



# The Dyfi Biosphere Consultation – your opportunity to take part

## INTRODUCTION

Did you know that part of the lower Dyfi Valley is internationally recognised as a ‘special place for people and nature’? UNESCO made it one of their ‘Biosphere’ areas in the 1970s – but nobody has ever used this designation to gain any real benefit for the area.

There are 482 such areas in the world, but **the Dyfi is the only one in Wales.**

Now UNESCO is saying “use it or lose it”. Either we need to tell them we are going to take advantage of this special status (and how) – or tell them that we don’t want to be part of this network any more.

The area has a rare and exciting opportunity: to become a ‘modern’ Biosphere Reserve. This document has been written to help you think about this and to ask for your opinions. **Please reply by 30th June 2007 if you can.**

A Partnership has been formed to consult local residents and businesses about the Dyfi Biosphere opportunities. The members are:

- Ceredigion County Council
- Powys County Council
- Gwynedd Council
- Snowdonia National Park Authority
- Welsh Language Board
- Countryside Council for Wales
- Welsh Assembly Government:
  - Department of Enterprise, Innovation & Networks
  - Department of Environment, Planning & Countryside
- Ecodyfi
- National Farmers Union
- Farmers Union of Wales
- Environment Agency Wales
- Tourism Partnership Mid Wales
- Forestry Commission Wales
- Allan Wynne Jones (co-opted to focus on cultural aspects)

**Delyth Richards** is the Community Engagement Officer. Delyth is happy to discuss the Biosphere Area with individuals or groups and can be contacted on:

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## SUMMARY

**O**riginally, the Dyfi 'Biosphere Reserve' designation was solely about environmental and habitat conservation. Nowadays, Biosphere Areas explore how local people can benefit from protecting the things they value – local knowledge, language and culture as well as the local and global environment.

If the people of the Dyfi valley want to keep and use this status, we have to ask UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) to approve a larger area than the present one. We have to show how people, whatever their interest – whether farmers, teachers, business people or residents of all ages – are involved in thinking about how to take advantage of it.

Bringing this status to life is a new and unique opportunity to bring people and organisations together to work towards a common goal. It's about identifying and being proud of what we really value about the area; its environment and landscape, its agriculture and business, its heritage and people – and deciding how to look after them in a changing world.

Biosphere status is entirely voluntary. No application to update the designation will go to UNESCO without community support. A 'Dyfi Biosphere Partnership' has been formed between community representatives, the Local Authorities and other public sector organisations, to consult local residents and businesses about the Dyfi Biosphere opportunities. Its members are listed on page 1.

Successful designation would not give the area a dedicated fund of additional money. However, it is likely to increase the chance of success of relevant funding applications made by local groups and businesses who work with the necessary organisational structures.

The current Biosphere Area is too small to qualify under UNESCO's new criteria. Currently, it consists only of protected areas (mainly the Dyfi National Nature Reserve, which includes Ynyslas, Cors Fochno and the estuary from Aberdyfi as far up as Dyfi Junction). Nowadays, Biospheres have to include a reasonable number of homes and business activities.

Most of the discussions about the future of this designation have been held within the area shown on the map on page 11. However, the size and shape of the overall area (and of the different "zones" within it) have yet to be decided. These are discussed later in this document in Section 4, 'Defining the area'.

UNESCO has always called these areas "Biosphere Reserves", but each area is allowed to use its own version of the name. For most people, the word "Reserve" brings to mind a piece of land protected by fences. This is definitely NOT what modern Biosphere Reserves are – and this is why the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership has been using the term "Biosphere Area".

You will find both terms in this document. Sometimes we even just call it "Biosphere" for short. These are all interchangeable. We need your ideas for a name – please see section 4.6, below.





## 1. RESPONDING TO THIS DOCUMENT

### 1.1 How to tell us what you think

Please answer as many or as few of the questions and points in this report as you wish, **preferably using the tear-out response sheet in the middle of this document**. Sometimes you are asked to agree or disagree on a scale of 1 to 5, where:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = don't know, don't mind or perhaps
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

Other questions offer you several options and you will be asked either to choose one (only) or to agree with as many as you like.

It would be helpful if you added some comments and suggestions as well, to explain your answers.

Please feel free to photocopy the Response Sheet for other people to use – or just write to us!

### 1.2 What will happen to your comments?

Local opinions are being sought in writing and in person, electronically and verbally. The Dyfi Biosphere Partnership will look at the responses to see whether there is a consensus about the way forward.

To proceed with an application to UNESCO, there would need to be declarations of support from the three Unitary Authorities (County Councils) and from Snowdonia National Park. Ideally there would be similar statements from the Town & Community Councils.

Other written evidence, including letters from societies, businesses, schools and individuals, will also be significant. Ideally, the comments should explain how the organisation or person expects to participate e.g. through marketing products, running a project, doing research, being part of the co-ordination structure etc. or explain what misgivings they have.

### 1.3 What is the timing?

**Autumn 2006** Presentations and discussions were held at public meetings and clubs and societies

**Winter 2006/7** Every house and business in postcode areas SY20 (8), LL35 (0), SY19 (7), SY20 (9) and SY24 (5) was sent a leaflet about the process

**April 2007** Distribution of this document and of a leaflet to advertise it, sent to LL35 (0), SY19 (7), SY20 (8) and SY20 (9).

**May 2007** A second round of events. People explore options on the new interactive forum on: [www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk](http://www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk)

**30 June 2007** Responses received after June will be too late to influence the decision about whether to go ahead, but they will be used to shape subsequent steps

**mid July 2007** Biosphere Partnership assesses feedback and opinions. A decision is made as to whether to ask UNESCO to renew the designation, via its UK Man and the Biosphere (MaB) Committee





If so, a draft of the application (called a Nomination Form) will be sent to public bodies towards the end of August and a final version will be sent to the Welsh Assembly Government at the end of October. They will forward it to the UK government and UK UNESCO bodies in mid December and it will reach UNESCO headquarters in time for them to consider in June and July 2008.

#### 1.4 The main question for you

The main question for consideration is:

**Question 6:** Should the Biosphere Partnership apply to UNESCO, asking for acceptance of the Dyfi area as a modern Biosphere Area?

**We suggest you read the rest of the report before answering it.**

The rest of this document has been written on the assumption that such an application is to be made. That is so that the other questions can be understood – not because the decision has been made already!

The content and layout of this document reflect the requirements of the UNESCO 'application form'.

## 2. A CO-ORDINATION POLICY

### 2.1 Breadth of subject matter

The Biosphere application form asks for the main features of a plan or policy to guide the area. In particular, UNESCO wants to know who influences land use at the moment, and how – and in what ways this may change.

The Dyfi Biosphere Partnership has wider ambitions for the Biosphere process than this implies. We recognise that Biosphere status is possible only because of the existing high natural value of the area, but we are committed to treating the cultural riches of the area with the same respect as the natural assets.

We are confident that UNESCO will agree with our position. UNESCO stands for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and has many programmes to support this side of its work. We also know that its staff understand the intimate connection between land use and culture, for example in agricultural practices.

