**Mid-term revision of the Dyfi Biosphere Coordination Plan 2014-2019**

1. **Introduction**

One element of ecodyfi’s work programme for 2015-17, grant-aided by Natural Resources Wales, was to lead a review of how the Dyfi Biosphere works. The Dyfi Biosphere Partnership wants to make sure the area benefits as much as possible from this important international status, and also to ensure successful formal reporting to UNESCO in 2019.

*This document reports this work to NRW. While Partnership members and other stakeholders have been involved throughout, they have not yet had the opportunity to discuss the report itself.*

It reviews how the Dyfi Biosphere has been working, describes its priorities to May 2019, when it reports to UNESCO, and sets out a vision for improving its value and effectiveness for the medium and long term. In doing so, it explores how partners in the Dyfi Biosphere can take forward some of the opportunities identified during the pilot work on the sustainable management of natural resources carried out in the Dyfi Biosphere by Natural Resources Wales.

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3. **Summary**

UNESCO agreed to expand the geographical area of the Dyfi Biosphere in May 2009, and at the same time endorsed the area’s proposal for innovative and collaborative action for sustainable development. In 2017, the following purpose statement was adopted, as a key way to describe what the Dyfi Biosphere is:

“The UNESCO Dyfi Biosphere inspires people to work together in creating sustainable futures we can be proud of. It connects people with nature and cultural heritage while strengthening the local economy.”

It captures a complex and very wide-ranging mission in relatively straightforward language, so as to engage a general audience. It was inspired directly by the Man and the Biosphere programme’s ‘Brand and Story Toolkit’.

“People” includes those working in businesses and organisations, so the purpose includes facilitating joint working and co-production, as well as fostering emotional engagement by individuals.

The Dyfi Biosphere seeks to add value to existing activity through collaborative working and by levering the value of its international status.

Until now, most of the activity carried out explicitly in the name of the Dyfi Biosphere has aimed to raise awareness of the status, to stimulate individuals to consider their relationship with their natural and cultural heritage, and to assist economic development. This has been quite successful, despite a chronic lack of core funding, because partners have used their own resources and also have drawn in project funding for specific projects. Collaboration has been a recurrent feature of this work.

In contrast, most of the practical land and water management (and strategic planning for it) has been carried out by farmers, landowners and public bodies without explicit reference to the Biosphere, and with only limited collaboration with others. In Wales and elsewhere, the appropriate scale at which to manage natural resources for services such as natural flood control and biodiversity is considered to be larger than single farm holdings and nature reserves. The Dyfi Biosphere covers a whole river catchment, and has governance and communication structures that should make it easier to collaborate, while using the international status to attract support.

**This review highlights one main opportunity and one main challenge**:

* In light of the statutory requirement for public sector bodies (and therefore for any other organisation they support) to ensure their actions bring about multiple and long-term benefits, organisations can use the Biosphere status to carry out some of their responsibilities more effectively through **co-production and collaboration**;
* The Dyfi Biosphere will not be able to facilitate this collaboration or to engage the wider public, and Wales will not be able to meet its international responsibilities, unless there is **stable and adequate funding** for the initiative.

It is suggested that to some extent partners need to make **a strategic choice** between two prime purposes for the Dyfi Biosphere:

1. In practice, focus mainly on projects and engagement activities that **encourage and facilitate greater appreciation, use and care of the natural, built and cultural heritage** by the local community, businesses and visitors; or

*in addition*

1. Take seriously the UNESCO Biosphere mission of trying out new ways of “reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use”, through **practical public sector, voluntary sector and landowner collaborations**, and through associated research and monitoring.

Key benefits available from the first purpose are:

* Enhanced leverage to pull in funding for a wide range of purposes;
* Stimulus to awareness raising and educational initiatives;
* Enhanced tourism image and profile;
* Enhanced opportunities for niche branding of local products and services.

Additional benefits from the second purpose are:

* Learning how collaboration can deliver multiple benefits from efficient use of resources;
* Stronger compliance of public bodies with the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Environment Act;
* Cohesion, resilience and locally-appropriate solutions to the challenges raised by leaving the European Union.

It is argued that

* both purposes are necessary, that
* the public sector is interested in the second purpose but has not put it into practice yet,
* that such place-based pilot work would benefit Wales as well as the Dyfi/Aberystwyth area, that
* the first purpose requires core funding for communications as well as project funding
* the second purpose requires core funding for facilitation and coordination as well as pro-active participation by public bodies, and that
* neither purpose is being funded at the moment.

