

SUP Newsletter Easter 2020

There seems to be a lot going on! As the World grapples with Covid-19 and life becomes more and more constrained, this year is clearly going to be unique. We all hope that you and your families remain safe and well.

We are all working from home and meetings have taken place online. Meanwhile, in the Southern Uplands, the shape of new initiatives is becoming a bit clearer.

Borderlands has produced a newsletter (see link below) setting out the areas it is going to concentrate on. Five areas have been identified: Business Infrastructure; Digital; Place and Destination; Energy and Natural Capital. The latter is perhaps of most interest to us, but all are very relevant. It is still very unclear how we will be able to engage with the Borderland decision making systems, but we will keep our eyes and ears open for the opportunity to do so.

<https://www.borderlandsgrowth.com/DesktopModules/EasyDNNNews/DocumentDownload.ashx?portalid=0&moduleid=424&articleid=39&documentid=54>

At the same time, the South of Scotland Economic Partnership (SoSEP) comes to an end and hands over to **South of Scotland Enterprise (SoSE)**. We had a positive relationship with the former, working with them on the two rounds of consultation events that took place across the region. We have also been awarded funding from SoSEP to explore the feasibility of extending our equestrian project into Dumfries and Galloway. SoSE only started work on April 1st but the signs are promising. Nick Halfhide has been appointed as CEO. Nick previously worked for Scottish Natural Heritage so he will appreciate the value of the environment and we look forward to working with him.

Another positive development is the resurgence in talk about regional land-use planning. The scale of current afforestation schemes is worrying and there are also signs of further intensification of landuse for dairy. There is an urgent need to consider how we can best guide landuse planning so that it helps address both climate change and the biodiversity crisis. Extending monocultures is unlikely to be the best way forward.

SUP has established SUP Services Ltd. This is a new Company, wholly owned by the Charity, which will allow us to undertake work that does not fit our charitable objects and thus generate an income. SUP Services has its own Board, currently consisting of Dr Jane Rosegrant, Alan Crichton and Dr Chris Miles. We will expand the Board in due course, so if you have a business background and are interested in helping this enterprise succeed, please get in touch.

The SUP Board also has a vacancy and we are especially keen to find someone with a financial background to help us deal with our increasingly complex finances. Please get in touch if you feel you could help.

Project News

Ride Scottish Borders

We were delighted when this project won the regional heat of the Scottish Thistle Awards as the best example of “working together for tourism”. Much of the credit for this goes to Gowan Miller, Project Officer, who has done an excellent job of bringing businesses, agencies and individuals together to develop a network that is now generating new business. The funding for this project has now ended. However, thanks to funding from SoSEP, Gowan is now working to make the case for extending the network across into Dumfries and Galloway and we hope that SoSE may support the work required to realise this opportunity. Check the project website for latest news

www.ridescottishborders.com.

The Galloway Glens Scheme approaches a 2-Year milestone, and thanks partners including Southern Upland Partnership

The Galloway Glens Scheme is undertaking 5 years of activity up and down the Ken/Dee valley in the Stewartry, using National Lottery Heritage Funding to 'connect people to their heritage', while boosting the local economy and supporting sustainable communities. The Scheme is supporting more than 35 projects from Carsphairn to Kirkcudbright, varying from visitor facilities and infrastructure including footpaths, to education and training programmes. To find out more about the scheme and to sign up for the newsletter, visit <https://gallowayglens.org/>



Over recent months a number of projects undertaken by the Galloway Glens Scheme have completed, being very well received by residents and visitors to the area. This has been a great example of the unique natural and cultural heritage of Southern Scotland being harnessed and capitalised upon to deliver actual benefits 'on the ground'.

McNabb Laurie, Galloway Glens Team Leader, said:

"We are trying to harness the heritage of the area to deliver genuine, contemporary benefits to the people and environment of our part of Dumfries and Galloway. We have now finished 2 years of our 5-year delivery phase, having spent more than £1.7million of the £5million scheme. It is excellent to note that 75% of scheme expenditure to date has been with Dumfries and Galloway businesses.

We have sought to adopt a genuine partnership approach and our relationship with Southern Uplands Partnership has been a great example of this working well. Southern Uplands Partnership, with their flexibility, connections and experience in this area have been a vital partner to have. SUP have led on a number of specific projects, such as the Galloway Glens Biosphere Experience project, exploring experiential tourism provision in the area, as well as supported the wider scheme as a whole."

Speaking specifically about the experiential tourism project, McNabb added:

"The Galloway Glens Biosphere Experience Project Officer has now finished, and I look forward to reading the findings.

This project has allowed us to better understand the different businesses in our area and the capacity for experiential tourism, allowing visitors to take part in genuine ‘Galloway’ experiences.”

SWSEIC Busier Than Ever

South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre (SWSEIC) received, and responded to, a record number of data enquiries in 2019-20, more than in any year since formation of the Centre in 2004. The Centre holds almost 2 million biodiversity records and supplies a range of standard and custom reports to developers, consultants, regulatory bodies, research and educational organisations, to inform and enable sustainable decision-making.

In addition, the Centre is actively involved with the collection of biodiversity data, the great majority of which comes from members of the public. Financial support from Scottish Natural Heritage and the Heritage Fund, via the Landscape Partnerships at Galloway Glens and Garnock Connections, has enabled the Centre to run various training days for reptiles and amphibians, dragonflies, moths and the use of iRecord, the online tool for recording wildlife. More courses are coming up in 2020, and Mammals at Home, a new project in the Galloway Glens area, that will loan out trail cameras and bat detectors to interested individuals in order to capture video and sound recordings of local wild animals, many of which are seldom seen due to their nocturnal habits. If you would like to get involved, visit the website at www.swseic.org.uk and/or sign up for the monthly [newsletter](#).

