



Cabinet report

Date	13 JANUARY 2022
Title	SUPPORTING THE ISLE OF WIGHT UNESCO BIOSPHERE
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR HERITAGE, ENVIRONMENT AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Isle of Wight UNESCO Biosphere Reserve was Designated on 19 June 2019 and is recognised as an example of where local communities have found a way to live sustainably within their local ecosystems.
2. The Council's [Corporate Plan 2021 – 2025](#) sets out that the council will need to both support and exploit our position as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve to lever in funding and support for the work we must do, including achieving our net zero aspirations.
3. We will work closely with Town, Parish, and Community Councils to encourage and support them in helping to deliver our aspirations and Further, we will challenge the utility companies and our partners to support us in making the Island a sustainable place to live and work. In so doing we will look to also address issues of fuel poverty and health inequalities by making homes more energy efficient.
4. More widely we will seek to use Biosphere status to by creating new opportunities for local people to make better use of the landscape to support their health and wellbeing, to address health inequalities, and to address wider issues of deprivation.
5. Every decision that the council takes will have regard supporting, sustaining, and enhancing our biosphere status as well as our climate and environment change strategy.
6. The proposed framework for embedding the UNESCO sustainable development principles into how the council works, makes decisions and develops policy to strengthen and support sustainable development principles for society, environment, culture and economic recovery is set out in the document entitled 'Supporting the IW UNESCO Biosphere'.

RECOMMENDATION

Option 2:

- Agree that the templates for decisions to full council provides sufficient regard for the Biosphere within the development of Policies, Strategies and Decisions taken by the council.
- Agree to adopt and build the document 'Supporting the IW UNESCO Biosphere, into the workstream planning of the work of the council.
- Create and support a Biosphere Steering Committee in accordance with the 'Supporting the IW UNESCO Biosphere' document. The Committee is to be administratively supported by the Council and is to work alongside the Mission Zero Hub currently under development.

BACKGROUND

7. The Isle of Wight UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (IW Biosphere) was Designated on 19 June 2019 and is recognised as an example of where local communities have found a way to live sustainably within their local ecosystems. There are seven Biosphere designations in the UK; the River Dyfi in Wales, Wester Ross and Galloway in Scotland, the Isle of Man, and North Devon, Brighton and Lewes Downs, and the Isle of Wight in England.
8. UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture. This means that the IW UNESCO Biosphere designation directly connects the Island to the work of the United Nations and most especially to the delivery of the [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) by 2030.



9. The UNESCO accreditation does not add to the existing suite of legal and policy protections that cover natural and cultural heritage; this is because the award of Biosphere status is in part justified on the grounds that biological and cultural diversity are already significantly recognised and protected through local systems of governance and public decision-making. The multiple biological and cultural designations that cover 75% of the Island provide that system and are therefore considered a sufficiently robust baseline position from which to make a better place to live and work by following Biosphere objectives.
10. The definition of the Biosphere Reserve and its purpose is stated as: ***'sites of excellence to foster harmonious integration of people and nature for sustainable development through participation, knowledge, well-being, cultural values and society's ability to cope with change.'***
11. The IW Biosphere area covers 915km² of land and marine environments (see fig 1) surrounding the Isle of Wight, this is made up of three component parts:
 - Core Zones (yellow below) - The Core areas are the highest levels of environmental protection, where restrictions on human activity are greatest. On the Island these comprise the inshore marine protected areas, coastal and estuarine designations, and inland European sites and SSSIs.
 - Buffer Zones (dark green) - The Buffer zones help to protect the core areas and are characterised by a less direct constraint on human interaction with the natural environment. Here these are the wider Solent and South Wight marine protected areas and the AONB and Heritage Coast.
 - Transition Zones (white) - The Transition zones incorporate all of the main centres of human population and infrastructure as well as more intensively farmed rural areas.

