

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Code of Practice for landowners/managers in the Isle of Man

There are few places in the world that can offer the variety of cultural experiences, historic environments and natural landscapes – all in close proximity – that make the Isle of Man such a special place to live, work and visit.

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man is all about amplifying the Island's attractions to a global audience. Gaining UNESCO endorsement as a World Biosphere Site would strengthen our economy by building our international reputation, creating business and employment opportunities. It would also boost our pride in our unique way of life and help to maintain and improve our exceptional environment and quality of life.

As we work towards nomination with UNESCO, we want to enlist the help of landowners and managers to find ways of increasing the value of our landscapes, agriculture and farming. This is where the UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Code comes in.

“UNESCO endorsement as a World Biosphere Region would be a fitting tribute to the Isle of Man as the Island uniquely combines a thriving business community with a healthy respect for its culture, history and wonderful physical environment. In the food industry's case, this congruence provides a mutually beneficial balance of a beautiful landscape, varied wildlife and thriving agri-businesses. The Island is an intrinsic part of our selling story and captivates all visitors and customers of the Creamery.”

Findlay Macleod, Managing Director, Isle of Man Creamery Ltd

The importance of our agri-food and tourism industries

The agri-food industry contributes over £75 million and 1300 jobs to our economy. This not only supports the economy, but ensures a readily available and sustainable source of locally produced foodstuffs as well as being responsible for shaping the landscape and the culture of the Isle of Man as we know it today.

Tourism also provides a valuable contribution to the economy. Total visitor spend exceeds £100 million each year, providing income to and generating employment for carriers, accommodation providers, attractions, eateries, and retailers. It generates expenditure and jobs in its own right and it contributes to the wider development of the economy as a whole.

The UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Code is a voluntary code underpinned by the existing Countryside Care Scheme (CCS), since renamed Agricultural Development Scheme (ADS) in 2015, which aims to achieve the following important outcomes for the Manx food chain and land management:

1. A reliable, sustainable and self-reliant industry capable of feeding the Manx nation with a diverse range of food products including our staple foods.
2. An efficient production system combined with a tailored market focus and a strong, clean Manx brand image so that reliable profits can be obtained from the marketplace.
3. Responsible custodians of our countryside, natural heritage and food larder, whose contribution is trusted and valued by the Manx people for their contribution to the landscape.

The UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man project has great potential to complement the work of our farmers in maintaining the outstanding landscapes we have now. It also presents additional branding/marketing potential through adding value to local produce and increasing interest in visiting the Isle of Man.

There is renewed interest in raising the economic value of local produce and Isle of Man tourism. There is also the scope to seek UNESCO recognition for us as a special place to live, work and visit – effectively a 'label of excellence'.

Some questions answered:

What does 'biosphere' mean?

This is the scientific word for the living surface of our planet.

What does UNESCO mean?

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

What is a UNESCO Biosphere?

An international site of excellence; special places for nature where people also live and work, where there is a balanced relationship between people and nature.

Why UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man?

To demonstrate that the Isle of Man qualifies for an international accolade for its balance between environment, society and economy, and would be the first entire small country with the prestigious accolade, which has could have a lot of prestige and economic value. Involvement in UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man is about amplifying the effects of what you already do to keep the island special.

What's in it for businesses?

UNESCO has very high reputational value for the countries, organisations, communities and businesses that are associated with it. For example, many Biosphere sites have used their UNESCO status to highlight tourism and local produce. Entlebuch in Switzerland has seen a growth in their tourism economy of over 3% a year since receiving the UNESCO Biosphere accolade. Galloway and Southern Ayrshire has seen tourism, tourism expenditure and local food sales increase by over 5% a year. Rhone Biosphere Reserve in Germany has seen even better economic improvements approaching 10% a year, particularly in tourism spend and local food sales.



