

Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership – Thematic Groups Meeting 11 April 2016.

14:00hrs at Castle Douglas Community Centre

Attendees:

Table Leaders

- Bryan Scott - D&G Council, Countryside Development Officer
Karen Morley - D&G Council, Countryside Development Officer
McNabb Laurie - Galloway Glens Development Officer

Cultural and Built Heritage Group

- Andrew Nicholson - D&G Council, Archaeologist
John Raven - Historic Environment Scotland
Malcolm Ross - Landowner
Richard Polley - National Trust for Scotland
Ted Cowan - Local History Expert

Community, Economy & Volunteering Group

- Christine Clarke - Third Sector First
Clair McFarlan - Solway Firth Partnership
Ed Forrest - Southern Upland Partnership
Elizabeth Tindal - Freelance Ranger
Gerry Donnelly - Castle Douglas High School – Headmaster
Jenny Smith - Dalry Secondary School
John Dougan - Forestry Commission Scotland
Lyndy Renwick - Forestry Commission Scotland
Marie McNulty - GSA Biosphere
Nic Coombey - GSA Biosphere
Tom Henry - D&G Council, Ranger Service

Landscape, Wildlife & Land Management

- Adrian Pringle - D&G Council, Landscape Architect
Andrew Jarrott - Forestry Commission Scotland
Andrew Bielinski - RSPB
Anne Connick - SEPA
David Hawker - Wildlife Expert
Emily Taylor - GSA Biosphere
Jamie Ribbens - Galloway Fisheries Trust
Keith Kirk - Wildlife Expert
Lucie Stewart - SEPA
Peter Norman - D&G Council, Biodiversity Officer



1. Welcome & Apologies

Karen Morley welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Introductions

Karen Morley introduced McNabb Laurie to all present, recently appointed as the Galloway Glens Development Officer.

3. Project Background + Current Situation

McNabb Laurie gave a brief overview to the background and development of the Galloway Glens programme, culminating in the successful first stage application. The development stage was now underway (costing approximately £230,000) before the stage 2 application is submitted in Early Summer 2017. Stage 2, if successful, will secure £2.7m of HLF funding. Match funding of over £2m is being targeted to give an overall programme budget of approx. £5.2 million.

The programme area is based on the Ken/Dee catchment, with some amendments to meet both HLF requirements and to match with Landscape Character types in the area.

The project governance was noted, with the Partnership Board overseeing the strategic direction of the project, supported by the Thematic Groups. It is currently proposed that chairs of the Thematic Groups be appointed and then sit also on the Partnership Board, providing a link.

McNabb Laurie noted the Heritage Lottery Funding process, the need for match funding and the fact that at this time there is not a definitive list of projects that will be undertaken. The role of the Thematic Groups is to define and develop the project listing. An expression of Interest form has been drafted to start drawing together project ideas – and is being freely distributed in the Galloway Glens area.

4. Thematic Working Groups

McNabb Laurie introduced the concept of the Thematic Groups and stressed the importance that the projects undertaken through the Galloway Glens Programme are coherent and work is not undertaken in a piecemeal approach.

To this end, it was important at this stage to take a step back from the individual projects and discuss the challenges facing the Galloway Glens area. This would:

- Highlight sectors requiring activity
- Evidence and provide reasoning for the eventual project listing
- Ensure the ultimate project listing is grouped to overall themes



To this end, today the working groups are being asked to consider two questions:

- 1) **What challenges face each sector in the Galloway Glens?**
- 2) **What can be done to address these challenges?**

McNabb Laurie also asked the groups to consider nominees for the role of a chairperson from each group being appointed to provide a link with the Partnership Board.

