

# Biosphere Joins Campaigners In Joint Bid For A Galloway National Park

- **Scotland in miniature – region is the perfect park location**
- **Supporters include economic development agency, three local councils, businesses and the public**

Campaigners have joined forces with Scotland's first UNESCO Biosphere to present a joint bid for Galloway to be declared the country's newest National Park.

The **Galloway National Park Association (GNPA)** and **Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere (GSABP)** bid – submitted to the Scottish Government yesterday – also has the support of key organisations including:

- South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)
- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- South Ayrshire Council
- East Ayrshire Council.

The Scottish Government is committed to the creation of at least one new National Park by 2026 and called for submissions by 29 February, 2024.

GNPA and the Biosphere say the range of landscapes and habitats in the area covered by a Galloway National Park (which would also take in parts of Ayrshire) make it a "Scotland in miniature".

It would be an opportunity to build on the success of the Biosphere, which has led the way in working with local communities to protect and enhance the environment and promote a sustainable economy.

Over the past seven years GNPA has worked hand in hand with the community and built up a membership of over 1,100.

**Rob Lucas, GNPA Chair, said:** *"Galloway is extraordinary, its rolling hills, open moorlands, mountains, rivers, lochs, rugged coasts and seascapes mean it comes as close as any region realistically can to being a Scotland in miniature."*

*"National Park designation would make the most of these assets, protecting and enhancing them for our common future."*

*"The Biosphere is already showing the way ahead, and this joint bid would build on its success, allowing us to achieve so much more."*

*"Galloway is one Scotland's poorest rural regions and National Park status would be the perfect way to boost prosperity for all by building a vibrant sustainable economy."*

*"We have held discussions with more than 2,000 people, have the support of businesses and the public, all three local councils and the SOSE development agency – all recognise the enormous benefits this would bring."*

The combined bid stresses that the Galloway would achieve the Scottish Government's ambitions for a new National Park to:

- play an important role in nature recovery
- assist in a just transition to net zero.
- be a model for the sort of sustainable development to which the whole country aspires.

A Galloway National Park would also achieve the ambitions set out in the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy for the region to be "Green, Fair and Flourishing".

Galloway has taken significant strides forward through the internationally acclaimed work of the Biosphere, which covers 9,700km<sup>2</sup> of land and sea.

**Ed Forrest, Director of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO**

**Biosphere, said:** *"Our joint bid with the GNPA for a Galloway National Park builds on more than a decade of activity led by the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Partnership, which has always raised the need for better investment in the natural and cultural heritage of southwest Scotland, and made even more apparent the imperative of creating new socio-economic opportunities for our rural communities and businesses.*

*"The collaborative, participatory ethos of a UNESCO Biosphere can help shape the direction of a new National Park and empower diverse stakeholders to address the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.*

*"We are pleased to be part of this exciting next stage in Galloway's story, and look forward to further engagement with Scottish Government as proposals are considered over the next few months."*

NatureScot will carry out a detailed investigation of the bids over the summer – and their final recommendations to Scottish Ministers on which should be accepted will then be revealed.

**The case for Galloway**

There is strong public and business backing for it to be in Galloway, where there is an urgent need for regeneration, as it will bring lasting and widespread benefits by:

- Making the most of our fabulous countryside and coastlines
- Generating sustainable tourism
- Creating business opportunities and jobs
- Providing a marketing brand that will put us on a world stage
- Attracting millions of pounds a year in investment and income
- Making space for nature to recover and flourish as a key part of the area's response to climate change
- Improving health and wellbeing

- Offering opportunities for leisure and outdoor activities
- Encouraging young people and families to remain or return to the region.

GNPA also believes that Galloway is the best place for Scotland's next National Park because:

- It has a unique mix of rolling farmland, low hills, wild moors, mountains and coastline – adding real diversity to Scotland's family of National Parks.
- Unlike some parts of Scotland there is ample opportunity, and need, for an increase in sustainable tourism.
- It offers easy access to wonderful countryside for all ages and abilities, including economically deprived communities across south-west Scotland.