Currently 291 certified products from 71 producers, and 38 businesses, including restaurants and tourism accommodation



Over 250 local business partners comprising agricultural businesses, local food producers, restaurants, tourism accommodation, and other crafts, some of whom saw sales increase 50% with the local brand association



The UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man logo – potentially for use by IOM food & drink and tourism as a label of excellence

What is the difference between Biodiversity and the UNESCO Biosphere project?

They sound similar and complement each other. The Biodiversity Strategy will focus on species and habitats. While the UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man project will take an interest in biodiversity, its primary focus is on encouraging sustainable development; bringing people and nature together. In other words, Biosphere Reserves are about achieving a good working balance between people and nature, not about nature, or people, in isolation. It also includes the scope to increase the value of quality local produce and tourism.

This voluntary Biosphere Code of Practice is based on existing requirements affecting landowners, being Statutory Requirements, CCS Requirements and Voluntary measures such as the Voluntary Water, Waste, Hedge Management and Cushag Codes of Practice.

Biosphere Zones: All Biosphere Regions are comprised of three zones. Core Areas are areas of highest nature or cultural interest/value. These would be sites that have statutory designation already, such as ASSI sites. Buffer zones are areas that surround these sites, or have a form of management that is compatible with conservation. In Germany and Switzerland they call these areas PflegeZone – Care Zone. The third category is Transition Zone – which can also be referred to as Sustainable Development Zone – areas pursuing more sustainable development, which could be regarded as urban areas and outer territorial waters.

It is important to clarify that there will be no new regulations or standards required/introduced by virtue of seeking UNESCO Biosphere status.

ASSI and other protected areas

Land designated as Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) may have management agreements under Section 30 on the Wildlife Act to manage the wildlife interest on the site.

Countryside Care Scheme – only relevant to farmers in existing scheme.

Some of the Standards of keeping land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition and Cross-Compliance Standards will only be relevant in certain environments — for example, standards relating to cultivation will not be relevant to upland rough grazing. For the most part, the relevance of particular measures to particular environments should be self-evident, but the 'guidance' sections aim to clarify the action necessary to comply with the standards.

Countryside Care Scheme (CCS) (now ADS) Cross Compliance standards already affects anyone who is in the Countryside Care Scheme. Cross Compliance requirements do not replace or alter existing legislation, they simply represent the rules of this voluntary scheme. These are rules of the scheme which define management standards and reflect good practice which applicants may already be following.

There are two main parts to Cross Compliance and, in order to continue to receive payments under the Countryside Care Scheme, you must meet both sets of standards:

Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs)

These are domestic requirements relating to EC Directives and Regulations which are specified by the European Commission. Under Protocol 3, all of these conditions are legally binding on farmers in the Isle of Man.

Standards of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAECs)

Cross Compliance applies to **all** land within an agricultural business, even if it is not used to activate Countryside Care Scheme entitlements.

