

**UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man
Stakeholder Partnership Group meeting
Monday 8th July 2024, 11am – 1pm**

**Minutes of a meeting of the UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Stakeholder
Partnership Group (UBIOM SPG)**

Present:

Alfred Cannan MHK	Chief Minister (Chair)	AC
Ken Milne	Director of Environment, DEFA	KM
Jacqui Keenan	Biosphere IOM Coordinator, DEFA	JK
Breeshey Kermode	Biosphere IOM Assistant, DEFA (minutes)	BK
Scott Gallacher	Chief Officer, DEFA	SG
Aly Lewin	Head of Climate Change Transformation Team	JF
Paul Fletcher	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	PF
Hayden Armour	Marketing Executive, Isle of Man Food and Drink	HA
Fenella Logan	Isle of Man Municipal Association	FL
Jo Callister	Advisory Teacher for Manx Curriculum & Climate Change, DESC	JC
Sarah Comish	General Secretary, Manx National Farmers' Union	SC
Leigh Morris	CEO, Manx Wildlife Trust	LM
Muriel Garland	Chair, the Green Centre	MG
Gail Corrin	Higher Education Manager, University College Isle of Man	GC
Rachel Smith	Youth Representative	RS
Ruth Keggin-Gell	Manx Language Development Officer, Culture Vannin	RKG
Melanie Allen	Director of Marketing & Communications, Visit Isle of Man	MA
Steve Billingham	Chair, Institute of Directors Isle of Man	SB
Martyn Cain	Arts Development Officer, Isle of Man Arts Council	MC
Shaun Murphy	Estates Manager, Manx National Heritage	SM
Joff Whitten	CEO, The Children's Centre	JF
Peter Reid	Institute of Directors, Isle of Man Branch	PR

Apologies

None recorded.

Item

2/24/1 Chief Minister/Chair's welcome and opening remarks.

AC welcomed the group, noting that Jacqui Keenan has taken up post the Biosphere Project Officer in succession of Jo Overty.

2/24/2 Conflicts of interest with items on the agenda.

None declared.

2/24/3 Minutes of meeting on 31 January 2024 for approval.

Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2/24/4 Rolling action point list for review.

The rolling action point list was reviewed and updated.

2/24/5 Delivery report by Jo Overty and Jacqui Keenan, former and current UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Project Officer, and Breeshey Kermode, UBIOM Project Assistant; any questions arising.

The paper was taken as read.

JC noted that UNESCO Biosphere School's Week linked in with national week this year, falling in the week prior. Schools participated in Manx assemblies with big links to Laa Columb Killey and Tynwald Day.

2/24/6 UBIOM Board - new governance arrangements: Verbal update by Scott Gallacher, DEFA Chief Officer, and Ken Milne, DEFA Director of Environment, accompanied by Terms of Reference and Chair's Job Description.

Progress has been made on developing the UBIOM Board, to ensure that UBIOM operates and is seen to be more than a DEFA or Government initiative.

The Technical Sub Group have been working with SG, KM, and JK to develop the Terms of Reference (TOR) and chair's role description, drawing on the structure and arrangements of the Department for Enterprise agencies, who have an independent paid chair. The Board will have representatives from the private sector, third sector and key Government departments. The chair will commit to around two days a month to begin, to be reviewed after three months with the potential to increase anything up to four days a month. The chair's role description will be finalised for recruitment to begin later this month, aiming for them to be in role by September. Once they are recruited, the chair's first task will be to help coordinate recruitment of the other board members.

Due to the nature of the role, the chair will be a paid role and the rest of the board will be honorary. The board will also report back into the SPG.

All members including the chair be recruited through an open process, through expressions of interest

MA added that she was Chair of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire (GSA) Biosphere Board, highlighting how well it worked and that it adds a robust provision, particularly leading up to Periodic Review.

2/24/7 Technical Subgroup Update - Periodic Review: Gail Corrin, UCM Higher Education Manager, and Leigh Morris, Manx Wildlife Trust CEO.

The reasons for and background to the Technical Sub Group were broadly discussed.

The TSG have been instrumental in developing the UBIOM Board and can now focus on the looking into and supporting the Periodic Review that will be submitted in September 2026.

MA was invited to join a meeting of the TSG to share her knowledge and experience, to which she agreed.

2/24/8 EuroMAB (3-7 June 2024): Verbal update from Leigh Morris, Manx Wildlife Trust CEO, and Rachel Smith, Youth Representative.

RS: The Youth Conference aimed to bring young people from various biosphere reserves together to connect and share skills. Storytelling as a resource was included in the workshops. The German biospheres reserves each have youth groups who connect and learn from each other, including running seminars on sustainability initiatives - which could be beneficial here.

RS plans to develop workshops for young people around what it means to live in a biosphere and the opportunities that may come with that. They would also provide an insight to what youth want to see in the future of our biosphere, and could inform or be part of the celebrations marking '10 years as a Biosphere'. RS invited SPG members to get involved, and could help ensure workshops runs across sectors. RS added that she is working closely with Sally White in the Isle of White Biosphere, who wishes to see more youth engagement across the UK and may set up a forum in this respect.