1. **The review process**

The review became a standing item at meetings of the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership and the Officer Support Group during 2016 and 2017.

A questionnaire was used at the 2016 Annual Meeting and sent to partners.

Review Workshops were held for Tourism, Education, Communications and the Public Sector. The latter was called a Strategic Workshop.

1. **Biosphere activities**

If we consider public activities carried out by core partners using the Dyfi Biosphere brand, the engagement and impact have been good in several areas, notably tourism and education, but poor in others, notably agriculture and conservation. The lack of core funding has been the main reason for this.

The second reason for progress appearing to be piecemeal is that many partners have not chosen to brand their activities as Dyfi Biosphere, even though they are consistent with the vision and objectives.

Thirdly, partners have not pooled budgets or ‘bent’ programmes, in ways that could lever in additional funding and/or ensure that wider programmes are best suited to the local situation.

This means that much of the activity affecting the state of the Dyfi Biosphere is partially disconnected from the Biosphere’s communication, engagement and reporting mechanisms, especially in agriculture and conservation.

The 2014 Action Plan is appended, with a commentary added to show the status of each action. In addition, here is a list of the main Biosphere projects.

Giants in the Forest:

The first project branded as Dyfi Biosphere used the arts to involve people in the natural environment. From May to November 2012 three enormous heads made of willow branches and other biodegradable materials grew into a patchwork of native flowers and plants as they nestled high up in trees in Pantperthog, Machynlleth and Eglwysfach.

Glyndŵr’s Way assets study:

In 2014, ecodyfi used Visit Wales grant aid to gather information about things on and near the Glyndŵr’s Way National Trail that are of interest to visitors – natural and built heritage, places to stay and shop, public transport and so on. The Report maps these assets, and will help any business that wants to develop walking tourism across Mid Wales.

Darganfod Dyfi / Explore Dyfi:

The former Countryside Council for Wales used European Commission grant aid to consult people about walking routes and heritage in the Dyfi Biosphere, and then to improve selected routes. The 16 resulting walks were published, and are available to download from <http://www.dyfibiosphere.wales/project-archive>

Legends of the Biosphere:

Visit Wales and Powys County Council grant-aided ecodyfi to organise events for visitors that drew on the rich cultural heritage and creative vibrancy of the area. Some short tongue in cheek videos are available from <http://www.dyfibiosphere.wales/legends>

Legends of the West app:

The app was developed jointly by ecodyfi and Ceredigion County Council, helped financially by Visit Wales. It brings our legendary landscape to life by delivering stories, activities and information to mobile device as people explore the region. Using GPS and Beacon location technology to show relevant content depending on your location, 'Legends of the West' enables people to engage more deeply with the culture of the region and to explore the places and spaces associated with 12 fascinating legends, including Taliesin, Owain Glyndŵr and Cantre'r Gwaelod. The app is available free of charge from either the [App Store](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/legends-of-the-west-chwedlaur-gorllewin/id1209844170?mt=8) or the [Playstore](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.loclyfd3e25944ce0427487a34f0f37b1a2d6" \t "_blank) - search for Legends of the West - Chwedlau'r Gorllewin.

Activity tourism:

During 2015/16, ecodyfi used Visit Wales grant aid to bring together guides, instructors and providers of outdoor adventures in the Dyfi Biosphere. They agreed to work together to let more people know what a great range of experiences and habitats are available in this unique and compact area. The videos produced are available from <https://www.youtube.com/results?q=Biosffer+Dyfi&sp=SABQFOoDAA%253D%253D>

Community management planning for Tŷ Gwyn woodlands:

Coetiroedd Dyfi Woodlands led work with the communities of Forge and Machynlleth to develop a transparent woodland management plan for Coed Tŷ Gwyn to meet the needs and interests of all. The project, which engaged 648 people across both communities, was coordinated by and was funded through the Forest Education Initiative Partnership Fund and Glasu’s Community Resilience Fund. All participants were made aware of the Dyfi Biosphere, and many became interested in how such community planning could be applied to other woodlands in the Biosphere. The report is available from <http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/f2889b_161049e0966d48e18f83a6371290682d.pdf>. The project acted as a pilot for COBWEB’s digital citizen science project.