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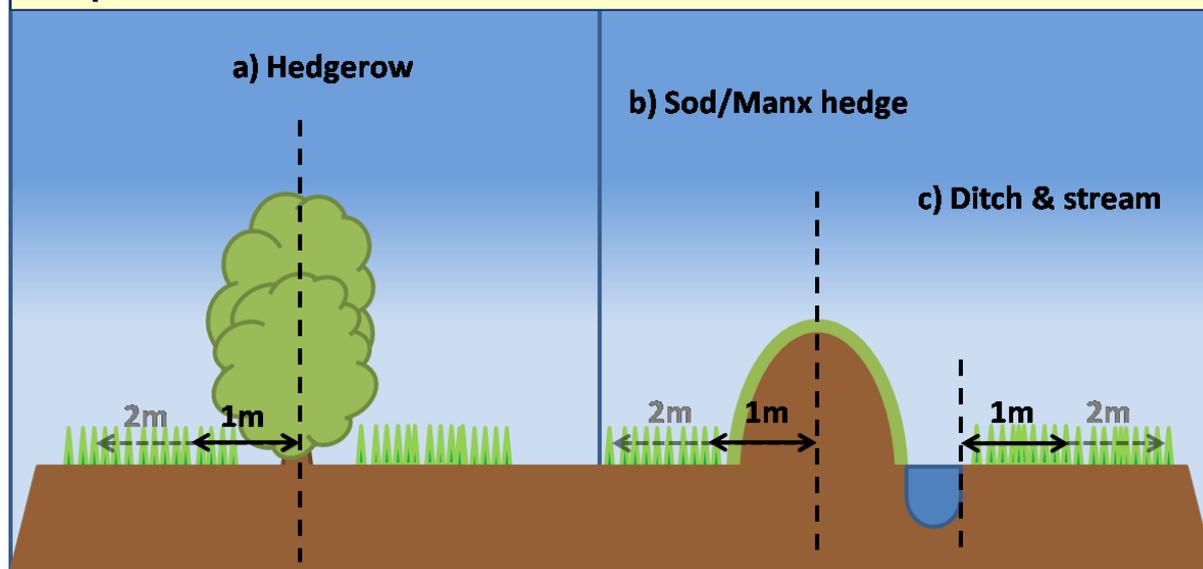
The standards have been developed with regard both to ensuring that they are reasonable for land managers and to ensuring that we adequately safeguard the land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC). In doing so we have:

- Followed existing codes of good practice (e.g. Good Farming Practice) where these fit within the prescribed European framework;
- Incorporated standards of management which we believe most farmers would regard as reasonable good practice; and

Used the framework flexibly so that we do not artificially constrain changes in land use and land condition where these are environmentally benign

Field Margin Management – Hedge Management Code of Practice (HCoP)

The Countryside Care Scheme requires a minimum of 1m field margin from the hedge (a) or sod bank (b) centreline. However it is best practice to leave at least 2m from the centreline to create a diverse field margin. Where a ditch or stream (c) is present, the buffer zone should extend 1m (preferably 2m) from the top of the watercourse.



Do I have to leave an uncultivated strip in the field margins?

The Countryside Care Scheme requires a 1m uncultivated strip to be maintained along the edges of fields sod hedges, ditches and streams. The application of fertilizer, pesticides, lime or slurry is not permitted in this area. For added wildlife benefits, it is recommended that at least a 2m strip is maintained.

Field margins act as a buffer zone between the field boundary and the crop or road, and form important wildlife corridors between species rich areas. Field margins are a key habitat for a number of rare and declining species, including many farmland birds, arable plants and insects. The structural condition of a field margin is extremely important for biodiversity along with the presence of associated features such as ditches, walls or watercourses.

Wide margins provide easy access for hedge trimming in late winter, after berries have been eaten, without damage to adjacent arable crops. Having an additional 1m sterile strip i.e. bare, uncultivated ground can prevent crop invasions from weeds such as cleavers and barren brome.

Key best practice points for traditional sod hedges:

- Avoid cutting grass banks between 31st March and 31st August except where road safety requires it, otherwise protected species (e.g. orchids and breeding lizards) could be adversely affected;
- Remove cut material where practicable, to avoid encouraging weeds which thrive on grassland choked by layers of old cuttings;
- Keep fertilisers, slurry, manure, lime and pesticides (e.g. herbicides, fungicides and insecticides) away from sod banks;
- Laws relating to injurious weed control (e.g. Ragwort/cushags, thistles) apply to hedges as elsewhere; where injurious weeds occur, use topping and/or weed wipes rather than wholesale spraying;

- When ploughing, keep at least 2m (6ft) away from the centre line of the sod hedge bank (see diagram overleaf).

The purpose of the ASSI system on the Isle of Man is to safeguard a series of sites which are individually of high natural heritage importance and which collectively represent the diversity of habitats and species on the Isle of Man.