Biosphere areas are sometimes described as “living laboratories of sustainable development”. The main challenge of sustainable development is reconciling biodiversity preservation with human needs. To improve understanding of the relationship between humans and their environment, UNESCO launched the programme Man and the Biosphere (MaB), which led to the Biosphere Reserve as a concept and tool. Sustainable development is often said to be about the interdependence of environment, economy and community (including heritage). Understanding this interdependence is itself a cultural issue.

**Question 2.1:** Should the Dyfi Biosphere be concerned with protecting cultural as well as natural assets?

### 2.2 Context

The area is already a special place. It has habitats of international importance that provide homes to rare species. Well over half the people speak Welsh. Its landscape is beautiful and impressive, yet welcoming. It is the ancient capital of Wales, where Owain Glyndŵr brought Wales together. Its institutions include Y Tabernacl and the Centre for Alternative Technology. Its Young Farmers and Urdd Gobaith Cymru groups are stars in the cultural firmament. This Fair Trade valley is known for its expertise in sustainable development. In a competitive process, the area recently won two designations as Tourism Growth Areas.

Yet some of these assets are under threat. Our climate is changing because of our western lifestyles. There are many pressures on the Welsh language. Hill farmers and foresters are reviewing their options to take account of changes within their industries.

Biosphere areas are part of this picture. They are guided by a UNESCO document called the Seville Strategy. It was drawn up in 1995 to describe the change in focus of Biosphere Areas from conservation to sustainable development. In other words, the designation is about encouraging and facilitating people to work together, to live in and manage the whole area sustainably.

### 2.3 A vision for the Biosphere Area

How might we describe ourselves in the year 2020? The following vision could guide the Dyfi Biosphere process:

“The Dyfi Biosphere will be recognised and respected internationally, nationally and locally for the diversity of its natural beauty, heritage and wildlife, and for 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.”

Possible benefits of modern Biosphere status include:

- Taking advantage of help and advice from UNESCO and other Biosphere Areas across the world
- Keeping and improving the area as a great place to bring up children and creating more opportunities for them to stay here
- Placing a greater value on our natural environment and on Welsh language culture
- Increased voluntary activity in nature conservation, for example in controlling invasive species or in creating ‘wildlife corridors’
- New mechanisms that encourage discussion and agreement between people with different values and priorities
- A more self-reliant local economy; less dependent on fossil fuel, with growth driven by local knowledge and resources
- A more sustainable area; with residents and visitors choosing locally produced goods more often and reducing our impact on the world
- Using the UNESCO ‘brand’ to promote the quality of local agricultural products and tourism experiences – both in the UK and internationally.



These points could become the objectives of the Biosphere area and the basis of an action plan to achieve them.

**Question 2.3:** Should the Dyfi Biosphere adopt the vision and objectives described?

#### 2.4 Safeguarding our natural assets

All aspects of the Biosphere designation are voluntary. For this reason, the Biosphere Partnership prefers to think in terms of co-ordination rather than management, seeking consensus in the interests of the whole community.

Because biodiversity is at the heart of the concept, a Biosphere co-ordination policy should describe how this is to be protected.

We propose, as a minimum, that existing protected area designations continue as at present. Some of these are described in the section called “Defining the area” later in this document. They can also be seen on an interactive map at <http://www.ccw.gov.uk/interactive-maps/protected-areas-map.aspx> and at [www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk](http://www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk)

Local Biodiversity Action Plans bring together a number of relevant measures and should be adopted as part of the Biosphere policy.

In addition, we would like to hear from you if there are particular natural features that you would like to see safeguarded. The Biosphere designation has potential to deliver “added value” for the conservation of plants and animals if (for example) collaboration brings about voluntary land management agreements.

**Question 2.4:** Are there any specific natural features you would like protected or enhanced?

#### 2.5 Safeguarding our cultural assets

The Biosphere Partnership would also like to hear from you if you feel that particular cultural features of the area need to be protected, developed or promoted.

This might include local customs, dialect and vocabulary as well as music and art forms. These may not all be in the Welsh language, though increasing the use of Welsh in all aspects of local life is bound to feature prominently in any action plan.

The vibrancy of local Welsh-language heritage and culture can be seen in the repeated successes of choirs, theatre groups and other competitors from the several Young Farmers Clubs at regional and national level. Its fragility can be seen in the difficulty experienced by many of these young people in finding houses or creating livelihoods in the area.

More recently, the area has seen an influx of highly educated, energetic and ecologically-motivated people. The resulting cluster of expertise is an aspect of the Dyfi Valley’s uniqueness – culturally as well as technically.

Building on the common ground and increasing understanding and collaboration between these two ele-

ments of the community has significant potential for the Biosphere, for example in building design and energy, but also in music, education and language.

**Question 2.5:** Are there any particular cultural features of the area that need to be protected, developed or promoted?



#### 2.6 Action Plan

Benefits will only come about if businesses and people get involved: it’s not the Biosphere status that’s important, but the related activities and projects that take place. Anybody can propose or help design these.

The next three sections describe some examples of activities that would help the community move towards the Biosphere vision. Others are described in Appendix 4. Some are underway already and others are simply ideas.

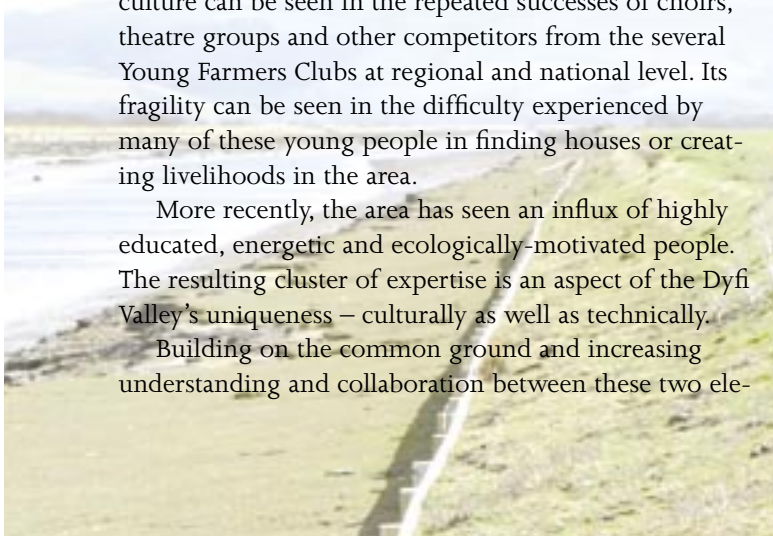
We mention them here to give you a better idea of the variety of opportunities that could be included in an Action Plan. If you have any comments or ideas to add please use the Response Form to say so. Ask us to pass your details on to the most relevant body if you like.

#### 2.7 Examples of activities: research

Remember, these are just some examples of possible projects that the Biosphere Partnership found during community consultations. They are mentioned here to stimulate further discussion.