COBWEB project:

The Citizen OBservatory Web was a 4 year research project funded by the EU’s FP 7 Programme which came to an end in October 2017.  It was concerned with enabling citizens to collect environmental data using mobile devices, for use in research, decision making and policy formation. The project was focused upon the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, and researched in four of these areas, primarily in the Dyfi Biosphere. The project is presented as a comic here: <http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/f2889b_a3b67de78b414939b0bb73298d48775a.pdf>

Cymerau/ Hydrocitizenship project:

The Cymerau project aimed to engage communities in the Borth and Tal-y-Bont area in discussions about water. A number of artists were commissioned; funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to work with communities over a twelve-month period, September 2015 – August 2016. A digital 'water map'; [Map Dŵr](http://www.mapdwr.com/) has been created, to reflect the many local stories that emerged through this process: <https://crowdmap.com/map/mapdwr/>

Gwres – Affordable Heat:

Ecodyfi used grant aid from the former UK Department of Energy and Climate Change to help householders in the Dyfi Biosphere install heating from renewable sources. 21 of the 129 people that got in contact went on to install wood pellet, heat pump and/or solar heating.

LEADER-funded Development Project

A two-year Dyfi Biosphere Development Project began in February 2017 and has a full time officer employed by Ceredigion County Council. It engages children and young people in the initiative, and supports businesses to use the brand, especially in food tourism, where a cluster is forming to promote the use of local food.

Dyfi Biosphere Education Group projects

The Group is a diverse network of both formal and informal professional education providers in the Dyfi Biosphere. It has used grant aid from the former Countryside Council for Wales and from charitable foundations to take pupils to nature and agricultural sites in the Dyfi Biosphere and to run two successful conferences for children and teachers. Each site has published work plans that let pupils experience specific habitats in the context of the whole Dyfi Biosphere.

The Dyfi Biosphere Secretariat

As there is no core funding, the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership, the Officer Support Group and the Annual Meeting have been supported by the public sector members, in turn, normally for one year each. Since 2009, this was done by allocating the tasks of compiling agendas and minutes to an existing member of staff, and paying meeting costs directly. For 2015/16 and 2016/17, the organisations concerned chose instead to contract ecodyfi to provide this basic service.

No service for 2017/18 has been put in place yet, and voluntary effort which ought to help develop activities is being diverted to resolve this serious problem.

Other activities:

As the Dyfi Biosphere has no core funding, many activities are carried out on goodwill. Ecodyfi is often expected to represent the Biosphere, and is proud to do so where possible, but it does so at considerable cost – not only in unfunded time of staff and Board members but at the expense of its own profile. Here is a sample of unfunded activities, at July 2017:

* Provide a Secretariat service (supporting and organising Partnership, Officer Support Group and Annual Meeting)
* Develop Ireland Wales Interreg full funding applications with Dublin Bay Biosphere if either or both of the two Expressions of Interest submitted are approved. One concerns business development around a shared cycle route and the other concerns trialing visitor management and communications techniques at key nature sites
* Develop funding applications to Visit Wales, some in collaboration with other Mid Wales destinations, aligning with the Years of Experience and the Routes of Wales
* Develop other collaborative proposals for ‘external’ funding, including Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery Fund and charitable Foundations
* Advise and support local third sector bodies developing project proposals, so as to encourage multiple benefits and Biosphere connections
* Consult about, and then administer and publicise, a Dyfi Biosphere artist in residence position, for awareness and PR; liaise with artists involved with the Cymerau project, and others, about possible collaboration with other Biospheres in using creative means to raise awareness
* Participate in / provide input to Mid Wales PR campaign led by MWT Cymru.
* Support DBTA in creating and using a series of social media videos based on footage given by locals
* Support the Development Officer and (LEADER) Project. To include anticipated staff induction, and to cover the period between existing and next officer
* Consult Tywyn and Llanbadarn stakeholders about possible inclusion in Biosphere
* Engage Town and Community Councils systematically, creating proper communication with Partnership and a more coherent voice for the area e.g. for Growing Mid Wales
* Work with NRW on preparation of Periodic Report to UNESCO
* Create new Communications Plan based on the Coordination Plan review, in collaboration with the Tourism Association and supporting the Partnership’s Communication Group; try to create a communications budget (alongside the Development Project)
* Manage and develop further [www.dyfibiosphere.wales](http://www.dyfibiosphere.wales) and [www.biosfferdyfi.cymru](http://www.biosfferdyfi.cymru), including featuring all Charter signatories and Faces (Ambassadors) and monitoring usage
* Manage and use the Biosphere facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube accounts, ensuring partners amplify campaigns
* Develop, publish and sell a coffee table style book that tells the stories of aspects of the Biosphere through text and high quality photography
* Revitalise and promote the Charter, Supporter and Faces (Ambassadors) of the Biosphere schemes so as to deepen involvement of companies, associations and individuals; provide appropriate information and materials to help them promote the Biosphere
* Participate in networks and consultations where the Biosphere needs to maintain influence, gather information and contribute to post-Brexit planning and Welsh Government policies e.g. the LEADER Local Action Groups for Powys, Ceredigion and West Wales Fisheries and the tourism destination partnerships/network for Ceredigion and Mid/North Powys
* Liaise with other initiatives to prevent duplication and seek synergy e.g. Cambrian Mountains Initiative, Pumlumon Project and Re-wilding Britain’s Summit to Sea
* Re-vitalise collaborative action in education for sustainable development and global citizenship by supporting the Dyfi Biosphere Education Group to work with schools, and by supporting schools into the UNESCO Associated Schools Programme network
* Increase understanding and use of the natural environment for health and well-being through the fledgling Dyfi Biosphere Nature Based Health Network
* Support the Dyfi Biosphere Tourism Association in its efforts to raise the profile of the brand, to increase collaboration in the visitor economy, and to improve quality and good practice, liaising with strategic partners through the Destination Dyfi Biosphere sub-group of the Partnership
* Erect more interpretation panels, flags and other ways to improve brand awareness, including highways ‘entrance’ signage
* Deepen engagement with Aberystwyth, including with the University, the Business Improvement District and Menter Aberystwyth
* Continue to exchange learning and develop collaboration with other members of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, especially with those in Britain and Ireland and with Urdaibai BR, through the UK MAB Committee, EuroMAB and one to one
* Help guide research programmes in the Biosphere (e.g. Ecostructure), and work with academics to bring more research funding into the area as well as increasing local use of research outputs
* Provide the main contact point for the Biosphere (for phone, email, social media and post), and deal appropriately with input
* Assist PONT and the Pennal Partnership in developing and delivering their full proposals to the Sustainable Management Scheme, for flowering habitat (Dolau Dyfi Meadows) and natural flood control, respectively.