LM expressed that coming away from EuroMAB, he felt he had not been championing Biosphere enough despite already being a huge ambassador. He saw the scale of the network and the importance that is put into Biospheres. He had multiple conversations regarding whole-nation Biosphere status and the potential power it brings to the Island for making positive change. It highlighted to him the unique position we are in, and he noted that we may not always be the only entire nation.

AC asked RS if she felt we were upheld as a Biosphere. RS stated that not many other biospheres have a youth rep, but would like to, so that is positive. However, the engagement within the Island from the youth community is quite minimal at present and needs to be improved. Mid-month, RS is holding the first youth group meeting to discuss future potential communities and how it is going to look.

AC added that perhaps there should be youth representation on the UBIOM Board. It was highlighted that this was discussed in developing the TOR, but it was preferred that organisations be encouraged to send a diverse range of representatives in order to avoid a tokenistic approach. This will be reviewed in the final revision of the TOR as, until there is a cultural shift, organisations may send the 'usual' representatives.

2/24/9 UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Youth Representatives: Verbal update from Rachel Smith.

Covered in above update. JK added that recruitment of a new youth rep will take place over the summer, to replace Georgia Unitz who has stepped down to focus on her career.

2/24/10 Standing item - Research: Verbal updates (if any) by:

LM:

- A further survey has taken place to give an accurate island-wide count of wallabies and goats; results will be issued by alongside DEFA in due course.
- The first Red list of freshwater fish for the island, conducted in conjunction with DEFA came out last week.

- A Motus receiver is now live on the Calf of Man – it is the only one around the Irish Sea.
- The bird tagging programme continues and the team are currently tagging Wheatears.
- The State of Nature Report is a continued project that will be published on the MWT website in the next two months; it's the best available data on wildlife.
- GC:
 - The 5th annual research festival will take place on 18th October with sustainability, AI and wellbeing as the underlying theme.
 - The £5,000 Corlett Bolton Award for Research will be open for submissions again this year, following Fiona Gell's win in 2023.

2/24/11 Other updates – around the table

JC (DESC):

- Within DESC a climate change and sustainability forum has been set up starting on 8th July and linked to the Climate Change Action Plan and Climate Impact report.
- The Environmental Educator's group continue to meet quarterly and links in to all things Biosphere, and will feed in to the education forum.
- This year is the 46th annual Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering festival. Visiting artists from surrounding Celtic nations will come to the Island for a week of performances.

PF (FWAG IOM):

- David and Rob Cooil of Ballagawne Farm, have won the 45th Silver Lapwing Award in recognition of their efforts in both nature conservation and community engagement. They are the first winners of the local Bronze Chough Award (in 2022) to go forward as regional finalists of the Silver Lapwing Award. The Island is now looking forward to hosting an open day next June, with regional finalists and delegates from FWAG UK attending.
- This year's Bronze Chough Award nominations open shortly, sponsored by Jacksons.
- FWAG hosted multiple events with support from DEFA this year, bringing in speakers to host workshops around regenerative farming and soil health.

RKG (Culture Vannin):

- Culture Vannin assisted His Excellency John Lorimer with his spoken Manx on Tynwald day.
- In March, the Folk Awards were successful and ran in conjunction with DESC.
- The Council of Europe's committee of experts visited the Isle of Man to see how Part III of the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is being upheld in the Isle of Man. It was a successful visit, verbal feedback was positive, and we await the report.
- The Festival Interceltique De Lorient is happening next month and the Pavilion will be Biosphere themed. This year's theme is 'Year of the Youth.' Culture Vannin's talented youth group Scran will be performing, alongside a strong Manx contingent of musicians and dancers. Manx language will be represented well, too. The IOM is also sending an artist.
- Culture Vannin is running a Manx Gaelic Summer School, coinciding with Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering. There are three courses available.
- 2026 is going to be the 'Year of the Manx Language' and falls timely alongside the Island having been a Biosphere for 10 years. There are early discussions in place to set up an exhibition that celebrated Biosphere and the Manx language. Initial ideas are to have themes of: Manx and people, Manx and place, Manx and the environment. Culture Vannin and Biosphere are meeting with a curator of Manx National Heritage next week to develop this further.

- CV are always happy to meet with and support any departments or organisations who would like to increase the use of Manx, or help weave Manx culture, into their work.
- Manx has been added to Google translate, but is currently not a reliable source for translations. RKG impressed the need upon people to continue using Culture Vannin's free translations service – email translations@culturevannin.im – particularly if translations are needed for signage.

MA (Visit IOM):

- Visit Isle of Man are keen to engage with stakeholders and partners through their marketing and in bring more of a Biosphere ethos. There is a good opportunity to share stories and create better engagement. Issues can arise in communication of and interpretation of Biosphere and sharing stories concerning the Biosphere ethos may help further with understanding.
- In Visit Isle of Man's Board meeting Dark Skies were discussed and there are plans for a winter campaign in this area as the IDA accreditation for dark skies creates a real opportunity to develop on.
- Visit Isle of Man met with Antony Boyd from Douglas City Council to discuss the idea of twinning with Dublin City. There may be an opportunity for Biosphere to twin with the Dublin Bay Biosphere which would need to be discussed with UNESCO.
- There was a brief discussion around the external perception of the Island Biosphere being very good.

2/24/12 Any other business.

None.

2/24/13 Date of next meeting.

Wednesday 29th January 2025.