

BIOSPHERE ISLE OF MAN STATE OF THE BIOSPHERE REPORT



2026

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Translations throughout: Culture Vannin

Foreword – Isle of Man Government

Mark Lewin, Chief Executive Officer

The Isle of Man's designation as the world's first whole-nation Biosphere in 2016 was a significant moment. It recognised our strong sense of community, distinctive natural environment, and resilient economy, as well as our shared commitment to protecting and enhancing them.

We are an outward-looking nation that recognises both the responsibility and the opportunity to play our part in addressing the complex challenges facing our world today. Through the Biosphere, we are demonstrating how people and the rest of nature can thrive together, benefiting both our Island and the wider global community.

Over the past ten years, Biosphere Isle of Man has developed into a truly island-wide endeavour. Communities, businesses, educators, voluntary organisations, researchers and government have all played a part in transforming the principles of the Biosphere into meaningful action and lasting partnerships.

As we mark this ten-year milestone, this State of the Biosphere report provides an opportunity to reflect on our achievements, consider the lessons we have learned, and recognise the challenges that remain. It celebrates progress while highlighting the important role the Biosphere can continue to play in shaping a sustainable, resilient and prosperous future.

The Isle of Man is a special place and safeguarding what makes it special requires shared responsibility, long-term thinking, and continued commitment. The Isle of Man Government remains committed to supporting the Biosphere programme and the values it represents. I invite everyone with an interest in our Island's future to be more Biosphere, and to play their part in the next chapter of our Biosphere journey.





Foreword – Biosphere Isle of Man Board

Jason Bissell, Chair

Ten years of our Biosphere

The Isle of Man has always been shaped by connections.

Between land and sea. Between town and countryside. Between generations. And between our economy, our communities and the natural world on which we all depend.

In 2016, we turned those connections into a shared ambition. The Isle of Man became the world's first whole nation to be recognised as a UNESCO Biosphere: bringing us all together through a commitment to our sustainable future.

Ten years on, there is a simple question we should ask: What does being a Biosphere actually mean for the people who live here?

This State of Our Biosphere report sets out to answer that question, looking at what has changed over the past decade, what has been achieved and where there is more to do.

There is much to celebrate. Hundreds of organisations have joined the Partner Network, every school is now a Biosphere Partner and young people play an active role in shaping our future. Across the Island, Biosphere principles are increasingly visible in the way we care for our environment, support our communities, celebrate our culture and develop our economy.

But this report is not simply a celebration of the past ten years. It is also an opportunity to reflect on what we need to do better, and the work that still lies ahead.

One of the clearest lessons of our first decade is that progress happens when we work together and recognise that the choices we make in one part of Island life affect the others.

The next decade will bring difficult choices and new opportunities. Our Biosphere gives us a way to approach them together.

Community + Environment + Economy

Not competing interests, but connected parts of the same future.

This is our Biosphere, and the next chapter belongs to all of us.



Foreword –

UK National Commission to UNESCO And UK National Committee for UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme

The Isle of Man stands out as the world's first whole nation UNESCO Biosphere.

Its leading role as a UNESCO Biosphere has helped the Isle of Man tell new stories about its achievements, its people and where it is heading.

The developing Isle of Man Biosphere Strategy for 2027–2036 sets out the island's vision for a sustainable future and the actions needed to achieve it.

Fittingly, the State of the Biosphere Report takes place during the 80th anniversary year period of the founding of UNESCO (Nov 2025–Nov 2026). UNESCO was conceived in London at the end of World War Two because the people who suffered through that war recognised that preventing global conflict requires more than just financial and military alliances.

The Report sets out a vital, grounded example through the Biosphere of how it makes a difference in both visionary and practical ways. It demonstrates how UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man is part of a world-wide network and movement contributing to UNESCO's goal of building connections and understanding between people and countries; and to paraphrase UNESCO's constitution,

"BUILDING THE DEFENCES OF PEACE IN THE MINDS OF WOMEN AND MEN".

James Bridge – Secretary General and CEO, UK National Commission for UNESCO

Professor Marc J. Metzger – Chair of the UK National Committee for UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme and Director of the Centre for Sustainable Forests and Landscapes, The University of Edinburgh



This is Our Biosphere / Shoh Yn Chemmyrk Seihll Bio Ain

In 2016, the Isle of Man became the world's first whole nation to be recognised as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Ten years on, what difference has it made?

The answer is not contained in any one project, policy or protected place. It can be found in the revival of Manx language and culture, the expansion of Marine Nature Reserves, the restoration of peat and temperate rainforest, changes in the way fisheries are managed, the growth of citizen science and the increasing number of businesses, schools and community organisations working together to build a sustainable future. There has been significant progress. There are also areas where progress has been slower, where evidence is incomplete, and where the Island faces difficult choices.

This report is an opportunity to acknowledge both.

It takes stock of the Isle of Man's first decade as a Biosphere: what has changed since 2016, what we have learned, and what those lessons might mean for the next ten years. Because Biosphere status was never intended simply to recognise what is special about the Isle of Man. Its real value lies in what we do with it.

**What does Biosphere status actually mean? /
Cre ta staydys Kemmyrk Seihll Bio dy firrinagh
cheet er?**

For all the familiarity of the Biosphere name, the idea behind it is not always well understood.

UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are places where people are trying to find practical ways for

our communities and economies to thrive alongside the rest of nature. They have three broad functions: conserving nature and culture, supporting sustainable development, and encouraging research, learning and the sharing of knowledge.

That makes the Isle of Man an unusually ambitious example. Biosphere status does not apply only to the Calf, the uplands, the Curraghs or a collection of designated sites. It covers the entire Island and its territorial sea. Towns, farms, communities, businesses, ports, schools, and roads are part of it too.

Our Biosphere status does not give the Island additional planning, development or regulatory powers. Nor does it mean that every activity on the Island is automatically sustainable. The designation is better understood as a framework: a way of bringing different interests together and asking how decisions can support the long-term health of the place as a whole.



Biosphere Isle of Man's place within government.



The Island's [2021 to 2026 Biosphere strategy](#) translated this into five areas: Environment, Economy, Education, Engagement and Enjoyment. Different words, but the same underlying principle. A successful Biosphere doesn't only conserve wildlife and culture. It should also be a good place to live, work, learn and spend time.

A whole island approach / Saase ta bentyn da'n slane Ellan

The UNESCO Biosphere encourages us to look beyond individual protected sites and look at the whole island as a connected system.

Nature does not work neatly within boundaries. Water moves from uplands through rivers and into the sea. Birds and insects move through farms, gardens, road verges and reserves. Decisions about land use can affect water quality. Decisions at sea can affect both wildlife and livelihoods.

UNESCO Biospheres recognise these different relationships through three types of area. Core areas are places with the strongest formal protection for nature. Buffer areas surround or

connect them, supporting conservation alongside compatible activities. The wider transition area is where most everyday life and development take place, and where communities, businesses and organisations put the wider principles of the Biosphere into practice.

On an Island of this scale, those relationships are particularly visible. Conservation, food production, tourism, development, energy, culture and community life are not separate stories. They overlap constantly.

Ten years of change / Jeih bleeaney dy chaghlaa

The Isle of Man of 2026 is not the Isle of Man of 2016.

The Island has seen economic change, pressure on public resources, the impact of the Covid pandemic, increasing challenges related to our climate, continuing concern about the condition of nature and, most recently, debate around new energy infrastructure. Some species remain under serious pressure. Environmental data is still fragmented. Not every part of the economy feels equally connected to the Biosphere.



The newly formed board meeting for the first time in 2025

And of course the Island is not immune to the effects of global economic and climatic challenges.

But today more land and sea is formally protected. New conservation projects have begun. Peat and woodland restoration have moved from ambition into practical delivery. Manx language has become increasingly visible and valuable and we come together as a community to celebrate our music, heritage and culture. Fisheries management has developed through closer collaboration between government, scientists and industry. The Climate Change Act 2021 has created a legal commitment to reach net zero by 2050.

The Biosphere itself has changed too. Its Partner Network has grown, its governance has been reviewed, and a new Board was established in 2025. Schools, charities, businesses, researchers and volunteers have become increasingly involved.

The result is a decade with plenty to celebrate, but also plenty to learn from.

Where our Biosphere stands today / Stayd y Chemmyrk Seihll Bio jiu

That is the purpose of this report.

It draws on the evidence, analysis and findings of the formal UNESCO Periodic Review, translating that detailed assessment into a more accessible account of where the Isle of Man Biosphere stands today.

The Periodic Review itself was developed through extensive engagement with stakeholders across the Island, including Government departments, Biosphere Partners, non-governmental organisations and local communities, reflecting a wide range of perspectives and experiences.

This report is not intended to catalogue every activity undertaken under the Biosphere banner over the last ten years. Instead, it highlights just some of the stories, developments and evidence to provide a clear picture of what has been achieved, where progress is being made, where challenges remain and what needs to happen next.

What is special about the Island and what is changing? How are farming, fishing, tourism, business and community life responding? Where has nature thrived? How has our Manx heritage endured? What have we uncovered about our past and how can it inspire our future? What are we learning about the Island through research? Where have we fallen short? And what should the next decade look like?

Ten years after designation, those are more useful questions than simply asking whether Biosphere status has been a success.

“THE BIOSPHERE IS A REMINDER THAT A THRIVING SOCIETY AND A THRIVING NATURAL ENVIRONMENT GO HAND IN HAND. IT IS NOT ABOUT ANY ONE ORGANISATION LEADING THE WAY, BUT ABOUT EVERYONE BELIEVING IN THAT VISION AND FINDING THEIR OWN WAY TO CONTRIBUTE.”