The designating of biological ASSIs on the Isle of Man, through the Wildlife Act 1990, has the overriding aim to conserve the Island's biodiversity by ensuring that good examples of all the Island's native species populations and the characteristic habitats they rely upon can be protected by law. These sites will already have defined boundaries, but nature does not recognise boundaries and species and habitats of interest can also occur in areas nearby, or be affected by land management nearby.

Groundwater and surface water protection

Statutory Management Requirement 3 refers to a statutory obligation to avoid water pollution. The Code of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Water, available from DEFA is a practical reference guide for land managers. Land managers are expected to observe The Water Act of 1991, The Water Pollution Act of 1993, Flood Risk Management Act 2013 and the Fisheries Act 2012, which may affect nearby sites.

Landscape, litter, waste and scrap

GAEC Standard 13 suggests that landowners do not discard (or store) waste: plastic, paper, wood, timber, wire, fencing materials, feed containers, scrapped machinery or vehicles, building materials or any other litter, waste or scrap on agricultural land or in woodlands, ponds and other areas of habitat. These and other wastes should be disposed of in an environmentally sound manner, and recycled where possible.

The scenic value of the Isle of Man is very important to everyone living in the Island, as well as visitors to the Island.

Standards of Minimum Levels of Maintenance

Many of the wildlife areas, birds and other animals on the Isle of Man are dependent on grazing livestock, field boundaries and other species rich semi-natural habitats, all of which contribute to both the landscape character and the wildlife value of the Isle of Man. Archaeological features also provide a link to the past within the countryside.

Due to the variations in conditions that occur in the Isle of Man, land managers are already asked to manage the land according to land type and climatic conditions specific to the land that will ensure the history, character, wildlife and agricultural production capability is maintained. Following the appropriate GAEC requirements, the minimum levels of maintenance required can be achieved.

Other land managers such as areas owned by the Department of Infrastructure, Manx National Heritage, Local Authorities and Golf courses are also encouraged to be mindful of the statutory requirements and other Codes of Practice, which very often are already standard practice.

For example the golf course is the main attraction and most valuable asset of any golf club, of which there are 9 on the Island. England Golf has a wide range of free resources to help Golf courses show how they are becoming more sustainable in how they manage energy and water needs, use chemicals responsibly and working with nature, which very often reduces running costs and adds interest for players.

Value for Tourism

To many people, the Isle of Man is an amazing place to visit, and we are fortunate to have a great range of tourism accommodation to offer. Much of this accommodation is close to amazing places to stay, visit and experience – and on top of this is the outstanding local produce.

For example, 'Isle of Man Stay on a Farm' comprises a group of farmers on working farms who have joined together to offer visitors the opportunity to stay in high quality self-catering properties, bed and breakfast farmhouse accommodation or bunkhouse and campsite accommodation.

The purpose of this Voluntary Code of Practice is to show where landowners **must** already adhere to the Statutory Requirements, CCS rules that provide protection to the environment and where they **could** adopt best practice guidelines in order to complement efforts to increase economic value of Agriculture, local produce and tourism by association with the UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man project, as a label of excellence for Isle of Man Produce and Tourism, as has been well used very well by European examples.

