



**UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man
Stakeholder Partnership Group meeting
Wednesday 24th February 2021, 10am to 12 noon**

Item: 7

Short title: Progress report

Discussion led by: Jo Overty, UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Project Officer

Note this report covers the period from last report (9/6/2020) to 08/01/2021

Headlines:

Staffing:

Breeshey Kermode started with UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man (UBIOM) as Project Assistant on 28th September 2020, strengthening the team to two full-time officers and filling the gap left when Rowan Henthorn was seconded to the climate change team in July 2019.

The UBIOM Project Officer has, November/December 2020, successfully undertaken an intensive online qualification with UNESCO/University of Athens/other bodies on Managing Biospheres and will, in February 2021, undertake training in video-making.

Budget for 2020/21:

The budget agreed by DEFA for UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man in 2020/21 is £30,000. There may be an underspend due to a delay in progressing the new vision and strategy and accompanying website, for which there are up front and staged payments, but it is too early to report accurately. The payments will be made in 2021/22 if not in the current financial year, so there is no overall saving. As reported to you in June 2020, it is anticipated that the budget will be re-established at £50,000 in 2021/22.

Local Vision and Strategy:

This is a separate agenda item.

UNESCO attendance/involvement:

2021 is the 50th anniversary of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme. This is a separate agenda item.

EuroMAB, the biennial conference of European and North American Biospheres, was due to be held in Austria in spring 2021 but has been put back to September 2021. It is hoped UBIOM can play a role and be showcased, as it did in Dublin in 2019.

UBIOM is joining Dublin Bay and Kerry Biospheres in a three-way webinar series commencing in January 2021 to mark the 50th anniversary of MAB. Invitations to attend the

webinars will be shared with SPG. UBIOM is supporting the newly appointed coordinator of Kerry Biosphere with advice and ideas.

It is hoped an invitation to Tynwald Day 2021 can be extended to the Secretary-General of the UK National Commission for UNESCO, who was to have attended the 2020 Tynwald Day as an official guest until it was pared back.

The UBIOM Chair/Chief Minister wrote to members of Tynwald to ask them to promulgate UBIOM social media posts about the 75th anniversary of the foundation of UNESCO in November 2020.

The autumn 2020 meeting of the UK and Ireland Man and the Biosphere Committee, due to have been held in Cambridgeshire Fens, a candidate Biosphere, was instead held online on 10th November 2020. The Isle of Man had been due to host the spring 2020 meeting, which was cancelled due to Covid, and will re-offer to host a meeting as soon as the Covid/borders situation is resolved, having last hosted in 2016. The Project Officer has taken on specific tasks for the UK and Ireland MAB committee: compiling a calendar of UNESCO and other related events/training globally that UK/Ireland Biospheres can benefit from and creating/running a private social media space for dialogue and ideas-sharing.

The Project Officer attended a webinar series in summer 2020 on Biospheres' role in Covid recovery, delivered by UNESCO MAB headquarters. She also attended similar webinars delivered by the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves.

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man's 'Biosphere Badge' for Guides and the work of Beach Buddies featured in a report entitled 'The National Value of UNESCO to the UK' published by the UK Commissioner for UNESCO in July 2020. The report attracted international media coverage.

UBIOM is an active and valued participant in all UK National Commission for UNESCO initiatives and research.

Membership of UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Stakeholder Partnership Group (SPG):

As per the direction of the meeting on 29th January 2020, invitations to join the SPG were issued to and accepted by the Institute of Directors' Isle of Man branch, Isle of Man Arts Council, Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce and Isle of Man Municipal Association.

Other updates:

Awards:

The UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Awards, which celebrate good practice in the areas of education, environment, economic sustainability and energy, would usually have been launched in June 2020, with an entry deadline of August 2020. It was felt that the Covid situation would leave under-pressure organisations with little appetite for celebrating successes. Instead, UBIOM Partners were invited to submit images of their contributions to the Isle of Man's response to Covid and UBIOM released a video featuring these, with the UBIOM Vice-Chair/Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture praising their efforts. We publicised this and invited SPG member organisations to do the same.

The 2021 awards will be remodelled around the Five Es of the new strategy but continue to feature energy, as the current awards grew from the former Department of Enterprise energy awards.

Business:

Encouraging businesses to adopt sustainable practices was a major focus of UBIOM's work in 2020. University College Isle of Man (UCM) Business Entrepreneurship Masters student Nikole Cervantes undertook a 40-week placement with UBIOM. She interviewed Partners about how their involvement with Biosphere benefits them and what more UBIOM could do to support them in their drive to be more sustainable. Nikole/UBIOM established a series of webinars, including one delivered by KPMG's Global Head of Infrastructure/IMPACT Programme. A business breakfast for potential Partners and follow up drop-in sessions were held, hosted at Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce. A private Facebook space was created where businesses are sharing challenges and successes.