Graham Makepeace-Warne, Manx Wildlife Trust

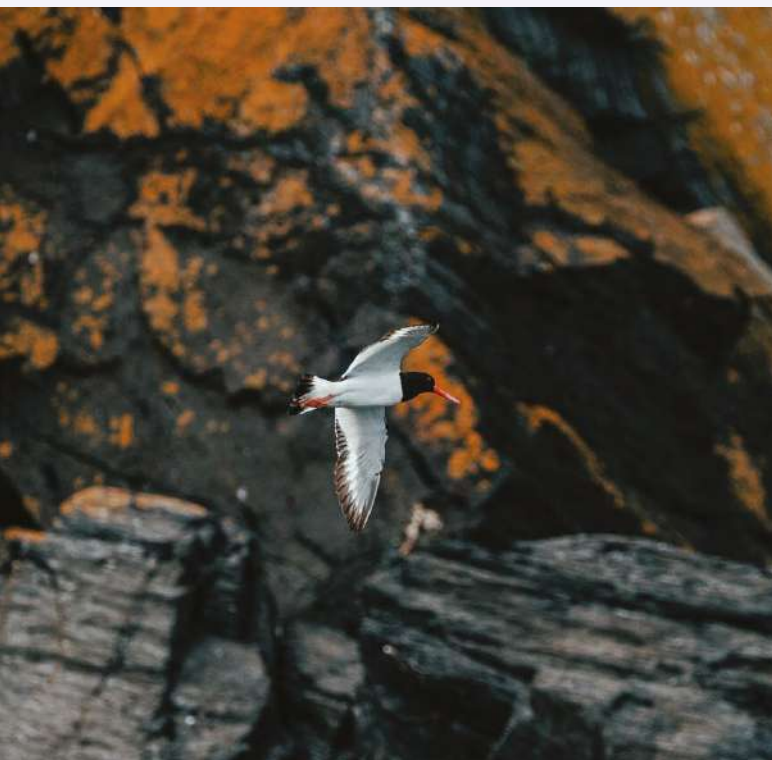


What Makes This Island Special? / Cre'n Fa Ta'n Ellan Shoh Cha Imraagh?

What makes the Isle of Man special is not any single species, habitat, tradition or landmark. It is the combination of a rich natural environment, a living culture and a strong sense of place, and the way these continue to shape one another.

Most of us know the broad shape of the Manx landscape well. What is less obvious is how much is happening within it.

The uplands are not simply open ground. Their peat stores a significant amount of carbon and helps regulate water. The familiar pattern of fields, hedges, banks and walls, shaped by millennia of human activity, provides habitat and connections for wildlife. Beneath the sea are seagrass meadows, horse mussel reefs and other habitats that support a much wider web of life.



And because the Isle of Man sits between Great Britain and Ireland, its wildlife and culture both reflect a history of movement, exchange and adaptation.

Though the landscape is familiar, many of its stories are yet to be told.

A connected landscape / Cheer ta co-chianlt

It is easy to think of the Isle of Man Biosphere as solely the Island itself. But 87% of our territory is sea. In that sense, we are as much a sea nation as an island nation, and understanding the health of the Biosphere means looking at the land and sea together, as interconnected parts of one system.

Within a relatively concentrated area, the Isle of Man contains a remarkable variety of habitats. On land, these range from upland heath and peat to grasslands, wetlands, farmland, woodland and wooded glens, dunes and cliffs. Around and beneath the water are rocky shores, kelp forests, seagrass meadows, maerl beds, horse mussel reefs and carbon storing marine mud.

What makes this diversity particularly important is that none of these habitats exists in isolation, neither from each other nor from the effect of human activity.

Peatlands, historically cut for burning but now carefully conserved, store carbon and help hold and filter water. Rivers carry the effects of what happens on the land downstream and eventually towards the coast. Hedges and field margins once sown with gorse to provide shelter for livestock, strengthened boundaries, fodder and fuel, now create routes and refuges for wildlife.



Coastal habitats form the meeting point between land and sea and provide resting grounds for migrating species, while marine habitats provide feeding, nursery and breeding grounds for species that may travel far beyond Manx waters.

These connections help explain why the Isle of Man's status as a whole nation Biosphere is so significant. What happens in one place can have consequences somewhere quite different. The condition of the sea is influenced by the land. The health of rivers affects the coast. Changes to one habitat can create pressures, or opportunities, for another, and we all have our own role to play in this ecosystem.

Seeing the Isle of Man, its people and the rest of nature as one connected landscape and seascape allows us to understand those relationships, recognise our dependence on healthy natural systems, and to think about the health of the Biosphere as a whole.

What lies beneath the surface / Shen ta ny lhie fo'n eaghtyr

Some of the Island's most important habitats are ones most of us rarely see.

Seagrass forms underwater meadows in shallow sheltered waters. Horse mussels can create complex reef structures that provide homes for many other creatures. Maerl, a form of slow growing red algae, creates intricate beds on the seafloor.

These habitats matter for biodiversity, but increasingly we are also learning more about the wider services they provide. The [Manx Blue Carbon Project](#) examined the carbon stored in eelgrass, saltmarsh and offshore mud. It is part of a growing understanding that the sea has an important role in the Island's response to climate change as well as highlighting the wider benefits that healthy marine habitats provide – supporting fisheries, helping protect coastlines from erosion

and storm damage, improving water quality, and creating opportunities for recreation, tourism and wellbeing.

Manx waters are also important for marine mammals and large fish. Common, bottlenose and Risso's dolphins, minke whales and basking sharks are all recorded here, while grey seals breed around the coast and on the Calf of Man.

In 2024, all Manx territorial waters were recognised as part of an Important Marine Mammal Area. It is a useful reminder that the ecological significance of the Island extends well beyond our shoreline.



Species that tell a bigger story / Keintyn dy vea-feie ta ginsh skeeal smoo

Individual species can tell us a surprising amount about the condition of the wider Biosphere.

Manx shearwater / Pibbin vanninagh

The Manx shearwater spends much of its life at sea, returning to land to breed in the same burrow each year. On the Calf of Man, control of rats (referred to locally as longtails or ringies to avoid bad luck) has helped the breeding population recover to around 1,500 pairs. It is a striking example of what targeted conservation can achieve when a specific pressure is understood and addressed. But the Shearwater remains under threat, and is Amber listed in the Isle of Man's Birds of Conservation Concern.



Horse mussel / Gob doo

Beneath the water, horse mussels create habitats that support an extraordinary variety of life. They form reefs whose nooks and surfaces provide homes for soft corals, lobsters, starfish, sponges and many other species, as well as nursery grounds for fish. A Horse Mussel Zone in [Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve](#) protects an extensive reef from activities that could damage it, as one important species helps support an entire underwater ecosystem.

Waxcap fungi / Bayrnyn-kerey

Some of the Isle of Man's most remarkable wildlife is easy to overlook. There are many species of waxcaps – brightly coloured fungi found in old grasslands that have not been heavily fertilised – with 42 species recorded on the island. Surveys have revealed that the Island has significant areas of waxcap grassland. These grasslands depend on being managed in the right way. Ploughing, reseeding, fertilisers, development and even well-intentioned changes in land management can cause them to disappear. But we are still discovering just how special they are. A butterscotch waxcap found at Ballaskyr was confirmed as a new species for the Island and is one of few records of it anywhere in the world.



Atlantic salmon / Braddan atlantagh

Atlantic Salmon make one of the most extraordinary journeys of any Manx species. Born in the Island's rivers, they migrate out to sea and travel as far as the Norwegian Sea and Greenland before returning to the rivers where they began their lives to breed.

But monitoring by the [Fisheries Team](#) in the Isle of Man's Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA) has shown [declines in young salmon](#), reflecting a much wider pattern across the North Atlantic. The pressures come from many directions: barriers and habitat damage in rivers, pollution, climate change and changes in the marine environment.

Some of those pressures can be tackled here on the Island. Others lie far beyond Manx waters. That makes the salmon a powerful reminder of how connected the Biosphere is to the wider world, and that protecting a species sometimes means looking far beyond the place where we see it.

Juniper / Aittyl

Juniper was once part of the Manx uplands, but by the middle of the last century it had disappeared from the Island. The last known native plant was removed from Glen Auldyn in 1947 in an attempt to save it, but died soon afterwards.



Now juniper is returning. Since 2016, new populations have been planted in places such as Glen Auldyn, with surveys showing encouraging survival and growth. As these shrubs mature, they will become part of the upland habitat once again, providing food and shelter for insects, birds and other wildlife.

It is a hopeful story, and a reminder that conservation is not always about holding on to what remains. Sometimes, with the right conditions and a little help, it is possible to bring back something we have lost.

Risso's dolphins / Lheimmeyder-marrey lheeah

The story of Manx Risso's dolphins is one of discovery. Years of monitoring and identifying individual dolphins from photographs have revealed that the Isle of Man is an important hotspot for the species, with some animals returning to Manx waters year after year.

Research has also produced some surprises. Here, Risso's dolphins have been found feeding on local octopus rather than the deep-water squid more usually associated with the species. Adults, juveniles and even newborn calves have been recorded, suggesting that Manx waters are important at different stages of their lives.

But these dolphins do not belong to Manx waters alone. Individuals seen here have also been identified in Wales, Cornwall and Ireland, revealing connections across the Irish Sea and beyond.

There is still much we do not know. Recent increases in records of dead Risso's being washed up on our shores are one reminder



of that. Continued research and monitoring are helping us build a clearer picture of these remarkable animals, how they use our waters and how they may respond as their environment changes.