The meeting broke up into the three thematic groups, with the following notes being taken by each group

Cultural and Built Heritage

- As an overall point, it was noted that the three Thematic Groups should not be considered as being exclusive of each other – both challenges and the ultimate projects undertaken would likely have benefits that would cut across different Thematic Groups. It was hoped that funding would not be targeted in a simple ‘cultural and built’ vs ‘landscape’ way etc.
- An example of this is the sector of projects that could be undertaken under the heading of ‘Historic Landscape’, noting historical earth works and landforms
- It was felt that there was an abundance of Cultural and Built Heritage assets in the Galloway Glens area, and there was willingness both by locals and visitors to engage with the heritage but the challenge was in making it accessible.
- Recent events held as part of The Glenkens Story group (including Andrew Nicholson as speaker) had been oversubscribed and well attended by all age groups. This was evidence of the wish locally to engage with the history of the area.
- It was noted that the accessibility of the Cultural and Built Heritage in the area – in the historical sector – was actually poorer than other areas of Dumfries & Galloway. Langholm, Stranraer and Whithorn were mentioned as having active historical groups and events going on.
- It was important to acknowledge that the landscape is largely man-made and this has developed over many years. Prehistoric and Bronze Age settlements have been found in the area.
- The Cultural Heritage is tied together by ‘water’ – the river was used for travel, food etc. and population growth and decline tended to take place along river valleys.
- A challenge in this sector was to reconnect people with their past. Only by ‘having pride in the past can people have pride in the present’.



- As evidence of the plentiful heritage assets in the area, it was noted that a Roman Road crosses the Dee near Glenlochar. Nothing is known about where it goes between Glenlochar and Gatehouse. Significant opportunities.
- Communicating the asset is the biggest challenge
- Local groups are exploring the possibility of drawing up a map of the area with every item of archaeological or historical interest on it as a definitive source.
- One of the largest challenges being faced by organisation nationwide in this sector is attracting younger people. All organisations are facing this, with the older, possibly retired members of society being more engaged in the cultural and historical heritage.
- It was also noted that sometimes the age profile of visitors to facilities fell either into the 'very young' or 'older' categories and missed out the working age persons in between.
- Work to address this has included specific family days, focussed advertising, development of informal facilities.
- It was suggested that a Heritage Audit be undertaken to establish baseline data – i.e. what is there now, how well attended is it, what does feedback from users say.
- The challenge also exists that there is infrastructure (i.e. halls etc.) in the Galloway Glens area that is under used at present. The addition of specific heritage facilities could dilute the use of the existing infrastructure further.
- Another challenge facing the cultural and built heritage sector is the seasonality that naturally impacts assets – by their very nature they can only be used at certain times of the year due to weather etc.
- Projects undertaken through the Galloway Glens programme must acknowledge the seasonality issue and work to provide a year-round resource could really help the whole sector.
- Regarding seasonality, organisations in this sector work hard to 'stretch the season' as much as possible and this might be something local groups can assist with – gauging demand, volunteer input during low footfall times etc.
- Project not affected by seasonality would include oral history projects and work to interpret and archive records.
- It was noted that the Galloway Glens area, often seen as 'natural' was subject to the massive, man-made impact of the Hydro Scheme. There were ever fewer survivors of the time when the hydro scheme was undertaken and it was important to capture the stories from this last generation.
- Genealogy is such an underdeveloped subject in the Galloway Glens. Currently the most popular hobby in North America is researching family trees.
- It was noted that Kirkcudbright had been used as a disembarkation point for settlement of the 'New World'. Genealogy can be a topic tackled online or through tangible 'on the ground' work.



- Discussion moved on to the broader challenge connected to this sector, making sure local residents didn't feel their heritage was being 'taken away' or 'sold out'. It was very important to undertake work to get the local residents on board and then this can be shared on a wider basis.
- There was a perception that locals 'know it all' with regards to the history of the area but actually there is an element of people not wanting to show their ignorance. A challenge in this sector is making projects that are easily accessible to relative newcomers and also the more interested parties.
- Schools are very important in this sector, giving children a good grounding in the topic. Examples were cited of successful projects that had both engaged school children but also contributed to the understanding of historical developments in the area.
- An ethnology study is underway covering the Glenkens which is likely to be one of the first of its kind in the UK.
- There were some massively underutilised assets in the area, examples mentioned included:
 - Tongland Abbey
 - The Smuggling History
 - Covenanters
 - Border Reivers
 - Hydro Scheme history
 - James Clerk Maxwell
 - Fishing Practices – Shoulder netting unique to the area?
 - Wool as the major export
- It was noted that a number of different settlement processes had been followed – with Castle Douglas planned whereas Kirkcudbright developing naturally.
- It was important not to overlook the other aspects of cultural and built heritage – i.e. artists, literature, sculpture
- Finally, discussion turned to the appointment of a Chair from the Group. It was noted that the numbers attending were significantly lower than in other groups and the apologies from today included some suitable members. It was stressed by all present that it should be someone local to the area able to put a strong voice forwards on behalf of the sector. McNabb Laurie would explore this further and keep everyone informed.

