



**UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man
Stakeholder Partnership Group meeting
Wednesday 14th July 2021, 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 24/2/2021-30/6/2021

Headlines:

Local Vision and Strategy and improved website:

'Working Together for a Sustainable Future', UBIOM's first local vision and strategy, was published and our greatly improved website went live on 30th June 2021. The vision and strategy complements the global aims of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme with a local layer of aims and ambitions under five headings – economy, education, engagement, enjoyment, environment. It and the website, marketing materials, advertising, etc are visually appealing and will therefore show off the Island well. It is anticipated UBIOM will carry out/partner with other organisations to carry out one major project per 'E' per year, in addition to all existing projects. A community rollout will follow this launch.

Technical sub-group of SPG:

This is the subject of a verbal update at item 10.

UNESCO attendance/involvement:

EuroMAB, the biennial conference of European and North American Biospheres, due to be held in Austria in September 2020 and then September 2021, has been put back again to spring 2022. It is hoped UBIOM can play a role and be showcased, as it did in Dublin in 2019.

The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee spring 2021 meeting was held online but it is anticipated that the autumn meeting will be held in person in Scotland in October.

The UBIOM Project Officer will attend some online parts of the International Workshop on Participation of the local population and stakeholders in European UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, being held in Germany from 5th-8th July.

The UK Committee submitted a bid for a stand at COP-26 in November but was unsuccessful. The Isle of Man assisted with the bid.

An invitation to Tynwald Day 2021 was again 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. Unfortunately, he was unable to accept the invitation this year.

2021 is the 50th anniversary of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme. Two UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man activities, our webinar series with Dublin Bay and Kerry Biospheres and our Young Nature Blogger 2021 challenge, are officially accredited 50th anniversary events.

Staffing:

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

Budget for 2021/22:

As reported to you in February 2021, the UBIOM budget has been re-established at £50,000 in 2021/22, from £30,000 in 2020/21. A sizeable sum of this is committed to the new strategy and improved website.

Other updates:

Awards:

The UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Awards have been 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. They will be launched on 6th July 2021 with traditional and social media coverage and a video and close on 20th August, with judging on 13th September and an awards ceremony on 4th October. UBIOM SPG members are asked to promote the awards across as many platforms as they can.

Business:

Continuing the good work commenced in 2020 by University College Isle of Man (UCM) Business Entrepreneurship Masters student Nikole Cervantes, who undertook a 40-week placement with UBIOM, another UCM Masters student, Emma Sayle, is undertaking a similar placement interviewing business Partners of UBIOM with a view to establishing a toolkit for engagement with UBIOM and issues around sustainability.

Further to a survey of businesses around their training needs, UBIOM, working with Department for Enterprise, UCM, One World Centre and Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce, launches 'Sustainable Man', a pilot series of six workshops delivered by public and private sector experts, in September and October 2021. Promotion of this will begin in July 2021, with priority booking offered to survey participants and Biosphere business partners and 'Sustainable Man' certification/publicity for businesses attending all six workshops. The pilot will be the economy 'E' project for 2021.

Education:

A Biosphere Week, originally scheduled to be held in primary schools in summer term 2021 but put back because of Covid and other issues, will now be launched in schools in

2 'Working Together for a Sustainable Future'

September 2021 and held in 2022. Schools will be allocated an aspect of our Biosphere to celebrate any way they choose: written work, music, video, assemblies, exhibitions etc. The event will be the education 'E' project for 2021/22.

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 13 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 has launched a badge based on that of UBIOM.

Nature:

A paper on plans for a Nature Recovery Network in collaboration with Manx Wildlife Trust is a separate agenda item at item 7. This will be the environment 'E' project for 2021/22.

UBIOM is again running a Young Nature Blogger challenge in conjunction with Isle of Man Newspapers and Manx Wildlife Trust. This year for the first time, three other UK and Ireland Biospheres are holding the challenge, too, and, as well as local winners, an overall winner will be chosen by award-winning young nature writer Dara McNulty and UK MAB Committee Chair Professor Martin Price. The challenge has been advertised publicly and to schools and youth groups.