A landscape shaped by use / Cheer cummit liorish ymmyd

The Manx countryside has been shaped by human activity for 8000 years and more, through farming, grazing, herding and more – and in turn it has shaped us. This history matters when we talk about conservation. The ancient division of land into treens and quarterlands helped to form our landscape, boundaries and routes seen across the Island today. Grasslands and grazing systems have been managed by people over centuries;

we are as much part of their evolution as they are ours. Seascapes have similarly shaped and been shaped by fishing, coastal communities and generations of knowledge about the sea.

The challenge is not to separate people from the rest of nature. It is to understand that we are part of it – our behaviour shapes it, and our choices matter. This is particularly important in a Biosphere, where conservation and sustainable development are intertwined and inseparable, rather than competing as entirely separate objectives.

“THE ISLE OF MAN’S NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IS NOT SOMETHING WE SIMPLY INHERIT. IT IS SOMETHING WE CONTINUE TO UNDERSTAND, MANAGE AND SHAPE THROUGH THE DECISIONS WE MAKE EVERY DAY.”

Tim Cowsill, Chief Officer, Isle of Man Government
Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture
(DEFA)

A living culture / Cultoor bio

The designation of a UNESCO Biosphere requires a place to protect cultural diversity as well as biological diversity. On the Isle of Man, that is not an abstract distinction.

Gaelg or Manx Gaelic, is perhaps the clearest example. The Manx language came close to extinction but has undergone a sustained period of revival supported by the community and government. [Bunscoill Ghaelgagh](#) provides immersive primary education in Manx, while language learning, music, broadcasting, events and cultural activity – including 2026 [Blein ny Gaelgey](#), the Year of

the Manx Language – continue to increase its visibility and inspire participation.

The same process of continuity and reinterpretation and creativity can be seen in music, dance, folklore, crafts and seasonal traditions. Cooish is bringing people together around language and culture and [Yn Chruinnaght](#) Celtic Gathering has shown how a volunteer committee can bring communities together to celebrate a rich and varied living culture, stimulating new developments and the visitor economy at the same time.

Hop tu Naa is connecting contemporary communities with older seasonal traditions and [Oie Voaldyn](#), the local celebration of May Day Eve, underwent a revival and reimagining by the





community in 2018, interweaving elements of new and traditional practices to create a seasonal event which brings together thousands of people to mark the start of summer. Manx performers continue to represent the Island internationally at festivals and events worldwide, including at the Festival Interceltique de Lorient in Brittany.

A living culture survives and thrives because people continue to use it, reinterpret it and find new relevance in it – it evolves over time.

That makes cultural conservation remarkably similar to nature conservation. Both depend on knowledge being passed on. Both can be weakened by neglect. And both are strongest when they are part of everyday life.

Connected beyond the island / Co-chianlt cheu-mooie jeh'n Ellan

While the Isle of Man is geographically distinct, ecologically it is certainly not isolated.

Migrating birds move through the Island on journeys across countries and continents. Marine mammals range through the Irish Sea and beyond. Fish move between rivers, coasts and seas. The Calf of Man, one of only 21 British Bird Observatories, contributes observations to much wider national and international datasets.

That gives local conservation a wider relevance. Changes recorded here can add to understanding elsewhere, while pressures originating far beyond Manx waters can affect species that spend only part of their lives around the Island.

The same is true culturally. The Island's unique combination of Celtic and Norse inheritance places it within a wider network of languages, traditions and histories, while remaining distinctly Manx.

Still more to discover / Foast ny smoo dy gheddyn magh

There is a temptation, in a place this well known to its residents, to assume that we all already understand it.

Our experience of the last ten years tells us otherwise.

New discoveries continue to change how we understand the Isle of Man. New species are still being recorded, research is reshaping our understanding of marine carbon and peat, and long term bird data and thousands of citizen science observations are revealing changes we might otherwise miss. Environmental DNA is

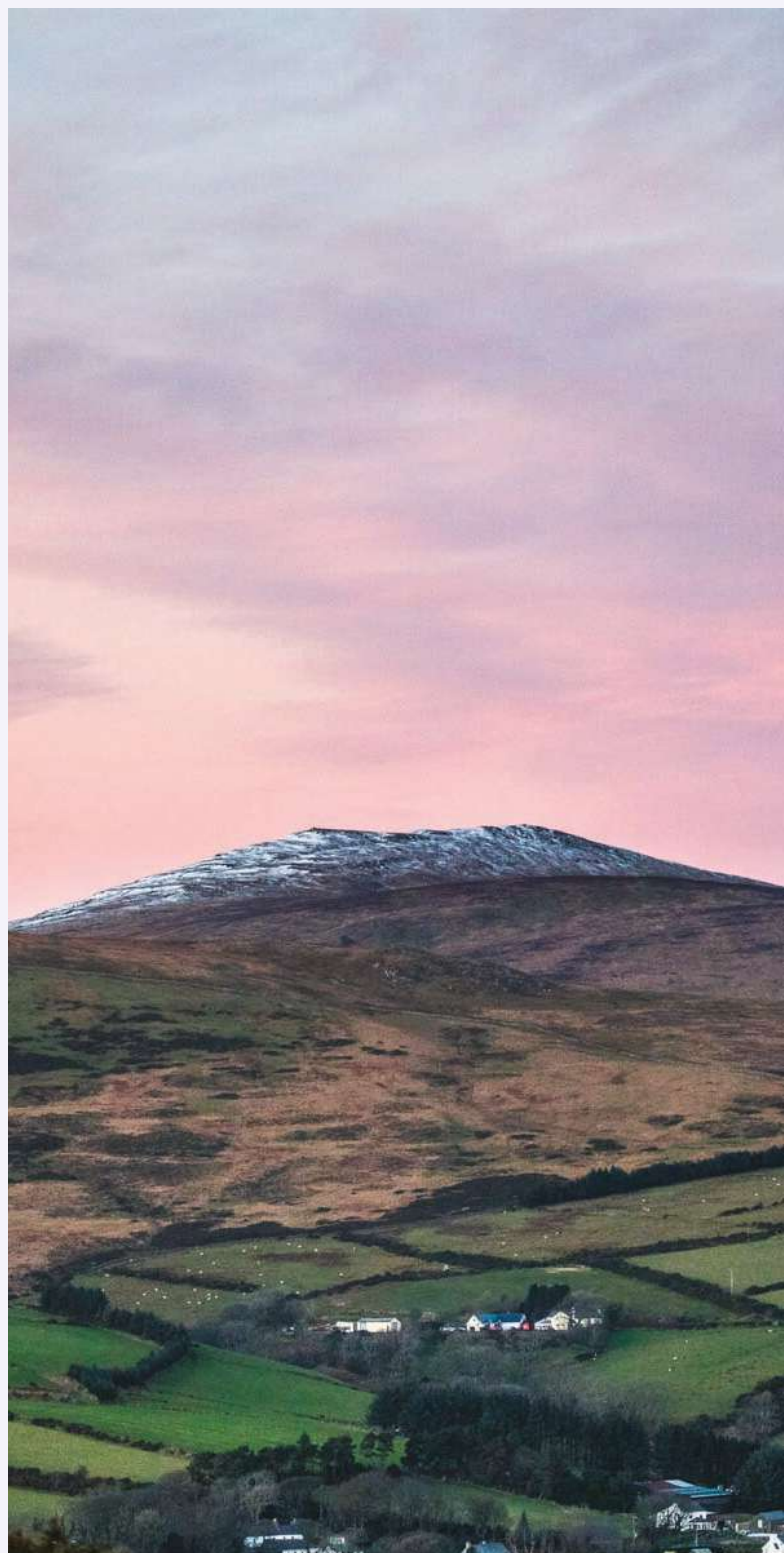
opening new ways of detecting native species and new arrivals. We are learning more about our cultural heritage too. New research at Rushen Abbey has challenged long held assumptions about remains once thought to be those of King Olaf II, while research into women in Manx politics is uncovering and sharing stories that have previously received less attention. Together, these discoveries show that our understanding of the Island, its nature, people and history, continues to grow.

The Isle of Man may be familiar, but there are still many mysteries left to discover.



“BUILDING A SENSE OF PLACE AND A SENSE OF IDENTITY FOR THE ISLE OF MAN LIES AT THE HEART OF MUCH OF OUR WORK AT CULTURE VANNIN. WE RECOGNISE A DYNAMIC AND LIVING CULTURE THAT DRAWS THREADS FROM THE PAST AND WEAVES THEM INTO NEW PATTERNS FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW.”

Breesha Maddrell, Culture Vannin





The sustainable development function of a Biosphere can be the hardest to explain, because it covers so much of ordinary life.

It is about jobs, businesses, food, tourism, energy and communities. It is also about recognising that long-term prosperity depends on the condition of both the place in which that prosperity is created and the communities creating it.

Over the last decade, the Isle of Man economy has continued to diversify. Digital, artificial intelligence and clean technology (cleantech) have become strategic priorities alongside established sectors such as insurance, professional services and eGaming. Leisure visitors are playing an increasingly important role in the Island's visitor economy. Farming, fishing and forestry remain relatively modest

in economic terms but have an influence on the Island's landscape, culture and environment far beyond their share of GDP.

The Biosphere question is not whether economic activity should happen. It is how it can happen well.

Farming with nature / Geirinagh marish y theihll dooghyssagh

Agriculture is one of the clearest places where environmental and economic interests meet.

Farms produce food, support livelihoods, and preserve heritage. They also manage a large proportion of the Island's land. Decisions about grazing, fertiliser, hedges, grassland, wetlands and soils therefore have consequences for wildlife, water, carbon and landscape, while the condition of these natural systems also affects the productivity and resilience of farms.

The Agri Environment Scheme supports farmers undertaking measures that benefit nature, including species-rich grassland and wetland management. The Farm Carbon Calculator has given farmers data to understand emissions and potential ways to reduce them.

