



**UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man
Stakeholder Partnership Group meeting
Wednesday 25th January 2023, 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 1/6/2022 to 28/12/2022

Headlines:

UNESCO:

UBIOM took part in the first ever International Day for the Biosphere Reserve, held on 3rd November, with a series of interviews/photos with those contributing positively to the Biosphere, run online and on social channels. This first 'day' had no theme but subsequent annual days may have themes.

UBIOM has joined a new World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves and has an entry and case study (peatland restoration pilot) on the network's website.

The UK National Commission for UNESCO has successfully bid for £250,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a project called 'Local to Global - building a resilient UNESCO network in the UK'. This will support UNESCO sites across the UK to engage new audiences, develop community celebration of world-class heritage, and share best practice through a mutually supportive and more resilient network. Although we await confirmation, we do not believe UBIOM can benefit from this as it is not in the UK. UK and Ireland Biospheres have access to various 'pots' of funding not available to us.

Officers from various parts of the Isle of Man Government responded to a request from the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme secretariat in Paris to Biospheres for information on extreme weather impacts in 2022 and mitigating actions. Further information is awaited as to how this will be compiled/used.

The UBIOM Project Officer attended EuroMAB, the bi-annual conference of European and North American Biospheres, in Nockberge Biosphere, Austria, from September 12th-16th 2022. The theme was 'Tying cultures: cross-border cooperation between societies and generations' and we were advised that a priority for the network is breaking borders between territories, disciplines, organisations and age groups. Gaining visibility within

1 'Working Together for a Sustainable Future'

Biospheres and making clear we are 'part of the solution' were also highlighted as priorities, as was taking steps to reach people disconnected from the issues around sustainability. Attendees were also asked to take a pledge to ensure youth has a voice in Biospheres. The event was an opportunity to promote the Isle of Man and the Project Officer displayed and distributed information for the Department for Enterprise Visit and Locate agencies as well as Biosphere-specific information at the event – and even at Vienna railway station. The Project Officer found there was a lot of awareness of, and interest in, the activities of UBIOM and good connections were forged. A workshop on sustainable tourism was particularly valuable and has led to the formation of a new, as yet informal, network of Biospheres concerned with tourism, with four follow-up online workshops planned for 2023.

Due to ill health, the UBIOM Project Officer was unable to attend the UK Man and the Biosphere Committee bi-annual meeting, held in Edinburgh on 19th October 2022, but provided a report. Chairmanship of the committee passed at this meeting from Professor Martin Price, who has been extremely supportive to UBIOM, to Professor Marc Metzger, Professor of Environment and Society at the University of Edinburgh.

The UBIOM Project Officer organised, attended and minuted the bi-annual meeting on UK and Ireland Biosphere Coordinators, held online on 21st November 2022. This discussed follow ups to the UK MAB Committee meeting, heard more from Professor Metzger about his aims and priorities and discussed youth involvement, the recent 'Biosphere Day', Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), how Biosphere can add value to food produced within them, and other topics. Due to workload, the Project Officer has reluctantly relinquished the permanent secretariat to this group and the duty will be shared between Biospheres.

Staffing:

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

Budget for 2022/23:

UBIOM has a budget of £50,000 for 2022/23 and, to date, just over £38,000 has been spent/earmarked, although there is doubt over a couple of sums earmarked, and workload (UBIOM and partners) and pre end of financial year leave (UBIOM Project Officer) may take those into 2023/24.

Five Es current/planned project updates:

In addition to all 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, Net Zero Isle of Man, One World Centre and University College Isle of Man, will repeat, in September/October 2023, 'Sustainable Mann' a six-part workshop series for businesses around sustainability. The first two workshops series each led to 14 businesses/organisations earning the 'Sustainable Mann' accreditation. The 2022 presentations were made on 11th January 2023.

Education:

2 'Working Together for a Sustainable Future'

The UBIOM Project Assistant met with Jo Callister, Advisory Teacher for the Manx Curriculum, who proposed a collaboration in the education setting in relation to wellbeing and connecting with nature, inspired by the installation of CO2 monitors in schools. It was discussed that a 'living wall' could be installed to one of the secondary schools as a pilot, with a view to connect up students with nature and encourage them to care for the plant wall. This is in very early stages of discussion and due to the difficult nature of installation and very specific optimum conditions for such a feature, air plants were discussed as a potential way to move this project forward.

Engagement:

Although it has been difficult to measure uptake and input in 2022, the Biosphere Bee Community Picnic will be repeated in 2023, encouraging people to get out into nature in a respectful way, come together and enjoy local produce. Participants who register an event receive an attractive 'how to' guide and other assets from UBIOM. The initiative came from the SPG and we hope SPG members hold events and support and promote this project in 2023.

Enjoyment:

Artreach Studios continues to work with the support of UBIOM and others to develop its multi-dimensional science/art/educational project 'The Big Blue Project', connecting people with the sea. It has a research and development grant from Culture Vannin, has secured £5,500 funding from the Isle of Man Arts Council for one aspect of the project and is looking to secure corporate sponsorship. It is not known when the project can be launched.

