

DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability:

Sustainability is a difficult concept to define as it encompasses so many different elements. What sustainability means is constantly changing as new ideas emerge and new scientific developments are made. However, sustainability at its core means that any activity, be it how we lie, work or exist, can be continues indefinitely without causing a negative impact.

[Johnstone, Everard, Santillo & Robert, 2007]

Organisational sustainability:

Organisational sustainability is the ability of an entity to survive, adapt and succeed in a complex and changing economic environment whilst considering social, environmental and economic issues. Organisations must take responsibility and accountability for the impact they have, whether the impact is positive or negative.

[Spiliakos, 2018]

Sustainable development:

Sustainable development was first defined in the Brundtland Report in 1987: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

[Brundtland, 1987]

Biosphere Reserve:

The formal definition of a Biosphere is the part of the earth's surface where all life naturally occurs on land and within the seas and oceans.

A Biosphere Reserve, as defined by UNESCO, are sites of learning where we can test interdisciplinary approaches to understand and manage changes between the social and ecological systems that exist within the Biosphere.

[Collins, 2022; UNESCO, 2022]

What does sustainability mean to your organisation?



UNESCO BIOSPHERE ISLE OF MAN

To provide context to the toolkit it is useful to first understand what UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man (UBIOM) is, what it's purpose and aims are and how you, as an organisation, link in.

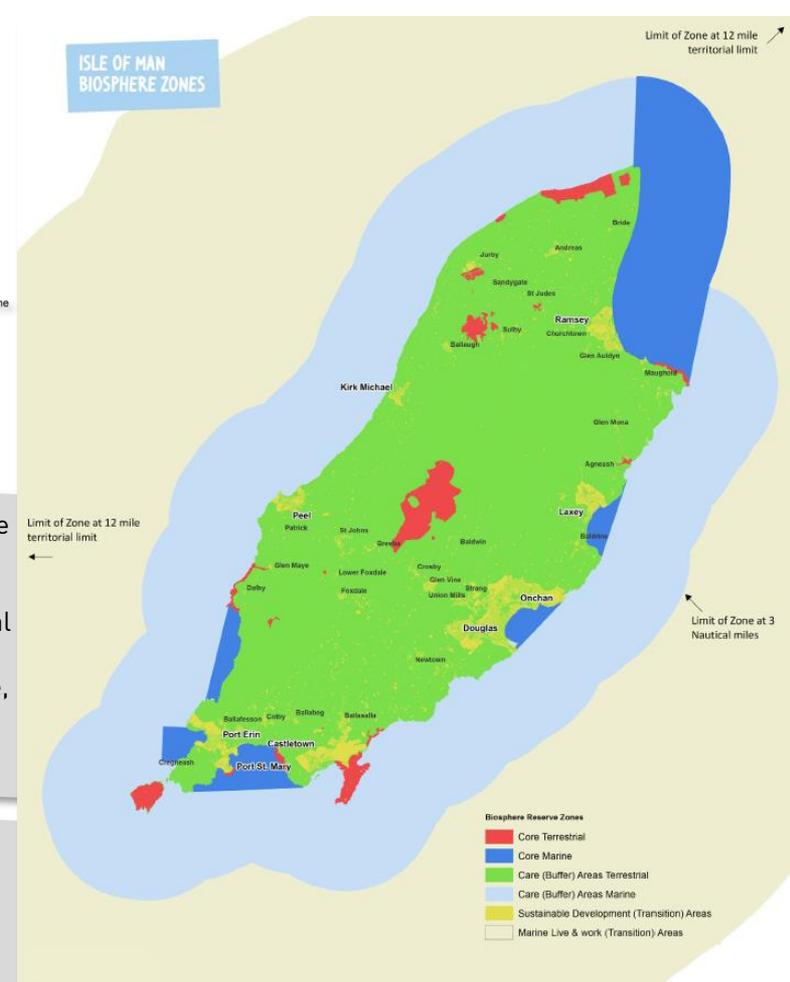
The Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) was launched by UNESCO in 1971 with an aim to establish a scientific basis for enhancing the relationship between people and their environments. It combines both natural and social sciences to find a balance between improving human livelihoods and safeguarding natural and managed ecosystems which create innovative approaches to sustainable development.



The Isle of Man was awarded UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status in 2016 and remains the only entire nation to be awarded the accolade to date (as of June 2024). The Biosphere Reserve status includes the land, the territorial sea surrounding the Island and everything within it, including us as individuals. The Island is divided into core, care and sustainable development zones which have varying levels of protection.