##### A cultural audit

Much is known about the biological and geophysical aspects of the area, but most cultural aspects are poorly documented. What makes this community special? What sub-communities can be described? How do they relate to each other and to the environment? An anthropological study would provide a baseline against which to monitor change, would reveal riches to celebrate, and may reveal the need to protect certain aspects – as well as opportunities to increase understanding and communication.





### Records and surveys

Do you or your society keep records of anything that will increase our understanding of the area? Examples are fishing returns, wildfowling records, bird or butterfly surveys, and weather or soil temperature records. Let us know if you're willing to share them.

## 2.8 Examples of activities: education for sustainable development

### Dyfi Footprint

The World Wildlife Fund worked out that if everybody in the world lived the same way as we do in Wales, we would need three planets to support us. The Dyfi Footprint project aims to help local people measure their personal Eco Footprint and also to help individuals and groups identify how their footprint can be reduced in local, practical ways. Some of this work will be done by young people, who will be asked to imagine how we could do things differently.

## 2.9 Examples of activities: community, economy, culture and environment

### Dyfi Biosphere/River Festival

Festivals and events can bring people together to enjoy themselves, spread knowledge and attract visitors. A Festival based around the river system would also serve to link the diverse communities of the Dyfi Valley. Many of the events could celebrate the natural and cultural assets that underlie the Biosphere Area. One option is to build on the October half-term festival that was billed as Gŵyl y Golau in 2006.

### Welsh language action plan

The aim is to increase the use of the Welsh language in Machynlleth and district, by co-ordinating activities for local people and institutions in the area, based on identifying local circumstances and needs.

### Wood-fuelled district heating for Dinas Mawddwy

Buildings in part or all of Dinas Mawddwy and Minllyn could be heated from a single boiler, using locally-sourced wood chip as fuel. Hot water would be moved underground in insulated pipes, as in the scheme at Llanwddyn. Residents and the school could have more affordable heat, less climate-changing carbon dioxide would be released and farmers and foresters would benefit. Such a proposal could also provide a new business opportunity for landowners wishing to diversify into energy crops. Growing willow in strips adjacent to watercourses (on intensively farmed land) has potential to improve biodiversity in watercourses by reducing nitrate levels – while still providing an income to the business.

### Feasibility study into how local farmers could obtain a premium through using a Biosphere brand

In other countries, customers have been shown to value a UNESCO or Biosphere brand, but more work needs to be done to turn this possibility into a reality for the Dyfi Valley. How big is this niche market and how many



farmers could sell into it? What kind of co-operation between producers would be needed?

### 'Eco' tourism development and marketing

The Dyfi valley and Ceredigion have benefited from the Tourism Growth Area initiative led by the former Wales Tourist Board. The Dyfi Biosphere Area designation will offer further opportunities for investment and marketing under a UNESCO-related brand. Meanwhile, a plan to market the "green" aspects of the area is being brought together, based on the same values as the Biosphere. The Wales Coastal Tourism Strategy and the more local Cardigan Bay Coastal Regeneration Action Plan both mention the Biosphere and its tourism potential. The proposed All-Wales coastal path is one opportunity that may flow from these.

### River quality, fishing and river access

The Dyfi is known for its high quality fishing, but stocks have decreased dramatically over the years. Many factors are relevant, possibly including river water quality. In addition, while fishing tourism is big business in some areas, it can be difficult to get a licence on the Dyfi at times. Water-based activity tourism is also a significant contributor to many rural economies but is not permitted on the Dyfi. There may be scope to bring all concerned together to design a package of grant-aided measures which are acceptable to all parties concerned and are not detrimental to the river's ecosystem. These could aim to improve flood control as well as water quality, fish stocks and access to the river.

### Cycling and walking path between Machynlleth and Aberdyfi

Cycle Route 8 (Lôn Las Cymru) is suitable only for mountain bikes for this section and the main road has some dangerous bends. A safe connection would be a real attraction for visitors as well as local people. Any such proposal would have regard to the existing landscape and biodiversity.



### 'Dyfi Paths' heritage walks

Short circular walks from villages are useful for locals as well as for visitors. They can connect places where people may buy local goods or services with places of architectural, historical or environmental significance. Planning and interpreting them is an educative exercise for participants. Ecodyfi and three Community Councils are managing a project in north Ceredigion at the moment as part of the Ysbryd y Mwynwyr (Spirit of the Miners) programme.

**Question 2.7, 2.8 & 2.9:** Can you suggest any additional activities or projects?

## 3. ORGANISATION & FINANCE

### 3.1 Background

UNESCO asks that organisational arrangements are provided "for the involvement and participation of a suitable range of public authorities, local communities and private interests in the design and the carrying out of the functions of a biosphere reserve." The arrangements need to include "a designated authority or mechanism" to implement the co-ordination policy.

At this stage it is impossible to describe fully such organisational arrangements. If the Biosphere designation was to proceed, they would need to be negotiated over the next year or so with those who wish to be involved, and they will continue to evolve as participation increases.

However, an application to UNESCO will have to describe the main elements of such arrangements, based on some principles which can be agreed at this stage.

### 3.2 Principles

The Biosphere Partnership proposes the following principles:

- 1 Everybody living or working in the area should be given opportunities to be involved
- 2 There should be partnership arrangements to oversee progress towards agreed objectives
- 3 Such partnerships should be accountable to the local community as well as to whoever provides money to carry out actions
- 4 Best practice should apply, e.g. open communication, no one body should dominate, respect for all participants, fully bilingual process

- 5 Where possible, initiatives should be led by businesses or groups in the private, voluntary and community sectors
- 6 Landowners and public bodies need to be able to continue their day-to-day business and fulfil their legal responsibilities

**Question 3.2:** Are these principles appropriate?

### 3.3 Who decides what happens?

Here is one way these principles could be applied:

1 The present Biosphere Partnership (its members are listed on page 1) could become the main co-ordinating Partnership, perhaps through adding members from:

- the Town and Community Councils,
- any Biosphere Forums created, and
- recognised 'communities of interest' (see below).

2 One or more 'Biosphere Forums' could be formed, through which the Partnership would be accountable to wider community interests. For example:

- A Forum for Estuary users
- A Forum for owners and managers of the land-based Core and Buffer Zones (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 in "Defining the Area")
- A Forum for the community at large, perhaps with special focus on the Transition Area.

3 The co-ordinating partnership could either become 'incorporated' so that it could handle funds and employ staff, or engage an existing organisation to do that on its behalf (as a 'Secretariat'). It could manage its own projects and/or delegate these to appropriate groups.

The term 'communities of interest' includes groupings of relevant businesses (such as farmers banding together for branding purposes) and new or existing societies (such as associations of anglers or of outdoor activity tourism providers). Any such body would be encouraged to design and carry out activities that would enhance the Biosphere Area.

If businesses and societies wanted formal representation on the Partnership as well, they may need to show how they represent or communicate with other similar interests throughout the Biosphere Area. Otherwise, they would be encouraged to participate in decision-making through a Biosphere Forum or a specialist committee.