At Ballagawne Farm, David and Rob Cooil have shown how those ideas can work in practice. Their grass-based dairy system has reduced fertiliser use by around 30%, while incorporating habitat management, diverse grasslands and support for species including dung beetles.

But these changes are not simply about making more space for nature. Healthier soils,

deeper rooted and more diverse grasslands and greater biodiversity can help the farm hold water for longer, cope better with dry periods and reduce its reliance on costly inputs. What is good for nature can also make practical and economic sense for the farm.

Their approach has also earned recognition beyond the Island. After winning Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) Isle of Man's Bronze Chough Award, in 2024 they became the first Manx winners of the FWAG UK Silver Lapwing Award, competing against farms from across the UK. The award recognises farms that successfully combine productive farming with the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

Behind that success is a wider Manx story. FWAG Isle of Man is a volunteer-run charity working with and celebrating farmers who are finding practical ways to bring farming and conservation together. That can mean protecting and restoring wildlife, improving soil health and reducing water and energy use, while respecting the heritage of the farm and, crucially, continuing to run a productive business.

The significance is not the award itself. It is the demonstration that a commercially viable farm can make nature part of its business model rather than treating it as something separate.



A working sea / Mooir dy yedjys

Fishing faces the same fundamental challenge. The industry needs productive seas, but fishing itself needs to work with and for the ecosystems on which future catches depend.

The Isle of Man has increasingly approached this through shared management involving fishers, researchers and government.

Scallop management is a particularly strong example of what collaboration can achieve. The Scallop Management Board brings together the fishing community, researchers and government, combining practical experience with scientific evidence to help manage this important fishery for the long term, and to gain international recognition.

Catch controls, closed areas and ongoing monitoring can then be used together, with management adapting as conditions change. It is an approach that recognises that a healthy marine environment and a sustainable fishing industry depend on one another.

A voluntary closure of around 24 square kilometres to mobile fishing gear has produced benefits for scallops and other species within the area, with evidence of benefits to catches beyond it.

This does not remove disagreement or difficult decisions. It creates a better basis for making them.

Local food, local value / Bee ynnydoil, foays ynnydoil

Food makes the relationship between environment and economy tangible.

The Manx Menu has promoted local produce including seafood, meat, vegetables, dairy, eggs and food made by local businesses.

The value of local food is not simply a question of distance travelled. A viable local food economy supports farms, fisheries, processors, shops and hospitality. It helps maintain skills, gives consumers a more direct connection with the landscape and sea from which their food comes, and makes the Island more resilient by ensuring more food is available locally when transport links are disrupted and the boats do not sail.



Tourism and the value of place / Turryssid as foays boayl

The natural environment and cultural heritage are central to the Island's visitor appeal.

Tourism has grown since 2016, with a shift towards leisure travel. In the [2024 Passenger Survey](#),

94.8%

of visitors agreed or strongly agreed that the Isle of Man takes care of its natural environment. Some 74.2% agreed or strongly agreed that they were encouraged to behave in an environmentally responsible way.

Walking, cycling, wildlife, the coast, heritage and Dark Skies all depend on qualities of place that cannot be separated from how we look after our environment. Alongside them, events such as Yn Chruinnaght Celtic Gathering and the TT races draw people from around the world to experience very different but equally distinctive parts of Manx life and culture.

Tourism also supports services used by residents throughout the year, including hospitality, attractions and transport. That creates a direct economic case for maintaining the character and quality of the Island.



Sustainability in the wider economy / Shassooaght ayns y tarmaynys shlea

Every Manx business is part of the Biosphere, wherever and however it operates, and each has an opportunity to contribute to its future while supporting their own sustainability commitments.

The [Sustainable Finance Initiative](#) aims to make the Isle of Man a leader in sustainable finance, recognising the important role its finance and insurance sectors can play in supporting the transition to a more sustainable economy. Its ambitions include establishing a dedicated Biosphere Fund and an Isle of Man Nature Market, building expertise in nature finance and exploring new ways to direct investment towards positive outcomes for nature. There is also an ambition to work with UNESCO to explore a dedicated financing instrument that could support



projects in the Isle of Man and across the global network of more than 700 UNESCO Biospheres. This could help the Island build expertise and capacity in a rapidly developing area, while encouraging businesses to consider the wider environmental impact of the activities and emissions they finance.

The [Isle of Man Innovation Challenge](#) puts these ideas into practice, with Biosphere principles at its heart. Its Biosphere Award recognises the initiative that best brings together social, environmental and economic benefits, encouraging innovators to think about success not just in commercial terms, but in terms of the wider value they can create for the Island.

The [Biosphere Partner Network](#) provides another route into improving sustainability with nearly 400 organisations to date making pledges aligned with Biosphere objectives.

The diversity of those partners is one of the strengths of the network. Together they show how the Biosphere connects every part of Island life, from nature and culture to business, education, community life and the economy.

Community, health and belonging / Co-phobble, slaynt as commeeys

Some of the benefits of a healthy Biosphere are difficult to express through conventional economic measures.

At Wallberry Farm, [The Children's Centre](#) supports more than

300 PEOPLE

each year through horticulture, animal care and time outdoors, alongside Manx culture and practical skills through its Celtic roundhouse, pottery and forge. Elsewhere, the Manx Bluetits

bring people together through open water swimming, while encouraging low impact recreation, litter picking, reusable equipment and support for local businesses. In 2023, the group also created a mural at Port Jack celebrating their community. Both organisations have been recognised with [Biosphere Awards](#), showing how community, wellbeing, culture and care for the environment can come together in very different ways.

The connection between people and place is central to the approach.

This is sustainable development in a broader sense: creating conditions in which people can build confidence, skills, relationships and wellbeing, while being connected to the environment around them.

“THERE ARE MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND PLACES THAT CAN HEAL, RESTORE, AND EMPOWER.”

Joff Whitten, CEO of The Children's Centre

Culture as a force for the island / Cultoor myr niart son yn Ellan

Culture contributes to the Island's distinctiveness, but it also contributes to prosperity.

Artists, musicians, performers, makers, festivals and cultural organisations support employment, attract audiences and help shape the experience of both residents and visitors. So, too, do our world-famous heritage sites and attractions – from castles to trains, water wheels to ancient keeills.

The [Biosphere Artist in Residence](#) programme is a good example of culture and nature coming together. Hosted by [Manx Wildlife Trust](#), funded by the [Isle of Man Arts Council](#) and supported by Biosphere Isle of Man, the programme has so far funded four talented artists to use creativity to explore our relationship with the natural world and tell new stories that reach different audiences. Alongside it, [Culture Vannin](#), the Isle of Man Arts Council, [Manx National Heritage](#) and many others continue to support and celebrate the rich cultural, artistic life and heritage of the Island.

The experience of the last decade has shown just how closely our community and culture are connected with our economy and environment. Each shapes and supports the others, and the Island is stronger when they thrive together.



“THE ISLE OF MAN BIOSPHERE DEMONSTRATES THAT ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP ARE NOT COMPETING PRIORITIES, BUT COMPLEMENTARY STRENGTHS. IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE WORLD, PLACES THAT CAN SUCCESSFULLY BALANCE PROSPERITY, COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY WILL BE BEST PLACED TO SUCCEED, AND THE BIOSPHERE HELPS POSITION THE ISLE OF MAN AS ONE OF THOSE PLACES.”

Andy Stewart, Chief Officer of Department for Enterprise

Looking After What We Love / Goail Kiarail Jeh Shen Shynney Lhien

The last ten years have brought a significant expansion in conservation activity across the Isle of Man.

More land and sea are protected. Major habitat restoration projects are under way. Approaches to managing fisheries and farmland are developing. Long-term monitoring is beginning to improve our understanding of what is changing.

But the overall picture is not simply one of recovery.

The 2024 assessment of Birds of Conservation Concern in the Isle of Man looked at 166 regularly occurring species. 48 are Red Listed, indicating greatest conservation concern and 68 are Amber Listed. 12 of the Island's 16 breeding seabirds are Red Listed. The wider picture was reflected in Manx Wildlife Trust's State of Nature 2024 report, which concluded that while important conservation successes are being achieved, many species and habitats continue to face significant pressures and long-term declines.

There has been real progress, but there is more work to be done.

More space for nature / Buill smoo cour bea-feie

Since Biosphere designation, the network of protected places has grown.

Conservation organisations have added significant areas. Manx BirdLife has expanded its network, including land at Langness and the Point of Ayre. Manx Wildlife Trust acquired nine new reserves totalling more than six square kilometres. Glen Auldyn, at around 4.55 square

km, was the largest single land purchase for conservation in Manx history.

As of September 2026, the Island had 25 Areas of Special Scientific Interest, covering around 4% of its land. More recent designations include Grenaby Garey, Marine Drive, Curragh Pharrick and Douglas Head. When other forms of habitat protection are considered, about 20% of the terrestrial Isle of Man has some form of protective controls.

Formal protection matters because it can prevent damage and give conservation work a secure base. But designation alone does not restore a habitat or recover a species. That depends on what happens on the ground.





Repairing the peat / Karraghey ny moaneeyn

The [Manx Peat Partnership](#), working with the DEFA Upland Team, has provided one of the clearest examples of the move from understanding a problem to acting.

More than 6500 hectares of peatland have been surveyed. The work estimates that Manx peat stores around 2.5 million tonnes of carbon, equivalent to roughly 9.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. Where peat is degraded and drying, that stored carbon is at risk. Damaged peat also loses some of its ability to hold water and support specialist habitats. Restoration has therefore focused on rewetting and revegetation, blocking drains and gullies, reprofiling damaged ground and slowing the loss of water. By the end of 2025, 420 hectares had been restored.