We are unique within the Biosphere Reserve community. Biosphere Reserves usually have one focus with which the reserve is associated with, however, as the whole of the Island is included within the Biosphere reserve, we are unique. Being unique presents us with both opportunities as well as challenges which require a holistic approach to address different sustainability issues.

The nature of UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man UBIOM means that it is not enshrined in legislation and has no formal powers. Instead, UBIOM relies on encouragement, awareness and engagement to get the sustainability messaging across.



CONNECT WITH US



Click on the icons above to explore our social media pages and our website.

Become a Refill station! The Refill campaign is trying to tackle plastic pollution and change behaviours in our Biosphere by providing free drinking water for the community.



By being a Refill station your organisation can help tackle the plastic problem. Refill stations appear on the Refill app so Islanders and visitors will see that you are offering free water. We will also give you the distinctive blue sticker to display in your window. Click the blue sticker above to find out more!

refill@gov.im

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man's partner scheme provides an inclusive network of partners, connecting organisations in a variety of sectors together and providing ideas for Biosphere-related projects and other initiatives. We also run a number of projects ourselves throughout the year which you could get involved with. Explore our website to find out more.



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There may be Partner organisations who are already doing what you are trying to achieve so reach out!

biosphere@gov.im

As an individual you can sign up to be a Biosphere Buddy and receive our monthly newsletter or if you are a keen photographer become a Biosphere Photographer and share your amazing photos with us. We can then use these on our social media channels and on our website.



Click on the icons to find out more:



BASICS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Before exploring the more in-depth topics surrounding sustainability you need to consider the basics firsts. Both goods and service providers consume resources and produce waste and emissions. Everyone has a personal responsibility to be more sustainable and this responsibility is the same for organisations.

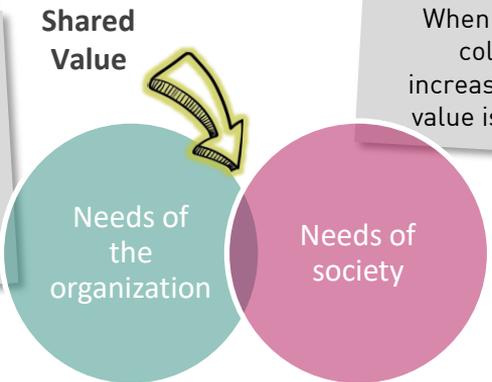
You are probably doing a lot within your organisation already without realising or you may want to consciously further your efforts in becoming a more sustainable organisation. This requires a holistic approach in order to address the broad range of topics that sustainability encompasses.

The basics of sustainability are often overlooked or are not fully understood. Individuals and organisations often have the preconception that their contribution won't matter but if everyone makes a collective effort it creates a larger impact.



Organisations must generate value for the themselves and for society simultaneously. However, when creating a shared value you need to consider future generations within decision making. Most organisations have a short-term view in order to seek immediate reward, but creating a sustainable organisation requires a long-term view and a change of mindset.

When organisations and society work collaboratively it creates value, increasing the benefits for both. Shared value is, therefore, mutually beneficial.



THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015. The 17 Goals and 169 associated targets were designed to provide a consistent framework for countries to use to address the urgent sustainability issues.

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man supports the goals as part of its 'sustainable development' function. Many aspects of the Isle of Man Governments 'Our Island Plan' complement these goals.

The SDGs can be used by organisations as an overarching framework to help guide, shape and communicate different goals and activities related to sustainability.

Identify new growth opportunities.

Strengthen your brand.

Attract investors.

Highlight priorities and gives purpose to your activities.

Enhance your local community.



Not all the goals will be relevant to your organisation, but it is still useful to know the different factors included within sustainability to aid with decision making.

Explore the individual goals in more detail. Click the image:



MYTHBUSTING

As identified through the SDGs, sustainability is not just about the environment. It includes a variety of social issues with an aim to provide a future for everyone and everything on earth.

SUSTAINABILITY IS ALL ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT.

BEING SUSTAINABLE IS TOO EXPENSIVE.

The initial cost of becoming sustainable may be high if the changes are drastic and have not been budgeted for. Infrastructure to support sustainable organisations is becoming more accessible. As the production of sustainable products has increased, prices are being driven down.

SUSTAINABILITY MEANS COMPROMISE.

This may have been true historically but there are now substitutes for most products which are of equal quality, but which don't exploit the environment or the people creating it.

As more research is being conducted into sustainable ways of doing business the concept of sustainability is constantly evolving. New products or ways of doing business may emerge which could be of benefit to your organisation.

SUSTAINABILITY HAS AN ENDPOINT.

