Annual Report 2015

General

• Established at Gold Tier in 2009. Keith Muir remains the core link for dark Skies in Galloway. Keith.muir@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

• In a bid to move the Dark Sky Park forward the decision to join up with the Unesco Biosphere in Galloway & Southern Ayrshire was taken. See below.

Biosphere

The Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere - http://www.gsabiosphere.org.uk/ was designated due to the special nature of the area. It covers over 5268 square kilometres and encompasses both Galloway Forest Park and the Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park. It was a logical move at a time when in the UK austerity is pushing organisations to work better together and think collaboratively to make the best of what we have. The first project to be completed is the full training of our new Freelance Biosphere Dark Sky Rangers.

Biosphere Dark Sky Rangers

Even though many events have been held by the small part time team (2) it has been well known for some time that there was demand in the private sector to do similar events but they could not be satisfied due to the constraints of being a public agency. As a result the decision was made to train good communicators in the night sky and let them free on the private sector.

The project was started in the early part of 2015 with expressions of interest. 25 people entered their names and 10 were shortlisted for interview. 5 were chosen but one quickly opted out due to other commitments. The 4 rangers are already in business for themselves in a varied mix of roles from photography to vehicle safaris. They were all trained in the night sky and have been fully briefed on the Biosphere and how to set up Dark Sky Events. We are now about to make a public launch of this to raise awareness ready for this year’s observing season. It is now in the hands of the rangers to push for business and work with the private businesses in the area and beyond to
Galloway Forest Dark Sky

expand the role of the Dark Sky Park and highlight the issues of light pollution and the wonders of the night sky. A new Biosphere webpage and uniform are being created to support the rangers.

Social Media

The Facebook page for the Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park continues to grow slowly. Over the main observing season is when most information from the DSP is placed on line. Throughout the rest of the year it is used to keep interest up and inform the wider public about the amazing things going on around the world and in space. Please spread the word and share the link. 
https://www.facebook.com/darksykigalloway

Communities:

- The first regional planning guidance has been approved to protect the dark sky park from poor lighting. Dumfries & Galloway Council were the first of the 3 councils to have the guidance note approved and passed which gives them far better control but not complete control of the lighting which could be introduced to the area. A larger buffer zone was created around the DSP and we wait to see if it is enough to hold back the demands of private housing and business.
http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/CHandler.ashx?id=1587

Funding

- There is no specific funding for dark skies. As a result all activity comes from Forestry Commission Scotland principal recreation budget. This is topped up with any additional sums from grants from other bodies.
Arts and Culture

The Dark Outside is an arts project created while the Dark Sky Park and Biosphere had an artist in residence in 2012/13. The project allowed the artists to explore what darkness means in different formats. One of the end works is a compilation of thousands of freely given sounds from musical composers from around the world that you can hear only in this one very small location in the heart of the dark sky park.

This year’s event called Sanctuary 2015 is set to be even bigger and better. With the increase in activist related arts events more artists are looking to show their support and help people understand the relationship man has with darkness and light. This year the big blue light will be back but due to its success last year in attracting bats during its very short ‘on’ period specialists are being brought in to note all the different types of bats and add them to the register. The light helps show how odd light is in a truly dark place and why it is dangerous to introduce it. Important when you consider 90% of the UK’s population live in urban areas.

More can be found at: [http://sanctuary2015.org/](http://sanctuary2015.org/)

A new major arts installation called ‘Multiverse’ by the world renowned landscape artist Charles Jencks was opened on the Duke of Buccleuch’s Crawick estate north of Dumfries & privately funded by the Duke himself. Inspired by the dark skies and the regions push to establish itself as the dark place to see in the UK the site was a derelict mining site that had been tried to be used in the past but failed. This new venture is already becoming a major tourist attraction and again links man with the heavens above us. [http://www.crawickmultiverse.co.uk/](http://www.crawickmultiverse.co.uk/)

Outreach

Forestry Commission Scotland continue to deliver a number of dark sky events ranging from straight forward night sky observing to more involved evenings with guest speakers. Attendance varies from as few as 10 to upwards of 50 depending on the event and the weather.