1. **Evidence and comment provided to the review**

Consultation indicates that the vision in the Coordination Plan for 2014-19 remains sound:

“The Dyfi Biosphere will be known and respected internationally, nationally and locally for the diversity of its natural beauty, heritage and wildlife, and its people's efforts to make a positive contribution to a more sustainable world. It will be a self confident, healthy, caring and bilingual community, supported by a strong locally-based economy.”

Public sector

A Strategic Workshop was held for those public sector organisations working in the Dyfi Biosphere that have obligations under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Tourism and economy

A Tourism Workshop was held on 23 January 2017 in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting of the Dyfi Biosphere Tourism Association.

Review/refresh the Dyfi Biosphere Tourism Plan – what do we want to do?

Generate/discuss project proposals suitable for Visit Wales funding 2017-19;

Recognition of the Biosphere area by Visit Wales as a “destination” is a significant advantage that must be protected.

Education

An Education Workshop was held in conjunction with the Dyfi Biosphere Education Group.

Communications

A Communications Workshop decided what the key messages should be for the key audiences identified.

Agriculture, conservation and the sustainable management of natural resources

From 2014 to 2016, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) worked with stakeholders to help develop a vision for how the natural resources of the Dyfi river catchment area are managed. This was one of three pilots of Wales’ new joined-up approach, aiming to build a healthy and resilient environment that can support economic and social prosperity for generations to come.

As part of its work programme funded by NRW, ecodyfi worked with the officers concerned to maximise participation in the consultations and to explore how the results could be used within and alongside the UNESCO designation.

Originally, many people expected that the report from this pilot work would lead to the development and implementation of an Area Statement based on the same area or on the Biosphere area (which includes Aberystwyth as well). Such Area Statements are required under the Environment Act. However, by now it is clear that these Statements will cover much larger areas. The Biosphere is likely to be involved in two of these, perpetuating the difficulty of being split by administrative and operational boundaries.

The pilot’s report identified the following challenges:

1. Retaining young people and providing employment opportunities
2. Potential decrease in capacity to produce food
3. Increased susceptibility to pests and diseases and wind-blow
4. Difficulty of expanding woodland cover
5. Potential changes to the tourist season
6. Less active land management
7. Potential declines in farm income
8. Ability to harness renewables
9. Potential declines in the fisheries resources and natural flood protection
10. Flooding
11. Water quality issues
12. Mine water pollution
13. Barriers to Fish Migration
14. Pockets of health deprivation and low levels of physical activity
15. Lack of activities/ access close to where people live
16. Lack of integrated information on what to do and where to go in the outdoors
17. Poor access to inland waters and the estuary
18. Impact of the changing climate on the historic environment
19. Fragmentation & reduction in biodiversity of habitat
20. Changes to the life cycles of plants and animals
21. Water level management at Cors Fochno
22. Invasive species