Community, Economy & Volunteering

- Need to engage with communities, get their feedback and act on it rather than telling them what we are going to do



- Consultation overload at present means it will be difficult to have meaningful engagement
- Who is the community? Not just community councils but local interest groups
- Need quick wins to get the community on board – so everyone can see a difference (High impact / lot of people involved)
- Need to go out to the community and see what they would like to see achieved (in terms of landscape scale things)
- Broadband speed is a big issue in the area
- Can other funders / organisations be levered in through the HLF funding
- Need to involve young people/schools at an early stage. Need schools in the area to work together – Dalry/Castle Douglas/Kirkcudbright
- Need an audit of what is happening already in the communities to see how we can link and add value
- Need a focus within the communities to go to – usually schools but could also include local pub, local groups etc. Need to make sure that get to older, rurally isolated people and also the working population who are out all day and busy in evenings
- Match funding – quite a lot of boundaries with the HLF funding that might restrict where match funding can come from
- Getting communities to think ambitiously / getting the project to reach wider
- No one from the community was at the meeting, important to get them into the groups. Also important to have a Chair of the group who lives within the communities
- Could get volunteers from other groups such as RSPB, NTS, Catstrand
- Need to have wide range of tasks to include all and not be restrictive
- Need to identify opportunities for young people to help them stay in the area – training/transfer of skills/volunteering
- Sustainability is key - training/volunteering can be a legacy
- Might be a good idea to look at what other Landscape Partnerships Projects have achieved in other areas, also look at things that didn't work so well. Maybe invite other partnerships for visit
- Important to train people to have a voice – empowering the communities
- To do a project that draws up a community action plan can lead to a whole series of spin off benefits.
- Business engagement was highlighted as a key requirement of the whole programme. It was suggested that Businesses be approached either to input into the thematic groups or to sit on the partnership board as a whole.
- The ageing population results in a number of spin off challenges in the area – including extra burden on health services and isolation as people are unable to get out and about as much.



- A challenge facing the Galloway Glens project is to leave a sustainable difference once the funding has stopped. The projects that will have the strongest legacy are often ones that might exist even informally now and therefore exhibit a need.
- Crowd funding was mentioned as a potential funding source
- Lyndy Renwick (Forestry Commission Scotland) was willing to act as Chair of the Thematic Group and therefore sit on the Partnership Board – very much on an *interim* basis

Landscape, Wildlife & Land Management

Landscape

Impact of wind farms both within and just outside the area is an important factor. Key views from especially the north of the area can be affected. These could offer opportunities for both interpreting the power industry or for protecting views and compensatory planting.

Debates about land use in the area are intense. The Regional Woodland strategy has a figure of 55% woodland/forestry cover for the north of the area this raises serious questions about land use balance and is a cause of concern to local communities. There is a feeling that their objections/ representations regarding applications for largescale new planting blocks are not being acknowledged/considered. May affect tourism offer and wildlife interests as well as cultural remains. Interesting issue in face of the government's wish to see both increase in forestry area but also community involvement in land use decision making.

One area where we might be able to exert some influence is via the SNH review of landscape character assessments. Currently the 'forces for change' element is to be removed but we could look to see if we could retain/update this information locally.

Natural Flood Management

Flooding is a huge issue for communities. There are opportunities to explore Natural Flood Management (NFM) and be an exemplar for other areas. Connection with the Biosphere and potential demonstration projects. Useful to show landowners what it is all about. Heavily modified river system throws up issues – can work to main river systems have any impact? Potential to remove flood backs north of New Galloway and restore the flood plain. No compensation payments for landowners as yet. Potential bottleneck at New Galloway Bridge needs to be considered. Need to be careful to do computer modelling and involve experts to ensure that other problems are not caused or the existing situation made worse. Great potential in the upper catchment and for multiple benefits. SEPA identified areas of



potential for NFM do not include Carsphairn, given the flood events this winter it is unthinkable that they would be left out of any study/ feasibility. Apparently this map is being constantly updated so need to check the most up-to-date version.

