



UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man SPG meeting

Wednesday 29 January 2025

Item 8: Delivery report

Discussion led by: Jacqui Keenan, Biosphere Isle of Man Coordinator

Note: Covers delivery 15 Jun 2024 to 6 Jan 2025

Project management & Governance

Biosphere IOM Board

- Jason Bissell began role as Chair of the Biosphere IOM Board in December 2024. Work in progress to determine the structure of the board and recruit board members (see item 9).

Team

- The Biosphere Periodic Review Officer has been recruited, and Beth Penhallurick will join the team on 11 February (see item 10).
- BK has taken responsibility for regular comms through social media and newsletter, with efficiencies made to improve processes and reduce the time spent on them.

UNESCO

- November 2025 is the 80th anniversary of UNESCO. The team plans to incorporate this with International Day of Biosphere Reserves on 3rd November.

UK Man & Biosphere network

- October 2024 UK MAB Committee online: Discussion around a shared Research Strategy (to be finalised and launched 2025), and strengthening links between Biospheres and farming communities.
- March 2025 UK MAB Committee, Living Coast Biosphere, Brighton & South Downs: JK to attend with either Board Chair or Review Officer, along with one Youth Rep.
- Monthly meetings of UK, Ireland & IOM Biosphere Reserve network continue every 2nd Friday of the month on Zoom, 12:30-13:45; all SPG members are welcome to join.

Local to Global

- **Northern Ireland & IOM Regional Cluster:**
 - Workshop in Belfast, July 2024: Identified common challenges and opportunities within and across regional clusters, including climate resilience and adaptation, engaging the disengaged, and demonstrating the value of UNESCO designations.
 - Research meeting, Giant's Causeway, April 2025: Focus to be on shared research; NI & IOM cluster wants to investigate the value that UNESCO designations bring on a local and national level, utilising £10,000 research funding available to each cluster.
- [Audience Development Mapping Toolkit](#) launched and available for all to use.

Thematic networks

- **World Network of Island & Coastal Biosphere Reserves:** IOM continues to contribute to the [semi-annual newsletter](#).
- **World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves:** No engagement in previous 6 months. JK attended an online meeting of the WNMBR in June 2024; whilst interesting, it was of little relevance to IOM, focussing on communities living in mountainous regions, the challenges they face, and their unique cultures.
 - **For decision:** JK suggests withdrawing from this network and focussing on the WNICBR and regional networks.

Global aims

Conservation (culture & biodiversity)

- **Manx Gaelic & cultural posts:** BK is integrating more aspects of Manx culture and language into Biosphere social media and newsletters; these are regularly our most popular posts.
- **Le Festival Interceltique de Lorient:** BK attended in August 2024 as part of the Manx delegation, hosting the Isle of Man's pavilion and speaking with attendees about Biosphere IOM. Attendance is planned again for 2025, with additional time to prepare.
- **Biosphere Artist in Residence (more [here](#)):**
 - Ali Hodgson completed her residency in September 2024. A dedicated set of the REIMAGINING Our Biosphere game is being made for Biosphere team and partners to use for engagement. We would like to arrange a session of the game with key figures, such as Tynwald members, the Chief Officers' Group, and the SPG particularly as we enter the periodic review process, and will likely use it during the induction of the Biosphere Board.
 - Amy Howse began her residency; a sound artist and sound therapist, Amy is looking at the effects of sound on our relationship with nature.
- **Biosphere Photographer in Residence:** MWT launched [this new initiative](#), kindly supported by Visit IOM, to nurture local talent in the field of wildlife and nature photography, open to applications to 26 Jan 2025.
- **Young Nature Champion:** This year saw 20 entries from people aged 5-15yrs, including two video entries. The partnership with MWT, Media IOM, Manx Ornithological Society, and LoveTech IOM will launch again in spring 2025, with the introduction of age categories, and aiming for more events with partners to encourage entries.
- **FWAG Awards:** The team attended the annual [2024 FWAG IOM Awards](#), with impressive entries across all categories, and Ballacosnahan worthy winners of the Bronze Chough Award.
- **Manx BirdLife Celebration of Birds:** BK gave a talk on Biosphere and how birds have shaped our culture and sense of place.
- **The Moon:** Following the success of [Gaia](#), Peel Cathedral is hosting [Luke Jerram's The Moon](#) from 9 February 2025. Culture Vannin are producing a Biosphere-inspired Manx Gaelic pamphlet to accompany the event.

Development (human, social, economic)

- **Biosphere Awards:** The [2024 Awards were held in October](#) and were a great success. A review of the awards is underway which is likely to see a change in both categories and schedule. The next awards will *launch* in autumn 2025, with the next awards ceremony in spring 2026, moving the workload from the busy summer period and moving the ceremony away from various other island awards.