**Question 3.3a:** If the current Partnership evolves to become the co-ordinating Partnership for the longer term, what changes or additions (if any) should be made to its membership?

**Question 3.3b:** Do you have any other comments about the organisational arrangements described?





### 3.4 Managing projects

Although there is no central “pot” of money to run projects, Biosphere status is expected to enhance funding applications for relevant projects.

Any Biosphere staff will expect to play a role in stimulating and encouraging such activities, but in most cases the lead will be taken by businesses, community organisations or public sector bodies.

If an organisation wants its activities to be seen as part of a Biosphere management plan, it will need to:

- a) consult whoever is co-ordinating the Biosphere
- b) show how the activity or project works towards the Biosphere vision. In doing so, activities will be strengthened and better coordinated.

In addition, those co-ordinating the Biosphere may develop projects. In these cases, they will:

- a) decide which of the many ideas are the most relevant and useful
- b) assess who is best placed to carry them out
- c) help to find the resources needed.

In particular, whoever is co-ordinating the Biosphere will be looking for projects that may attract funding from these three sources:

- a) EC ‘Convergence funding’ (formerly Objective 1; available in Ceredigion and Gwynedd – and possibly in the rest of the Dyfi Valley if that would make a better overall project)
- b) EC ‘Competitiveness funding’ (formerly Objective 2; available in Powys)
- c) The Rural Development Plan (“Axis 3” and “Axis 4”).

Other funding sources may help the area build links with other communities, such as other Biosphere areas in Europe or in underdeveloped countries.

### 3.5 Central activities

Efficient administration, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, promotional activities and information provision will be important functions. The co-ordinating partnership could either become incorporated so that it could handle funds and employ staff, or engage an existing organisation to do that on its behalf (as a ‘Secretariat’). Specialist activities could be commissioned from appropriate contractors.

The co-ordinating partnership will need to report to an administration that is part of the state (formally, Biosphere Areas are nominated by state governments). The relevant public bodies are being asked to discuss who is best placed to take on this role.

### 3.6 Finance and resources for community engagement work

The current work is to engage people in thinking about the future and what to do about the Biosphere, leading up to a possible application to UNESCO. It is funded through a partnership grant from the Countryside Council for Wales (with money from the Welsh Assembly Government). The Welsh Assembly Government has also provided money for website development through its Department of Enterprise, Innovation and Networks. The Biosphere Partnership commissioned ecodyfi to provide local management of this work on its behalf.

The Welsh Assembly Government has also provided money for the UNESCO Cymru Wales Committee to pay for two specific pieces of work carried out by ecodyfi and the Centre for Alternative Technology together. The first was to work with the secondary schools and colleges that serve the area (and with a professional photographer) to raise awareness of the Biosphere Area, sustainable development issues and of how we affect the planet. The second was to stimulate discussion through producing publications and through using a very large play mat, made up of aerial maps of the valley.

The organisations involved in the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership have contributed significant staff time to this initiative. In addition, many individuals have participated in a voluntary capacity.

### 3.7 Finance and resources for central activities in the future

UNESCO asks for an indication of who will provide the “technical and financial support” for management and “for addressing interrelated environmental, land use, and socio-economic development problems”.

The budget required to pay for central functions will vary according to the co-ordination mechanisms adopted and the level of the community’s ambition.

It may be possible for some of this income to be created by the Biosphere co-ordinators, for example by





organising itineraries for visiting groups of students and researchers. However, most of the funds will have to be public money, at least in the early years.

In most Biosphere Areas, most of the funding comes from regional or local governments. In Wales, there is also the opportunity to apply for European funding. The following potential contributors would be approached if the process continues:

- Welsh Assembly Government and/or Countryside Council for Wales
- Convergence funding (EC)
- Rural Development Plan Axis 3 and Axis 4 (EC)
- CAE (Snowdonia National Park Authority)
- Gwynedd Council
- Powys County Council
- Ceredigion County Council

The size and nature of contributions from the three Unitary Authorities has to be discussed with them. They may find it easier to provide staff time than cash. This might be a combination of a dedicated part-time liaison officer post in each authority and time from service departments such as translation and mapping.

**Question 3.7:** Is it appropriate for such a high proportion of “core” funding to come from the public purse?

### 3.8 Finance and resources – other aspects

A central budget would create conditions helpful to those seeking to bring resources into the area for projects. It would not include the cost of continuing and improving research, management and monitoring of the Core and Buffer Zones. This would continue along present lines.

An immediate example of how the Biosphere Area can help things happen is a current funding proposal by the University of Wales Aberystwyth, in collaboration with the University of Wales Bangor. They have submitted a research proposal to the European Commission, to investigate the ability of communities to adapt to environmental change and to create livelihoods based on environmental resources. They propose using the Dyfi valley as a case study because of the Biosphere process. If successful, the project would help the community and authorities understand how to steer change in a desirable direction. All the funding would come from EC research sources.

## 4. DEFINING THE AREA

### 4.1 Background

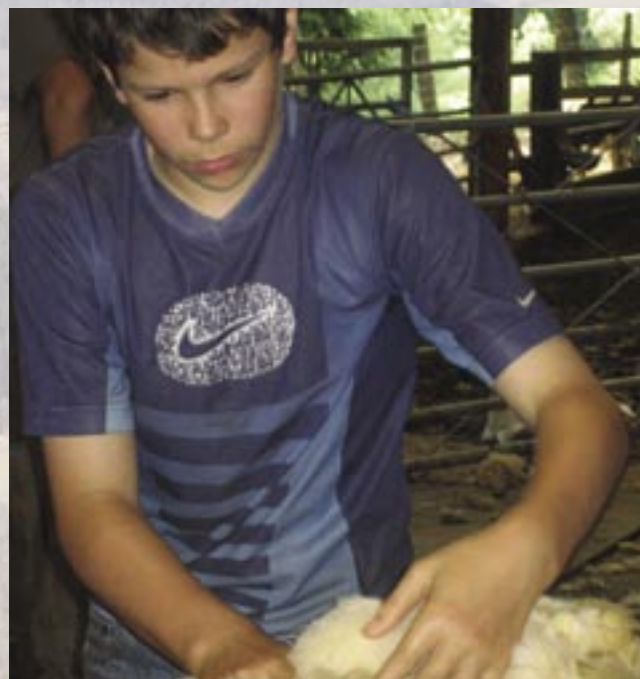
In 2001, the Environmental Change Institute of the University of Oxford produced a report on the Dyfi Biosphere Reserve. An extract is reproduced as Appendix 3, available on request or at [www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk](http://www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk)

We know from this report that the current Biosphere Area is too small to qualify under the revised criteria, even though UNESCO is not specific about a minimum size or population requirement. Currently, it consists

only of protected areas, mainly the Dyfi National Nature Reserve (which includes Ynyslas, Cors Fochno and the estuary from Aberdyfi as far up as Dyfi Junction).

Biospheres have to include a reasonable number of homes and business activities. The purpose of including people and commerce in Biospheres is to enable populations to achieve sustainable development in a way that is suited to their needs.