The Biosphere Project Officer continues to deliver talks to boards, sustainability committees, individual company CEOs etc on request.

Sustainability/circular economy training:

Continuing this work with businesses, UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man is leading an initiative with the Department for Enterprise, UCM, Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce and One World Centre to upskill businesses regarding sustainability and the circular economy. Businesses were surveyed in November over the type and format of training they require and 26 responses were received. UBIOM and Partner organisations meet on 1st February 2021 to consider the responses and plan a pilot training programme to be delivered this year.

Education:

A Biosphere Week, scheduled to be held in primary schools in summer term 2021, and one of our flagship pieces of work for 2021, has been put back a year due to the current circumstances. Schools will be allocated an aspect of our Biosphere to celebrate any way they choose: written work, music, video, assemblies, exhibitions etc.

Education has been another focus area in the second half of 2020. UBIOM has founded, with Manx Wildlife Trust and Department for Education, Sport and Culture, an Environment Educators' Group to bring together all bodies delivering same. This has met twice and is already leading to more collaborative working. UBIOM has created a directory of environment educators on its website.

Emma Sayle, UCM Masters in Business Entrepreneurship student, will undertake a 40-week placement with UBIOM from spring 2021 and she will continue the good work commenced by Nikole Cervantes, although the precise content of her project is still being discussed.

UBIOM has input into a revision of the science curriculum at UCM.

During Covid, UBIOM created and published bespoke home learning activities, linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, to enable the Scout Association of the Isle of Man and Girlguiding Isle of Man to continue to work towards their Biosphere Badges. The organisations are now meeting again in person.

The Project Officer continues to deliver workshops and assemblies in schools and supports teachers with materials. She supported a class at Rushen School with a term-long project on our Biosphere.

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man continues to purchase Sustainable Development Goals Book Club titles for 33 primary schools. UN Publishing has so far published lists of books relating to 11 of the 17 Goals, from which DESC chooses one title for local distribution.

Biodiversity:

A paper on plans for a Nature Recovery Network in collaboration with Manx Wildlife Trust is a separate agenda item.

UBIOM is providing input to the Langness Partnership in its plans for 'Turning the Tide', an event on 12th April 2021, marking the 20th anniversary of Langness, Derbyhaven and Sandwick as an Area of Special Scientific Interest, that organisers are linking to Biosphere.

During the summer, and building on its #CloserToNature blog series run during lockdown, UBIOM ran a Young Nature Blogger challenge in conjunction with Isle of Man Newspapers and Manx Wildlife Trust. Winning entries appeared in the IoM Examiner and MWT's Manx Nature magazine and the Vice-Chair and MWT presented MWT-supplied prizes, which attracted media coverage. It is planned to invite UK/Ireland Biospheres to run this in their Biospheres in summer 2021, with, perhaps, an overall UK/Ireland winner.

An educational #MarineMonday series of articles on the Isle of Man's 10 Marine Nature Reserves started on UBIOM social channels and website on World Oceans Day in June 2020 and ran until September 2020.

UBIOM attends the Manx Nature Conservation Forum.

Community:

An update on plans for the Biosphere Bee community picnic is a separate agenda item.

The Biosphere Project Officer continues to deliver talks to community groups and societies, although these were curtailed in 2020.

Culture/arts:

Isle of Man Arts Council plans to gather a new collection of Manx contemporary art in book form as a Biosphere project, with UBIOM support and input.

Culture Vannin's Biosphere intern Sarah Mercer remodelled her Mann's Green Footsteps project to focus on the Island's response to and recovery from Covid and the implications for the future of the planet. The premiere of her feature-length film, Island Utopias, took place in September and featured 12 artists creating their responses to interviewees' comments. An invitation to participate in interviews was extended to the SPG, as was an invitation to the premiere at the Erin Arts Centre and a second screening at DEFA.

Covid has delayed Culture Vannin's project to create a Biosphere shelter at Conrhenny Plantation but this is moving forward again.

Mannin Quilters' Biosphere wall-hangings, whose 'Island tour' was interrupted by Covid, are now permanently housed in the Barrool Suite in Legislative Buildings and the Chair/Vice-Chair took part in publicity in September 2020.

UBIOM participated in the unveiling of the latest sculpture in the Biosphere-badged Silverdale Arts Trail in August 2020.

Tourism:

UBIOM continues to support Visit Isle of Man promotions and initiatives and has taken part in a webinar and will attend a live event looking at the industry post Covid.

