RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SOUTH OF SCOTLAND ENTERPRISE BILL

SUBMISSION FROM GALLOWAY AND SOUTHERN AYRSHIRE UNESCO BIOSPHERE

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere (GSAB) actively supports the creation of a new South of Scotland Economic Agency and welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed South of Scotland Enterprise Agency Bill.

GSAB covers 5268sq/km of SW Scotland, one of the primary reasons for partners in the region coming together to seek UNESCO Biosphere recognition was to use the designation to support sustainable economic development opportunities that benefit people and nature.

UNESCO Biospheres are acknowledged as “the world’s only internationally recognised ‘badge’ for demonstrating excellence in sustainable development” - https://www.unesco.org.uk/designation/biosphere-reserves/

It is therefore with some disappointment that we note that sustainability does not feature anywhere in the proposed bill. At a time when sustainability is seen as one of the core foundations of most modern economies in the world, when Scottish Government has signed up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and has developed a range of forward thinking Climate Change and Land Use policies it would seem remiss to not actively embrace sustainability at the core of a new economic agency that will be supporting Southern Scotland for many generations to come.

It’s further noted that whilst the aims for the new agency expand on what economic and social development of the South of Scotland includes there is no expansion on what the amenity and environment of the South of Scotland should include.

We would therefore suggest that the aims of the new agency as outlined in para 5 of the proposed bill are reworded to reflect this inclusion (GSAB additions in BOLD);

Aims

(1) South of Scotland Enterprise’s aims are to—

(a) further the **sustainable** economic and social development of the South of Scotland, and

(b) improve the amenity and **natural** environment of the South of Scotland.

(2) Furthering the **sustainable** economic and social development of the South of Scotland includes—

(a) supporting inclusive **sustainable** economic growth,

(b) providing, maintaining and safeguarding employment,

(c) enhancing skills and capacities relevant to employment,
(d) encouraging business start-ups, entrepreneurship, **social enterprise**

(e) promoting commercial and industrial—

(i) efficiency,

(ii) innovativeness, and

(iii) international competitiveness

(iv) **sustainability (economic, social and environmental), and**

(v) **resilience (climate and business)**

(3) improving the amenity and environment of the South of Scotland includes-

(a) supporting responsible stewardship of the natural environment

(b) supporting an ecosystem services approach to land use

(c) supporting and encouraging sustainable access to the natural environment

We have significant reservations over the boundaries as highlighted in para 18 of the bill which focuses solely on D&G and Scottish Borders. The consultation report published in October 2018 recognised the need to work proactively with neighbouring local authorities, this was also reinforced at public meetings when Prof. Griggs stated on more than one occasion in response to queries over rural South and East Ayrshire, that cross border working was a priority and funding for projects would not be solely limited to the South of Scotland as defined in the bill. We’d welcome a rewording to of para 18 to acknowledge this cross border support.