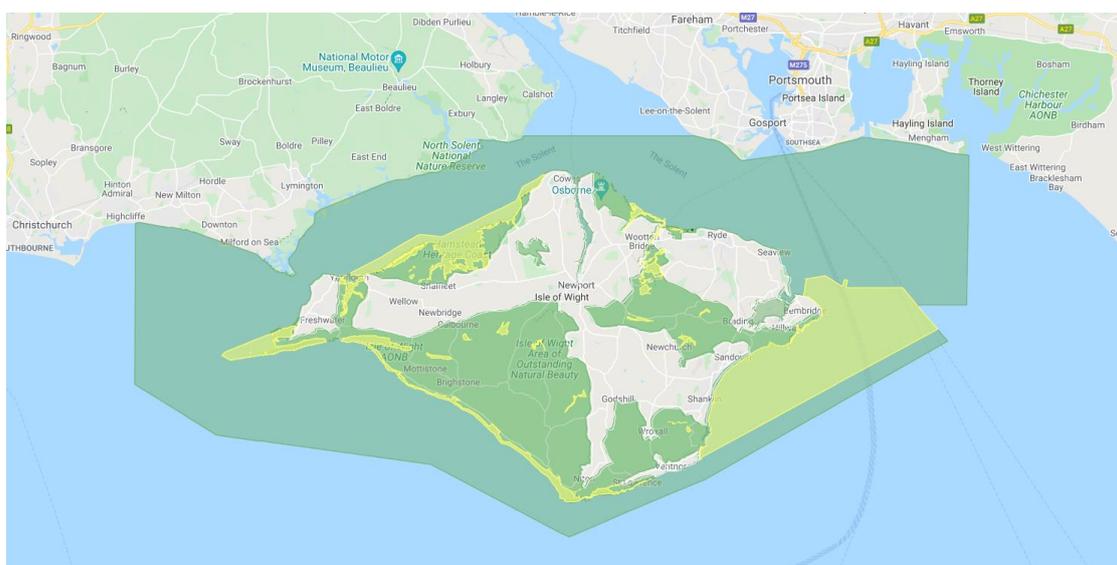


Figure 1: IW Biosphere zones

12. The purpose of the IW Biosphere development is to use the interaction between these zones to enhance sustainable social, economic, environmental, and cultural development that supports ecology, wildlife and for the people who live and visit these areas.
 - A conservation function – to preserve genetic variation, species, ecosystems and landscapes.
 - A development function – to foster sustainable economic and human development, including wellbeing
 - A logistic function – to support research, monitoring, education and information exchange related to local, national and global issues of conservation and development.
13. The [Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership](#) currently coordinate and facilitate the Isle of Wight UNESCO Biosphere Reserve on behalf of the Island's community. Local communities are integral elements in a Biosphere Reserve. The communities are key decision makers in how the Biosphere Reserve is run and governed, ensuring the Biosphere Reserve meets its functions and objectives. Each Biosphere Reserve should fulfil three functions that work together and reinforce one another.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

14. The Isle of Wight council has demonstrated its commitment to achieving the overarching purpose of the IW Biosphere status through its [Corporate Plan 2021-2025](#), which sets out that responding to Climate Change and enhancing the Biosphere is one of the three key areas for Action.
15. The councils Corporate Plan commits to having a regard to supporting, sustaining and enhancing our Biosphere status in every decision that we take. This has been actioned and reflected in the updated Cabinet Paper templates for decision making (see appendix 1: Cabinet report template).
16. IW Biosphere accreditation and the council's support of its delivery is primarily focused on in the corporate plan through the administrations aspirations 41 to 45 that commit to:
17. **Administration aspiration 41**

Support and enhance our biosphere and AONB areas. Support the active management and development of biosphere status and secure dark sky status Key activities

 - Annually increase the number of trees planted and maintained from April 2022 in accordance with a new tree management and planting plan to increase biodiversity, green corridors and of set carbon impacts.
 - Agree short term (from July 2022) and long term (from June 2023) environmental stewardship agreements (including tree planting) with Natural England.
 - One part of the Island will have a dark sky space designation by March 2024 following the completion of a positive business case and with secured funds by March 2022.

18. administration aspiration 42

Continue to develop successful waste management and increase recycling rates further Key activities

- Increase the number of garden waste subscription services by April 2023.
- Annually reduce the volume of non-essential waste sent to landfill to achieve net zero by April 2025.

19. administration aspiration 43

Commit to develop sustainable transport options with a focus on infrastructure to encourage active travel Key activities

- Complete a local transport plan (LTP) 4 by April 2022 based on the need for long term sustainable transport options.
- Annually increase by 20 per cent from April 2022, the number of towns, parish and community councils with local walking and cycling infrastructure plans which can be used to support capital funding bids.

20. administration aspiration 44

Promote the increased use of renewable energy in all sectors Key activities

- Secure commitment from all stakeholders to improve grid connectivity to the mainland and a roadmap for its achievement.
- Prepare capacity planning study for the Island in relation to renewable energy by end of February 2022 including a heat network options analysis for the Forest Road energy recovery facility.
- Increase the capacity in the local supply chain to deliver low carbon and retrofit works as well as the tidal energy industry by December 2022.
- All council facilities to use 100 per cent green energy or onsite renewable generation where possible by March 2024.
- Use the procurement process to increase the proportion of suppliers to the council that use 100 per cent green energy or onsite renewable energy generation by March 2025.