Biosphere Isle of Man Code— optional management of land	Statutory requirements	Cross Compliance requirements which are compulsory for farmers within Countryside Care Scheme, and relevant Standards of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC's) which apply to all land within an agricultural business	Does the recommended management measure in the Code of Practice for Biosphere Vannin differ from CCS/GAEC requirements?
Hedgerow cutting dates			
Restricted period 1 st March-31 st August (but cutting outside of this can be permitted by DEFA in some situations)	✓ Wildlife Act 1990	GAEC Standard 16 refers to Manx Hedge Management Code of Best Practice BUT minor trimming by hand is permitted if the work does not contravene the Wildlife Act 1990, particularly with reference to nesting birds	No difference (note the possible alteration to cutting dates for arable cropped and wet fields)
Nesting birds protected under Wildlife Act 1990	✓ Wildlife Act 1990	SMR 1 – Conservation of Wild Birds refers to Wildlife Act 1990	No difference
Sod Bank management			
Remove cut material where practicable to avoid encouraging weeds and to encourage herb diversity.	✓ Weeds Act 1957	GAEC 17- Encroachment of unwanted vegetation	No difference
Keep fertilizer, slurry, manure, lime and pesticide away from edge of hedgerows (excluding spot treat of injurious weeds)	✓ Weeds Act 1957	GAEC 16 Must not apply slurry, pesticides etc closer than 1m to centre of bank (excluding spot treat of injurious weeds Weeds Act 1957)	No difference
When ploughing, keep at least 2m from centre line of sod hedge bank.	X	GAEC 16 Must not cultivate within 1m of centre of bank	Yes – additional buffer, but same as Hedge Code of Practice
Avoid cutting grass banks between 31 st March and 31 st August (excepting road safety is an issue).	✓ Wildlife Act 1990	SMR 2- Conservation of Flora and Fauna refers to the Wildlife Act 1990 and protected species.	Yes – dates specified, but same as Hedge Code of Practice
Field Margin Buffer Zone			
Keep fertilizer, slurry, manure, lime and pesticide away from edge of hedgerows (excluding spot treat of injurious weeds)	✓ Weeds Act 1957	GAEC Standard 16 Must not apply slurry, pesticides etc closer than 1m to centre of bank (excluding spot treat of injurious weeds Weeds Act 1957). DEFA should be consulted if it is intended to use a pesticide within 5 m of a watercourse or, a LERAP assessment (Local Environment Risk Assessment for Pesticides) must be carried out. The 1m margin should not be used for the storage of materials, for example bales or dredgings.	No difference

Groundwater and surface water protection			
Land managers are expected to observe the Water Act of 1991, the Water Pollution Act of 1993, the Flood Risk Management Act 2013 and the Fisheries Act 2012. There is a statutory obligation to avoid water pollution and damage to freshwater fish and their habitat.	✓ Water Act 1991 Water Pollution Act 1993 Flood Risk Management Act 2013 Fisheries Act 2012	SMR 3 - Groundwater and surface water protection against pollution refers to a statutory obligation to avoid water pollution. The Code of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Water, available from DEFA is a practical reference guide for land managers.	No difference
Work in or near Watercourses			
Maintain all watercourses on lands to not compromise flood protection functions	✓ Flood Risk Management Act 2013	GAEC 14 – Must not undertake new drainage works, ploughing, clearing, levelling, re-seeding or cultivations on uncultivated land or semi-natural habitats without prior written approval from DEFA. Under Section 18 of the Fisheries Act 2012, consent must be sought from DEFA prior to removing material from the bed of any river. River in this instance is defined as 'any natural or artificial channel through which water flows and includes a tributary or stream'. Material includes gravels, cobbles, boulders and soft sediment such as silt but does not include vegetation removed for the purpose of routine drainage management. Under the Flood Risk Management Act 2013, consent must be sought from Manx Utilities Flood Risk Management Team for alteration of a channel's course or installation or removal of structures, e.g. crossings, pipelines/culverts, sluices, bank revetments, dams and weirs whether or not the watercourse is a designated 'Main River'. Consent must also be sought from Manx Utilities Flood Risk Management Team before constructing anything or planting trees/shrubs within 9.1m (30') either side of a watercourse designated a 'Main River' under the Flood Risk Management Act 2013.	No difference
Seek to avoid works likely to disturb the water course or destabilise banks from October to June inclusive, in order to protect the eggs and young fry of fish.	✓ Fisheries Act 2012	GAEC 14 – Must not undertake new drainage works, ploughing, clearing, levelling, re-seeding or cultivations on uncultivated land or semi-natural habitats without prior written approval from DEFA. Under Section 18 of the Fisheries Act 2012, consent must be sought from DEFA prior to removing material from the bed of any river. River in this instance is defined as 'any natural or artificial channel through which water flows and includes a tributary or stream'. Material includes gravels, cobbles, boulders and soft sediment such as silt but does not include vegetation removed for the purpose of routine drainage management. Destabilising banks during Oct to June can cause damage to fish eggs and fry via smothering by sediment.	No difference
Semi-natural habitat management			
Retain uncultivated land, rough grazing and semi-natural habitats.	✓ Tree Preservation Act 1993	GAEC 14 Refers to land containing rough grassland which is used or suitable for grazing and other semi-natural habitats (rough grazing, woodland, scrub, heathland, heather moorland, bog, wetlands, species-rich grasslands), ponds, shelterbelts, trees protected under the Tree Preservation Act and archaeological features.	No difference