The work responded to these challenges by mapping a number of opportunities – places where changes in management could make a difference, as follows:

1. Opportunities to connect people to the outdoors, help communities become more sustainable and support health and tourism
2. Opportunities to maintain/ increase agricultural productivity, improve resilience and deliver public benefits
3. Opportunities to connect and improve the natural environment
4. Opportunities to enhance the historic environment
5. Opportunities to increase carbon storage, biodiversity and flood regulation
6. Opportunities to increase woodland cover and deliver multiple benefits
7. Opportunities to improve the water environment and deliver multiple benefits – detail view
8. Opportunities to improve biodiversity, recreation/access and the water environment in the coastal area.

An Appendix to this report maps how the issues and opportunities in the Dyfi study relate to the Dyfi Biosphere’s aims. There are two ways the Biosphere needs to build on this work:

1. Use the evidence to inform project development and collaboration;
2. Work with others in Mid Wales to explore how a watershed that is split across two Areas in this way can be treated coherently.

Here are some examples of the first approach:

Encouraging people to use the natural environment is one way of addressing poor activity levels and associated health problems in Machynlleth. The Dolau Dyfi Meadows proposal aims to do just this, through improving and promoting where to walk, cycle and ride – especially on routes from and Machynlleth and Aberystwyth. The Dyfi Biosphere Nature Based Health Network brings together providers of therapeutic activities in the outdoors, and is linking in to the ‘Green Health in Practice’ initiative of the Mid Wales Health Collaborative, to explore how such services can be used more widely.

Dolau Dyfi Meadows responds to the issue of habitat becoming fragmented and biodiversity being reduced, and to the opportunity to connect and improve the natural environment, through producing flowering habitat for pollinators and other invertebrates.

In the past, the Biosphere has brought together organisations to develop a catchment approach to non native invasive species, and Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust and ecodyfi made an unsuccessful application for Welsh Government funds to progress this.

Rivers trusts have been successful in bringing landowners together elsewhere in Wales, to improve water quality and habitat management, and in some cases to develop leisure opportunities. Given some capacity for such a piece of work, it would be possible to work with Afonydd Cymru to explore this potential here.

Aberystwyth University has a lot of information about mine pollution of watercourses. Bringing that together with Natural Resources Wales and landowners could produce practical proposals for remedial work.

The funding application from the Pennal Partnership to the Sustainable Management Scheme aims to improve natural flood risk management on farmland upstream from Pennal. The unsuccessful application from Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust to the same fund included a proposal to do something similar on the forested part of this sub-catchment. The opportunity to join these up still exists.

Sustainable farming projects around the core and buffer areas of the Dyfi Biosphere would address several of the opportunities identified in the report. Close collaboration and trust would be required, not only between farmers but with statutory agencies. This would draw on the experiences of Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust in the Pumlumon Project, much of which has taken place within the Biosphere area. The ‘Future Farmers’ above Tal-y-bont have been trying to attract funding for such work, with no direct success so far.

The appended Action Plan identifies which of the pilot’s opportunities are being followed up by the Biosphere activity concerned.

1. **Changes to context and reporting requirements**

The Partnership believes partners could benefit from using the area and its communication mechanisms as a test bed for the innovative approaches set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. In fact, UNESCO established Biospheres to try out this kind of innovation.

A situational analysis for Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere was carried out at the meeting of the Officer Support Group held on 13th March 2017, and added to subsequently by Partnership members through email.

