



**UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man**

**Stakeholder Partnership Group**

**Update from Biosphere Project Officer**

**Headlines:**

**Staffing:**

During Covid-19, the Biosphere Project Officer continues to work full-time from home and interest in, and engagement with, the project remains positive. At our meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020, we advised you that the 0.5 of week limited-term Administrative Officer, who was seconded to the Climate Emergency Consultative Transformation Team in August 2019, would return to the Biosphere project in February 2020, so staffing would be back up to the full complement of 1.5 officers. That officer has stayed with the climate change team for that portion of her week. Subject to the budget, which is under review, it is hoped to recruit a full-time Administrative Officer to the Biosphere project.

**Budget for 2020/21:**

The budget agreed by DEFA for UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man in 2020/21 is £30,000. With Covid-19 forcing the cancellation of some planned activity, this should allow us to fulfil other current plans. It is anticipated that the budget will be re-established at £50,000 in 2021/22.

**Local Vision and Strategy:**

Changes to the document advised prior to/during our meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January are being advised to the graphic designer in the Cabinet Office and he will produce a final draft, which will be circulated to members. Reducing Covid-19 workload now means we will reinvigorate this. Other materials, plus a revised website, will flow from this. We will launch this as soon as possible and practical.

**UNESCO attendance/involvement:**

The Isle of Man was selected to host, in April 2020, the spring biannual meeting of the UK and Ireland Man and the Biosphere Committee, which would have been attended by representatives of fellow UK and Ireland Biospheres as well as representatives of the UK National Commission for UNESCO. The gathering would have been an excellent opportunity to show off the Island's nature, wildlife, food and drink and the collaborative working of the Stakeholder Partnership Group. Much of the Project Officer's time this spring was around organising the formal meeting, informal gatherings and visits. The meeting was cancelled due to Covid-19.

The Secretary-General of the UK National Commission for UNESCO was to have attended Tynwald Day as an official guest and was to have stayed on to spend time in our Biosphere, but pared back arrangements for the day mean it will take place without guests' attendance.

The autumn 2020 meeting of the UK and Ireland Man and the Biosphere Committee will be held in Cambridgeshire Fens, a candidate Biosphere (announcement over admission to world network due summer 2022). 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.

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man's 'Biosphere Badge' for Guides and the work of Beach Buddies both feature in a report being published by the UK Commissioner for UNESCO on/around 18<sup>th</sup> June, entitled 'The National Value of UNESCO to the UK'.

### **Membership of UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Stakeholder Partnership Group:**

As per the direction of the meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January, invitations to join the SPG were issued to the Institute of Directors' Isle of Man branch, Isle of Man Municipal Association, Isle of Man Arts Council and Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce. Three organisations have enthusiastically accepted the invitations and a reply is awaited from the fourth.

### **Other updates:**

#### **Nicole Stott:**

The Project Officer/Ecosystem Policy Team have provided substantial 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.

#### **Awards:**

The UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Awards would normally be launched in June 2020, with an entry deadline of August 2020. It was felt that the Covid-19 situation would leave already under pressure organisations with little appetite for the awards in their conventional form. The Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture has considered a suggestion that we instead hold an event celebrating the contribution Biosphere Partners have made to the community-wide effort to tackle Covid-19 and a more detailed suggestion is being worked up.

#### **Sustainability/circular economy training:**

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man convened a meeting with the Department for Enterprise, University College Isle of Man, Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce and One World Centre in March 2020 to discuss upskilling businesses regarding sustainability and the circular economy. The first planned step was a survey of businesses to ascertain the areas in which they lack knowledge and the best format for delivering training. It was then planned to arrange relevant sessions, probably with off-Island experts. Covid-19 has placed a great strain on most businesses and they have other priorities now, but this will be progressed when it is appropriate. The Project Officer is undertaking an online diploma in corporate sustainability while working at home.

#### **Education:**

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man joined a discussion on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020 led by Manx Wildlife Trust and the Department of Education and Children on strengthening links between organisations delivering environmental education. It was agreed this should come under a

Biosphere umbrella, with the Biosphere website to host a page outlining organisations and what they deliver.

### **Internships:**

After a pause at the onset of Covid-19 in the Isle of Man, University College Isle of Man student Nikole Cervantes, who is working towards a Masters in Business Entrepreneurship, has resumed her internship project with UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man: assessing the mutual benefits of businesses linking with Biosphere. She has good engagement and makes good progress. Nikole regularly updates us on her progress and will provide a written report at the end of her interviews (phase one) before moving to an implementation phase (phase two).

Unfortunately, Covid-19 meant we were forced to cancel the four to six-month internship planned for Biosphere Masters student Romain Gandolfi, University of Toulouse, France, which had been due to commence March 2020 as part of a cross-Biosphere collaboration.

Culture Vannin's Biosphere intern Sarah Mercer has remodelled her Mann's Green Footsteps project to focus more on the Island's response to and recovery from Covid-19 and the implications for the future of the planet. A further invitation to participate in audio interviews has been extended to the SPG.

### **Partners:**

New Partner applications continue to be received and processed, even during Covid-19, and the project now has 223 Partners, with a further six applications being processed.

### **Sustainable Development Goals Book Club:**

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man continues to purchase Sustainable Development Goals Book Club titles for 33 primary schools, albeit these await distribution.

### **Projects and collaborations:**

#### **Biosphere wall-hangings:**

Mannin Quilters' Biosphere wall-hangings exhibition was opened by the Chief Minister in February 2020 and was at the third of four venues when Covid-19 halted it. Laxey Hodgson Loom Gallery also mounted a month-long 'Biosphere Fibrefest' event to coincide with it hosting the hangings, and this showcased local fibres and skills through workshops and talks, although this was sadly cut short. Schools were invited to create their own artwork, inspired by the project. The hangings had also been entered into a UK festival, also now cancelled. The wall-hangings will have a permanent home in the Legislative Buildings.