Some existing wet woodland around Carsphairn which might be of interest need to explore.

GFT stated that in the fisheries sector there is presumption against debris in rivers this was an opportunity to show that this does not adversely affect fisheries. Also to try to get the creation of leaky dams with woody debris as a standard procedure in forestry practice while machines and the debris are on site anyway.

Forestry

Some big changes happening both with new planting but also restructuring of existing due to tree disease and changes in forestry practise. Opportunity to engage with private forestry owners to achieve improvements in forest design and practice.

Potential to get local people more involved in state forestry design and decision making. Need to help people understand constraints and opportunities. Particular opportunity to identify key views, areas of greatest recreation/landscape impact where different approaches might be taken i.e. longer term planting, different species mix with the emphasis on aesthetics rather than production. Also potential to impact positively on wildlife i.e. Night Jars which people come here specifically to see/hear.

Big questions about the positive/negative effect of forestry on flooding need to be answered.

Recreation/Access

Potential to open up route to Gatehouse station – but potential cost of road maintenance high but would be a great route

Access to shore of Loch Ken is limited and would benefit from improvement both for walkers and also for canoeist portage around the Glenlochar barrage, parking and access along the loch lacking – conflict with fishermen for launch points.

Water quality/fisheries

Water quality is largely an acidification issue only one case of diffuse pollution problems (Woodall Loch?). SEPA's watercourse condition records 7 in good condition, 10 in moderate, 18 in poor 4 in bad. Highest pressures effecting overall condition are;

- man-made barriers to fish migration (16)
- Acid rain (7)
- Hydroelectricity generation(6)



- Invasion by non native species (4)
- Modification to physical condition (4)
- Unknown sources (4)
- Rural diffuse pollution (1)

However the lower catchment is to be a priority area for diffuse pollution and will be inspected by SEPA officers this year.

Black Water of Dee improving due to increased compensation flows but below the Ken/Doon dam no compensations flow and no fish pass hence no salmon in the upper ken catchment at all. Issues around national targets for only allowing 5% loss of power generation due to environmental factors within Hydro Schemes. Some issues with migratory fish return – only one tenth of the number of fish return than would be expected for the number which pass through the Tongland fish pass (where every fish is counted and photographed.)

Wildlife

The area has an unusually high number of important species, many impacted upon by farming and forestry practice.

Should we be looking to do the wetland ground truthing sooner? Within the development phase?

Need ability to engage with farmers/landowners re habitat management.

Peatlands

There are great opportunities for multiple benefits from restorations of peatlands, particularly areas of deep peat. FSC doing some peat depth survey work at present in the upper Dee catchment. Also potential to build on the success of early work in the Fleet catchment. Also potential areas elsewhere in the area which might also be able to help address flooding i.e. areas which might have been drained for forestry then not planted.

Emily Taylor agreed to chair the group.

5. Overview

The Table managers each gave an overview of what had been discussed by each group to all present.



6. Next Steps

McNabb Laurie summarised the next steps which were:

- To compile the notes from today – and will circulate round everyone in the thematic groups
- We will draft an agenda for the next meeting at which we can assign projects to the identified challenges
- Date of the next meeting, **aiming for w.c.09 May**, McNabb Laurie will be in touch with all by email to arrange.
- It was stressed that as the development work gets underway, any opportunity to meet people to discuss the project would be welcomed. Please consider the Galloway Glens as an agenda item on any meetings you may have coming up in the area, we are keen to meet as many people as possible.
- The Expression of Interest form would be circulated amongst attendees ASAP to gather any project ideas, however brief, that you may encounter.

Regarding chairs of the Thematic Groups, the following situation was agreed:

- Community, Economy & Volunteering = Lyndy Renwick, on an interim basis
- Cultural and Built Heritage = TBC
- Landscape, Wildlife & Land Management = Emily Taylor

7. AOB & Close

McNabb Laurie brought the meeting to a close, thanking all present for their attendance. He would be in touch ASAP to agree the date and time for the next meeting.