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| --- | --- |
| **Strengths**   * Diversity: of organisations involved; of characteristics of the area * Uniqueness in Wales – levers awareness * Partnership * Brands: Biosphere; UNESCO * Resilience of the community, seen in reactions to flooding events and to loss of April Jones * Natural beauty * Strong local identity, community * Local food markets * Aberystwyth – University & other national organisations * Operates bilingually - helps to support high level use of Welsh in all sectors * Other ‘local’ UNESCO brands: University Chair, Memory of the World | **Weaknesses**   * Diversity – difficult to cohere * Partnership – lack of significant collaborations; low level of ongoing commitment and involvement by public sector * Brands are weak; little higher-level effort to promote Biosphere brand * Awareness amongst general population * Lack of core/dependable/realistic funding and dedicated time * Poor transport infrastructure * Failure to make Biosphere as relevant to Aberystwyth town as to the rest of the area * Low population density * Straddles 3 Local Authorities and other institutional boundaries e.g. NRW * Failure to attract significant interest of farmers * Failure to realise potential of CAT * Overdependence on (underfunded) ecodyfi * Mid Wales ‘off radar’ of Welsh Government |
| **Opportunities**   * Well Being of Future Generations and Environment Acts * Well Being Plans of Public Service Boards * Area Statements to be developed * Natural beauty & attractiveness * Sparky people and other local initiatives * Capacity of local people; use of brand * Brexit * Aberystwyth: University; ‘cultural capital’ * Local food markets * Cross border & international partnership working * Greater involvement of voluntary sector * Strong sense of community in Bro Ddyfi * Influence values of younger generation * Work for wider aims of UNESCO * CAT linkages * Summit to Sea | **Threats**   * Taking wrong or too broad a focus; superficial activities * Not delivering tangible & sustainable outcomes * No long term or consistent funding/capacity that would allow strategic action * Climate & sea level changes and flooding – to Core Area * Loss of youngsters * Money leaking out of local economy * Brexit * Over-dependence on ecodyfi * Loss of key champions / staff turnover * UNESCO 10 year review * Lack of core funding * Summit to Sea |

The Biosphere is obliged to report to the UK Man and Biosphere Committee – and in turn to UNESCO – about how it is working to the Lima Action Plan that guides the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The appended Dyfi Biosphere Action Plan identifies how the activities meet some of the indicators in the Lima Action Plan, but more attention will need to be paid to those indicators where the Dyfi is showing no progress. The appended ‘UK MAB report format’ demonstrates this.

1. **Ways of working**

Aims, objectives, indicators, monitoring and reporting

The Vision and the Purpose statements for the Dyfi Biosphere are set out in sections E and B of this document, respectively.

The Objectives developed during the 2008 application to UNESCO have been used since 2009. Two studies commissioned by the former Countryside Council for Wales attempted to define indicators for monitoring progress towards them. As discussed in the 2014 Coordination Plan, these are far from satisfactory.

This review recommends that they are used as Aims rather than Objectives. They are still useful because they describe in more detail what is being attempted and can help to prioritise effort. Measurable and time-bound objectives will be set for each project.

The 2014 Coordination Plan also noted two gaps in the coverage of these objectives/aims:

* Securing a sustainable and resilient environment (especially in relation to climate change);
* Understanding and protecting all aspects of our cultural heritage, including the built environment.

As a result, it is recommended that the following set of Aims replaces the current set of Objectives. Numbers 2 and 3 have been re-worded:

1. To keep and improve the area as a great place to live, work and bring up children – and to create more opportunities for them to stay here
2. To understand, appreciate and protect all aspects of our natural and cultural heritage, including the built environment and the Welsh language
3. To secure a sustainable, connected and resilient environment (especially in relation to climate change and especially through voluntary means)
4. To encourage discussion, agreement and co-ordination between people and organisations with different values and priorities
5. To develop a more self-reliant local economy; less dependent on fossil fuel, with growth driven by local knowledge and resources
6. To develop a more sustainable area; with residents and visitors choosing locally-produced goods more often and reducing our impact on the world
7. To use the Biosphere ‘brand’ to promote the quality of local agricultural & other products and tourism experiences
8. To ensure education and training in sustainable development, as well as research in the natural and social sciences, in support of the Biosphere vision
9. To take advantage of help and advice from UNESCO and other Biosphere Reserves across the world

Governance and resources

“The Biosphere” itself is not a legal entity, has no funds or staff of its own, and operates through its partners and through others keen to associate themselves with the initiative. This is both a strength and a weakness. It represents an invitation to benefit from better stewardship of the natural and cultural assets that we all depend on. There is flexibility for people and organisations to use their imaginations about how to take advantage of this unique-in-Wales international status.

One member of the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership, ecodyfi, has an agreement with the Partnership that allows it to act in the name of the Biosphere and seek ratification later. This has some advantages in fundraising for projects and allowing speedier actions. In practice, ecodyfi has provided consistent and vital support for the initiative, and unfortunately many people still confuse this social enterprise with the partnership initiative that is the Dyfi Biosphere.

The Partnership not being a legal entity and not having its own bank account appears to be a disadvantage in only once respect, but it is a critical one; Welsh Government is likely to offer voluntary organisations another opportunity to bid for core funding. It may consider funding the Biosphere, but may be reluctant to do so indirectly through a partner. There was some indication that this was one reason why the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate rejected the application made by ecodyfi on behalf of the Biosphere for the period July 2015 to March 2018 – although the main reason was that the Call strongly favoured organisations with an all-Wales remit.

