



**UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man  
Stakeholder Partnership Group meeting  
Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022, 2pm to 4pm**

**Item: 6**

**Short title:** Progress report

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

Note this report covers the period 1/7/2021-31/12/2021

**Headlines:**

**Working Together for a Sustainable Future:**

UBIOM's new vision and strategy, launched on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, has led to an increase in engagement and interest and has assisted communications with interested parties and the public in what Biosphere status means for them and for the Isle of Man. The project team is meeting stakeholders across sectors to embed understanding and encourage activity and promotion.

**UNESCO attendance/involvement:**

As part of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme's global #ProudtoShare campaign, UBIOM has a new video on marine protection, and the co-management of Ramsey for the benefit of people and nature, on the global UNESCO MAB website and its social media channels and has conducted local publicity.

Because the MAB 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2021 were impacted by Covid in 2021, they will continue in 2022.

UBIOM has submitted a bid to be included in a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary online exhibition on the UNESCO MAB website featuring particular species and landscapes via narrative, photography and a podcast. Our bid focuses on the conservation work at the Calf of Man. If we are selected, this will be good exposure for the Isle of Man.

EuroMAB, the biennial conference of European and North American Biospheres, originally due to be held in Austria in September 2020 and then postponed twice further, is now scheduled for September 2022. As it did successfully in 2019, UBIOM will seek to showcase its work.

It is hoped an invitation to Tynwald Day 2022 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 and was invited at short notice in 2021, which then proved impractical due to officer leave. If he is invited, it is hoped the Secretary-General can attend the end of schools' Biosphere week. See separate update.

UBIOM has applied for its 2019/20 UCM Masters student to represent the Biosphere at a UNESCO MAB conference in Germany in May 2022 exploring research being conducted by, in and for Biospheres.

The Secretary-General of the UK National Commission for UNESCO has invited UBIOM to explore, with the Finland National Commission, links that could be forged between the Isle of Man and Åland Islands, which have become an Associate UNESCO member during the recent UNESCO General Conference. This will be progressed.

UBIOM is completing a detailed survey that will inform its entry on a new Man and the Biosphere Programme data management system for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. This is proving very time-consuming.

The World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves was launched with an online event on 9<sup>th</sup> December and applications for membership will be invited in spring 2022 once the joint secretariats (Biospheres in Spain and China) are ready. SPG agreed in July 2021 that UBIOM should join this network.

The UK MAB Committee meeting was held online on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021 but it is anticipated that the spring 2022 meeting will be held in person in Scotland. The new, separate, UK and Ireland Biosphere Coordinators' meeting was held for the second time on November 16<sup>th</sup> and these meetings are proving beneficial in encouraging collaboration and sharing information.

### **Staffing:**

UBIOM continues to have two officers: a project officer and an administrative officer.

### **Budget for 2021/22:**

UBIOM has a budget of £50,000 for 2021/22. £38,535.53 is spent or earmarked so far. UBIOM should therefore be in a position to pay off the final 12-months instalments for its improved website in this rather than the next financial year, although there are unknowns regarding one major project and over UBIOM's participation in forthcoming UNESCO events, expenditure for which may fall in to the current year.

### **Five Es current/planned project updates:**

In addition to existing projects, it is hoped that one project per E per year will be delivered (some will span multiple years).

### **Economy:**

UBIOM, in partnership with Department of Enterprise, Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce, One World Centre and University College Isle of Man, ran 'Sustainable Mann' a six-part workshop series for businesses around sustainability. Attendance and feedback were good.

## **2 'Working Together for a Sustainable Future'**

14 businesses that attended all six sessions received the first Sustainable Mann accreditation and congratulations from the DEFA Minister by email. A meeting in January 2022 will determine whether the workshops are repeated/expanded on.

**Education:**

Schools have been invited to hold a 'UNESCO Biosphere Week from 27<sup>th</sup> June to 2<sup>nd</sup> July 20-22, exploring and celebrating our Biosphere status any way they choose (written work, music, video, assemblies, exhibitions, visits, etc), and a menu of speakers and activities is being drawn up.

**Engagement:**

The Biosphere Bee Community Picnic 2022 was launched at the Isle of Man Food and Drink Festival in September 2021 and will connect people, encourage them into the outdoors and promote local produce. Neighbours, schools, social clubs, businesses etc can sign up. Promotion has been less high profile than planned over recent months because of uncertainty over Covid and gatherings. We hope SPG members hold events and support this project.

**Enjoyment:**

The Isle of Man Arts Council staged 'Ellyn: a Tale of Contemporary Manx Art' – with an exhibition and book - in September/October 2021, featuring 66 artists' interpretations of our Island/Biosphere. UBIOM and the Arts Council gifted books to all schools and public libraries.

**Environment:**

Plans are progressing with Manx Wildlife Trust for a Nature Recovery Network. See item 8.

**Other updates:**

**Awards:**

The UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Awards were remodelled around the five Es of the new strategy. They attracted a strong entry and five worthy winners were rewarded at a ceremony held on 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2021. The Chief Minister was keynote speaker and radio personality Howard Caine the master of ceremonies.

**Business:**

After conducting interviews and an e-survey, UCM Masters student Emma Sayle is (December 2021-April 2022) establishing an online toolkit for businesses to encourage engagement with UBIOM and issues around sustainability. This continues the business liaison and education commenced by the previous UCM Masters student. UBIOM has engaged a further UCM Masters student for 2022/23, in line with the 'research' function of Biospheres.