The Henry Bloom Library, part of Biosphere partner Douglas is basing its summer reading project around 'Nature', with workshops linked to Biosphere aims.

Community:

An update on plans for the Biosphere Bee community picnic is a separate agenda item at item 11 and this project will be the engagement 'E' project for 2021/22.

In an initiative with Hospice Compassionate Isle of Man, a 'Biosphere' Sit and Chat bench has been installed in the grounds of DEFA's building, Thie Slieau Whallian overlooking a new wildflower area.

The Biosphere Project Officer is booked to deliver several talks to community groups and societies, after Covid interruptions for the past year.

UBIOM will take part in a Junior Achievement-led summer workshop scheme for young people whose education has been affected by Covid.

Culture/arts:

Under the title 'Ellyn' (Manx for art), Isle of Man Arts Council is publishing a new collection of Manx contemporary art in book and exhibition form as a Biosphere project, with UBIOM support and input, and this project is the enjoyment 'E' project for 2021.

Island Utopias, the film made by Culture Vannin's Biosphere and Manx culture intern Sarah Mercer, has been selected for the Celtic Media Festival and will compete against films made by broadcasters such as Sky Arts, BBC Alba and S4C for the overall best film in the Arts category.

3 'Working Together for a Sustainable Future'

UBIOM endeavoured to take part in a global art project to mark the 50th anniversary of MAB by sending (as per UNESCO's request) a swatch of local fabric (Laxey Woollen Mills Manx tweed) to the project creator in Brazil and we also took photos and wrote an article but the Post Office advised we could not send animal products to Brazil, so we were thwarted.

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

UBIOM continues to promote culture/art/creativity via its newsletter.

Tourism:

UBIOM continues to work with Visit Isle of Man and will be an important part of Visit's post-Covid-messaging. The UBIOM Project Officer has written a blog on sustainable tourism to promote the Island in off-Island media.

Partners:

New Partner applications from organisations wishing to take the Biosphere Pledge and the project now has 280 Partners, with a further seven 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:

Premises offering Refill Isle of Man were instructed not to do so during Covid outbreaks/lockdowns in spring 2021 but are now able to offer it again. There are 137 Refill Isle of Man Stations, a small decrease on the pre-Covid figure as some premises have closed down.

Due to the stop/start nature since March 2020, it is felt the scheme is in need of rejuvenating and a small number of community volunteers have been recruited from Biosphere Buddies to operate in the north, south, east and west to visit existing stations and recruit new Stations. They will attend training by UBIOM in July 2021.

The Isle of Man adopted Refill's 'Refill Refreshed' expansion of the scheme from reusable drinking bottles to include premises offering refills of lunchboxes, groceries, cleaning products etc but there are few premises offering this in the Isle of Man and, despite publicity, so far no new Stations have signed up to advertise that they offer this widened service.

Biosphere Lecture:

Ongoing border restrictions 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 use. Both speaker and sponsor preferred an in-person event. UBIOM will continue to look to reschedule this.

Events:

The tri-webinar series with Dublin Bay and Kerry Biospheres marking the 50th anniversary of the UNESCO MAB Programme has now delivered six of the 12 webinars. While all Biospheres participate in all the webinars, Isle of Man will next be 'hosting' in September with a webinar by Culture Vannin.

Several spring events UBIOM had been scheduled to attend were cancelled.

UBIOM will hold an event during Manx Wildlife Week 2021. 'Nature Through a Lens' at the Manx Museum on 8th July will showcase the work of five leading local photographers, in line with the 'conservation' and 'education' elements of the Man and the Biosphere Programme. It is still 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.

UBIOM will also be at the Royal Manx Agricultural Show on 13th and 14th August, the Our Island, Our World Festival on 11th September 2021, and the Isle of Man Food & Drink Festival on 18th and 19th September 2021 (where it will promote Biosphere Bee).

Communications:

UBIOM updates its three social media channels at least six days a week, delivering our own and stakeholders' and wider Government message and marking significant, Biosphere-related, dates in the calendar (eg: World Environment Day) with educational content.

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 1,100 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
June 2021.