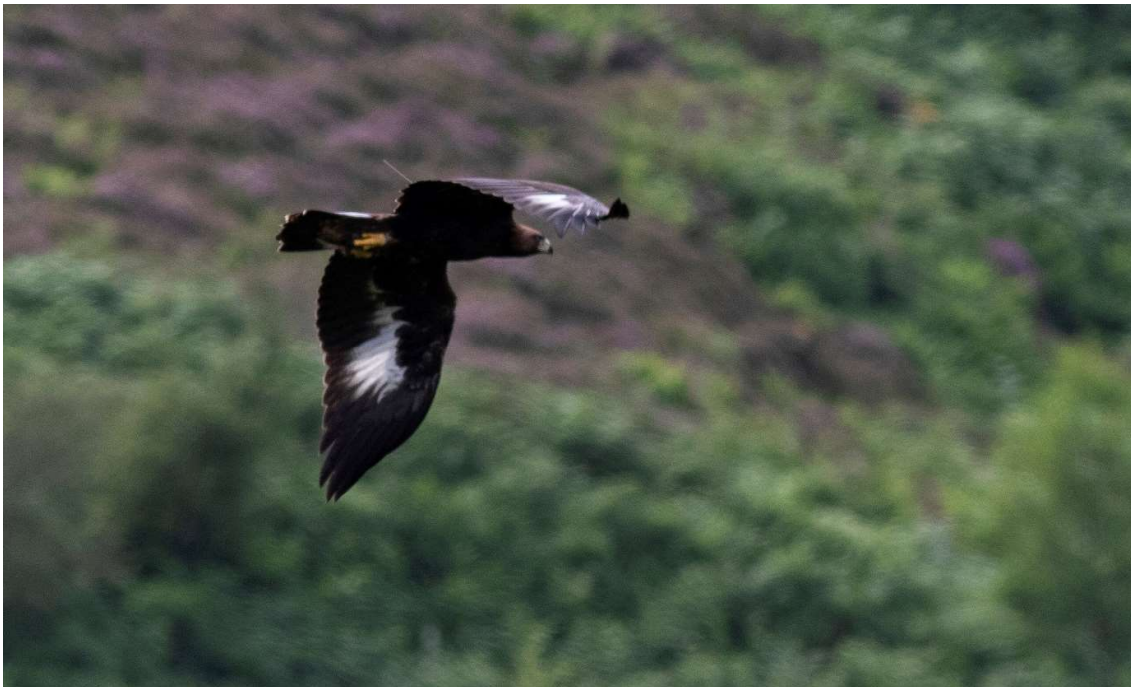
Kjartan Bollason from Snaefellsnes Regional Park in Iceland countered the notion that Galloway and Southern Ayrshire is remote and difficult to access. "The road system you have is good for tourists, especially when they want to take their time – it slows you down and this could be a positive for tourism. The link to Glasgow airport is not that far for Iceland and festivals like Spring Fling and your Food Festivals could be promoted more widely."

The visit follows a similar trip undertaken a few weeks earlier by nine representatives from GSAB to North Karelia Biosphere Reserve in Finland, led by GSAB Business Development Officer, Marie McNulty. “This was an amazing opportunity for the participants,” she said. The area around the Koitajoki river had a unique nature including rare flood meadows used in former times for cattle grazing, old-growth forest landscapes as well as extensive and rare mire ecosystems.

We got to experience a ‘slow triathlon’ eco-tourism initiative that had been developed building on the natural and cultural heritage of Koitajoki and got insights on the tourism co-operation and co-governance in the region.”

South Scotland Golden Eagle Project

The four eagles are all doing well and remain within the South of Scotland. The 2018 birds have been moving about quite considerably east and west, interacting with resident breeding pairs and naturally fledged juveniles.



Sadly, we have not yet located missing eagle B29. We have received expert advice and will continue to search. The tags we are using in the project are known to be very reliable, with a recently published review showing that only 2% fail due to technical malfunction (<https://www.nature.scot/snh-commissioned-report-982-analyses-fates-satellite-tracked-golden-eagles-scotland>). In B29’s case, the available evidence suggests that his tag was most likely damaged in a fatal altercation with another golden eagle (‘Beaky’) leading to a cessation of transmission.

Our Scientific Advisory

Panel (<https://www.goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk/about/meet-the-team/advisers>) is considering methods to secure more birds for a successful translocation in 2020.