Biosphere Areas have to define a ‘Core Area’ and a ‘Buffer Zone’. They also have to describe a larger area that is called either an ‘Area of Co-operation’ or a ‘Transition Area’.



The conservation features are safeguarded by existing legislation. The Biosphere will not bring any extra legislative protection. However, its organisational structures (see Section 3 above) will provide mechanisms to agree what is reasonable activity within the Core and Buffer areas.

They will also be available to explore collaboration between landowners and the rest of the community. This might result in (for example) better marketing of food produce and/or additional land being brought into voluntary land management agreements.

Guidance for where these zones should be has been sought from members of the Biosphere Partnership and the UK Man and the Biosphere Committee, but as yet no lines have been drawn. To help you consider where these areas should be, details on each zone are to be found below.

If you have access to the internet, you can find the boundaries of all the existing designations mentioned below at <http://www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk>.

While the zones are discussed in terms of land use and environment, protecting and enhancing culture will be an important aim of the Biosphere Area as well.

### 4.2 Core Area(s)

UNESCO requires “a legally constituted core area or





areas devoted to long term protection, according to the conservation objectives of the biosphere reserve, and of sufficient size to meet these objectives”.

Guidance from the UK Man and the Biosphere (MaB) Committee is that Core Areas must be of “bio-geographical regional significance”. They should have international status and be protected by law. Examples include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protected Areas (SPA – classified under the EC Birds Directive) or RAMSAR sites (for wetlands).

The Dyfi Biosphere Reserve was designated in the 1970s because of the internationally important habitats within the Dyfi National Nature Reserve (NNR). The NNR consists of Cors Fochno (Borth Bog), Ynyslas sand dunes and the tidal Dyfi estuary, including the mudflats from Ynyslas as far as Dyfi Junction. However, not all of the NNR is within an SAC or SPA.

Three SACs are relevant here: (1) Cors Fochno/Borth Bog, (2) Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau/Lleyn Peninsula and the Sarnau (this includes all the tidal estuary and continues a long way out to sea to the west and north), (3) Coed Cwm Einion. This is a small but unusual wood of ash and small-leaved lime, extending up a steep gorge. The ground flora is diverse, and includes an exceptional Atlantic bryophyte and fern flora.

The Dyfi SPA covers the tidal estuary and some land on the south bank which is outside the SAC.

People have asked how the estuary itself can be a Core Area when so many people use it. While the core area is intended to be strictly protected, according to UNESCO, “certain activities and uses may be occurring or allowed, consistent with the conservation objectives of the core area”.

The SAC designation cannot stop the activity that goes on over the water above, though the Countryside Council for Wales does have the ability to prevent any new activities which are perceived to be damaging to the SAC. Adding a Biosphere designation would not alter this position, but should create additional opportunities for collective decision making and conflict resolution.

**Question 4.2** Which of the following should be included in the **Core Area**? Choose as many as you like.

- a) Cors Fochno Special Area of Conservation (SAC), plus that part of Pen Llyn a'r

Sarnau SAC that is the Dyfi estuary and shore, and that continues out to sea up until the 10 metre depth contour line

- b) The Dyfi Special Protection Area (SPA).  
c) Coed Cwm Einion

#### 4.3 Buffer Zone(s)

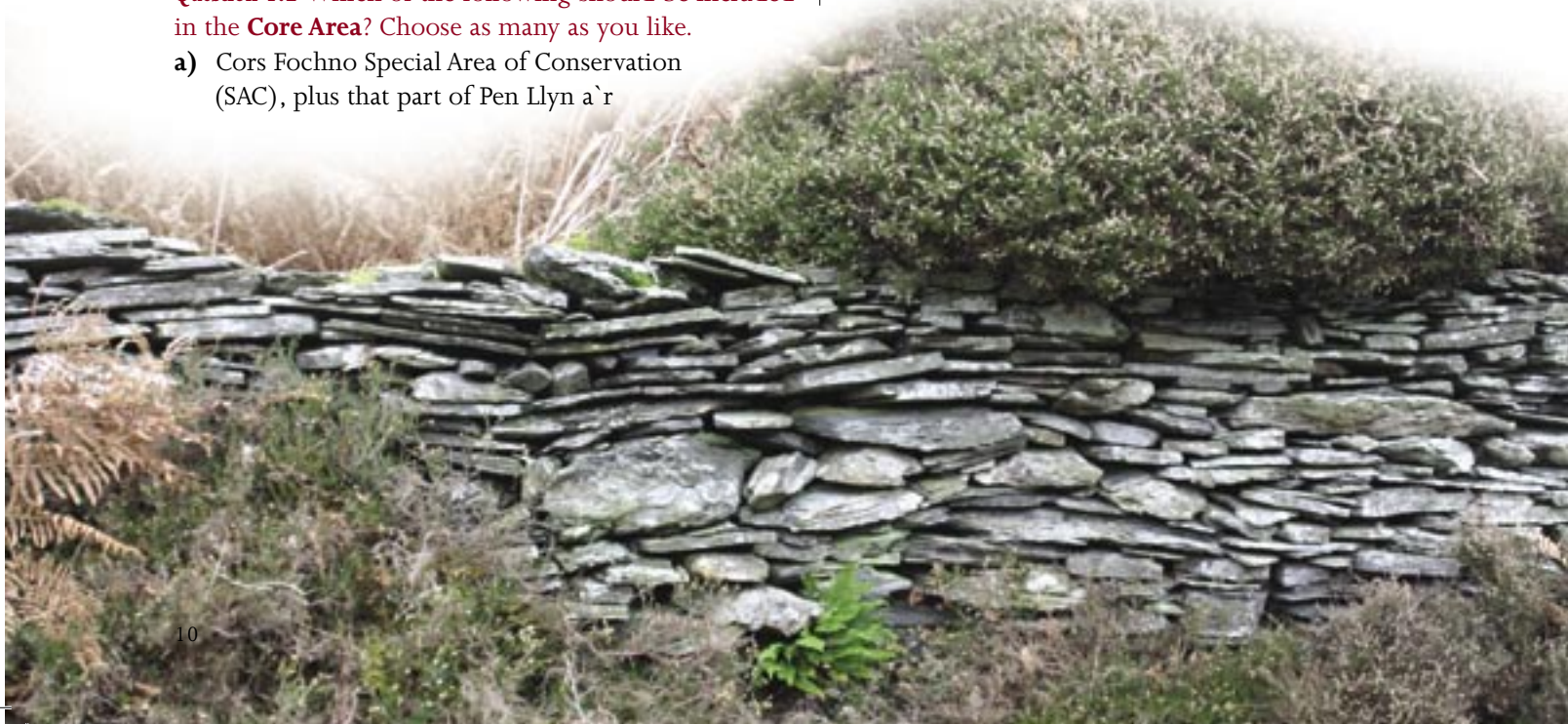
UNESCO requires “a buffer zone or zones clearly identified and surrounding or contiguous to the core area or areas, where only activities compatible with the conservation objectives can take place...”. Buffer zones may support a variety of uses which promote the multiple functions of a Biosphere Reserve while helping to ensure the protection and natural evolution of the core area(s).