- **Sustainable Mann Workshops:** This year [successfully run by Earthscope](#), well attended with 16 newly accredited businesses. This will now go to quick quote, to contract delivery of the workshops for the next 5 years.
- **Biosphere fund:** Discussions have continued around a potential fund to enable more Biosphere-related work, both by the team and other organisations. Further work on this will be the responsibility of the Board and the Review Officer.
- **Awards for Excellence:** The [2024 awards theme was 'We Are Biosphere'](#), celebrating the people and organisations who make our biosphere special and highlighting our interconnectedness.
- **Gef 30 under 30:** Biosphere and Net Zero partnered on the [30 Under 30 Sustainability category](#), participating in events and media aimed at a younger audience, with additional Biosphere coverage (e.g. Media IOM [Aug](#) and [Sep](#)).
- **Digital Isle & Innovation Challenge:** Biosphere and technology was the subject of a panel at the [Digital Isle conference](#), where the [2025 Innovation Challenge](#) was launched, once again with Biosphere at its heart.
- Biosphere IOM were also present at various other events:
 - Government Conference (talk and panel)
 - IOM Chamber of Commerce Charity event (speaker)
 - Visit IOM Marketing Symposium
 - Sustainable Finance Forum

Research (monitoring, learning, education)

- **Research hub & library:** The team plan to create a hub on the BIOM website collating details of all on-island research projects, and Gail Corrin has been working on creating a library of all IOM-related research papers; the two will of course be linked.
- **MAB Masters placement:** As part of the [MAB MSc programme in Toulouse](#), students are required to do a 6 month placement in a Biosphere Reserve. IOM have offered suggestions of research projects to be conducted Mar-Sep 2025, and are interviewing candidates.
- **Schools & Biosphere IOM Schools Week:** Schools have been contacted to offer sessions during the spring and summer terms, run by Dawn Colley. This year Biosphere IOM Schools Week will take place 30 Jun-4 Jul; a theme and activities will be planned in coming months.
- **TopSchool.AI – 4Learn:** Winners of the 2024 Innovation Challenge Biosphere Award, 4Learn offer [tools for creating tailored learning and lesson plans](#), and are working with DESC to roll out in IOM schools. Integration of Biosphere values into the tool has been discussed, as has the creation of a 'Biosphere IOM Academy', offering dedicated Biosphere-related learning. This has not yet been progressed due to team capacity.

Partner programme

- **Partner network development:** First Partner Forum held in October 2024, bringing partners together to strengthen the partner network, sharing successes and learning. To be held quarterly, the next a workshop is 18 Feb on marketing and Biosphere led by Melanie Allen of Visit IOM.
- **Partner scheme:** Streamlining administration of the partner scheme, with some to be automated through the website, including an automated 2-year check in with partners.

Engagement & comms (other)

- Comms review:
 - Newsletter: Now monthly again, with streamlined process for compiling.

- Social media: Scheduler now used for efficiency to post across all platforms. X account deleted – minimal engagement and required additional time to edit posts specifically for X. Youth engagement review has recommended engagement through TikTok, but this is time consuming; suggested potential youth biosphere channel.
- Website: On hold due to capacity, but review is planned 2025 Q1-2. Potential efficiencies to be made through utilising the website e.g. for partner applications.

Additional: Delivering more with existing resources

Task with further actions will be added to SPG action tracker or team planner as appropriate.

Recommendation	Outcome
Develop online training library/toolkit	
Online module with UCM	Discussions underway with 4Learn on Biosphere Academy. UCM launched a Sustainability Course and added a Sustainable Business practice module to Masters programme instigated Sustainability module. Preliminary discussions re: Biosphere-focussed course. On hold due to capacity
Film presentation in place of talk	Most talks require tailoring to the audience, and those who request talks generally want in-person interaction. However, an introduction to Biosphere IOM video would be useful, both to use at the start of these talks and more widely. Team to investigate costs for an introduction to Biosphere IOM video
Advocacy toolkit for partners, including child-friendly toolkit for schools (e.g. Biosphere box for schools and groups)	Great idea and could link in to/from Biosphere Academy. On hold due to capacity
Social media	
Limit platforms for engagement	See engagement & comms section
Coordinate more with other teams	Regular discussions on comms with Net Zero and Visit. Identifying ways to engage with other teams efficiently. Ongoing
Biosphere page for SPG/partners on FB	Hard to manage and feels unnecessary now we have streamlined posting. Not pursuing
SPG/partners tag Biosphere IOM	Continue to encourage this; some regularly tag. Ongoing
Reducing workload generally	
Focus on advice, facilitation & empowerment	Focussing on strengthening Partner and Youth networks to support this. Ongoing
Simplify SPG reporting	To be implemented ahead of July SPG and ahead of the formation of the board (which will also require reporting). Update in July 2025 SPG
Reduce UNESCO network engagement	See Thematic networks – suggest leaving Mountain Biosphere network.
Empower others to spread the Biosphere message	
Reviving Sustainability Champions network with specific role for Biosphere	Energy Champions (though quiet of late) seem to have taken on much of what the Sustainability Champions used

	to do, and doesn't feel appropriate for Biosphere-specific role there. Not pursuing
Biosphere Awards entrants to include film	New awards submission process will include a short video submission to support comms. To be included in next awards launch
Additional staffing resource	
Generation of income for additional staff	To be pursued by Board and Review Officer
Additional funding	
Visitor levy	Discussions with Visit re: new Visitor charter, will include potential levy in future. Update in July SPG
Corporate solutions, inc optional partner donation scheme	To be pursued by Board and Review Officer