



UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man  
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## factsheet

Among the Isle of Man's many special attributes is that it is the only 'entire nation' UNESCO Biosphere in the world.

Below is some information and I would be delighted to answer any queries you have.

### **Background:**

UNESCO is the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Perhaps the best-known of UNESCO's programmes is World Heritage Sites. Biosphere reserves exist under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme.

The programme began in 1971, initially concentrating on experimenting to find solutions to care for land, sea and species. It was expanded in the mid-1990s to also reflect areas' economy, culture, heritage and community.

The Isle of Man was admitted to the world network of Biosphere reserves in 2016 and is one of 701 Biospheres in 124 countries and one of eight UK and Ireland Biospheres (the Island reports to UNESCO via UK MAB).

### **What is a Biosphere?**

In order to become a Biosphere, a location must have two key features: **people and a special environment.**

The three central platforms of the Biosphere programme, globally, are **sustainable development, conservation and education.**

The programme encourages Biospheres to work towards the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or Global Goals, a blueprint for a better future for people and the planet.

It's sometimes stated that our Biosphere status means development can't happen. However, the Biosphere Programme is about balance and progression to a more sustainable future, not prohibition.

Although Biosphere sits in, and is funded from within, the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture, it belongs to the whole community.

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man is governed by a Stakeholder Partnership Group, chaired by the Isle of Man's Chief Minister and with membership from tourism, farming, conservation, education, commerce, culture, heritage, NGOs and the charitable sector.

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man is not enshrined in legislation and has no 'powers'. Instead, it is an influencer and a mechanism to prompt interest, care and action.

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man will undergo a periodic review (reaccreditation) in 2026 and is already working towards that.

### **What does it mean for the Isle of Man?:**

Our Biosphere status encourages us to learn about and cherish what we have in the Isle of Man and safeguard it for the future by making good decisions, as individuals, as organisations and as an Island.

It tells potential new residents and visitors that we are a special place for people and nature and have a conscience.

### **How is our special environment measured?**

Central to our designation was UNESCO evaluating whether we have the special environment warranted to be a Biosphere.

UNESCO MAB evaluates this by breaking Biospheres down into core, care and transition areas (in some Biospheres these have different names but mean the same).

This map, depicting core, care and transition areas, can be viewed in more detail on our website.



### **On land**

Core areas (red) are considered worthy of the highest level of protection, eg, Ayres National Nature Reserve, Calf of Man bird sanctuary, Ballaugh Curragh's Ramsar site, Areas of Special Scientific Interest.

Care areas (green) are areas such as Manx Wildlife Trust nature reserves, Manx National Heritage land, ancient monuments, uplands, glens, public footpaths, plantations, registered trees and water catchment areas.

Sustainable development zones (yellow) are our town and villages, roads and pavements etc.

### **At sea**

(87% of our Biosphere area)

Core areas (dark blue) (including IoM's 10 marine nature reserves\*) are considered worthy of the highest level of protection and contain important species/habitats or provide ecosystem functions for surrounding areas. They include high biodiversity sites, such as horse mussel reefs, act as nursery areas for species or contain stocks of adults which produce young which spill over into the adjacent sea. Extractive or commercial operations are strictly controlled and/or limited to low impact activities, such as recreation or ecotourism.

(\*although only the Isle of Man's first marine nature reserve, Ramsey Bay, was demarked a core area during the Isle of Man's formal designation as a Biosphere in 2016, nine more reserves, designated since the Island became a Biosphere in 2018, are considered 'core areas' and may be formally incorporated as such by UNESCO in years to come).

Care areas (light blue) are buffer zones between highest protection and normal activity. These zones manage potentially damaging activities at a moderate level, in order to reduce impacts on core areas, and ensure sustainable practices. For example, for fisheries management, tighter controls on the number of boats, time spent or amount of fishing, or catch quotas may be applied. Management may be via licence conditions, agreements, or by legislation.

Sustainable development zones (beige) accommodate, normal sustainable fishing, leisure activity etc (within the law). Enhanced management may occur in these zones as necessary to protect features or resources, e.g. annual fishery closed areas.

### **Partnership scheme:**

We invite organisations to be partners of UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man and have partners in five categories: Government, business, environment/culture, education and community.

We have 187 partners (August 2019).

Applicants take the 'Biosphere Pledge' and state how they are contributing to:



It is not essential to be contributing in all areas. It is, for some partners, the start of a journey. Partnership is free.

Individuals can sign up as Biosphere Buddies.

Both Partners and Buddies receive regular mailings from us and we collaborate with them over projects.

### **Current projects:**

UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man collaborates with all key sectors of the Isle of Man on projects and initiatives that connect people with nature, celebrate our sense of place and encourage sustainability.

Just a few current examples are:

**Refill Isle of Man:** Discouraging the purchase of single-use plastic bottle and reducing plastic pollution by signing up Refill Stations, Island-wide, providing free tap water.

**Biosphere awards:** recognising and encouraging initiative in areas of environment, energy, economic sustainability and education.

**Poetry Map:** With the Manx Bard and Culture Vannin. Has encouraged people to explore and appreciate places and species and write about them.

**Girlguiding Biosphere Badge:** Awarded to girls of all ages who carry out tasks relating to two or more of the Sustainable Development Goals (Badge is soon to be adopted by Scouts).

**Facebook:** Unesco Biosphere Isle of Man **Instagram:** biosphereiom  
**Twitter:** biosphereiom

Lots of interesting projects and collaborations are planned.

**Further information:**

Jo Overty, Biosphere Project Officer – 01624 686080/07624 463677 or [biosphere@gov.im](mailto:biosphere@gov.im)

**Social media:**

Please follow us and tag us on

**Facebook:** UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man

**Twitter and Instagram:** @biosphereiom

**Useful links:**

[www.biosphere.im](http://www.biosphere.im)

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/>

<https://www.globalgoals.org>