Environment:

UBIOM is supporting The Manx Nature Show, at Cathedral Isle of Man, being staged by Biosphere Partner Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch from February half term 2023 to Manx Wildlife Week in May 2023. This will celebrate biodiversity and conservation work in our Biosphere.

Plans are progressing with Manx Wildlife Trust for a Nature Recovery Network, due for launch in spring 2023. See item 10.

Other updates: - alphabetical:

Awards:

The UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Awards 2023 will be launched on 8th May 2023, with entries open until 11th August 2023 and a prize presentation in late September/early October 2023. This year there will be six categories – the 5Es of 'Working Together for a Sustainable Future' plus energy, as the awards grew from the original Isle of Man Government Energy Awards. Invitations have gone out to people to form a judging panel. Entry criteria and judging methodology have been revised in line with comments from judges. His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor and Lady Lorimer have kindly agreed to present the awards again in 2023. Winners of the 2022 awards, presented in September 2022, feature in a podcast on the 'Biosphere' area of the podcast section of Manx Radio website. A promotional video will also be made.

Biosphere Centre:

3 'Working Together for a Sustainable Future'

UBIOM turned down an offer from a private supporter for a rent-free space in Laxey for a Biosphere Centre. This was primarily because of the peripatetic nature of the two Biosphere officers in delivering across the community across a seven day patterns, and difficulty in committing to being at the centre on specific days on a regular basis; also the mileage needed for those officers to travel to Laxey regularly and need for those officers to be based as part of a team at DEFA and provide normal team cover, etc. It was felt the budget for kitting out such a centre to a suitable standard, including all the graphic design and displays, and on costs, such as heating and lighting, would be beyond UBIOM right now.

Communications:

UBIOM is constantly looking to improve its website and has recently added a 'Resources' section housing information such as the Hedge Hub guidance on hedge cutting, marine nature spotter sheets, prevention of wildfires, the business toolkit, etc., as well as its own brand guidance. Information will be rotated seasonally.

Twenty videos created to educate people about the Island's marine nature reserves (10 short, 10 longer) have been added to UBIOM's YouTube channel.

A 'Staff Summer Snaps' photo competition in DEFA supported by the Wellbeing Team has yielded nice new photo content for the UBIOM website.

UBIOM is funding a podcast being created with Manx Radio and the Manx Blue Carbon Project in January 2023 to update the public on blue carbon. It will be housed on the station's website and downloaded from Spotify, Apple, Google, etc.

UBIOM has, until November 2022, updated its four other social media channels at least six days a week and usually seven, delivering its own, stakeholders' and wider Government messages and marking significant, Biosphere-related, dates in the calendar with educational content. However, this is proving increasingly difficult as the project gets busier and busier, so updating sometimes drops off. Updates are done at 7am/7pm. Having social media channels is a criterion of the periodic review.

UBIOM's previously monthly newsletter, a curated mix of its own, Isle of Man Government and Stakeholders/Partners' news, which goes to more than 1,200 recipients globally, and is widely praised but time consuming to curate, compile and test, has currently reduced to every other month. Production of a newsletter is a criterion of the periodic review.

The UBIOM-curated Manx Life #MyBiosphere feature continues monthly in the newly revamped Business 365 magazine and on its website and social channels. This month we celebrate 50 such authored columns and this is excellent publicity for the Island, with potential for other SPG members to share more widely to promote their aims. Suggestions from SPG for new authors are welcome.

Culture/arts:

The Isle of Man Art Society's Easter exhibition at the Villa Marina Arcade at Easter 2023 will again celebrate and be supported by UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man.

Education:

The UBIOM and University College Isle of Man Undergraduate Sustainability Student Placement Scheme is running for a second year in 2023, with organisations that offered to

host a student in 2022 but that were unsuccessful in securing one being offered the first chance to take part prior to any advertising being done.

With the distribution of books for SDG Goal 16 to primary schools in January 2023, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals Book Club initiative will be complete. None of the books on UN Publishing's suggestion list for the final goal, Goal 17, are in print.

Environment:

UBIOM, DEFA and wider stakeholders supported and participated, in 2021 and 2022, in a project by Liverpool John Moores University, Leeds Beckett University, the Bluecoats gallery and others, capturing on eclectic podcasts the legacy of Malcolm Lowry on care for the marine environment. The project so far is expected to be launched at the end of January 2023. We are discussing, with those running the project, ideas for possible extensions in 2023 such as underwater recording projects; the installation of local 'listening stations' so people can hear undersea life; musical/creative projects, etc., if further funding can be obtained at their end.

Events:

Subject to staff availability, UBIOM hopes to attend a full programme of summer events in 2023. Volunteers from SPG willing to help staff stands would be very welcome.