#### **Isle of Man Flower Festival:**

The Island-wide festival, due to be held in July 2020, but cancelled, had a Biosphere theme and the strapline 'A special place for people and nature'. The Project Officer had supported the preparations for this. It is not yet known whether the theme will be carried over to 2021.

#### **Manx LitFest:**

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man had been due to co-host an event featuring an author from an environment background during the festival, from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020. However, the festival is cancelled.

**Refill Isle of Man:**

On the advice of the Regulation Directorate of DEFA, we have contacted the 150 Isle of Man Refill Stations to ask them to cease to offer Refill during Covid-19. The Stations have been removed from the Refill app. The future of the scheme in the Isle of Man is uncertain, as it is unclear how rapidly businesses will reopen or whether they will wish to continue to offer Refill, but we hope that we can get back to normal at some point in the future, with appropriate procedures. At the same time, with legal officer assistance, we are negotiating a new 'international' licence, a departure from the fully-supported licence we currently operate under. This must continue as we will be 'out of licence' at the end of June 2020.

**'Biosphere Badge'/home-schooling resources:**

We have 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. These are also useful for home schooling.

**Chamber of Commerce Charity Forum:**

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man has joined this forum, which will link member charities with organisations wishing to carry out corporate social responsibility work; provide advice and networking.

**Events:****Manx Wildlife Week – 8<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> May 2020:**

The UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man event, a talk by Dr Clem Fisher, on birds and their place in culture, was postponed, as was the week itself. It is hoped to rearrange the talk, either as part of a rearranged Manx Wildlife Week or as a standalone event.

**Biosphere Lecture 2020:**

Natalie Fee, founder of the charity City to Sea, which runs the Refill scheme, was to deliver the lecture at the Manx Museum on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020. We are investigating the feasibility of holding the lecture online. Zurich International is continuing its part-sponsorship of the lecture.

**Inter-Island Public Health Forum:**

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man was to have participated in this event, being held in the Isle of Man on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020, now cancelled.

**Small Countries Financial Management Programme:**

Biosphere was to have been a feature of this gathering of practitioners, being held in the Isle of Man from 28<sup>th</sup> June to 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020, but now cancelled. The 2021 meeting in the Isle of Man has already been planned and the project will continue to work with the organisers over possible involvement.

**Festivals/shows 2020:**

Events that UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man and/or the Ecosystem Policy Team were due to attend, including Environment Festival (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> May), Southern Agricultural Show (25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> July), Royal Manx Agricultural Show (7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> August), Our Island, Our World Festival (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> September) and Isle of Man Food & Drink Festival (19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> September) are cancelled.

**Talks/workshops 2020:**

Since the January 29th meeting, workshops have been held at Marown Primary School and talks delivered to various community groups. The Project Officer was also guest speaker at Girlguiding Isle of Man annual awards evening/dinner. Booked talks with community groups during Covid-19 will be delivered online, subject to this being suitable for the groups.

**'Biosphere Bee' community picnic, 2021:**

The brief agreed at 29<sup>th</sup> January meeting is with the Cabinet Office's graphic designer to develop although the Covid-19 situation means we must keep this plan under review.

**Postcards from the Isle of Man:**

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man is liaising with a possible partner over a challenge to depict life in the Isle of Man in postcard photo form, for a display. There is potential to do something innovative that will promote the Island to would-be residents and visitors, important as our economy recovers.

**Marketing/publicity:****Traditional media:**

Professor Peter Bridgewater, former global director of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme, and a Manx resident, has approached Manx Radio to request a weekly slot to discuss how the Isle of Man's Biosphere status can be used to pursue new ideas. This would include ideas outside of Government's governance but we would contribute where applicable.

The summer 2020 edition of The Quilter magazine, published in June 2020, features the Mannin Quilters' Biosphere wall-hangings project.

The relaunch of Fishing for Litter by DEFA is featured in the May 2020 edition of Zero Plastic News, the newsletter of the Zero Plastic Working Group of the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves.

The Project Officer-curated Manx Life #MyBiosphere feature, which appeared in Manx Life from May 2018 to December 2019, continues in a revamped lifestyle section in Business 365 magazine and on its new website.

Lansons, the Isle of Man Government's UK agency, continues to promote UNESCO Biosphere to media organisations considering featuring the Isle of Man.

**Social media:**

Three social media channels are maintained, seven day a week. Since Covid-19, UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man has run a popular blog series, #CloserToNature, connecting people who are isolating/staying in with nature and the outside world for wellbeing, enlisting authors from across the Manx community. This is part of a bigger campaign run with Manx Wildlife Trust and Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch. We have also repeated #MyBiosphere blogs and are creating other new content to try to keep people connected with Biosphere issues.

#MarineMondays and #SaturdayStroll features commence on social media in June 2020. The former casts a spotlight on the Isle of Man's 10 Marine Nature Reserves and was

launched on World Oceans Day (8<sup>th</sup> June). The latter will feature guest authors' favourite walks.

**Online promotion:**

Blogs by the Project Officer have appeared on the Chamber of Commerce website and in Douglas Town Centre Management's newsletter.

**Newsletter:**

We produce a monthly newsletter, a curated mix of our own and Stakeholders/Partners' news. Unsettling events of April 2020 meant we didn't publish a newsletter but we resumed publication in May 2020 and welcome SPG members' input and content.

Jo Overty  
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UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man  
June 2020.