We are busy with our community engagement work through activities including presentations and Eagle Schools and are nearing a milestone of 10,000 participants. Follow our project blog for regular updates <https://www.goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk/>.

We currently have two part-time short-term contracts available for **Stakeholder Engagement Officers**, one based in Galloway and one based in the Borders. Details on all posts can be found at www.sup.org.uk.

The **Galloway Glens Biosphere Experience** project is working with partners to run a bird-watching weekend.

Winter Birds in the Biosphere

Friday 31st Jan 2020 – Sun 2nd Feb 2020

Cost £178 pp (£50 pp deposit required on booking)

To book call the [Selkirk Arms Hotel](#) on 01557 330402

Join us for a weekend of winter bird watching in the Galloway Glens, a unique part of the UNESCO Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere. This area hosts a variety of birds over the winter months. Your local expert guide will be able to take you to the best spots for sightings during the trip. We would hope to see Greenland White-Fronted Geese as well as many other wintering species. Whooper Swans are also common and you can get some spectacular close up views of Red Kites feeding. We'll also keep our eyes peeled for Willow Tit as well as the ever-popular Red Squirrel.

Your weekend will start on Friday afternoon when you will arrive and check in at your leisure. Perhaps enjoy a stroll around the harbour town of Kirkcudbright and browse the range of art galleries. You will then meet your guide and the rest of your group for a three-course dinner. We will follow this with a talk from the South of Scotland Golden Eagle project who will give an update on their efforts to reintroduce eagles to this part of Scotland.

On Saturday morning after a hearty breakfast, we will depart by minibus for the first site of the day. The hotel will provide packed lunches and we will plan our route according to the weather and current locations of the birds.

Returning to the hotel after an inspiring day of bird sightings, you will have some time to relax before another enjoyable evening meal. As the weekend will fall close to Robert Burns' birthday you can expect a bit of a Scottish twist on the menu. After dinner your guide will talk a little more about the local birds and the history of the area.

Enjoy another fabulous breakfast on Sunday morning before we head out again for some final opportunities for bird watching. We will return to the hotel for a light lunch before you depart for home.

If you would like to extend your stay please book with the hotel directly. See link below for further information:

www.gsabiosphere.org.uk/explore-the-biosphere/biosphere-experiences/birdwatching-weekend/

Loch Ken Is Alive!

Barnaby Fryer is the new Loch Ken Alive Project Officer for a partnership between the Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership, Loch Ken Trust and the Southern Uplands Partnership. Based with the Galloway Glens team in Castle Douglas, Barney says “Loch Ken Alive is about bringing all the Loch Ken communities together to ask ourselves, what do we want this area to look like in 10 years’ time? At a time when we are facing uncertainty at home and abroad, how can we build a thriving, prosperous, sustainable community around Loch Ken?”

Barney believes that Loch Ken has all the resources in place to do exactly that. Although he and his family have only recently moved to the area for the job, he is no stranger to the Galloway Glens.

“I have been a regular visitor to the area for over a decade, to visit family. There is something magical about this place. From the amazing natural landscapes to the friendly communities; the passionate local businesses and entrepreneurial spirit all combine to make this a real gem at the heart of the Galloway Glens and our UNESCO Biosphere.”

“Through Loch Ken Alive, we want to tell people all about the wonderful natural and cultural heritage of the area. We want to showcase all the activities you can do on the loch, as well as the beautiful views you can only see from the water. We want to see thriving businesses around the loch, creating employment opportunities so that people won’t have to leave the area to find work.”

To achieve these aims, there are four main strands to Loch Ken Alive. These are laid out below, together with some of the key questions we would like to hear your thoughts on.

Develop a Loch Ken Plan

What do we want the future of Loch Ken to look like? How do you see Loch Ken in 10 years’ time? What would you like to see more of? What puts you off visiting the Loch?

Launch an online information hub for Loch Ken

What kind of information would you like to see on a Loch Ken website? How would you like to access it e.g. mobile, app, computer?

Stage a series of festivals and events over the next 3 years

Do you currently attend any events at Loch Ken? What kind of events and festivals would you visit?

Run a campaign to promote the Loch Ken area

How would you promote the Loch Ken area? What story should we be telling about Loch Ken to attract visitors?

The area covered by Loch Ken Alive runs from Dalry in the north, to Castle Douglas in the south, taking in Balmaclellan, New Galloway, Parton, Crossmichael, Glenlochar, Laurieston, Balmaghie and Mossdale as well.