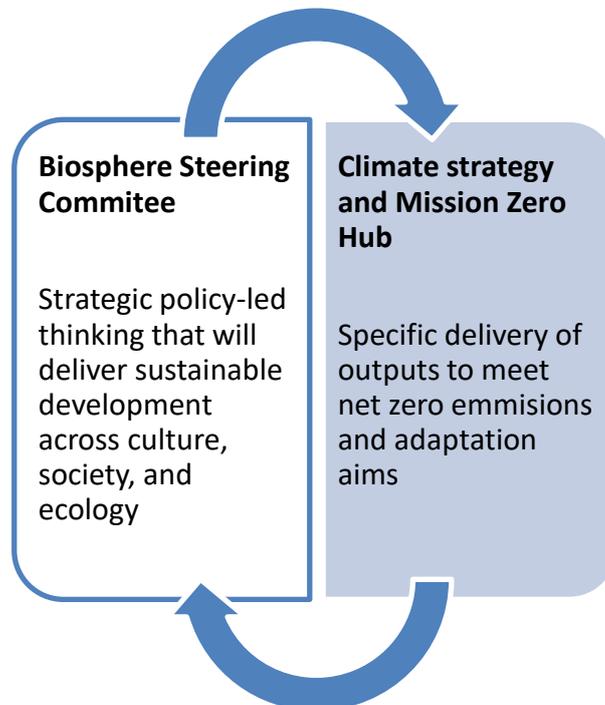
21. administration aspiration 45

Embed both the biosphere and the climate change strategy into policy, including the Island plan; advanced by appropriate action plans. All council decisions are to have regard to the biosphere and the climate change strategy Key activities:

- Publish and Promote the climate and environment strategy and fully launch 'mission zero' by April 2022.
- Introduce a new climate and environment impact assessment screening tool for corporate decisions by April 2022.
- Introduce climate change training modules to all staff, councillors and other stakeholders by August 2022 through the e-learning hub.
- Introduce carbon literate climate ambassadors to support decision making; undertake and complete carbon literacy training by April 2023
- Publish a policy matrix detailing how the climate and environment strategy, the Island plan, the sustainable transport plan and the biosphere plan are aligned and mutually supportive of each other by July 2022. Together forging the means to guide the maintenance and use of the biosphere.

SUPPORTING THE IW UNESCO BIOSPHERE FRAMEWORK FOR SERVICES AND DECISION MAKING

22. As set out in the corporate strategy, supporting the Biosphere is a key activity for the council which must be cross cutting across the outcomes for the council. The delivery of the key activities of the corporate plan are a mandate to the staff of the council to prioritise the work and service focus for the plan period that are monitored. Although there is significant focus on Biosphere in respect of Heritage, Climate, Environment, Transport and Planning services, the wide embedment of the UNESCO Biosphere principles into the wider work of the council will require a framework for service managers to develop their service plans regarding the IW Biosphere
23. The challenge is to incorporate the principles of the IW Biosphere and wider UNESCO sustainable development principles into the council's corporate DNA as a way of working without appropriating the designation itself. The council's Corporate Plan commits to this work being overseen by a Biosphere Steering committee drawn from all relevant sectors of the Island, including representatives of the environment, business, art and culture, and wellbeing.
24. To manage and direct the development of Biosphere status and advise the council on the sustainable development of the Biosphere through its work, it is recommended that a Biosphere Steering Group is appointed. The full organisational detail is set out in Appendix 1 'Supporting the IW UNESCO Biosphere'.
25. The Biosphere Steering Group will be administered by the Neighbourhoods Directorate, Environment and Waste Services team to align with Climate Change and Environment Strategy delivery, the Mission Zero Hub and Environment and Sustainability Forum.



26. The Steering Group will be allied with the Mission Zero Hub and be committed to enabling the local authority, island community and businesses to act jointly in the management of the IW UNESCO Biosphere. The Biosphere Steering Group will

encompass a wider membership of community groups, business, landowners and organisations in order to engage an appropriate range of relevant national, regional and local interests in the management of the IW Biosphere and facilitate co-operation and co-ordination between these stakeholders.

27. This Steering Committee approach mirrors and allies with the developing Mission Zero Hub Steering Committee structure that is being developed to support the delivery of the Climate and Environment Strategy and The two will work in an integrated way.

CONSULTATION

28. The Corporate Strategy which has committed the council to the Key Aim of [Corporate Plan 2021-2025](#), which sets out that responding to Climate Change and enhancing the Biosphere is one of the three key areas for Action.
29. The Corporate Plan and decisions to enshrine the Biosphere in its key actions was development by the council's senior management team and the Cabinet.
30. Further consultation with the AONB and Ecology specialists on the island has been taken account of in the development of the document at Annex 1 (Supporting the Biosphere).

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

31. The administration of the Biosphere Steering Group will require the equivalent of 0.2FTE to be provided by the council. This resource will be allocated from within the overall portfolio budget once it is agreed by Ful Council in February 2022.

Further funding would need to be sought from external partners or grant sources supporting the Biosphere Steering Group to enable any expansion of education or information dissemination.

