

Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere

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Dyfi Biosphere enters a new phase with Welsh Government support

The UNESCO Dyfi Biosphere has secured core funding from the Welsh Government for the financial year 2026-27. This is in support of its five-year development plan and marks a significant step forward, opening up inspiring possibilities for mid Wales.

First designated in its current form in 2009, the Dyfi Biosphere recognises the outstanding natural and cultural value of the Dyfi Valley and surrounding areas, bounded by Tywyn, Aberystwyth, Carno and the summit of Aran Fawddwy. It is the only UNESCO Biosphere in Wales, part of a UK network of seven and a global network of over 700 - home to hundreds of millions of people.

“A Biosphere is a living laboratory where the residents develop new ways of living with the natural world, bringing the economy and the environment into balance, so it is very much about how people work and flourish along with the natural world,” said Ann MacGarry, co-chair of the Biosphere’s Board.

For many years, the Biosphere operated as a largely voluntary project, bringing together local authorities, statutory bodies, voluntary organisations, farming unions and small businesses, supported by the Machylleth-based development trust Ecodyfi. During this time, it delivered a wide range of projects including work on outdoor health, citizen science, myths and legends, schools, and most recently food and farming.

However, without proper core staffing, progress was limited. At its UNESCO Periodic Review in 2019, it was clear that securing sustainable funding would be essential for the Biosphere’s future.

Help came from the Welsh Government in 2023 with a development grant. Combined with consultancy provided by the UK National Commission for UNESCO, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, this enabled the Biosphere to make progress on financial planning, audience engagement and digital communications.

This was followed by additional support from Ecodyfi which allowed the appointment of two part-time coordinators. Over the past two years, this has led to a significant expansion in activity. Recent work includes the completion of the Tyfu Dyfi food and farming project, participation in the Awyr lach outdoor health initiative, and delivery of Screams and Streams, a citizen science

project combining river health with swifts. It is now setting up its own section of the National Forest for Wales.

The Biosphere is one of a number of UNESCO sites in Wales, together with four World Heritage Sites, two Geoparks, two university chairs and the new City of Culture, Dinas Llên Aberystwyth/Ceredigion. As part of this network, and supported by the UK National Commission for UNESCO with funding by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, it recently organised a workshop on Building Peace with Nature, in collaboration with Aberystwyth University.

Matthew Rabagliati, Head of Policy, Research and Communications at the UK National Commission for UNESCO, said:

“We are absolutely delighted that the Dyfi UNESCO Biosphere has received this support and recognition for its important work in mid Wales. This endorsement from the Welsh Government highlights the vital, often unseen role the partnership plays in bringing together communities, organisations and businesses.

This milestone also reflects the contribution of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, through our Local to Global programme, in helping to strengthen the Biosphere’s foundations.

Biospheres are powerful platforms for collaboration, and we look forward to continuing to support Biosffer Dyfi as it enters this exciting new phase. Diolch.”

Further information is available from Jane Powell on 07929 857173 or James Cass 01654 01654 703965.

Notes for Editors

1. The Dyfi Biosphere website is at www.dyfibiosphere.wales and www.biosfferdyfi.cymru.
2. The Biosphere is part of a network of Biosphere Reserves in the UK overseen by the UK National Commission for UNESCO. See <https://unesco.org.uk/our-sites>.
3. For the Biosphere’s draft five-year plan, see <https://www.dyfibiosphere.wales/five-year-plan>.