Barney says “I’m really keen to hear the views of everyone who lives, works or plays around Loch Ken. We can’t build the Loch Ken Plan without the voices of the Loch Ken people! Pop in and see me at the office (5 St Andrew Street, Castle Douglas) to tell me your thoughts, or you can get in touch with me at barnaby.fryer@lochkenalive.co.uk or 04740 557742.”

Photo: Alan Smith, Chair of Loch Ken Trust, with Barnaby Fryer, Loch Ken Alive Officer



Welcome to SUP's new Board Members:

John Esslemont

“I am a chartered town planner with a background in local government and extensive experience of strategic planning in the west of Scotland. I share a keen interest with the aims of the Partnership in promoting the sustainable use of the natural and cultural assets of southern Scotland to the benefit of the local communities and the economy of the area.

From a professional perspective, I can bring to the Board extensive experience and knowledge of partnership working in the Ayrshire area and am already familiar with many of the projects which SUP are promoting and supporting. These include the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, the SHAPE project – Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnership for Ecotourism, the People Landscape Art Culture Environment project (PLACE) and South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre (SWSEIC) and its development within the Ayrshire area through the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire project.

During my time in local government I was involved in several national advisory groups and regional partnerships which were influential in policy development within Scotland. I have a degree in geography from Aberdeen and a Master of Philosophy from Glasgow University. I am a past Convener of the Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland”.

Karen Morley

“Working in Landscape Design and Natural and Cultural Heritage Management for the past 30 years, in both the public and private sectors and charity sectors, I have a wide variety of experience in developing, designing and implementing rural and urban fringe projects and strategies.

Projects have required close working with clients, other agencies, funders, other team members and the community to deliver Landscape Design, Countryside Access, Recreation and Natural and Cultural Heritage projects and studies.

For the past 10 years I have worked for Dumfries and Galloway Council’s Environment Service as Access Officer and latterly Countryside Development Officer. In this role I have been focused on the development and implementation of strategic projects and policies. Both professionally and personally I have an interest in rural development in South of Scotland and believe SUP plays a crucial part in both policy and project development. I have been the Council’s representative and liaison with SUP for a number of years and have worked closely with project staff in a number of areas.”

Will Williams

“As Director of Natural Economy Northwest England, I became aware of this successful Partnership over 10 years ago. Since moving to Kirkcudbright, I have been privileged to attend SUP meetings as an adviser. My experience includes a career with Government Conservation Agencies in Scotland and England, 15 years as Trustee of John Muir Trust, 8 years as member of the NT Natural Environment Group and 3 years of chairing the NT North England Advisory Board. Also Chair of the Cumbria Third Sector and the Cumbria Leaders Board.

As a Trustee, it will be a pleasure to continue to develop the Southern Uplands Partnership, which is founded on a well-established track record of partnership and community engagement, as well as effective delivery through a range of projects. I am committed to wishing to play a part for the sustainable future for the Southern Uplands, with both strong community engagement and with stakeholders for a strong strategic direction and for nurturing the distinct cultural and historic character. In all this what is very important is the restoration of biodiversity and linking this to the public benefits, including adapting to climate change and ‘playing our part’ in reducing the rate of change.”

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

2019 Rural Youth Project Ideas Festival

Are you 18 to 28 years of age? Starting on Friday 29 November and concluding on Sunday 1 December 2019, the Rural Youth Project Ideas Festival residential weekend will be a mixture of workshops, inspiring speakers, fun outdoor and indoor activities, evening functions and networking with young people across the world that will leave delegates empowered to make real and lasting change in their rural communities.

Expressions of interest to attend the 2019 Rural Youth Project Ideas Festival in Lanarkshire are now open! Attendance and accommodation are free and travel will be subsidised for UK attendees more than 20 miles from the venue. Spaces are strictly limited.

Register your interest here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PSBYJB8>

Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company

Ettrick And Yarrow Community Development Company's Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday 29th November in the Gordon Arms at 7.00 pm. They will have a guest speaker this year, Gordon Newlands, who many of you may know as he used to run the Halliwell's Butcher Shop in Selkirk. Gordon will be giving his thoughts on how value could be added to valley produce. Gordon now travels extensively on international trade trips promoting the meat retail sector so has a lot of experience to draw on. Could we do more with home produced Valley lamb and market it differently? Are there other ways to bring additional income into the Valleys?

All welcome for what should be a stimulating talk, starting at 7.30 pm (and no doubt continuing in the bar afterwards!)