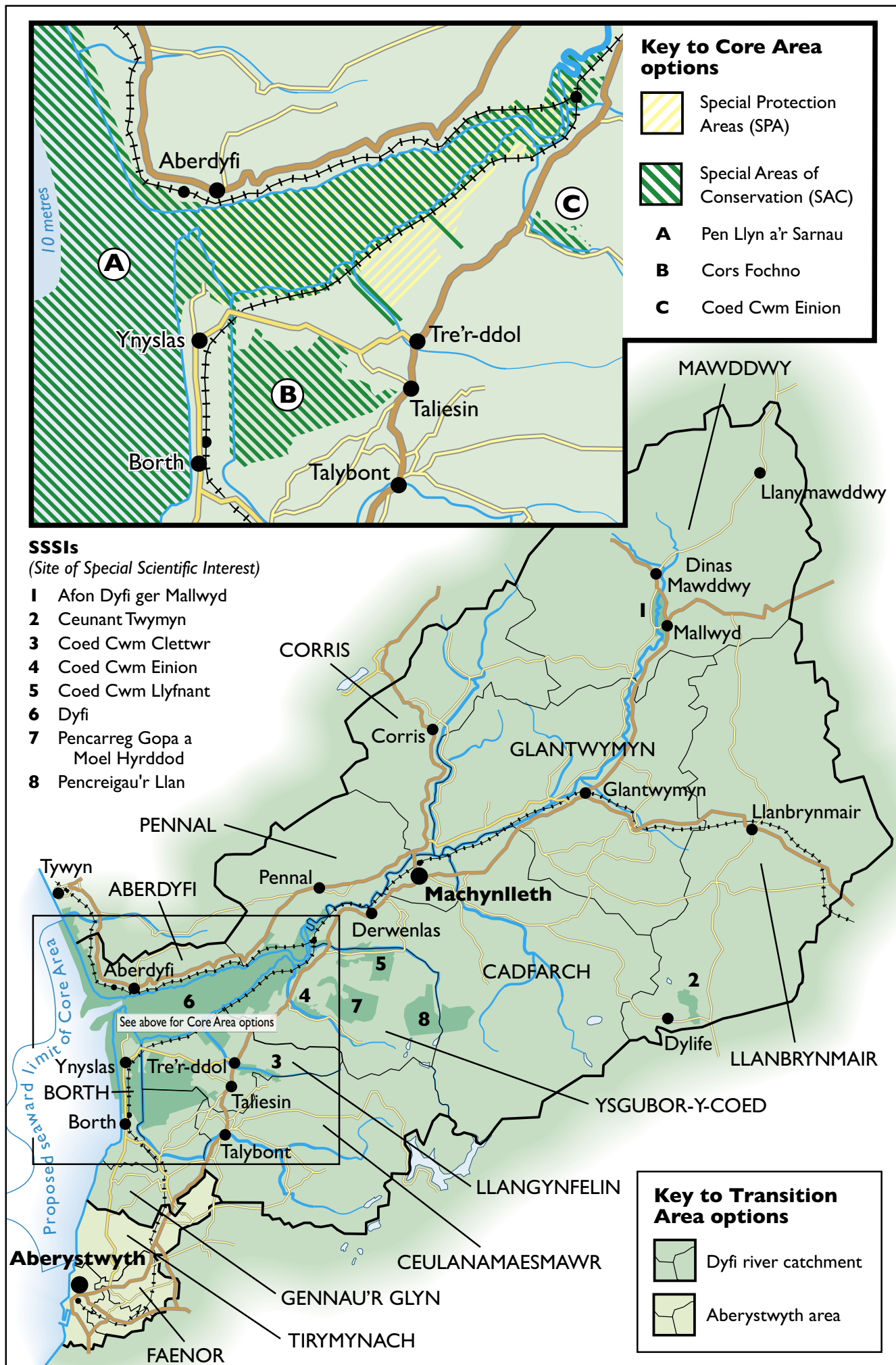
Recent guidance from the UK Man and the Biosphere (MaB) Committee is that Buffer Zones must be supported by a national conservation policy or designation to allow intervention if necessary, or be in the ownership of a public body. They advise that agri-environment scheme agreement areas (such as Tir Gofal) should not be included, since such agreements only have a limited lifespan.

This implies that primarily we should be considering existing SSSI's (Sites of Special Scientific Interest).

**Section 4.3:** Which of the following areas should be included in the **Buffer Zone** or Zones? Choose as many as you like.

- a) The Dyfi Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – this is adjacent to the Dyfi NNR and includes all the Dyfi SPA, but it does not include all the land that borders Cors Fochno  
b) The 5 largest SSSIs nearest to Cors Fochno (Coed Cwm Clettwr; Coed Cwm Einion; Coed Cwm Llyfnant; Pencreigau'r Llan; Pengarreg Gopa a Moel Hyrddod)  
c) The two largest SSSIs that lie wholly within the eastern and northern part of the river catchment area (Ceunant Twymyn; Afon Dyfi ger Mallwyd).







#### 4.4 Transition Area – what's it for?

UNESCO requires “an outer transition area where sustainable resource management practices are promoted and developed”. The UNESCO Seville Strategy gave increased emphasis to the transition area since this is the area where the key issues on environment and development of a given region are to be addressed. The transition area is by definition not delimited in space, but rather varies in size, according to the issues that arise over time.

So far as habitat and biodiversity is concerned, the transition area is where there is most potential for the Biosphere process to “add value” to the existing legally protected areas.

This might be through negotiating additional agri-environment and land management schemes that would be particularly beneficial to wildlife. The most likely situations are where land is close to, or adjacent to, the Core or Buffer Areas - or where a ‘wildlife corridor’ can be created to connect fragmented habitats.

Other possibilities include attending to bracken infestation and softening transitions between land uses (such as forestry and pasture). “Environmental goods” that land managers may be able to deliver include improved flood control and a more natural appearance of the landscape.

Public bodies agreeing with the Biosphere vision will include such work in their programmes. Private businesses will expect the rest of society to demonstrate it values these services by paying for the work involved in some way.

The sections describing some current and potential projects (2.7, 2.8, 2.9 and Appendix 4) give a flavour of the wider cultural, community and economic aspects that the community may wish to develop in the Transition Area.

#### 4.5 Transition Area – where should it be?

Guidance from the UK Man and the Biosphere (MaB) Committee is that the transition zone “should encompass the most rational area that interacts with the core area. In most areas this might be the river basin or catchment area upstream or downstream of a site. The extent of transition zones is nominal in terms of actions and activities. They tend to grow rather than shrink over time, but there should be some statement of the scale of impacts and possibly a ratio of size of the core to the transition; other states use 1% or 3% for example. The nominal transition zone should be easily identifiable.”

Does it really matter where it is? Transition Areas are often said to have “fuzzy boundaries”. This indicates that participants for a particular activity should be chosen according to whether they will make the activity more successful, rather than simply where they are located.