The scale matters, but so does the way the work is being done. Farmers, land managers,

conservation organisations, volunteers and government all have a role. Peat restoration is not simply a nature project. It connects biodiversity, climate, water, land management – and people.

Temperate rainforest / Keyll-liaghee hembreilagh

The return of temperate rainforest is another long-term project.

Across more than 450 hectares at the Manx Wildlife Trust reserves of Creg y Cowin, Glion Darragh and Glen Auldyn, work is underway to restore these landscapes for the future. The [rainforest restoration](#) is being delivered in partnership with the Isle of Man Woodland Trust, combining native tree planting with wider habitat restoration, agroforestry, research and community involvement.

The important word is restoration. This is not

simply a tree planting exercise. The ambition is to recreate functioning woodland ecosystems, with the richness, complexity and resilience that develop over time.

And time really matters here. The results will not be measured over one political term or one funding cycle. Some of the most important outcomes will belong to the next generation and beyond.

A safer sea for nature / Croo buill smoo cour bea-feie sy cheayn

Marine protection has expanded substantially since 2016.

Since 2016, nine new Marine Nature Reserves have been designated, bringing the total to ten.

Together they now cover more than half of the inshore area (within three nautical miles of the shore) and more than 10% of the Island's entire territorial waters.

They protect habitats including eelgrass beds, horse mussel reefs and scallop breeding grounds. They also create opportunities for research and for forms of fishing that can complement conservation and research.

The wider approach to fisheries has increasingly used catch limits, closed areas, monitoring and collaboration between industry, government and researchers, with record high king scallop stocks as just one outcome of this more adaptive conservation management approach.

DEFA's recently completed Manx Blue Carbon Project not only added new evidence about the carbon stored in marine habitats but also helped introduce temporary closures of heavily trawled areas of the seabed to allow for research and monitoring, as well as trials of lower impact fishing methods for langoustine using 'creels' or pots. As a result, a new sustainable local fishery was created, bringing resilience to the fishing community whilst also reducing pressure on the marine environment and protecting carbon stores.

The Calf: what recovery looks like / Yn Cholloo: sampleyr braew jeh couyral

The Calf of Man offers both encouraging and cautionary evidence.



Control of longtails has helped Manx shearwaters recover to around 1,500 nesting pairs. Following encouragement from artificial puffins and calls played over a loudspeaker, in 2021 a puffin was seen carrying nesting material for the first time in more than 30 years. Although that bird did not breed on the Calf, recovery work continues and sightings continue to increase.

Grey seals around the Calf provide another example of why long-term monitoring matters. A record 98 pups were recorded in 2024, but the same year also brought record pup mortality. Nature recovery is rarely a smooth upward curve. A population can improve while still facing serious pressures.

The value of places such as the Calf with their long-term monitoring programmes is that they allow those changes to be observed over time, rather than judged from a single good or bad year.

Nature can return to unlikely places / Foddee bea-feie cheet reesht dys buill neulicklee

At the Point of Ayre, exhausted quarry land has become an important nature reserve.

Since 2019, Manx BirdLife has worked with Island Aggregates and the RSPB to restore 105 acres. The site has recorded 45 of the 48 species on the UK Red List and 61 of the 68 Amber Listed species.

It is an important example because it challenges a simple idea of conservation as protecting only places that are already pristine.

Nature recovery can also mean changing the future of land that has been heavily used. In this

case, collaboration with the quarrying industry is helping to return processed land to wildlife while also informing how other areas might eventually be restored.

The spaces in between / Ny baarnaghyn

Protected sites cannot do all the work.

The Nature Recovery Network, a collaboration between DEFA and Manx Wildlife Trust, intends to build a more connected network of places managed for wildlife. Individuals, landowners, schools and businesses have been registering land and identify ways to improve it.

The principle is straightforward. A small garden, field margin, school ground or business site may not be significant in isolation. Connected with many others, it can become part of a much larger network, connecting habitats and providing corridors for wildlife.





That wider context is especially important for species that move between feeding, breeding and sheltering areas, in a landscape which has become increasingly fragmented. It also gives more people a direct role in nature recovery.

Celebrating what makes us Manx / Jannoo mooar jeh Manninaghys

The same decade has seen continued investment in Manx language and culture.

Blein ny Gaelgey, the Year of the Manx Language in 2026, sits within a much longer revival, demonstrating continued efforts in partnership between the community and Government. Manx is also increasingly visible in everyday life. Language education, music, festivals, oral history, traditional crafts and new creative work are all helping ensure that Manx culture is practiced and develops rather than simply remembered.

Culture and heritage have continued to thrive

across the Island. Manx National Heritage has marked its centenary with a major programme of exhibitions, celebrating everything from the RNLI, founded on the Isle of Man, to Manx artists past and present, including Archibald Knox. Five of the sites managed by MNH were recognised in Tripadvisor's 2024 Travellers' Choice Awards, while growing participation in the [Manx Folk Awards](#) has brought thousands of young people together to celebrate Manx music, dance and culture. Biosphere Isle of Man has supported this wider cultural story too, through projects including Manx language materials, artistic commissions, the creative shelter at Conrhenny plantation and work exploring people's ideas about the Island's future.

It is a useful reminder that conservation is ultimately about what a community chooses to celebrate and protect, and what it chooses to nurture and develop.



“WE ARE PROUD OF OUR RICH TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE, BUT WE MUST ALSO EMBRACE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD THE WAY IN BEING BOLD AND INNOVATIVE TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.”

Gail Corrin, UCM

One of the less visible changes of the last decade is the amount we now know about the Island.

Research, monitoring and citizen science are building a much richer picture of the Isle of Man, not just of its species, habitats, fisheries and changing environment, but of its people, culture, heritage, economy and society. Research is helping us understand everything from how the Island has been represented through literature and how people lived here centuries ago, to how Biosphere status can contribute to the Isle of Man as a place to live, work, visit and invest. At the same time, education is bringing more of that knowledge into schools, workplaces and the wider community.

The scale of the activity is striking. Manx BirdLife holds more than nine million bird records. The [Isle of Man Fungi Group](#) has a checklist of 1,466 species. The [National Biodiversity Network \(NBN\) Atlas Isle of Man](#) recorded its

ONE MILLIONTH WILDLIFE RECORD IN 2020.

[Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch](#) combines formal surveys with thousands of public observations.

For a Biosphere, that knowledge is not an academic extra. Understanding our environment, culture, communities and economy together helps us make better decisions about the Island's future.



A living laboratory / Obbyrlann bio

UNESCO describes Biospheres as learning places for sustainable development. The Isle of Man has some obvious advantages in that respect.

The Island is large enough to contain complex environmental, social and economic systems, but small enough for the connections between them to be studied at a meaningful scale. Our communities, businesses, researchers, and government are all interlinked, providing many opportunities to collaborate.

That does not automatically make research coordinated, nor decisions well informed. There is a recognition that knowledge is still fragmented and that more needs to be done to connect research across organisations, and to ensure that research informs decision making.

But the potential is considerable.

Research Vannin and UCM / Ronsaght Vannin as Colleish Ollooscoill Ellan Vannin

University College Isle of Man (UCM)'s

Research Vannin provides a focus for research activity and collaboration. Since 2018, its annual Research Festival has given researchers and organisations a place to share learning and solutions. In 2025 the event became a collaboration with Biosphere IOM, adopting the 'Our Biosphere' theme and opening with the Annual Biosphere Lecture. The research shared through UCM reflects the breadth of the Biosphere. Projects have explored how the Isle of Man has been portrayed through literature

and historical writing, and what the health of medieval Manx people can tell us about lives lived here centuries ago. Research has also examined how UNESCO Biosphere status influences perceptions of the Island as a place to live, work, visit and invest, exploring the connections between Biosphere, community wellbeing, identity and sustainable economic development. This work sits alongside a much wider body of Manx Studies research spanning archaeology, language, history, culture and the natural sciences, including the publication in 2026 of a special Manx edition of the International Journal of the Sociology of Language.



UCM also incorporates sustainability into teaching and works with external academic partners, including the University of Chester.

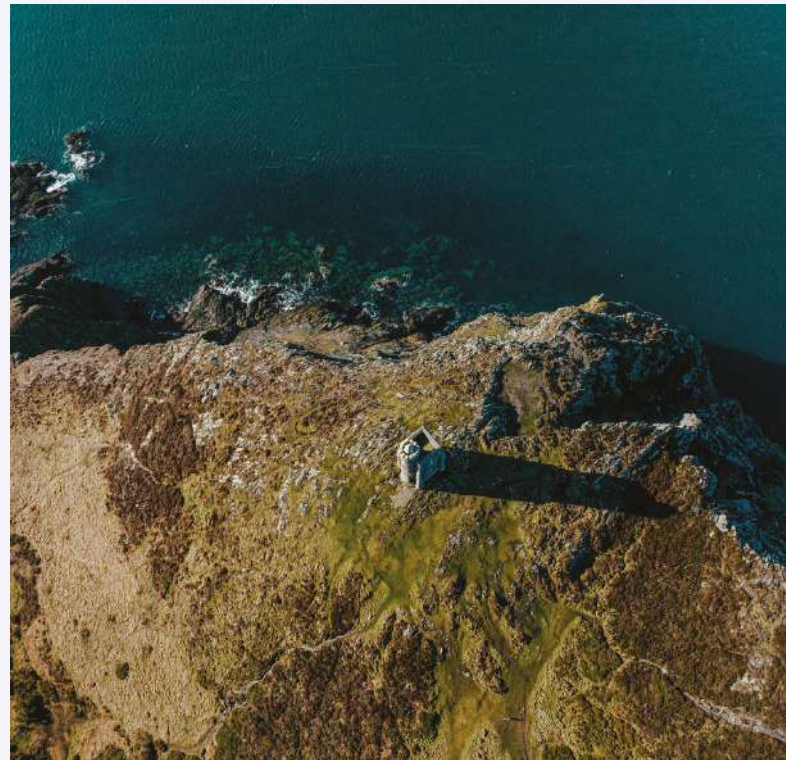
The opportunity for the next decade is to make research stronger, with Biosphere as a conduit and drive for interdisciplinary collaboration: helping local questions become research priorities, connecting expertise and making findings easier for policy makers, organisations and the public to use.