The Biosphere Partnership has the responsibility to work up projects, get the right people together, agree to test out approaches at a local area level and to bid for resources.

It has done this in the tourism sector, by setting up the sub-group Destination Dyfi Biosphere. However, in practice, the coordination of this group has fallen to ecodyfi, supported by the Dyfi Biosphere Tourism Association.

This has been the tendency generally – to work as if there is a Dyfi Biosphere Coordinator to do the leg-work, while not securing the funds required to appoint one – whether directly or through a partner acting as accountable body and employer.

The nomination (application) form to UNESCO in 2008 stated that financial resources were still under discussion at the time. However, an annual budget of £140,000 was envisaged, part of which would be ‘in kind’ rather than in cash. It anticipated that central Biosphere functions would need at least one full time member of staff, and probably two.

It was assumed that the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and Welsh Government would in the first instance provide money for central activities (co-ordination, administration, networking, publicity, facilitation and help with fund-raising). The document noted that CCW had provisionally allocated a budget of £30,000 per year for the first 3 years of the project.

Other partners, especially local authorities, would provide staff time, expertise and facilities “in kind” and use their best endeavours to secure funds for project activities.

In practice, while CCW and others had funded the community engagement phase leading up to 2008 quite generously, after the 2009 endorsement there was no formal agreement between the partners to fund the core activities, and suddenly there was an absence of core funding. The new Action Plan recommends a formal process to address this.

*including relationship to (confusion with) ecodyfi; local Councils*

Doing things differently in the Biosphere?

development control, strategic planning, consensus and controversies case studies Nant y Moch wind farm, Dyfi Bridge

Spatial considerations

The 2019 report to UNESCO is an opportunity to request any changes to the area covered by the status and/or how it is zoned.

A larger area would have a better critical mass of (for example) food producers, and might encourage stronger support from the public sector, but at the expense of diluting the very scarce development and coordination capacity, and potentially alienating of the Dyfi/Aberystwyth community.

Expansion to include Tywyn and Llanbadarn Fawr is on the Biosphere Partnership's agenda now, but it would need a very strong rationale to take it much wider. Tywyn is part of the natural circulation area for visitors, it has two key leisure assets in the Magic Lantern cinema and the Tal-y-Llyn Railway, and a number of pupils from the Biosphere attend the High School there. Llanbadarn Fawr is part of the greater Aberystwyth population, so the division is somewhat arbitrary, and it contains a church that is significant to cultural heritage, as well as a campus of Aberystwyth University.

While there is a requirement for a formal boundary for reporting purposes, activities carried out in the name of the Biosphere are allowed to include people and organisations nearby that would enhance the activity or cluster concerned, for example by being best practice examples. Tourism is an obvious case in point, as visitors don't recognise administrative or institutional borders.

The zonation of the Dyfi Biosphere has been challenged on the grounds of a weak rationale, and that the Partnership and statutory partners have not used the Buffer Zone to guide activities or policies. Natural Resources Wales is the natural body to initiate a review, but has not done so to date.

1. **Action planning**

Biospheres are sometimes described as testbeds for sustainable development, and are expected to be innovative. The policy context has moved the whole of Wales towards the Biosphere way of working, but the Dyfi Biosphere retains the aspiration to be an exemplar for trialling and demonstrating the sustainable management of natural resources, and in doing so, to realise the social, economic and environmental benefits this provides.

While many people have not yet seen results on the ground, the Biosphere does have the governance and enthusiasm to trial new ways of working that take advantage of its international status and help partners be more effective.

In order to maximise this potential, the main focus should be on:

* Raising further the awareness of the status and its potential benefits, especially within businesses and the rest of the community;
* Creating change on the ground that demonstrates some of these benefits;
* Being a pilot area for the ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act;
* Being a cross-border testbed for the Area Statements under the Environment Act;
* Creating the closer collaboration between partners that this will require;
* Securing resources to facilitate these changes, including (as a minimum) a Secretariat service for the main Biosphere groups that is not subject to annual delay and uncertainty.