People and businesses within the area are encouraged

to collaborate with those in neighbouring communities who can help deliver the Biosphere’s objectives. This might be for reasons of scale (for example, a group of specialist producers may be stronger if they invite appropriate businesses bordering the Biosphere to participate in a marketing scheme). It might be to obtain expertise, for example, or research capacity. Participants from this wider area would be expected to demonstrate their commitment to the Biosphere’s objectives.

Defining a boundary helps to show who controls the process, but it is not intended to exclude artificially – see also the final point in Section 5.2.

**Question 4.5:** Which of the following descriptions of the Transition Area do you prefer? Choose only one.

a) The land, residents and businesses within the catchment area of the Dyfi and its tributaries, including the Leri. To provide clarity, this will be taken to be the local council areas that together make up almost exactly the same area: Genau'r Glyn, Borth, Ceulanamaesmawr, Ysgybor y Coed and Llanfynfelin in Ceredigion; Machynlleth, Cadfarch, Glantwymyn and Llanbrynmair in Powys; and Mawddwy, Corris, Pennal and Aberdyfi in Gwynedd.

b) The above area, plus Aberystwyth, Faenor and Tirymynach community council areas.

#### 4.6 Name

We have yet to decide on the official title for the Biosphere area. The chosen name will be used in official documents, reports and when referred to by other organisations, individuals etc. Below are some suggestions.

**Question 4.6:** The initiative should be called:

- Bro'r Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere Area
- Gwarchodfa Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere Reserve
- Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere
- Bio Fro Dyfi (subtitle “Dyfi Biosphere Area”)
- Y Fro Deg (subtitle “Dyfi Biosphere Area”)
- Other – please suggest one!

### 5. REPORT OF THE PROCESS SO FAR

#### 5.1 Background

The community engagement process for the Dyfi Biosphere Area has been taking place since April 2006. Delyth Richards and members of the Partnership have given information about biosphere areas, discussed possible benefits the designation could bring to the area and listened to people’s responses. This has happened through presentations for groups, public meetings, one



to one talks, newspapers, publications, the website [www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk](http://www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk) and other means.

The main presentations are listed in Appendix 5.

A leaflet was delivered to every home and business in the area during the winter. It contained a cut-out slip to encourage people to send in their comments and questions or to ask for further information. A second leaflet was distributed in April 2007.

The response on the whole has been relatively positive, with the number of people showing an interest in the project growing. While most input has been verbal so far, we have received over 100 written responses. These include about 50 slips from the first leaflet and 50 feedback forms from public meetings and presentations.

While many people have been cautious and are waiting for the kind of detail contained in this document, all the written responses have been supportive and include useful comments and suggestions. In many of the public meetings there was initial scepticism, but by the end there was constructive discussion about the potential benefits and how the process might be made to work.

Many people said they want to be part of the discussion process and want to be kept informed of further developments. They are being sent a copy of this document. From now on, the Forum at the newly-expanded [www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk](http://www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk) should be a good additional way for those with internet access to participate.

## 5.2 A sample of the suggestions and points raised so far

"It's an idea that's positive, interesting and exciting".  
"Ynyslas and the Dyfi Valley ... is precious and must be preserved for the future, there is so much history written into it". "It just sounds like another National Park to me".

Audiences came to understand that this idea is different to other designations. It's not UNESCO or a public body bringing a new set of rules and regulations; it's an opportunity for the local community to work towards a more sustainable future together, with support from public bodies and from communities elsewhere. It is about valuing and protecting the natural and cultural assets we've inherited, and doing so voluntarily.

"Would like to know more about how it might affect farming methods". "My main concern is that the wildlife is given priority – too much emphasis these days is put on access for people."

It was obvious that farmers feel the weight of the many regulation regimes that exist already and are desperate not to have any further restrictions and bureaucracy. Those that attended were reassured that the Biosphere will not bring any extra legislative protection. Some saw possibilities for niche marketing using a Biosphere brand.

"We need more tourists/visitors in winter and summer



whilst maintaining and conserving the nature of the area."

There has been a lot of interest in helping the local economy by increasing the kind of tourism that is sensitive to the local environment and culture. Some people didn't want any more visitors in high summer but saw scope for increasing year-round interest in walking, nature-watching and other outdoor activities. People also discussed how to offer additional and higher quality goods and services to visitors so that economic benefit came from increased expenditure, rather than from increased numbers of people.

"We need to promote how proud we are of the local accent". "More should be made of the history and importance of this area! ie. museums or exhibitions".

Some events discussed what is unique about local culture. One aspect of this is the local Welsh dialect. Another is the strength of the 'ecologically-motivated' community. People are interested in exploring what cultural activities may be helped by the Biosphere designation.

"Would the designation improve the bus service from Dinas Mawddwy to Machynlleth?"

This is an example of people asking what benefits the designation might bring to "ordinary people". People in meetings understood that public transport is important for environmental as well as social reasons, and that services would be more cost-effective if used by 'environmentally-conscious' visitors as well as by locals. Generally, participants came to see that benefits will come about to the extent that people organise relevant projects.

"The Biosphere would enhance its bid and credibility if it were to include the University, IGER etc with the level of research and economic development that is currently practised within this area".

People wanted to know where the boundary would be – who's in and who's not – and were often surprised to discover that this is one of the matters that can only be decided through public debate. Only one community outside the area suggested in the Oxford review has asked to be included, and that is Aberystwyth. People in the meetings came to understand that there would be opportunities for businesses and institutions to be involved in Biosphere-related activities, even if they were based outside the notional boundary eventually adopted.



## 6. CONCLUSION

While the decision about whether to ask UNESCO to confirm the area as a Biosphere is in the hands of the community as a whole (and readers of this document in particular), the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership believes that this is an opportunity not to be missed. It provides an opportunity to explore and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development on a regional scale. It has the potential to foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable.

The area has the potential to serve as a pilot site for promoting the sustainable development of its region, with an international perspective. To a certain extent it does so already, but the measures suggested in this document amplify this. While the UNESCO designation would provide a certain status and momentum to the valley's development, the co-operation and activities carried out under its umbrella are far more important than the "badge". If successful, the approach can be replicated throughout Mid Wales and beyond.

**Question 6:** Should the Biosphere Partnership apply to UNESCO, asking for acceptance of the Dyfi area as a modern Biosphere Area?

## 7. NEXT STEPS

Delyth Richards is keen to discuss this document with you. You may like to invite her to a meeting of your club or society or make an appointment to see her. You would be very welcome to drop in at any of the events below. Each event will open at 3pm and include a short presentation at 7pm. Come at any time before 9pm. Tea & coffee will be available free of charge.

Date	Place	Location
Tuesday 8th May	Llanbrynmair	Community Centre
Wednesday 9th May	Talybont	Memorial Hall
Thursday 10th May	Machynlleth	Owain Glyndŵr Institute
Monday 14th May	Dinas Mawddwy	Village Hall
Friday 25th May	Aberdyfi	Hall

Please send us your answers and comments as soon as you can. An amended version of this document will be sent to the local authorities at the beginning of June 2007, but we will still make use of comments received after this time.

