

UNESCO BIOSPHERE ISLE OF MAN BOARD

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 In 2016, the Isle of Man was admitted to UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Biosphere reserves are 'learning places for sustainable development', internationally recognised within the framework of UNESCO's Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB).
- 1.2 The 10 year periodic review is due to be handed to UNESCO in September 2026, with the review outcome to follow in June 2027.
- 1.3 One of Our Island Plan key messages is for a "vibrant community set in a beautiful UNESCO Biosphere, with sustainability and resilience at the heart of everything we do". We are an international site of excellence where active conservation sits alongside responsible development, recognising the balance of people and the rest of nature, and celebrating and protecting the breadth and range of biodiversity.
- 1.4 The Isle of Man Government provides officer resource and budget to support the UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man (UBIOM). The UBIOM management plan is in place until 2027, when it will be reviewed following the Periodic Review. This plan is contained within the Isle of Man Biosphere Strategy '[Working Together for a Sustainable Future](#)' which sets out work under the headings of economy, enjoyment, environment, engagement and education, referred to as 'the Five Es'. The strategic aims are as follows:

ECONOMY

- Encourage people to live in, work in and visit the Isle of Man
- Add to our vibrant economy
- Enhance our reputation as an Island that cares and has a conscience
- Encourage a green economy and sustainable ecotourism
- Promote the value of the Isle of Man's unique culture, heritage, and community
- Promote the diversity and quality of Isle of Man goods, produce and crafts

ENJOYMENT

- Celebrate and promote all that is special about the Isle of Man and its surrounding seas
- Encourage people to access and appreciate our nature, culture, heritage and community
- Encourage enjoyment and participation to foster health and wellbeing
- Celebrate, promote and help people access our heritage and culture, past and present

- Celebrate and contribute to our 'sense of place'

ENVIRONMENT

- Connect people with nature and their surroundings
- Help people to understand the importance of, and the challenges facing, the environment
- Contribute to preserving and enhancing our land and seascapes and biodiversity
- Recognise and value the environmental, social and economic benefits we gain from our natural systems
- Inspire people to volunteer and take action in their environment

ENGAGEMENT

- Engage our entire community in Biosphere's ethos and aims
- Enable people to more easily connect with nature, culture, heritage and community life
- Engage our population on issues and challenges relating to conservation and sustainability
- Empower individuals to drive change and make a difference, no matter how small
- Inspire our community to be ambassadors for our Biosphere
- Encourage organisations to collaborate with each other to benefit our Biosphere

EDUCATION

- Ensure our people understand our Biosphere and its principles
- Foster understanding of how the way we live, and the decisions we take, affect our sustainability
- Encourage learning about, and adoption of, more sustainable ways of living
- Be a catalyst for good decision-making and innovative solution-finding
- Identify and encourage opportunities on Biosphere-related topics

1.5 The UBIOM Team is based in the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA) and reports to the Director of Environment. The team will provide regular updates to the UBIOM Board and attend meetings as 'observers', and will also continue to provide updates and secretariat support to the Stakeholder Partnership Group. The aim is that our Biosphere and its values are adopted and championed across IOM Government.

1.6 The Stakeholder Partnership Group, chaired by the Chief Minister, will in the short/medium term continue to meet every 6 months and oversee the delivery of UBIOM in a balanced way, jointly and through their own organisations, and will

contribute to delivering projects and initiatives. The UBIOM Board will review the Terms of Reference for the Stakeholder Partnership Group within their first year.

<https://www.biosphere.im/stakeholders>

<https://www.biosphere.im/legal/terms-of-reference>

2. REMIT AND GOVERNANCE

2.1. The UBIOM Board (“the board”) will be responsible for the effective review, revision, oversight and direction of the UBIOM strategy, based on clear and measurable objectives -

[biosphere-vision-and-strategy.pdf](#)

2.2. The board will in the short/medium term report to the Stakeholder Partnership Group, and will update the DEFA Minister and Chief Officer (see 3.7).

2.3. The board is a non-statutory body and it has no statutory powers.

2.4. The board’s purpose is to build on the Biosphere status and explore options for a self-funding proposition to enhance the Biosphere with the business and the wider local Island community.

2.5. The board’s function is to:

- provide steer to the UBIOM Team, giving oversight to a work programme and associated marketing and communications plans to multiple audiences reflecting the strategic priorities, whilst working within the parameters of cost, time, and quality KPIs and targets. The UBIOM Team will continue to report to the Director of the Environment in DEFA;
- monitor progress towards the UNESCO periodic review submission in September 2026;
- develop the future Biosphere strategy post 2026 and explore options for a transition into a longer-term self-funded Biosphere;
- identify and maximise potential opportunities in the UBIOM, including opportunities for businesses to deliver their Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) objectives;
- provide oversight to external representations to UNESCO and UK MAB National Committee;
- provide periodic reports to the Biosphere Stakeholder Partnership Group and update reports to Tynwald; and
- ensure that the UBIOM budget is managed in accordance with government accounting controls and is underpinned by value for money; the Chief Officer of DEFA will remain the accounting officer.

3. MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1. The Group's membership is drawn from Government Departments, private sector, and NGOs that have an interest in or are responsible for the various activities that enhance and impact our Biosphere. Diversity is important within the board e.g. the Equality Act 2017 Code on Services, Public Functions and Associations; diverse groups/organisations will actively be encouraged to apply to join the board, and board members will be encouraged to think about diversity when selecting representatives.

Chair: Non-executive Chair of the Board (part-time two-year position with a possible two year extension), open recruitment process.

Non-Executive Agency Board Members (by nomination; application, voluntary basis):

- Senior Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture Representative
- Senior Department of Education, Sport and Culture Representative
- Senior Department for Enterprise Representative
- Representative from the Cabinet Office
- Private sector Representatives x 2-4 (appointed by application)
- NGOs x 2-4 (appointed by application)
- Youth Representative (18-35 yrs at time of appointment, appointed by application)

The UBIOM Team will attend meetings as observers and provide input as required.

- 3.2. The Chair of the Board will be appointed following an open recruitment process. The recruitment panel will comprise of one or more Board members (or SPG members for the initial panel), a senior representative of DEFA, and a member of the UBIOM Team.
- 3.3. Initial member applications will be considered following the appointment of the Chair, alongside one or more members of the SPG, a senior DEFA representative, and a member of the UBIOM Team. Once the board is established, future member applications will be considered by the board and ultimately decided by the Chair. DEFA reserve the right to veto member applications.
- 3.4. A minimum of 5 attendees is required for the meeting to be quorate. In the absence of the designated Chair, the meeting will agree a Chair.
- 3.5. The board may invite other parties as the agenda requires. Sub-groups may be formed for the delivery of specific tasks with the agreement of the board.
- 3.6. Membership to the board will be for an initial period of two years with the option of further two-year appointments, as recommended by the Chair, and subject to the confirmation of the Department.
- 3.7. Membership of the board shall cease:

- automatically at the end of a term of membership (unless renewed);
 - in the event of resignation by the member; or
 - in the event of expulsion or termination by the decision of the Chair and/or the Department e.g. based on the Government Code of Conduct (see 5).
- 3.8. Where a member does not attend two meetings in a row or submit apologies a week in advance, the board may reallocate membership to another representative or organisation from the relevant sector.
- 3.9. In addition to the engagement of members at board meetings, members may be invited to attend events or other meetings on behalf of the board.
- 3.10. Observer status will be granted to the UBIOM Delivery Team and the DEFA Environment Director, to facilitate the strategic direction of UBIOM delivery. The Board and Chair may decide to exclude these observers if it is deemed that their presence may inhibit open discussion of a specific agenda item. In such an instance, the Chair will promptly inform the Deliver Team and DEFA Environment Director of any discussion outcomes which may impact their responsibilities, as appropriate.
- 3.11. DEFA retains the right to veto any board commitment to Government expenditure and resource allocation.

4. MEETINGS AND MINUTES

- 4.1. DEFA will provide secretariat support for the board meetings.
- 4.2. The board will initially meet a minimum of six times per year, or bi-monthly. This is to be reviewed by the board after the initial year, or earlier if the board so decides, and potentially revised.
- 4.3. Requests for items to be included on the agenda should be sent to the Chair and secretariat at least one week before the meeting.
- 4.4. Papers and an agenda will be signed off by the Chair and circulated to members and 'observers' at least three working days before the meeting.
- 4.5. Members will declare any conflicts of interest with items on the agenda at the start of the meeting, if not before.
- 4.6. Minutes of board meetings will be recorded and circulated to members within five working days of the meeting, and will be agreed by the board prior to publication on the UBIOM website.
- 4.7. The board will agree action points which will be circulated to the relevant persons once the meeting minutes are agreed, reviewing progress at the next meeting.

5. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE, CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 5.1. Whilst the board aims to grow UBIOM beyond Government, the Terms of Reference are written with reference to the [Isle of Man Government Corporate Governance Principles 2005](#).
- 5.2. Whilst transparency is important, there are nevertheless circumstances in which, for good reasons, confidentiality must be observed. Board members must be sensitive to communication protocols and disclosures and confirm with the Chair the timing and nature of information to be shared collectively.
- 5.3. The board will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2015 and Manx data protection laws, complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements enforced on the Isle of Man.
- 5.4. Nominated board members will be required to make a full disclosure of interests prior to their appointment. Upon appointment, board members will be required to fill in a register of interests, which will be updated on a regular basis. In addition to the filing of disclosures, where members see a potential or recognised conflict of interest, they should make a disclosure, at the first opportunity, to the Chair and the other board members.
- 5.5. Should a potential conflict be identified by a third party (e.g. another member of the board), this situation must be brought to the attention of the Chair for due consideration. If the conflicted member is the Chair, as perceived by a third party, the matter must be raised with the Department's Chief Officer and the Minister for DEFA.
- 5.6. The Chair may request a board member to leave the board, and the Department reserves the right to do so, in the unlikely event that a situation should arise where a board member's continued attendance will bring the reputation of the Board, UBIOM, the Department or the Government into disrepute.
- 5.7. Each case will be considered by the Minister for DEFA and, in all cases, the Minister has the power, without appeal, to remove a board member.
- 5.8. A board member is at liberty to tender their resignation at any time and, in such circumstances, it is requested that the remaining board members work with the Chair to identify a suitable replacement from the relevant sector.