OPERATING COMPLETELY SUSTAINABLY IS EASY ONCE YOU FIGURE IT OUT.

Even on an individual level, living a completely sustainable life is not possible in today's society. There will be a lot of trial and error in terms of what practices best suit your organisation and even then, new challenges may present themselves further down the line.

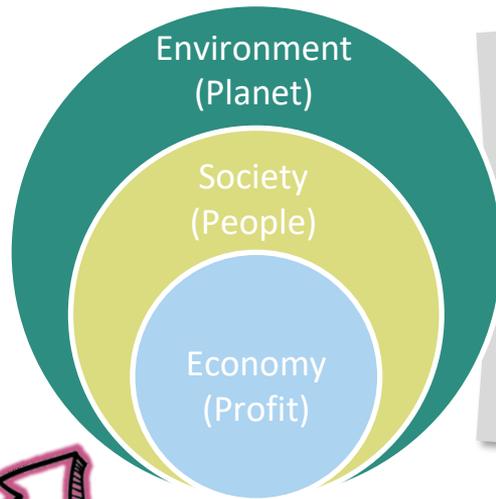
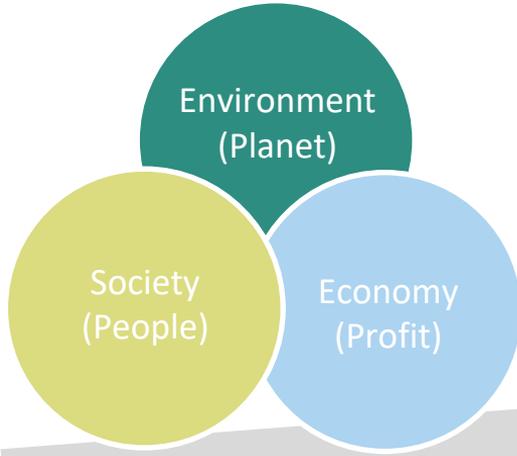
Although it may take time to change and adopt a sustainable mind-set, there are small wins which would take up as much time as you would normally spend researching best practice or what products to purchase.

IT TAKES UP TOO MUCH TIME TO BE SUSTAINABLE.

MY IMPACT WON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

This is a myth often thought by individuals, but it can also relate to organisations who may think they are too small or won't have enough of an impact to make a difference.

BASICS OF SUSTAINABILITY



The traditional way of looking at the Triple Bottom Line, however, allows for flexibility which often means that organisations choose to address one factor at the detriment of another.

(Block & Paredis, 2019)

Instead, the three factors need to be considered as interdependent with the success of economic and social factors being reliant on how successful you are at addressing environmental concerns. Economy is the smallest sphere as it is directly influenced by the other two spheres.

The Triple Bottom Line model was developed by John Elkington in 1994 as a way of measuring sustainability in large corporations, moving away from the traditional business models. The model continues to be used by businesses today and has aided the development of other sustainability-based models and concepts, such as Corporate Social Responsibility.

(Elkington, 2004)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a broad concept and can be adapted based on the type of organisation and sector. CSR initiatives force organisations to examine their internal processes in a variety of organisational functions, including the management of staff, procurement of goods and services, and meeting the needs of customers.

CSR reporting is now common in many large organisations to demonstrate to their internal and external stakeholders that they are addressing sustainability issues within their operations.



ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) models also link in with CSR with many of the same underlying principles.

(Stobierski, 2021)