32. Through the delivery of the corporate strategy via the mechanisms of work planning of key actions and activities via Directorate, Service and Team Planning will embed the principles of the Biosphere as art of the way we work rather than as a new activity.

IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

33. Supporting the UN Sustainable Development and the Biosphere principles will have a positive impact on young persons. The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989, article 12, places a duty for children and young people to have an active voice in decision making on matters that affect them.
34. This will be achieved by enabling social, cultural and environmental capital to be used to enhance the interaction between people and their environment to support sustainable growth in and beyond the boundaries of the IW Biosphere.
35. Key opportunities for education will arise through enhanced outdoor education, improved biodiversity and open spaces.
36. The health and mental wellbeing of young persons will be enhanced through connectivity with their communities, cultural history and outdoor environment.

37. Young people voices will be encourage on the Steering Committee through the youth council to ensure their view on the Biosphere and social, cultural and ecological development of their home are heard and taken account of in decision and recommendation making.

CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT & UNESCO BIOSPHERE IMPACT

38. Through supporting the Biosphere in the delivery of the way that we work as a council, the council will feed the principles and actions to support the Biosphere into its work planning and decisions making to ensure support for and enable the development of
- A high level of biological diversity
 - A high level of cultural diversity
 - An institutional, regulatory and political framework that recognises these
39. The delivery of this workstream will support the outcomes in the Climate and Environment Strategy for the council to be net carbon neutral by 2030 in its actions and the wider community by 2040.
40. Embedding and supporting the UNECSO Biosphere Designation through the way the council delivers its work will flow regard to the United nations Sustainable development Aims into the decision making and work planning processes of the council these aims are to:
- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
 - Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
 - Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
 - Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
 - Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
 - Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
 - Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
 - Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
 - Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
 - Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
 - Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
 - Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
 - Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*
 - Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
 - Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
 - Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
 - Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

41. Biosphere Reserves are governed by “soft law”. Member countries of UNESCO commit to apply their Statutory Framework for Biosphere Reserves. This means that the current UK habitat and landscape designations, such as: Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Marine Conservation Zones and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty form the law that governs the Biosphere.
42. The Man and Biosphere National Committee (UK MAB) ensures Biosphere Reserves are responding to UNESCO’s criteria and they are function properly.
43. Reporting on the delivery of actions and outcomes that support the IW Biosphere that the council has taken to the Biosphere Steering Committee will initially take place through the AONB to evidence that the UNESCO criteria is being responded to.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

44. This report introduces new Procedure that is implicit with the decision to adopt the Corporate Strategy and falls within the Equality Impact for that Strategy.

PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

45. Giving due regard to the Biosphere in the way the council delivers its work may have implications for the sustainability and operations of the council’s buildings, assets and disposals. This will be reviewed as part of the associated accommodation strategies as they are developed and moved through the decision-making process.

OPTIONS

46. Option 1:
 - Agree that the templates for decisions to full council provides sufficient regard for the Biosphere within the development of Policies, Strategies and Decisions taken by the council.
 - Agree that the IWC Corporate Plan provides sufficient support and guidance for the council in regard to supporting and enhancing the Biosphere
 - Agree that the further commitment of the council is not necessary
47. Option 2:
 - Agree that the templates for decisions to full council provides sufficient regard for the Biosphere within the development of Policies, Strategies and Decisions taken by the council.
 - Agree to adopt and build the document ‘Supporting the IW UNESCO Biosphere, into the workstream planning of the work of the council.
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RISK MANAGEMENT

48. Commercial Risk: Unintended consequences of implementation are unaffordable within the council's budget.
Mitigation: The review of the financial implications of Directorate, Service and Team actions that support the Biosphere must be costed and demonstrated to be delivered within existing service budget and delivery plans. Additional costs and new activity must be costed and bid for in the budget setting process.
49. Reputation Risk: The council's reputation is damaged by changes in the way services are delivered as a consequence
Mitigation: Positive outcomes will be promoted and linked to the Biosphere Branding and IWC branding to ensure both brands remain viewed as trusted leaders in sustainable development
50. Economic Risk; Sustainable development principles slow or hinder economic recovery
51. Strategic Delivery Risk: The implementation of sustainable development actions causes other Key Priorities and performance indicators of the corporate plan to become undeliverable.

EVALUATION

52. The council does not wish and cannot take full accountability or ownership of the IW Biosphere. This would close access of the IW Biosphere to the rest of the community that collectively have 'ownership' over this designation.
53. The council has committed to supporting the IW Biosphere and the Framework for supporting this as a council is best service through building IW Biosphere and Climate change actions into the work planning document that demonstrate the golden thread from corporate strategy down to service and team delivery.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix 1: Framework for Supporting the Biosphere

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[The Corporate Plan](#)
[The Climate and Environment Strategy](#)

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