

Subject:	The Biosphere Board and Developing the Rural Economy		
Date of Meeting:	13 February 2015		
Report of:	Chair, Greater Brighton Officer Programme Board		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Nick Hibberd	Tel: 29-3756
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LA(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The Brighton & Lewes Downs UNESCO World Biosphere area is developing a revised governance structure, to be able to effectively deliver its sustainable development agenda across diverse sectors and administrative areas.
- 1.2 A formal link to the Greater Brighton Economic Board is sought to better integrate environmental and socio-economic objectives for the City Region and work together to deliver improvements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**2.1 That the Greater Brighton Economic Board:**

- (1) Notes the importance of designated Biosphere status to the City Region economy and to promoting the sustainable economic growth of the City Region;
- (2) Requests that the proposed transitional shadow Biosphere Board takes forward a programme of work that seeks to maximise the economic benefits of Biosphere status alongside its environmental and social objectives;
- (3) Asks the shadow Biosphere Board to develop a pipeline of projects that support Greater Brighton's sustainable economic growth, and;
- (4) Considers the opportunity that Biosphere status represents in becoming the overarching 'brand identity' for the area; to drive sustainability, economic development (especially tourism), local civic pride, and applied research and development.

3. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 3.1 The Brighton & Lewes Downs UNESCO World Biosphere site was designated by UNESCO's 'Man and the Biosphere' (MAB) programme in June 2014, becoming part of a global network of over 600 "sites of excellence" that seek to balance the needs of people and nature between socio-economic development and conservation and thus progress local sustainable development in practice.

- 3.2 The designation was the result of an application submitted to UNESCO by the Biosphere Partnership, which currently has over forty members from the public, community and private sector. A full list of members of the Partnership is attached as Appendix 1b.
- 3.3 Our Biosphere is notable for including a diverse tight-knit mix of environments, including major urban areas (one of only a handful of such sites worldwide), as well as being the first completely new site in the UK in almost 40 years and the first-ever Biosphere in South East England.
- 3.4 'Biosphere Reserves' are not statutory restrictive protected areas, but are places where people voluntarily work together in partnership to pursue "win-win" solutions that improve the quality of life and local economy, whilst enhancing the local environment.
- 3.5 All UNESCO Biosphere areas have three objectives, to:
- Conserve and enhance nature;
 - Support human development that is sustainable, and;
 - Encourage environmental knowledge, learning, awareness and engagement.
- 3.6 The Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere covers an area of 390 kilometres (150 square miles) of land and sea between the River Adur at Shoreham in the west and the River Ouse at Newhaven in the east. It extends north to the boundary of the South Downs National Park and southwards to include near-shore coastal waters. It thus brings together three distinct but connected environments:
- Countryside – part of the South Downs National Park;
 - Coast – extending 2 nautical miles out to sea, and;
 - City & Towns – Brighton & Hove, Shoreham-by-sea, Lewes, Newhaven, Peacehaven, Telscombe, Southwick and Shoreham Beach.
- 3.7 The Biosphere boundary covers much of the Greater Brighton economic area. A map showing the Biosphere boundary is attached as Appendix 2. Our Biosphere area is home to 371,500 people, as well as thousands of species of wildlife, and receives as many as 12 million visitors each year.

Biosphere Value for Sustainable Economic Growth of the Greater Brighton City Region

- 3.8 The Biosphere area covers the majority of the Greater Brighton economic area and is estimated to have an economic value of £7 billion.
- 3.9 Biosphere designation has significant potential to form the focus for not only environmental sustainability, but also for sustainable socio-economic development across the Biosphere area.
- 3.10 The local environment of our Biosphere is a primary economic asset, hence its conservation and sustainable management is vital to the future growth and success of the Greater Brighton economy.