Charity:

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man attends the Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce Charity Forum, which is, as a Biosphere-supporting project, connecting member charities with organisations wishing to carry out corporate social responsibility work and volunteering.

Partners:

New Partner applications continue to be received and processed, with an upsurge in interest during and since Covid, and the project now has 265 Partners, with a further nine being progressed.

All Partners were, in the second half of 2020, afforded the opportunity to update their entries on www.biosphere.im with any new actions.

UBIOM supports and inputs into publicity with quotes and appearances on photos when Partners request it.

Government Department that were not Partners of UBIOM were invited to become so in autumn 2020 and this is being progressed.

The majority of the Project Assistant's time is spent administering the Partnership scheme and keeping records up to date.

Refill Isle of Man:

On the advice of the Regulation Directorate of DEFA and Director of Public Health, premises were cleared, following the Covid shutdown, to again begin offering Refill from late August 2020. A substantial amount of Project Officer's time was taken in summer adapting a new licence agreement Refill asked schemes to sign to make it compatible with Manx law and this was successfully concluded at the same time.

There are 137 Refill Isle of Man Stations, a small decrease on the pre-Covid figure as some premises have closed down.

In autumn 2021, Refill expanded the scheme from reusable drinking bottles to include premises offering refills of lunchboxes, cleaning products etc. The first 'expanded' Isle of Man Refill premises has been recruited and publicity is planned early in 2021.

The Project Assistant had an online meeting with the CEO and regional coordinators of Refill in December 2020 and was advised support staff are on furlough until further notice due to

the situation in the UK. This means there will be less direct support from Refill but they were encouraging and supportive of the Isle of Man scheme continuing to grow.

Workload does not permit the two Biosphere officers sufficient time to grow and nurture the Refill Station network 'on the ground' and gain it a higher profile so volunteers are to be sought in early 2021 from among individuals who have signed up as Biosphere Buddies.

However, the lockdown from 7th to 27th January 2021 has forced the further closure of Refill.

Biosphere Lecture:

The closure of the borders meant the 2020 lecture, due to have been delivered by Natalie Fee, founder of Refill and the charity City Sea, did not go ahead. This lecture would have amplified the messages around single-use plastic use. Both speaker and sponsor preferred an in-person event. UBIOM will look to reschedule this in 2021 or investigate alternatives.

Other:

Nicole Stott:

The Project Officer/Ecosystem Policy Team have, during the second half of 2021, continued to provide information on Biospheres from a global and local context to Nicole Stott, NASA astronaut and wife of Manxman Chris Stott, who is comparing the Biosphere 'model' of living with life in space for a book she is publishing in her native USA in 2021.

Isle of Man Post Office:

UBIOM helped judge the celebratory IoM Post 'O Land of Our Birth' stamp issue competition and took part in publicity.

Events:

The entire programme of spring, summer and autumn events due to have been attended/supported by UBIOM in 2020 was cancelled, including events where Biosphere was to have been the sole theme or a focus, including the Isle of Man Flower Festival, the Inter-Island Public Health Forum, the Small Countries Financial Management Programme and Manx LitFest.

It is hoped to reschedule the event UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man had planned for Manx Wildlife Week 2020, a talk by Dr Clem Fisher, on birds and their place in culture.

Officer availability and Covid restrictions permitting, UBIOM hopes to be at the Construction IoM Home and Lifestyle Expo, 21st and 22nd February 2021; the Environment Festival, May 2021; Manx Wildlife Week, 1st to 9th May 2021; summer agricultural shows; the Our Island, Our World Festival, September 2021, and the Isle of Man Food & Drink Festival, 18th and 19th September 2021.

Communications:

Lansons, the Isle of Man Government's UK agency, continues to promote UBIOM to media organisations considering featuring the Isle of Man. UBIOM featured in an extensive article on the Isle of Man in Country Life in summer 2020 and in The Times in January 2021.

Blogs by the Project Officer on the topics of sustainability in the wake of Covid and why businesses should embrace sustainable practices appeared on the Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce website and were promoted in its newsletter.

UBIOM marks significant, Biosphere-related dates in the calendar with educational website and social media content, eg an article by the Project Assistant on enjoying a sustainable Christmas and supporting local retailers.

UBIOM continues to produce a monthly newsletter, a curated mix of its own, Isle of Man Government and Stakeholders/Partners' news, which goes to more than 1,000 recipients globally. It welcomes SPG members' ideas and content.

The UBIOM-curated Manx Life #MyBiosphere feature continues in Business 365 magazine and on its website. Suggestions for new authors are welcome.

A more detailed log of all activity is maintained and can be sent to you on request.

Jo Overty
Project Officer
UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man
January 2021.