Research at sea / Ronsaghey er y cheayn

Marine research has a particularly long history on the Isle of Man, stretching back well over a century. The Port Erin Marine Laboratory opened in 1892 and, over more than a hundred years, became home to generations of marine scientists. When it closed in 2006, that tradition of research continued. Since 2007, Bangor University has provided government commissioned fisheries science, ensuring that decisions about Manx waters continue to be informed by robust evidence and research.

The research feeds directly into fisheries management. Stock assessments, surveys and other evidence inform catch limits, closures and management decisions, while industry involvement in collecting data provides an important practical perspective.

This relationship between evidence and action is one of the strongest expressions of the Biosphere idea. The opportunity for the next decade is to build on the Isle of Man's internationally significant research heritage, using the Biosphere as a living laboratory where new



knowledge can be tested, applied and shared.

Citizen science at scale / Skeeandys y theay er aght mooar

A significant amount of Manx environmental knowledge comes from people who are not professional scientists and volunteers are also helping to fill important gaps in our knowledge.

Through Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch, volunteers and members of the public play an important part in building our understanding of the marine life around the Island. Public sightings are combined with dedicated land and boat-based surveys to build a growing body of evidence about whales, dolphins, porpoises and basking sharks in Manx waters. Those observations and surveys have helped

demonstrate the importance of our waters for marine mammals and contributed to their inclusion in the Central Irish Sea Important Marine Mammal Area.

Manx BirdLife's database contains more than nine million records collected by people since 1998. Long running schemes such as Garden BirdWatch, together with national censuses and targeted surveys for specific species, allow changes in bird populations to be tracked over time.

Beneath the water, Seasearch volunteers, coordinated on the Island by Manx Wildlife Trust, record marine life and habitats while diving and snorkelling around the coast, including within Marine Nature Reserves. Their findings

help inform how these areas are protected and managed and have even revealed previously unknown areas of seagrass.

Isle of Man Fungi Group volunteers have surveyed more than 90 sites and built a checklist of 1,466 species, combining traditional field identification with newer approaches such as environmental DNA.

These projects – and many others – depend on expertise, but also on participation. Their strength comes from many people looking, recording and sharing what they find, contributing their time and knowledge to understand and protect our Biosphere.

Learning about the place we live / Gynsaghey mychione y voayl raad ta shin cummal

Learning across every aspect of the Biosphere has expanded considerably. Manx language and culture are an important part of that story. Culture Vannin and Skimmee Gaelgagh support opportunities to learn and use Manx, while Bunscoill Ghaelgagh provides primary immersion education through the Manx language. Opportunities extend well beyond schools, with adults able to learn Manx and take part in courses and activities exploring the Island's culture, wildlife and natural environment.

Learning also reaches into workplaces and organisations. Biosphere Isle of Man's Sustainable Mann workshops have been held annually since 2021, helping organisations explore what sustainability means in practice and how it can influence the decisions they make and the way they operate. Each annual series includes



up to seven workshops, with 76 organisations completing the workshop series so far, and many going on to become Biosphere Partners and others developing their own community led initiatives. It is one way that learning about sustainability is being translated into practical action across the Island.

Together, these different forms of learning help build the knowledge, skills and confidence people need to understand the Island better and play an active part in its future.

Alongside community events, Manx Wildlife Trust has grown its Island-wide education service. School sessions have increased from around 50 to 75 a year, with every primary school now visited at least once annually – and that commitment extends beyond the classroom. Through a partnership with the Outdoor Learning Centre, [Laa Feie Manninagh](#), or Manx Wild Day, gives every Year 5 pupil the opportunity to spend a day learning outdoors each year, experiencing and understanding the Island's natural environment first hand.

Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch delivers free primary school sessions on marine conservation, supported by its visitor centre in Peel. Manx National Heritage uses collections, exhibitions, workshops and digital resources to connect natural and cultural heritage with learning.

The Environmental Educators Group, [Scoillyn Eco](#) and the [Outdoor Learning Centre](#) add further routes for schools to engage on sustainability.

The point is that growing up on the Isle of Man should bring opportunities to understand and



take part in the life of the Island: its culture and language, its communities, its economy and environment, and the connections between them. That understanding helps each generation recognise what is distinctive about this place and the part they can play in its future.

Across the curriculum / Trooid magh y churriglym

Castle Rushen High School has taken that idea particularly far. Inspired by the annual Biosphere IOM Schools week, in 2025 they launched their own Biosphere Week, where subjects across the school are taught through a Biosphere lens. The approach moves sustainability beyond science and geography and into a wider conversation about society, culture, creativity and the future.

Alongside the work taking place through schools and other education partners, Biosphere Isle of Man delivers its own education programme. Across 2024 and 2025, these sessions reached nearly

1,000 PUPILS.

The significance of this kind of work will be difficult to measure immediately. Its value may emerge over much longer periods, as young people carry a stronger understanding of the Island into adult life and future decisions.

Different ways of knowing / Caghlaaghyn agh dy hoiggal

Not all learning comes through formal research or school.

Artists, photographers and cultural organisations have found new ways to explore and interpret what it means to live in the Isle of Man Biosphere. Manx National Heritage exhibitions have explored wildlife, extinction and the Island's ten years as a Biosphere, while Artist and Photographer in Residence programmes have offered new perspectives on the connections between people, culture and the natural world. These programmes also demonstrate the collaborative spirit of the Biosphere, bringing together Manx Wildlife Trust, Biosphere Isle of Man, the Isle of Man Arts Council and Visit Isle of Man to help different audiences see and understand the Island in new ways.

Living and working in a Biosphere can inspire new ways of thinking about our relationship with the

place around us, and artists and musicians have the ability to tell stories in new ways.

These approaches matter because evidence alone does not determine how people value a place – we need to tell our stories and bring people into them. Culture, memory, experience, creativity and imagination all influence what we notice and what we decide is worth protecting and nurturing.

Listening is research too / Ta geaishtagh ny agh dy ronsaghey neesht

The development of the next Biosphere strategy has also involved asking people what they think.

The Reimagining Our Biosphere game, designed by 2023-24 Biosphere Artist in Residence Ali Hodgson, gathered 288 responses with support from seven Biosphere IOM Youth Network volunteers. Interviews, expert consultation and input from organisations across conservation, agriculture, fisheries, business, tourism, education, culture and community life informed the Periodic Review and continue to inform the development of the next strategy.

Those conversations reveal areas of agreement, but also tensions and gaps.

That is useful. A Biosphere is strengthened by understanding where perspectives differ and finding better ways to make decisions informed by those differences.



**“IT COMES DOWN TO HELPING PEOPLE
UNDERSTAND WHAT’S HERE, WHY IT IS SPECIAL,
AND WHY PROTECTING IT MATTERS.”**

Allison Leonard, Manx BirdLife

What We've Learned / Shen t'er Ve Ynsit Ain



Ten years on, this review gives us the chance to take stock and decide what comes next. That means celebrating the progress that has been made, while being equally clear about what has been difficult, what remains unresolved and where we need to do better.

Several lessons come through strongly.

Collaboration produces some of the best results / She co-obbraghey ta cur paart jeh ny troaryn share

Our strongest examples from the first decade are collaborative.

Fisheries management brings the fishing community, scientists and government together. Peat restoration involves farmers, land managers, conservation organisations and volunteers.

The Nature Recovery Network depends on individuals, schools and businesses as well as environmental and government bodies. Citizen science works because people contribute time and knowledge over many years. Cultural and community projects work when they place partnership at their heart.

The common factor is not simply partnership for its own sake. Different people hold different parts of the answer to the challenges we face and we're stronger when we bring those pieces together.

The Island's scale can be an advantage here. Relationships can be built across sectors that elsewhere might rarely meet.

The Biosphere only works when people can see the benefit / Cha nod y Chemmyrk Seihll Bio gobbbragh agh tra oddys sleih fakin ny vondeishyn

The most successful initiatives of the last ten years show what can happen when nature, communities and the economy thrive together. Success in one can support success in the others, creating benefits across Island life.

More sustainable fisheries support both marine ecosystems and fishing livelihoods. Nature-friendly farming supports wildlife while also being commercially productive. Peat restoration improves habitats, stores carbon and helps manage water. For businesses, doing things in a more sustainable way can have very practical benefits too, from lower energy bills and less waste to creating better places for people to work. And looking after our landscapes, coast and sea makes the Island a better place to live, while

supporting tourism, recreation and our wellbeing.

That does not mean there are no trade-offs. There are. But the best solutions look at the whole picture, recognising that what works for our communities, our economy and our environment needs to be considered together rather than separately.

The Biosphere is about all of us / Ta'n Chemmyrk Seihll Bio mychione ain ooilley

The Biosphere name is widely recognised, but its purpose and powers are less consistently understood. It is often assumed that Biosphere status provides legal protections or statutory responsibilities that it does not. The designation has also been invoked on different sides of contentious debates.

To improve trust, we must improve understanding of what Biosphere really is, or should be, and what it can and cannot do. Biosphere is a lens through which the social, environmental, and economic implications of decisions are considered in a balanced way to find the best solution, recognising that no solution will be perfect.

The next decade needs a clearer explanation of what Biosphere status can do, what it cannot do, and why it is relevant to everyday decisions on the Island.