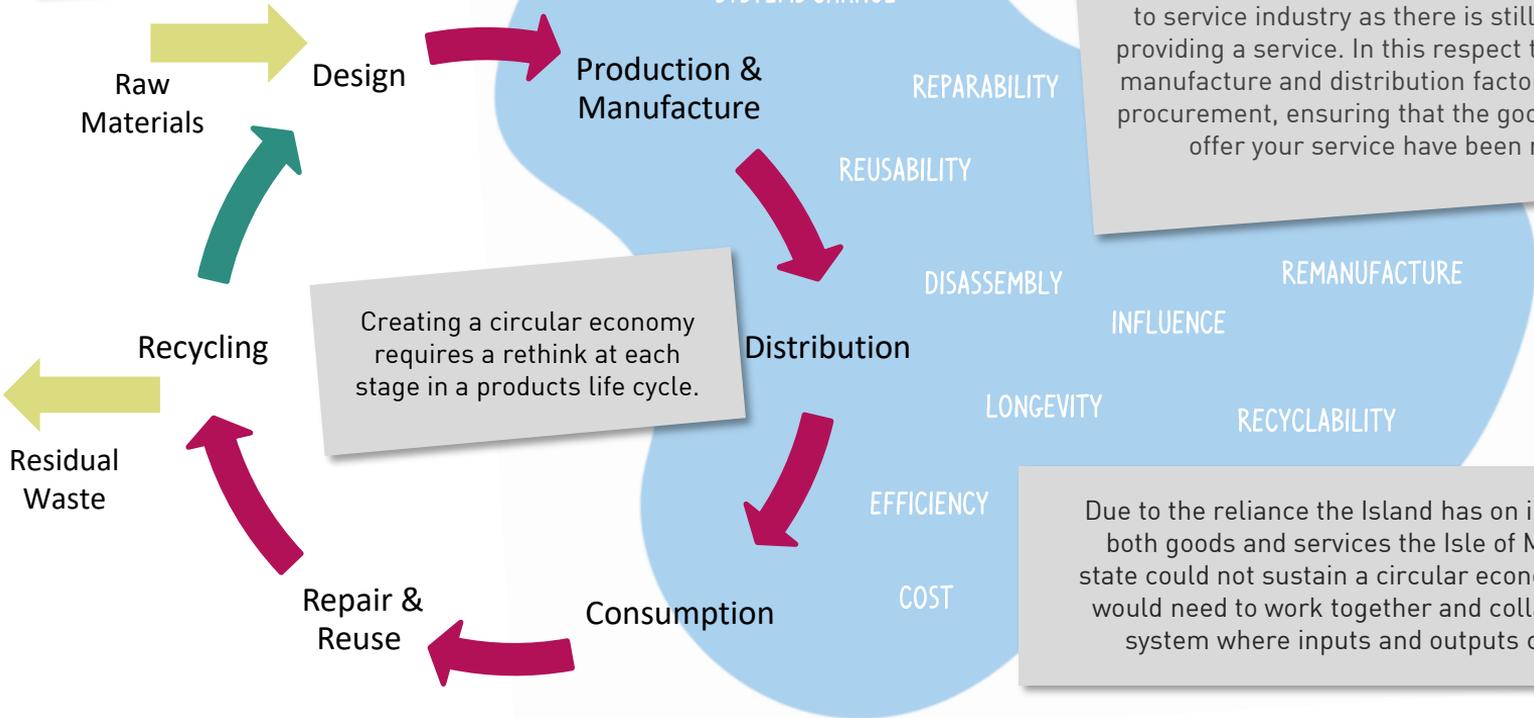
A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The circular economy model is based around the main aim of extending the life cycle of a product or service to reduce waste as much as possible.

When a product reaches the end of its life the broken-down components are kept within the economy where possible, being redesigned, repaired, refurbished or recycled where possible.

The model illustrated here is more representative of the goods industry, however, the circular economy also applies to service industry as there is still waste associated with providing a service. In this respect the design, production & manufacture and distribution factors may be replaced with procurement, ensuring that the goods you may purchase to offer your service have been responsibly made.

(Henry le Fleming, 2016)



Due to the reliance the Island has on imports in terms of both goods and services the Isle of Man in its current state could not sustain a circular economy. Organisations would need to work together and collaborate to make a system where inputs and outputs can be reduced.



HOW DOES THIS LINK WITH MY ORGANISATION?

- MICRO
- MEDIUM
- LARGE
- SMALL
- JOINT VENTURE
- MULTI-NATIONAL
- SOLE-TRADER

Organisations in all sectors play a vital role in supporting the Island's economy, however, they also produce waste and emissions. It is not just environmental impacts that need to be considered.

Taking a holistic approach means addressing a variety of issues which include staff wellbeing, engaging with the local community, contributing to the economy in a sustainable way, protecting the environment and promoting the Islands culture.

Just over 35,000 people are either employed or self-employed on the Island which is around 40% of the total population. People working full time spend a significant amount of their week committing time to the organisation they work for.

YOUR ORGANISATION

Biospheres offer plenty of opportunities which can add both intrinsic and commercial value to the area. Entrepreneurs looking to explore new opportunities play a vital role in the transformation towards a more sustainable future.

Every organisation has an impact on the people who work within the organisation, as well as on the society they operate within. When looking to recruit, potential employees are now looking more in depth into how an organisation operates and treats their employees. If an employer can't meet the needs of their employees, then they are less likely to be loyal.

No matter what sector your organisation falls within or the size of your organisation, the responsibility to be sustainable still lies with you as an organisation.

- Private Sector**
 - Primary Sector
 - Secondary Sector
 - Tertiary Sector
 - Third Sector

- Public Sector**
 - Isle of Man Government

- Government owned / run enterprises.