



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

Biosphere Dark Sky Rangers



The Dark Sky Ranger programme has been well received but not overly used to date. This coming observing season will be the first real test to see how well they will do and how much uptake from both the private sector and general tourism groups will occur. Advertising both the park and the Rangers is ongoing but more targeted with the hope that this will generate more business for them and increase our presence as a destination. As a direct result of this we will be able to educate more people about the issues around light pollution. It has helped having the backing of the Biosphere as this is something that looks at how man interacts with their environment. In the case of light pollution - it's badly!

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/darkskygalloway>

Communities:

- The first regional planning guidance has been approved to protect the dark sky park from poor lighting.

<http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=15874&p=0>



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The guidance document is now in place in all three Local Government areas that surround the Dark Sky Park. There has been some resistance to it from those that do not think it goes nearly far enough. We do agree with this, but we also know how Government works and that placing a document with extremely stringent planning conditions would never have got passed the planning bodies let alone the general public. By introducing a document that begins to get people to realise that light can no longer be ignored as part of the building process, we are highlighting the fact that more will come. The document and the way it has been created across 3 councils and one Government body has been nominated and now shortlisted under the Scottish Government awards. We have been asked to support this in a presentation in early September.

- Kirroughtree Visitor Centre – the Dark Sky Park’s main gate way centre - has been nominated and won several architectural awards over the past 18 months for its innovative approach and dark sky elements.

- The Dumfries & Galloway lighting programme is now nearing the end. All the lights across the region are being changed to flat glass lanterns. Although most are LED many are low powered and we are told that they are being dimmed. There is still more work to be done with Local Government officers but there



is a marked improvement in the night sky environment across the region and due to the changes every household in the region is now aware of the dark skies movement. Every little step we take is one step closer to complete awareness of the problem.

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

The idea for such a conference is not new but has taken some time to get to a point that we feel we can proceed. At this time we are suggesting that at



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the end of Sept 2017 we will host the first international Dark Sky Places conference in Galloway Scotland.

The concept is to host an event that brings together the academic, the engineers, the planners, the safety officers and the humanitarians under one roof and in a friendly positive manner to openly discuss the issues we now face. The conference is hoped to have a number of outreach events that allow the local communities and visitors alike to join in with the delegates. Indeed we would welcome delegates who are willing to give presentations on their chosen topic and specifically from other dark sky places to hear the amazing stories and see amazing images from around the world. This will be a joint conference with the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere which is an excellent link to the wider Unesco ethos of Man in the Biosphere. All are welcome and more details will follow.



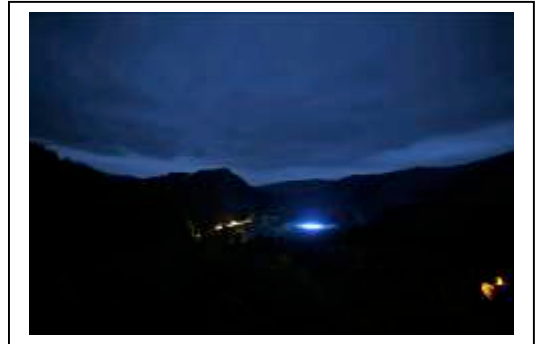
All images are from Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park



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Arts and Culture

This year's Sanctuary 2016 event is looking to review on where to take the event. It will be smaller with an invited guest for the most part with a couple of smaller features of stargazing guided walks and external movies. The idea is to bring it more closely related to dark Skies. Over the past 2 years due its growth the amount of light being used – although small – is still too much. The 2017 event will bookend the dark sky conference



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 284!