The island knows a lot, but the knowledge is fragmented / Ta mooarane fys ec yn Ellan, agh ta baarnaghyn sy fys shoh

The amount of environmental, social, and economic data held across the Isle of Man is

impressive. It is also dispersed. Government, UCM, universities, charities, specialist groups and volunteers all hold valuable information. There is a need for better coordination, more Isle of Man specific research and a clearer way to bring evidence together.

A central research hub or database could make existing work easier to find, reveal gaps and reduce duplication.

The lesson is not simply that we need more research and collaboration across sectors. We also need to make better use of the research we already have.





Ambition needs capacity / Ta gloyr-vian feme ablid

The Biosphere team has a wide remit and limited staff and funding.

There are other practical constraints too, including outdated conservation legislation, threats from invasive species and gaps in local research.

There is a limit to what can be achieved through goodwill and partnership alone. If the Island wants to increase the ambition of the Biosphere over the next decade, resources, governance and legislation will need to support that ambition.

We need to understand the value of the Biosphere / Ta feme ain toiggal foays y Chemmyrk Seihll Bio

The benefits of Biosphere status, both to the Island as a whole and to individual communities, businesses and organisations, are not always fully understood or appreciated. During the review, some stakeholders expressed their continued support for Biosphere designation, while also calling for its benefits to be more tangible.

That is important feedback for a whole nation Biosphere.

For example, for farming, the next decade needs to connect the Biosphere more clearly with practical priorities such as prioritising local food, ensuring viable routes to market, improving public understanding of agriculture and the role farmers play in managing the Manx landscape.

The principle applies more widely. The Biosphere will be strongest when people, communities and organisations can see both how they contribute to its success and what they gain in return. Making that value clearer, more tangible and more relevant to everyday life should be a priority for the next ten years.

Some challenges do not have simple answers / Son paart dy ghoolaneyn cha nel freggyrtyn aashagh ayn

Being a Biosphere does not mean every issue has been solved, or that the Isle of Man is perfect. It is an indication that the island is trying to approach the complex challenges we face in a balanced way, considering the implications for our community, environment, and economy.

Energy development is one example. The transition away from fossil fuels is central to the Island's climate commitments, but proposals for onshore and offshore wind have also raised concerns about landscape, ecology, fishing and impacts on the local community.

The Biosphere cannot make those tensions disappear. What it can offer is a framework for considering environmental, social and economic consequences together, and weighing the costs and benefits against the range of other options for our energy future to make the right decision for the Isle of Man.

Some longstanding environmental challenges are still being resolved, but important progress is being made. Whilst sewage continues to be discharged into the sea in Peel and Garff, work on a new wastewater treatment works for Peel began in 2025, while proposals for Garff are under consideration. At Peel Marina, options are also being explored for a long-term solution to contaminated silt, a legacy of historic mining and landfill.

These are complex issues without quick solutions, but work is underway to address them. They are not comfortable stories, but our Biosphere designation is not a claim that everything is working as it should. Its credibility depends partly on being prepared to acknowledge where it is not, and committing to improve.

The framework still has value / Ta foast feeuid ec y chrauelagh

Despite those challenges, organisations repeatedly describe value in the Biosphere as a shared framework. Culture Vannin sees it as a way of connecting activity across the Island. Manx Wildlife Trust describes it as an important platform for partnership and a unifying narrative. Businesses and other organisations are contributing to a shared vision of a thriving and sustainable Island.

The first decade therefore suggests a useful distinction. Biosphere status does not solve problems by itself. But it can create better conditions in which to solve them.



"WHEN WE TALK TO COMPANIES LOOKING AT THE ISLE OF MAN, BIOSPHERE COMES UP MORE OFTEN THAN PEOPLE EXPECT. IT TELLS THEM SOMETHING ABOUT HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS AND WHAT WE VALUE. THAT HAS TURNED OUT TO BE A REAL COMMERCIAL ASSET, AND NOT ONE WE COULD HAVE MANUFACTURED."

Lyle Wraxall, Chief Executive, Digital Isle of Man



The Next Chapter / Yn Nah Chabdil

The first decade has established the Isle of Man as a distinctive example of what a Biosphere can be. The next decade is about building on that foundation and making its value felt more widely across Island life.

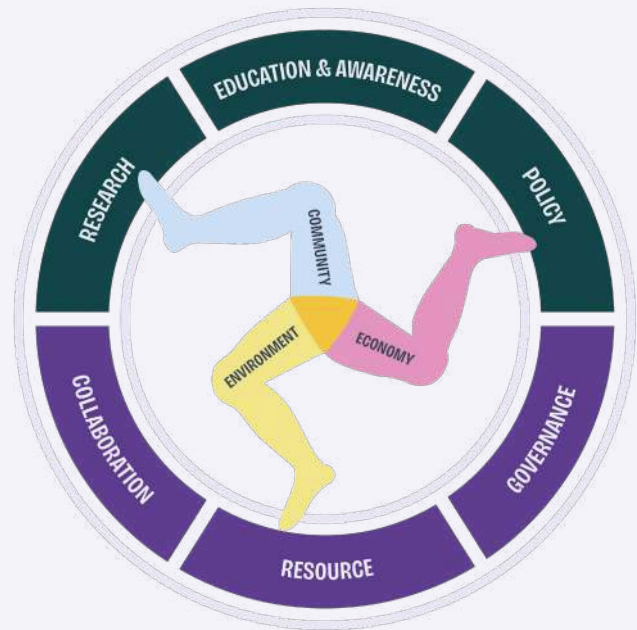
The proposed direction for the next ten years brings together the three legs of Biosphere – Community, Environment and Economy – with the Biosphere itself sitting where all three meet. Supporting them are three Foundations: Collaboration: bringing people and organisations together; Resource: ensuring there is the capacity to turn ambition into action; and Governance: providing the leadership and accountability needed to make progress.

Three Workstreams then put that thinking into practice. Research builds the evidence and understanding we need. Education and Awareness help people understand, participate in and benefit from the Biosphere, while Policy helps ensure those principles are reflected in the decisions that shape the Island.

It is a deliberately interconnected approach. Rather than sustainability sitting apart from everyday Island life, the ambition is for social, economic and environmental considerations to be thought about together, from the decisions government and businesses make to the choices we make as communities and individuals.

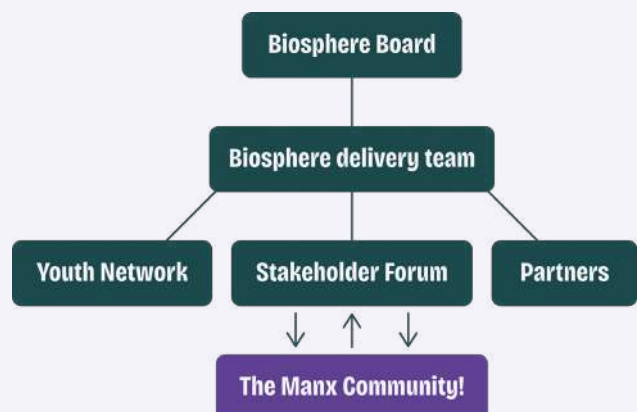
Stronger decision making / Aght-reaghee stroshey

Biosphere Isle of Man is hosted by the Isle of Man Government and sits within the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture. But its reach



is much wider than government. Its governance and wider network bring together people and organisations from across the Island, reflecting the principle that the Biosphere belongs to, and depends upon, all parts of Manx life.

A new Biosphere Board was established in 2025 to provide stronger and more timely governance.



How Biosphere Isle of Man is governed and delivered.

The Stakeholder Partnership Group had been the governing body since before designation in 2016, and the efforts of its members had been key to driving Biosphere forward. However, as the group was large and only met every six months, its ability to provide regular direction was limited. The new structure strengthens oversight through the Board, while maintaining wider participation through the Stakeholder Group, Partner Network and other relationships. With stronger governance and a refreshed strategic direction, the Biosphere will be better placed to translate ambition into action and to demonstrate its value across every aspect of Island life.

A Biosphere people understand / Kemmyrk Seihll Bio oddys sleih toiggal

The next decade also needs a clearer public story.

Awareness of Biosphere status is not the same as understanding why it matters.

The opportunity is to make the connections more visible: between peat and climate, healthy seas and fishing, local food and landscape, nature and wellbeing, culture and identity, regenerative business and thriving communities, research and better decisions.

Schools will be an important part of that, but this is not primarily an education challenge for children. It is a communication challenge for the whole Island.

The Biosphere should feel less like a designation people have heard of and more like a useful way of understanding the place in which they live.

More people taking part / Tooilley sleih goaill ayn

BY THE END OF 2026, THE BIOSPHERE PARTNER NETWORK WILL INCLUDE AROUND 400 ORGANISATIONS.

That provides a substantial base for the next decade.

The challenge now is to deepen participation. Partnership should increasingly mean that organisations are supported to take practical action, share learning and collaborate.

Businesses, farmers, fishers, conservation organisations, schools, artists, community groups, young people, local authorities and government all bring different knowledge and different resources.

The strongest work of the first decade suggests that those differences are an asset when there is a good structure for bringing them together.

Backing good ideas / Cummal seose smooïnaghtyn mie

The potential of a dedicated Biosphere Fund is yet to be fully explored, but the principle is worth pursuing. A fund could help community-



led projects move from enthusiasm to delivery, support work across sectors, contribute to research and monitoring and help turn new ideas and evidence into innovation, investment and economic opportunity. It could also help the Island explore opportunities around nature and carbon finance.

If the next decade is intended to involve more people, practical support for local action will matter.