Developing Sustainable Ecotourism in Rural Areas



SUP, on behalf of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, has been a partner for the last three years on a project called SHAPE – Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism.

SHAPE has been a €1.5 million three-year project (2017-2020) funded by the European Commission’s Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme. SHAPE will enable authorities, businesses and communities to develop innovative ecotourism initiatives which preserve local natural and cultural assets and generate economic value.

Partners in SHAPE included Scotland's two Biosphere Reserves (BR), a BR in Finland, a BR in Norway, a regional park in Iceland, and a World Heritage Site in Greenland. Together, we refer to these as 'Sustainable Heritage Areas'. The project has been led by the University of the Highlands and Islands and also involves Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Finland.

The closing conference for the project took place in Finland at the beginning of February and Linzie Liddel, Senior Tourism Policy Adviser for Scottish Government, joined us. Below she recounts her thoughts on the conference, the project and future tourism in Scotland.

Over the last few decades tourism has become one of the fastest growing sectors in the world. According to the UN World Tourism Organisation, the business volume of tourism is equal to, or outstrips that of oil exports, food products or automobiles.

Tourism also provides a significant source of revenue and employment within Scotland. In 2018 it was estimated that overnight and day visitors generated around £12 billion for the Scottish economy, and employment in tourism provided around 1 in 12 jobs. While tourism is important for Scotland as a whole, it is especially so in our rural and coastal regions.

However, recent years have seen a major shift in how we think about tourism, at home and worldwide. A simple focus on increasing visitor numbers and economic benefits is no longer viable given the global climate emergency and increasing concerns around the negative impacts of over-tourism on communities and the environment. We now face urgent questions on how to promote tourism responsibly, in ways that enhance inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth.

The conference focused on practical ways of developing sustainable ecotourism in rural areas rich in natural and cultural heritage. SHAPE aims to develop tourism which offers opportunities for visitors to experience and discover a regions' natural and cultural heritage, in a way that respects and preserves the local assets. There is a focus in SHAPE on the creation of partnerships that bring together businesses, communities and managers of natural and cultural heritage to promote sustainable business practices and create local socio-economic benefits.

One of the key aims of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves is to promote sustainable use and development while conserving rich natural assets. Communities are supported to become involved in the Biosphere Reserve through collaborative projects which are designed to bring revenue into the local area.

To help realise these goals, the Koitajoki Nature 'Slow Triathlon' was developed. In an inversion of conventional triathlon events, this is designed to be completed at a relaxed pace, over a number of days, to allow participants the opportunity to enjoy the nature, culture and environment of the Biosphere Reserve. Multiple activities have been designed to provide a tourism package for a range of fitness and abilities involving: hiking, canoeing and cycling or hiking, rafting, swimming and (the quintessentially Finnish) sauna. This is combined with opportunities for visitors to stay in a traditional cottage or hotel and to enjoy local Karelian food, developed in partnership with the Ilomantisi tourism association and wider local partners to help benefit the local area.

Experiencing the richness and beauty of the North Karelian landscape and culture first-hand was a genuine privilege. More than anything it underlined the importance of developing tourism in ways that not only help preserve and conserve assets, but do so in a way that allow communities to thrive.

Overall, the conference provided a valuable opportunity to learn about the key findings and approaches taken by SHAPE, and to hear about innovative projects, best practice and opportunities for future international collaboration on sustainable ecotourism from a range of participating countries.

Dumfriesshire East Community Benefit Group (DECBG)

SUP administers Ewe Hill 16 Community Benefit funding from ScottishPower Renewables' Ewe Hill Windfarm, near Langholm, on behalf of DECBG. The Fund was well oversubscribed again in the last round with eighteen applications requesting a total of £280,997. The DECBG Board meeting in March had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 movement restrictions and decision making electronically proved to be more challenging. A total of £156,810 was committed, with the following projects receiving support: Buccleuch Centre – Marketing and Programming Support Coordinator; Canonbie and District Green Bowling Club – Replacement of Clubhouse Roof; Dumfriesshire Hunt Branch of the Pony Club – Equestrian Training; Ecclefechan Village Hall – Repair and Repointing; Ewes Hall Committee – Ewes Hall Regeneration Phase 1; Gretna Supporters Society Ltd – Little Changes; Gretna Tennis Club – Restoration of Two Courts; Kirkpatrick Fleming Play Park; The Langholm Alliance – Implementing Community Plan; The Langholm Initiative – Digital Skills project; Burgh of Langholm Pipe Band – Uniform and Accoutrements Renewal; Lockerbie Bowling Club – Installation of Automated Watering System; Muckle Toon Media CIC – Going Digital!; OutPost Arts – Next Steps; Waterbeck Church – Tower Preservation.

Other projects

Some of our project work has been adversely affected by the virus. The planned Black Grouse survey has had to be postponed, and it will not now be possible to collect any new golden eagle chicks this spring. This is disappointing because a significant amount of preparation work had been done. However, we will be well prepared for next spring when things should be back to normal.

That's it for this time. Check the website for latest news <http://sup.org.uk/>

Stay safe and well.