**Communications:**

UBIOM's Project Officer attended the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' annual conference, with the theme 'stakeholder engagement', in November 2021. It has engaged one of the speakers to assist with The Rubbish Group (see later).

During COP26, UBIOM collaborated with Net Zero Isle of Man and other Biospheres to deliver short, inspiring, success stories on social media from Partners and stakeholders.

UBIOM features in each edition of the World Network of Island and Coastal Biospheres' bi-annual general newsletter and the same network's Zero Plastic News newsletter.

UBIOM secured a series of three placed articles in Isle of Man Newspapers' titles in September 2021, free of charge, explaining the role of a Biosphere and its benefits to the Isle of Man. The same articles will feature on the Island Life website from January 2022.

UBIOM created a podcast with Manx Radio in December 2021 about sustainability at Christmas. Manx produce and shopping local were promoted.

UBIOM updates its social media channels at least six days a week, delivering its own, stakeholders' and wider Government messages and marking significant, Biosphere-related, dates in the calendar with educational content.

UBIOM produces a monthly newsletter, a curated mix of its own, Isle of Man Government and Stakeholders/Partners' news, which goes to more than 1,100 recipients globally. It welcomes SPG members' ideas and content.

The UBIOM-curated Manx Life #MyBiosphere feature continues monthly in Business 365 magazine and on its website. To date there have been 41 such columns. Suggestions for new authors are welcome.

### **Culture/arts:**

Artreach Studios has secured initial funding to research and develop a joint art/science/community/education project with UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man and other partners, working title 'What's The Sea To Me?'

Covid has delayed Culture Vannin and IoM Arts Council's join project to create a Biosphere shelter at Conrhenny Plantation but it is hoped that this will soon move forward.

### **Education:**

UBIOM assisted a local student at York University researching marine conservation.

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man continues to purchase Sustainable Development Goals Book Club titles for 33 primary schools, building a library. UN Publishing has so far published lists of books relating to 14 of the 17 Goals, from which DESC chooses one title for local distribution.

Girlguiding Isle of Man and the Scouting Association of the Isle of Man continue to deliver the Biosphere Badge and Dublin Bay Biosphere and Kerry Biosphere have launched a badge based on that of UBIOM, with Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere planning the same.

### **Events:**

The tri-webinar series, with the Irish Biospheres Dublin Bay and Kerry, marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UNESCO MAB Programme, has continued, with Biospheres taking it in turns to host each month. In September the Isle of Man presented a webinar on culture and the passing down of stories about Manx life. The series concludes with a webinar hosted by the Isle of Man on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2022 on built heritage. Publicity has been carried out. It is hoped SPG will help spread the word.

UBIOM were present at the Royal Show in the DEFA tent alongside Ecosystem Policy Team.

Subject to staff availability, UBIOM hopes to attend a full programme of summer events in 2022.

### **House of Keys:**

UBIOM held two familiarisation sessions for House of Keys candidates in August and September 2021 and a further session for candidates then elected, who had not attended, in October 2021.

### **Lecture:**

Ongoing Covid issues mean it hasn't been possible to re-arrange the 2020 lecture, due to have been delivered in person by Natalie Fee, founder of Refill and the charity City Sea. This lecture would have amplified the Government's messages around single-use plastic. A new speaker will be sought so we can resume the lecture (which it's hoped will be annual) in 2022. The original sponsor is keen to continue its support.

### **Nature:**

UBIOM again ran the Young Nature Blogger challenge with partners Isle of Man Newspapers and Manx Wildlife Trust. This year for the first time, the two Irish Biospheres collaborated with us to hold the challenge, too, so as well as local winners, an overall winner (from Kerry) was chosen by award-winning young nature writer Dara McAnulty and UK MAB Committee Chair Professor Martin Price.

### **Nicole Stott:**

In her book, *Back to Earth*, published in October 2021, astronaut Nicole Stott writes about the Isle of Man's Biosphere status as a model way of living.

### **Partners:**

Applications from organisations wishing to take the Biosphere Pledge and become Partners continue to come in. However, several Partners have ceased to exist, so they have been removed. There are currently 298 Partners, with a further two applications being progressed. It should be borne in mind that the majority of the Project Assistant's time is spent administering the Partnership scheme and keeping records up to date.

### **Refill Isle of Man:**

There are 135 Refill Isle of Man Stations, offering cold water tap refills to those with their own bottles, reducing plastic use and pollution. Due to the stop/start nature of the scheme (locally and nationally) since March 2020, it is felt the scheme is in need of rejuvenating and a small number of community volunteers were recruited from among Biosphere Buddies to operate in the north, south, east and west to visit existing stations and recruit new Stations. However, training was then delayed due to Covid and it's now felt that a spring 2022 push would be better.

### **Rubbish Group:**

Following a letter to the local newspaper from Alan Jones, Peel Commissioner, calling on a more joined up approach to solving the litter issue, UBIOM has convened a group of those charged with, and who have an interest in, reducing litter. Its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 will hear from an experience in influencing behaviour change. A campaign may follow.

**Talks:**

As well as talks being delivered as part of the targeted strategy rollout, the Biosphere Project Officer is booked to deliver several talks to community groups and societies in coming months.

**Tourism:**

UBIOM continues to work with Visit Isle of Man on workstreams such as Visitor First, and is on subgroups on familiarisation for visitor facing teams and visitor responsibility. It has held awareness training with cruise and coach operators and has sessions planned for Welcome Centre staff and the Guild of Manx Registered Tour Guides.

A 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 7<sup>th</sup> 2022.