- 3.11 The Biosphere environment provides many of the daily needs, in the form of “ecosystem services”, which are often taken for granted or undervalued by conventional economic analyses. Critical services that our local environment provides include:
- Water supply (of sufficient quantity and high quality), all of which comes from the chalk groundwater aquifer;
 - Local food from both land and sea, as well as wood fuel, that promotes distinctiveness and greater self-sufficiency;
 - Regulation of flooding and erosion through green space (‘green infrastructure’) and its sensitive management, buffering against increasing weather extremes;
 - Fresh air and open space, for health and recreation, and;
 - Attractive landscapes and diverse wildlife, acting as a draw for visitors and residents, providing pollination services and mitigating against pest outbreaks.
- 3.12 Our new ‘world-class’ Biosphere status provides an opportunity for more effective marketing of our City Region and its environmental qualities, to encourage visitor spend from tourism, promote local sustainable goods and services to both residents and visitors and attract new business investment in a high-quality location. It can also be used as a ‘unique selling point’ for external funding bids.
- 3.13 Tourism is the key economic sector where Biosphere status can be used to support development and diversification, including green and eco-tourism opportunities.
- 3.14 Many other Biosphere areas worldwide use this recognition as a marketing and branding tool in global tourism markets, with some countries particularly successful in doing so such as Sweden and Germany. Germany’s 15 Biosphere Reserves attract 65 million visitors each year and generate gross revenue of three billion euros, of which more than 100 million Euros can be attributed to their UNESCO Biosphere status specifically – a figure that far outweighs the public funding invested in managing them. Furthermore, a UNESCO survey in 2004 documented a diverse range of sites that are promoting “quality economies” locally, through marketing and branding of their goods and services in the sectors of agriculture and fisheries especially in addition to tourism.
- 3.15 At the same time as promoting the positives of our environment, the Biosphere is also focussed upon reducing negative socio-economic impacts by addressing environmental pollution by seeking more natural and sustainable solutions to reduce treatment costs and health impacts. A key example of this is our focus on improving groundwater quality through encouraging more sustainable land management by both farmers and urban managers.
- 3.16 It is essential to plan and invest strategically to increase the resilience of our environment and communities in the face of future environmental and social change, if we are to be able to maintain and develop our infrastructure and quality of life given the context of increasing impacts especially from climate change.

Biosphere Board Governance Proposals and Links with the Greater Brighton Economic Board

- 3.17 The Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere is undergoing a transition from a development proposal to a delivery programme. It is proposed to revise Biosphere governance to raise its profile and benefit from greater buy-in at senior level from key existing partners (on the Greater Brighton Economic Board), as well as attracting significant new partners (especially from the private sector). It is proposed that the Biosphere becomes the overarching environmental framework and body for the area, as an umbrella that links with diverse projects and groups. There is a need too to rationalise the number of existing partnerships involving local authorities (e.g. the City Sustainability Partnership and One Planet Living Board in Brighton & Hove), to avoid duplication and maximise efficiency.
- 3.18 Since establishing new arrangements and rationalising existing structures will take some time, a transition/shadow board will be set up for one year to oversee this change. It is proposed to start this change program in early 2015 to maintain momentum and be able to start delivering greater tangible benefits associated with the Biosphere as soon as possible. A diagram outlining the proposed revised governance structure is attached as Appendix 3 and a list of the proposed members of the transitional Board is attached as Appendix 4.
- 3.19 A formal link is proposed with the Greater Brighton Economic Board to promote understanding, co-operation and mutual benefit between the environmental and economic agendas for both policy and practice in the area. This is needed to help bridge the space between conventional understanding of our economic assets and the assets of our natural environment. In this way, the environment of the Biosphere can be fully valued and harnessed sustainably as an economic asset that is essential to the success of the Greater Brighton economy.
- 3.20 The Biosphere initiative has identified five key thematic priorities, based upon its five-year Management Strategy (2014-19), to directly add greatest value:
- Environmental awareness – of local people (especially children and young people);
 - Tourism & Recreation (visitors & residents) – economic & social development;
 - Green Infrastructure ('town to downs') – ecological networks, ecosystem services of green space;
 - Water (groundwater chalk aquifer, plus the coast) – water quality / quantity / public awareness, and;
 - Research & Monitoring – applied environmental studies (by our universities) that inform local management and development.
- 3.21 A Biosphere delivery plan is being developed that sets out a programme of potential projects based upon the above priorities, including the following significant examples:
- Development of the Biosphere brand, to engage local residents and develop a sense of civic pride and to promote the area as a destination for tourists as well as branding local sustainable produce (eg sea food);

