



# Galloway Forest Dark Sky

## Annual Report 2016

### General

- Established at Gold Tier in 2009. Keith Muir remains the core link for Dark Skies in Galloway. [Keith.muir@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Keith.muir@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

### Biosphere Dark Sky Rangers

The Dark Sky Ranger programme is now well established. The number of events and educational talks has increased with the number of participants also increasing. There are further opportunities to be had by the rangers who are being asked to go further afield to give talks.



Lord Thurso Chairman of Visit Scotland speaking to Elizabeth Tindal one of the Dark Sky Rangers

### Digital Media

The Facebook page for the Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park has had a quieter year due to other commitments but remains an excellent source of information for followers

<https://www.facebook.com/darkskygalloway>

### Communities:



John Barentine IDA, Joan Mitchel GSAB, Alistair Speedie Director D&G Council, Keith Muir Galloway DSP, Roseanna Cunningham Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate change & Land Reform Scottish Government, Alan Stevenson Director of Tourism Forest Enterprise Scotland

- Following the first regional planning guidance that was approved in 2016 to protect the dark sky park from poor lighting it was awarded winner of the Scottish Government Quality Planning Awards in early 2017.

- The Scottish Dark Sky Observatory has just completed the construction of its very own open on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October

- The Dumfries & Galloway lighting programme has progressed well and it is now at the point where any major issues that have arisen from the retrofitting are being dealt with

on a site by site basis. The overall effect on the skies of the region has been overwhelmingly positive and the night sky is being enjoyed by even more residents and visitors alike.



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- A new Dark Sky Centre is being created in the town of Kirkcudbright and full funding has been achieved. This development will help bridge the gap between day and night with activities and interpretation that will enhance the science and technology and explain more about why the region has and intends to keep and improve the night time environment.

## Funding

There is no specific funding for dark skies. As a result all activity comes from Forestry Commission Scotland principal recreation budget. This has not changed but the funding from the Scottish Government is reducing year on year and we are now in a position where the main Forest Park let alone the Dark Sky park is struggling to keep standards at a high level. We will persevere and ensure each and every visitor has a great time.

## Dark Sky Places Conference #darkskies2017

The First European Dark Sky Places Conference has taken place at gatehouse of Fleet in Galloway Scotland. Hosted by the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere and the Dark Sky Park the event was seen by all who attended as a positive step in ensuring collaborative working between the dark sky places across the UK and wider afield. With delegates from New Zealand, Australia, Chile, USA, Norway, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Southern Ireland and Wales it was a true multinational event.

With key note speeches from the Chairman of Scotland's National Tourism body Visit Scotland and the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform the conference was deemed of significant importance to attract the big hitters!

Subject matter was kept simple around basic themes including the environment, human health and psychology, lighting issues and tourism and for the first time the Arts were very much part of the programme.

A full break down will be written up and the presentations – if allowed – will be placed on the conference website. [www.eudarkskiesconference.com](http://www.eudarkskiesconference.com)



Al & Patricia Grauer Cosmic Camp ground, Nalayini & Gareth Davies NZ Dark Skies



Some of the delegates at the drinks reception of locally distilled Single malt whiskey and Gin!

All images are from the European Dark Sky Places Conference 2017



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## Arts and Culture

This year's Sanctuary 2017 followed directly after the Dark Sky Places conference and this year had 90% less light and even the awful weather could not dampen the spirits. A real mix of experimental art linked to darkness and remoteness was on offer.

<https://sanctuarylab.org/about/>

The curators were also present at the conference to add another dimension for delegates to discuss – how art can influence the dark sky movement.



## Outreach

We continue to have a number of requests to give talks on dark skies and we welcome the opportunity to do so. They range from schools to educational groups to interest groups in smaller communities. We are always warmly welcomed and leave most with some really thought provoking discussions. Keith's personal tally for talks has now reached 287!