Health and wellbeing:

The UBIOM Project Officer and the 2023/22 UBIOM UCM Masters student Emma Sayle were the opening presenters at the Isle of Man Government Wellbeing Conference on 23rd November 2023, presenting a 'personal' version of the sustainability toolkit created for businesses.

Lecture:

The second UBIOM Lecture will be held on 25th January 2023 at the Manx Museum. Dr Roger Barker, Director of Policy and Corporate Governance for the IoD, based in London, will speak on 'The role of businesses in creating a sustainable future'. The lecture will be preceded by a reception sponsored by Zurich in the Isle of Man.

Nature:

The fourth UBIOM Young Nature Writer challenge will be launched in May 2023 in Manx Wildlife Week and the closing date for entries the end of the school holidays in September 2023. The initiative is run with Manx Wildlife Trust, Manx Ornithological Society and the Isle of Man Examiner. Seven winners/runners up in the 2022 competition received generous prizes at an event held on 17th October 2022.

Partner scheme:

Applications from organisations wishing to take the Biosphere Pledge and become Partners continue to come in healthily and running this scheme and the necessary record keeping forms the majority of the UBIOM Project Assistant's time. The UBIOM Project Officer and Project Assistant also regularly meet with boards and directors of organisations keep to get involved as Partners, to enhance their understanding of what the commitment entails. And they support the growing number of communications from Partners and their PR agencies regarding how their Partner Pledge is steering their positive actions. There are currently 327 Partners, with a further five applications being progressed.

Refill Isle of Man:

While UBIOM signed a lengthy legal contract at Refill's instigation to become an 'international' licence holder for this scheme, removing the £800 a year licence fee it had initially paid, it has recently been contacted by Refill to advise it may now need to pay a £2500 a year fee to run the scheme, as Refill needs to recoup more costs. Given the protracted nature of agreeing the legal contract just two years ago, clarification is being sought from Refill. Officers continue to struggle with the resource to proactively recruit new Refill Stations, as this requires one to one visits and contact, often lengthy as they are busy shops, cafes, etc., and often ask us to wait. While we have proactively recruited new Refill Stations during personal visits to suitable premises, out of hours, other Refill Stations have closed down, so the number of Stations in the Island remains steady, at 150. The Biosphere volunteer 2022/23 has done great work streamlining and improving record keeping. UBIOM hopes to run further awareness involving Stations for World Refill Day 2023 on June 16th.

Research:

UBIOM has offered to be more closely involved in the fifth UCM Research festival in 2023 and has mooted the possible involvement of its new UK MAB Chair Professor Marc Metzger.

Aoibhe Maher, a Human Geography graduate who works full time for a corporate Biosphere partner, is planning to conduct research in 2023 on the Biosphere's ability to strengthen cultural links and local wellbeing in residents through the Biosphere status. This will be achieved by liaising with UBIOM, and collecting further data and resources for the research question by various methods as decided by Aoibh. This may involve interviewing some partners or the general public to gather their thoughts.

Rubbish Group:

In August 2022, UBIOM published an initiative to ask retailers to carry Biosphere anti-littering messages on till receipts and the like, as this forms a large part of littering around towns and villages. Only four organisations have signed up, although many more replied to say they are doing away with receipts unless specifically demanded.

The UBIOM Project Officer has not had time to return to the more substantive piece of work the cross-sector group was created for, creating a campaign or education programme.

Talks:

UBIOM regularly receives invitations to deliver talks but are unable to fulfil them all, trying to deliver on those that will attract positive and far reaching engagement. The UBIOM Project Assistant delivered an assembly at Andreas Primary School on 14th November, and a talk to IFGL's ESG steering group on 8th November, resulting in them signing up as partners. The UBIOM Project Assistant also delivered a talk to current partners Lloyds on 3rd November, on request by the new head of Ops who wanted to know how they could be more involved in their partnership. The UBIOM Project Officer was unable to deliver a talk to the Manx Footpath Conservation Group due to ill health. Several talks are scheduled for later in 2023.

Tourism:

UBIOM continues to work with Visit Isle of Man on work streams such as Visitor First. It attended the four regional industry 'Coffee and Cake sessions, hosted by Visit Isle of Man in autumn 2022. It has also delivered Biosphere training to staff at the Isle of Man Welcome Centre and is discussing how it can support the organisation handling the 60 cruises coming to the Isle of Man in summer 2023 in spreading the word about Biosphere.

Youth involvement:

UBIOM successfully advertised and interviewed for two youth SPG members. See item 11.

UBIOM has declined several approaches from students on the Biosphere Management course at the University of Toulouse, France, for 20-week internships as the sum it could pay would not allow the student to rent accommodation of a suitable standard or enjoy life. This approach is supported by the UK MAB Committee.

This is a brief summary of the main work of UBIOM. A detailed log of all activity is maintained and can be sent to you on request.

Jo Overty and Breeshey Kermode
Project Officer and Project Assistant
UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man
28th December 2022.