- Development of a visitor guide based on the Biosphere brand for the area, which would include digital media as well as conventional publicity, marketing and interpretation (similar to the Jurassic Coast);
- A groundwater partnership project is underway with Southern Water, South Downs National Park and the Environment Agency;
- Joint funding bids – for example for environmental improvements, initial discussions have already taken place regarding an Interreg Channel funding bid with French partners;
- Coordination of Biosphere related research by Higher Education establishments, to help secure funding and promote the establishments as centres for excellence, and;
- A more integrated approach to environmental education with local schools, for example funding secured for work on the local water cycle.

4. CONCLUSION:

- 4.1 Biosphere designation has significant potential to form the focus not only for environmental sustainability, but also for sustainable socio-economic development across the City Region. The local environment of our Biosphere is the primary economic asset, hence its conservation and sustainable management is vital to the future growth and success of the Greater Brighton economy.
- 4.2 A formal link is proposed with the Greater Brighton Economic Board to promote understanding, co-operation and mutual benefit between the environmental and economic agendas for both policy and practice across the City Region.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The Biosphere Board will take responsibility for the allocation of resources for the delivery of the action plan. Activity will be funded from existing resources of partner organisations and additional funding required will be sourced through external fundraising. Any projects that proceed will be detailed in subsequent business cases and the financial implications reported separately to this board.

Finance Officer Consulted: Rob Allen, Principal Accountant, BHCC

Date: 02.02.15

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Pending its permanent structure being agreed by the partners it is proposed that a Biosphere Board in waiting is set up so that momentum is not lost. There is an opportunity for the Greater Brighton Economic Board to influence the transitional arrangements.

Lawyer Consulted: Bob Bruce, Deputy Head of Law BHCC

Date: 20 January 2015

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 No equalities implications have been identified at this stage of the process. As the business cases for individual projects are developed, lead partners will be asked to develop an Equality Impact Assessment on their project if appropriate.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Biosphere designation has significant potential to form the focus not only for environmental sustainability, but also for sustainable socio-economic development across the Biosphere area. The local environment of our Biosphere is the primary economic asset, hence its conservation and sustainable management is vital to the future growth and success of the Greater Brighton economy.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 5.5 None.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Full List of Biosphere Partnership Members
- Appendix 2: Map of Biosphere Boundary
- Appendix 3: Proposed Revised Governance Structure
- Appendix 4: List of Proposed Members of Transitional Board

Background Documents

None.

Appendix 1: Full List of Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere Partnership

Local Authorities:

Brighton & Hove City Council (LEAD)
Lewes District Council
Adur District Council
Horsham District Council
Mid Sussex District Council
East Sussex County Council
West Sussex County Council (tbc)
South Downs National Park Authority
Sussex IFCA
Newhaven Town Council
Lewes Town Council
Peacehaven Town Council
Telscombe Town Council
Ditchling Society (for Ditchling PC)
Hamsey Parish Council
East Chiltington Parish Council

National Statutory bodies:

Environment Agency
Natural England

Voluntary bodies:

Sussex Wildlife Trust
National Trust
RSPB
Butterfly Conservation Sussex
Friends of the Earth (Brighton & Hove)
Community Works (ex-CVSF B&H)
Railway Land Wildlife Trust, Lewes
South Downs Society
Brighton Peace & Environment Centre
Brighton & Hove Allotment Federation
Brighton & Hove Food Partnership
Brighton & Hove Wildlife Forum
HKD Transition
BioRegional

Education bodies:

University of Brighton
University of Sussex
Plumpton College
Archaeology South-East, UCL
Dorothy Stringer High School

Private sector bodies:

Jurys Inn Brighton
Southern Railway Ltd
South East Water Ltd.

Brighton & Hove Bus Company
Shoreham Port Authority
So Sussex
Communities Matter