Adhere to the Fisheries Act 2012, and the Flood Risk Management Act 2013 when undertaking any works in or near watercourses.	✓ Fisheries Act 2012 Flood Risk Management Act 2013	GAEC 14 - New drainage works and modification of existing drains could cause a lowering of the water table and result in the loss of wetland plant communities and their associated fauna, from area where undertaken or nearby. Under Section 18 of the Fisheries Act 2012, consent must be sought from DEFA prior to removing material from the bed of any river. River in this instance is defined as 'any natural or artificial channel through which water flows and includes a tributary or stream'. Material includes gravels, cobbles, boulders and soft sediment such as silt but does not include vegetation removed for the purpose of routine drainage management. Destabilising banks during Oct to June can cause damage to fish eggs and fry via smothering by sediment.	No difference
Avoid application of lime, fertilisers and pesticides to rough grazings and/or semi-natural areas.	X	Standard 15 – Avoid application of any fertilisers, manures, pesticides, or liming materials to any rough grazings, moorland, unimproved pastures, wetlands, or other semi-improved areas. In some circumstance you may obtain prior written permission from DEFA, in which case you must comply with any conditions contained.	No difference
Vegetation Encroachment			
Minimise encroachment of unwanted vegetation	X	GAEC 17 - Encroachment of unwanted vegetation. Land is retained as capable of agricultural production. Unwanted vegetation which is both agriculturally and environmentally degrading is controlled. Through appropriate grazing, topping or other permissible methods of control.	No difference
Public Rights of Way			
Maintain access to Public Rights of Way	✓ Highways Act 1986	GAEC 18 – Well maintained Rights of Way discourages users from straying onto other areas of land.	No difference
Heather Burning and Gorse Management			
Manage heather and Gorse according to Heather Burning Code	X	SMR 6 - Burning of Registered Heath is only allowed between 1st of September and 15th of March, except by special agreement with DEFA. Periodic burning of heather and grass can be advantageous for agriculture and wildlife conservation. SMR 10 - Gorse can be controlled by cutting and treating stumps with an appropriate herbicide. Burning of Gorse is not recommended as this causes seed germination and leads to the further spread of new growth of Gorse.	No difference
Tree Planting			
Preference for native trees in any planting schemes	X	When planting trees, preference should be for Manx native tree species rather than introduced or non-native trees, which have greater wildlife value, and blend into landscape. Advice on species and suppliers available from DEFA.	Yes – preference for native trees, but can be easily specified.
Invasive Plants			
Remove invasive plants	✓ Weeds Act 1957 Wildlife Act 1990	SMR 17 - Through appropriate grazing, topping or other permissible methods of control, land managers can prevent the severe encroachment of unwanted vegetation which is both agriculturally and environmentally degrading. Unwanted vegetation includes Rhododendron, Bracken, Gorse and weeds covered by the Weeds Act 1957, Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam There is no obligation to remove Jap knotweed, giant hogweed or Himalayan balsam but it is an offence under the Wildlife Act to cause it to grow or spread in the wild. DEFA agricultural advisory staff provide a free service to farmers and the general public on the best methods, both non-chemical and chemical, to control weeds.	Yes – treatment of invasive weeds