**What could a whole nation Biosphere achieve?
/ Cre oddagh Kemmyrk Seihll Bio yn slane
ashoon cooilleeney?**

The Isle of Man was the world's first entire nation UNESCO Biosphere. Others have followed, including São Tomé and Príncipe in 2025 and Aruba in 2026, creating a growing group of places exploring what it means to apply the Biosphere approach across a whole jurisdiction.

For the Isle of Man, being small can be a real advantage. We are large and complex enough to face many of the same challenges as much bigger nations, but small and connected enough to bring people together, try new approaches and make change happen more quickly.

The examples throughout this report show that this is already happening. Fisheries management is bringing together science, industry and government. Farmers are finding ways to support nature while strengthening their businesses. Research is informing decisions. Culture is helping people understand and celebrate their relationship with the Island and to express themselves creatively. Communities, businesses and organisations are finding their own ways to contribute.

The opportunity for the next decade is to build on this and be more ambitious about what a whole nation Biosphere can achieve.

The Isle of Man can be a place where ideas are tested at a meaningful scale, where evidence can move quickly into practice, and where social, economic and environmental needs are considered together from the outset. We can learn from what works, be open about what does not, and share that learning with others.

A small island can have an influence well beyond its shores.

"THE DEEPER AND MORE CONSISTENT THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE, THE STRONGER AND DEEPER THE ROOTS OF THE ISLAND'S FUTURE."

Alice Watson, Biosphere Youth Representative

A voice for the next generation / Coraa son y cheeloghe shoh cheet

Young people also have a particular opportunity to help shape what comes next. Youth Representatives are now appointed to the Board to provide advocacy within Biosphere decision making. The Biosphere Isle of Man Youth Network brings together people aged 18 to 35 who want to get involved, meet others, share ideas and have a voice in the future of the Island. Through site visits, educational activities, collaborations with local organisations and participation in Biosphere projects, members have opportunities to learn about the Island's challenges and contribute their perspectives.

That matters because the next ten years will be shaped by decisions whose effects will be felt for decades. Younger people should not simply inherit those decisions. Through the Youth Network and Representatives, they can contribute their own ideas, priorities and experience, and play an active part in shaping the Island they want to live in.

We will all contribute differently: as farmers, pupils, business owners, anglers, volunteers, researchers, neighbours or simply people who care about this place. What matters is that more of us find our own way to take part.

Finally: what can I do? / Er-jerrey: cre oddym's jannoo?

A whole nation Biosphere cannot be delivered solely by government. It must be a collaboration, where all of us can find our own way to be part of it.





And there are plenty of ways to do that.

You can become a [Biosphere Partner](#), joining hundreds of organisations across the Island that have made their own commitments to the Biosphere. You can join the Nature Recovery Network, making the space you look after part of a growing network of places managed with nature in mind.

You can help build our knowledge of the Island too. Record the wildlife you see. Take part in citizen science. Research your heritage. Volunteer your time. Millions of nature and wildlife records exist because people have been prepared to look, notice and share what they find. The Biosphere [Volunteering Hub](#) is a good place to find opportunities to get involved.

The choices we make as consumers matter as well. Supporting Manx farmers, fishers and food producers helps maintain local livelihoods and

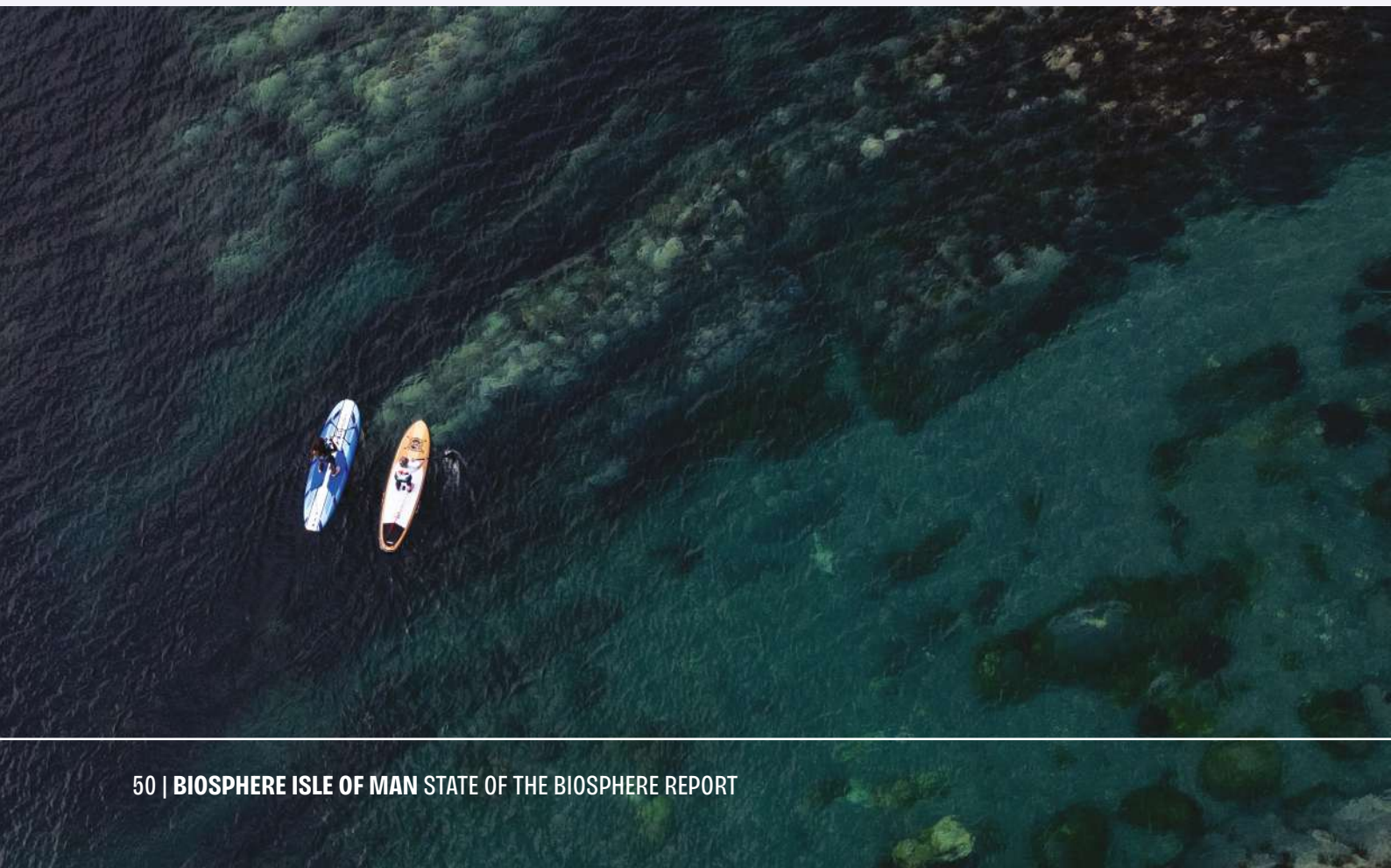
the people who manage much of our land and sea. Reducing waste and energy use can make a difference at home and at work.

There are cultural choices too. [Learn and use some Manx](#) – even ‘red beg’, a little bit. Take part in local events. Support Manx music, arts, crafts and traditions, come together and create. Looking after the Biosphere means looking after the culture of the Island which shapes our community and evolves with it.

And sometimes the best place to start is simply with what you can do. Make your garden better for nature. Look at what could change in your school or workplace. Explore the Island responsibly. Support local businesses and think about where your money is being spent and invested. Get involved in your community. Speak up about the things that matter to you. Small actions become more significant when thousands of people are taking them.

"SOME OF US HAVE BEEN ENGAGING WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT FOR A LONG TIME, OFTEN FOR DECADES. BUT OF COURSE, IT'S THE YOUNGER FOLKS WHO WILL HAVE TO COPE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF PREVIOUS GENERATIONS' ACTIONS. INSTEAD OF FOISTING OUR SOLUTIONS ON THEM, THEN, WE SHOULD BE ASKING THEM "WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP AND EMPOWER YOU?" AND RESPONDING TO THEIR PRIORITIES..."

Cat Jenkins, The Green Centre





Our next ten years / Ny jeih bleeaney ry-heet ain

The first ten years have shown what can happen when people across the Island bring different skills, knowledge and ideas to the same challenge, working together to solve complex problems.

The next ten should involve even more of us.

There will be difficult choices. There will be lessons to learn. And there will always be more to discover about the place we live. But perhaps the ambition itself can remain quite simple.

The Children's Centre describes the relationship between people and place as something that can "heal, restore, and empower."

Because ultimately, the Biosphere is not about a UNESCO designation. It is about the kind of Island we want to live in and leave for future generations.

A place where people and the rest of nature do not simply coexist, but thrive together.

"WE SHOULD BE WORLD LEADING IN TERMS OF INITIATIVES. WE MIGHT BE A SMALL ISLAND BUT WE CAN BE A PLACE OF EXPERIMENT, INGENUITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS."

Deborah Heather, Locate Isle of Man

Stakeholder Group Acknowledgement



The Isle of Man Biosphere would not exist without the people who have chosen to give their time, enthusiasm and expertise to it.

Over the past decade, the [Biosphere Stakeholder Partnership Group](#) brought together representatives from across the Island to share ideas, challenge assumptions, build partnerships and help guide the development of Biosphere Isle of Man. Their commitment has helped ensure that Biosphere remains a collaborative, community-led endeavour that reflects the diversity of Manx life.

As we look back on our first ten years, we offer our sincere thanks to all those who served on the Stakeholder Partnership Group and contributed to the success of Biosphere Isle of Man.

Thanks to Visit Isle of Man and Culture Vannin for the photographs.

Page 22 Images: Paul Ward (left), FWAG Isle of Man (right).