Specifically, for 2017-19:

* Deliver a successful LEADER-funded two-year Development Project from February 2017 by engaging children and young people and by supporting businesses to use the brand, especially in food tourism;
* Re-vitalise collaborative action in education for sustainable development and global citizenship (the Dyfi Biosphere Education Group with schools)
* Improve the resilience and connectivity of estuarine and lowland ecosystems by producing the attractive flowering habitat needed by pollinators and other invertebrates, while linking the improved natural resources with health and wellbeing by encouraging outdoor exercise and activity on promoted routes (Dolau Dyfi Meadows);
* Increase the use of the natural environment for health and well-being through Dolau Dyfi and through the Dyfi Biosphere Nature Based Health Network;
* Encourage further collaboration in the visitor economy through the Dyfi Biosphere Tourism Association, increasing profitability and environmental sustainability (Tourism Plan);
* Erect more interpretation panels, flags and other ways to improve brand awareness, including highways ‘entrance’ signage;
* Deepen engagement with Town and Community Councils to strengthen the Biosphere’s legitimacy, perhaps leading to participation in Growing Mid Wales;
* Deepen engagement with Aberystwyth, including the University;
* Provide an appropriate Periodic Report to UNESCO by May 2019, having clarified who will lead this and how it is resourced, and consulting as appropriate over any changes proposed, such as the inclusion of Tywyn and/or Llanbadarn Fawr;
* Continue to exchange learning and develop collaboration with other members of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Dyfi Biosphere action plan 2017-19

Tourism Plan 2017-19

Communications 2017-19

The following points were generated at the Communications Workshop held on 22 March 2017

# The key audiences will be:

1. Visitors
2. Young people living here and ‘gatekeepers’ to them
3. Community (rest of), including interest groups
4. Aberystwyth as a special focus
5. Local businesses
6. Agriculture
7. Welsh speakers and learners
8. Media (i.e. journalists etc. as advocates, not just a channel)

# The key messages will be:

1. The Dyfi Biosphere is us and ours, in Aberystwyth and the Dyfi Valley
2. Let’s celebrate living sustainably, in our diversity
3. The area is unique
4. We want our collaborations and experiences to be useful to other areas
5. We depend on the rest of the world and are part of nature
6. Younger people are key to planning our future
7. Businesses can explore together how this international status can benefit them and the wider community

Owain Jones and the Development Project have some time and money. He will target children, young people and businesses (especially those in the visitor economy such as hospitality). Primarily:

* Activities for children over the summer;
* Training and video-making with a group of teenagers, possibly leading to an Ambassador scheme;
* Working with the Biosphere’s delegates to the MAB Youth Forum;
* Facilitating the creation of a food tourism cluster and a Trail linking places of interest

We have no other budget. We can re-launch a Friends scheme, asking for regular donations, with income being dedicated to communications. The Charter and Faces schemes have good potential to increase engagement but have nobody to develop them.

Increasing brand visibility is a priority.

* Ecodyfi has some money in hand to put up more interpretation panels and to produce a southern version of the joint attractions leaflet/poster/banner;
* Efforts to find funds to erect entrance signage continue;
* Opportunities exist to erect flags and banners at events and at venues.

Ecodyfi can continue to operate the Biosphere facebook and twitter accounts and to update the website, if paid to do so. Other partners could have access too. The Biosphere can benefit from Visit Wales funded PR/marketing projects for Mid Wales and for Ceredigion if it can provide input.

Partners and members of thematic groups could do far more to link to Biosphere channels and use the brand on websites, literature and windows (decals are available).

Taking it forward through 2019

1. **Next steps**

Sec funding

doc to stakeholders and partnership mtg Sept

1. **Appendices and references**

The Coordination, Communication and Tourism Plans being reviewed can be accessed from

<http://www.dyfibiosphere.wales/maps-and-management-plans>

UNESCO MAB’s Brand and Story Toolkit can be accessed from

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/related-info/publications/mab-brand-story-toolkit/>

What is a Biosphere Reserve?

[www.dyfibiosphere.wales/what-is-a-biosphere](http://www.dyfibiosphere.wales/what-is-a-biosphere)

[www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/biosphere-reserves](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/biosphere-reserves)

Sustainable management of natural resources – reports of the Dyfi pilot project can be accessed from [www.dyfibiosphere.wales/projects](http://www.dyfibiosphere.wales/projects)

Well-being of Future Generations Act:

<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>

Environment Act and Area Statements:

<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/natural-resources-management/environment-act/?lang=en>

[www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/section/11/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/section/11/enacted)

Constitution of the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership

Partnership members July 2017

ecodyfi Agreement with Biosphere Partnership

Status report on 2014 Action Plan from Coordination Plan

Tourism Plan 2014-15 status at March 2017

Dyfi Biosphere Cooperation Proposal for LEADER-funded Development Project

Learning in the Dyfi Biosphere Reserve – Education Group vision

Dolau Dyfi Meadows - summary

Tourism Action Plan 2017-2019

Activities since the last meeting x x