Responses received after 30th June 2007 will be too late to influence the decision about whether to go ahead, but they will be used to shape subsequent steps.

Local opinions are being sought in writing and in person, electronically and verbally. The Dyfi Biosphere Partnership will look at the responses to see whether there is a consensus about the way forward.

Your contributions will help us write an application to UNESCO, if we go ahead. It will be based on this document, with additional descriptions of the area, its culture, environment and economy. It will be sent to the Welsh Assembly and Westminster Governments at the beginning of November 2007.

We may not hear the outcome until August 2008. During the months leading up to that date we can all continue to use the Forum on the website [www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk](http://www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk) (as well as other means) to plan how to make best use of the designation. Even if the application is unsuccessful, we will still be able to use your ideas to develop new and innovative projects.

**Question 7:** How would you like to be involved in the proposed Biosphere Area if it comes about?

**Thank you for giving your time to reading and responding to this document.**

### Appendices at [www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk](http://www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk)

- Appendix 1: What are Biosphere Reserves?
- Appendix 2: UNESCO vision for Biosphere Reserves
- Appendix 3: Dyfi entry for the UK Review of Biosphere Reserves
- Appendix 4: Additional examples of activities
- Appendix 5: List of community events

### Web-based resources

- Dyfi Biosphere Area [www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk](http://www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk)
- UNESCO MaB (Man and the Biosphere) programme [www.unesco.org/mab/wnbr.htm](http://www.unesco.org/mab/wnbr.htm)
- UNESCO: biospheres in a nutshell [www.unesco.org/mab/nutshell.htm](http://www.unesco.org/mab/nutshell.htm)
- Dyfi entry in the UNESCO Biosphere directory [www2.unesco.org/mab/br/brdir/directory/biores.asp?mode=all&code=UKM+05](http://www2.unesco.org/mab/br/brdir/directory/biores.asp?mode=all&code=UKM+05)
- [www.nmw.ac.uk/mab/ukbr.htm](http://www.nmw.ac.uk/mab/ukbr.htm)
- Review of UK Biosphere Reserves [www.nmw.ac.uk/mab/BRReport/Head.htm#contents](http://www.nmw.ac.uk/mab/BRReport/Head.htm#contents)
- Dyfi entry for the UK Review [www.nmw.ac.uk/mab/BRReport/dyfi.htm](http://www.nmw.ac.uk/mab/BRReport/dyfi.htm)







## The Dyfi Biosphere Consultation: Response sheet

We welcome your views on the Dyfi Biosphere proposal. Please complete the form below – by 30th June 2007 if you want to influence the main decision (whether to proceed to a formal application for ‘modern’ UNESCO Biosphere status)

You may answer as many or as few of the questions and points as you wish. Feel free to photocopy the answer sheet for other people to use – or just write to us!

If you prefer, use the on-line form at [www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk](http://www.dyfibiosphere.org.uk)

Some questions offer you several options and you will be asked either to tick one (only) or to agree with as many as you like. Others ask you to circle your chosen answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where:

- 1 = no, definitely not/I don't like this at all
- 2 = no, probably not/I don't like this much
- 3 = I don't know/don't mind/perhaps
- 4 = yes, probably/I quite like it
- 5 = yes, definitely/I really like this

It would be helpful if you added some comments and suggestions as well (write them anywhere) to explain your answers.

**The questions have the same numbering as the sections in the document.**

**Section 2.1:** Should the Dyfi Biosphere be concerned with protecting cultural as well as natural assets?

1      2      3      4      5

**Section 2.3:** Should the Dyfi Biosphere adopt the vision and objectives described?

1      2      3      4      5

**Section 2.4:** Are there any specific natural features you would like protected or enhanced?

**Section 2.5:** Are there any particular cultural features of the area that need to be protected, developed or promoted?

**Section 2.7, 2.8 & 2.9:** Can you suggest any additional activities or projects?

**Section 3.2:** Are these principles appropriate?

1      2      3      4      5

**Section 3.3a:** If the current Partnership evolves to become the co-ordinating Partnership for the longer term, what changes or additions (if any) should be made to its membership?

**Section 3.3b:** Do you have any other comments about the organisational arrangements described?

Please complete this form, pull it out and return it to us



**Section 3.7:** Is it appropriate for such a high proportion of “core” funding to come from the public purse?

1 2 3 4 5

(where 5 = yes, definitely)

**Section 4.2:** Which of the following should be included in the **Core Area**? Choose as many as you like.

a) Cors Fochno Special Area of Conservation (SAC), plus that part of Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau SAC that is the Dyfi estuary and shore, and that continues out to sea up until the 10 metre depth contour line

b) The Dyfi Special Protection Area (SPA).

c) Coed Cwm Einion

**Section 4.3:** Which of the following areas should be included in the **Buffer Zone** or Zones? Choose as many as you like.

a) The Dyfi Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – this is adjacent to the Dyfi NNR and includes all the Dyfi SPA, but it does not include all the land that borders Cors Fochno

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**Section 4.5:** Which of the following descriptions of the **Transition Area** do you prefer? Choose only one.

a) The land, residents and businesses within the catchment area of the Dyfi and its tributaries, including the Leri. To provide clarity, this will be taken to be the local council areas that together make up almost exactly the same area: Genau'r Glyn, Borth, Ceulanamaesmawr, Ysgybor y Coed and Llanfynfelin in Ceredigion; Machynlleth, Cadfarch, Glantwymyn and Llanbrynmair in Powys; and Mawddwy, Corris, Pennal and Aberdyfi in Gwynedd.

b) The above area, plus Aberystwyth, Faenor and Tirymynach community council areas.

**Section 4.6:** Give each name option a score of 1-5

• **Bro'r Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere Area**

1 2 3 4 5

(where 5 = I really like this)

• **Gwarchodfa Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere Reserve**

1 2 3 4 5

• **Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere**

1 2 3 4 5

• **Bio Fro Dyfi (subtitle “Dyfi Biosphere Area”)**

1 2 3 4 5

• **Y Fro Deg (subtitle “Dyfi Biosphere Area”)**

1 2 3 4 5

• **Other** – please suggest one!

**Section 6:** Should the Biosphere Partnership apply to UNESCO, asking for acceptance of the Dyfi area as a modern Biosphere Area?

1 2 3 4 5

(where 5 = yes, definitely)

**Section 7:** How would you like to be involved in the proposed Biosphere Area if it comes about?

Please send your comments to:

Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere  
FREEPOST NWW16824  
MACHYNLLETH  
SY20 8ZB

delyth@dyfibiosphere.org.uk Tel: 01654 703965

If you would like us to keep you informed about the Biosphere, please give us your details here:

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Phone number .....

Email address .....

Please send me ..... copies of the full Consultation document (and further information)

Please send me .... copies of the Summary Consultation document (and further information)

**Thank you for giving your time to reading and responding to this document.**

Please complete this form, pull it out and return it to us