

Subject:	Brighton & Hove and Lewes Downs Biosphere Application		
Date of Meeting:	9 July 2013		
Report of:	Executive Director Environment Development & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Jan Jonker	Tel: 29-4722
	Email:	jan.jonker@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove City Council is the lead partner on the Brighton & Hove and Lewes Downs Biosphere Partnership. The Partnership is working towards the local area becoming a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.
- 1.2 In March 2012 the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Cabinet Members Meeting approved the work and engagement plan to progress the project to the stage of submitting the bid to UNESCO by September 2013. This report sets out the progress made to date and seeks approval of the Biosphere Management Strategy and the application to UNESCO to become a Biosphere Reserve.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee note the progress made on the project
- 2.2 That the Committee agrees the Biosphere Management Strategy
- 2.3 That the Committee endorses an application to UNESCO to become a Biosphere Reserve.
- 2.4 That the Committee formally thanks the Biosphere Partnership for the progress made on the project.
- 2.5 That the Committee delegates authority to the Executive Director of Environment, Development & Housing to sign off the UNESCO application on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) has established global network of Biosphere Reserves consisting of world class environments which promote a balanced relationship between people and nature.
- 3.2 The first Biospheres were developed in the 1970s and there are now 621 in 117 countries worldwide, six of which are located in the UK. The last completely new Biosphere designation in the UK was in 1976.
- 3.3 UN Biosphere Reserves have three functions:
- **Conservation** of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic diversity both on a regional and global scale
 - **Development** – economic and social development which is culturally and ecologically sustainable
 - **Knowledge** – environmental education, research and training to test and demonstrate innovative approaches to nature conservation and sustainable development
- 3.4 The proposal to work towards Biosphere designation originates from the 2008 Sustainability Conference hosted in Brighton & Hove. Since then the project has progressed significantly. The proposed Biosphere area has been defined, the Brighton & Hove and Lewes Downs Partnership has formalised and expanded, the Biosphere Management Strategy has been produced and the application to UNESCO to become a Biosphere Reserve is near completion.

The Brighton & Hove and Lewes Downs Biosphere Area

- 3.5 A map of the proposed Biosphere area is shown in Appendix 1. It consists of rural, urban and coastal marine environments forming an area centred on the South Downs chalk block between the River Adur in the West and the River Ouse in the East. It covers an area of approximately 150 square miles with three quarters of the area being terrestrial and a quarter marine.
- 3.6 The area is home to a variety of important rare wildlife habitats including chalk grassland, wetland and estuarine environments, networks of urban green space, vegetated shingle beaches and chalk cliffs and reefs off the coast. There are 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest SSSIs which make up the 'Core Areas' of the Biosphere. These are surrounded by the Buffer Zones consisting of part of the South Downs National Park on land and part of the recommended Marine Conservation Zone of Beachy Head West in the sea.
- 3.7 The area is also home to approximately 300,000 residents and a destination for 12 million visitors annually. The environment provides 'ecosystem services' for the local population from water supply to local food, fresh air an open space to a desirable environment to attract tourists and sustainable economic development.

What will a Biosphere Reserve achieve?

- 3.8 The Brighton & Hove and Lewes Downs Biosphere Partnership seeks to inspire people to work together to raise awareness and to better care for the local countryside, coastal and urban environments. The area is unique for the close

links between the different environments a point highlighted by a UNESCO representative visiting the area.

3.9 UN Biosphere designation for the area would result in:

- Maximising the benefit from the close proximity of the sea, countryside and urban environments, integrating them more closely
- A more integrated approach to protecting and enhancing the environment across industry and businesses, public agencies, community and voluntary sector, and research and education areas. The benefits of this have already started to be realised as working towards the bid has strengthened links between partners delivering key projects, for example in relation to protection of groundwater.
- Greater national and international recognition and opportunities to promote the area, widening the attraction of Brighton and Hove and the surrounding environment as a destination. Representatives from UNESCO have visited the area and they recognise the international uniqueness of our area and are supporting the Partnership in the development of its bid.
- Opportunities for economic development focusing on green industries in particular green tourism
- Greater community involvement and pride in the local environment
- More opportunities to promote local sustainable food production and consumption both from the land and the sea.
- Improved opportunities to draw in external funding, some of which has already been realised as set out below.

The Brighton & Hove and Lewes Downs Partnership

- 3.10 The Brighton & Hove and Lewes Downs Partnership has been set up to over see the Biosphere Project. The Partnership now consists of 30 partners from the public, educational, voluntary and private sectors. It is governed by a Board and an elected Executive. Brighton & Hove City Council established the project and continues to be the lead partner.

Members of the partnership are listed below.

Local Authorities/ Town Councils/ Parish Councils	
Brighton & Hove City Council	Hamsey Parish Council
Lewes District Council	East Chiltington Parish Council
Mid Sussex District Council	Ditchling Parish Council
Adur District Council	Newhaven Town Council
Horsham District Council	Peacehaven Town Council
Lewes Town Council	Telescombe Town Council
Educational Establishments	
University of Brighton	Sussex University
Plumpton College	Dorothy Stringer High School
Other Organisations	
South Downs National Park Authority	Sussex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority
Natural England	The Environment Agency
Sussex Wildlife Trust	National Trust
Royal Society for Protection of Birds	Brighton & Hove Friends of the Earth

Community & Voluntary Sector Forum	Brighton & Hove Allotment Federation
Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust	South Downs Society
Brighton Peace & Environment Centre	
Private Sector Bodies	
Brighton & Hove Bus Company	Jury's Inn Hotel

The Biosphere Management Strategy and Biosphere Application

- 3.11 A copy of the Biosphere Management Strategy is available in Members' rooms. A summary is attached as Appendix 2. The strategy has been produced jointly between key partners including IFCA and SDNPA with extensive input from other partners.
- 3.12 The overall aim of the Biosphere Management Strategy is to create a world-class environment that is economically successful and enjoyed by all.
- 3.13 The objectives are summarised below.
- Nature Conservation: To improve important local wildlife habitats and species (biodiversity), and precious environmental resources such as water, through better downland and floodplain management, improved urban spaces and new marine conservation initiatives.
 - Sustainable Socio-Economic Development: To take positive action to reduce energy and water use, and waste generation; encourage sustainable transport and local food production; and develop new social and economic opportunities such as outdoor health, eco-tourism and low carbon industries.
 - Knowledge, Learning and Awareness to increase awareness and knowledge of our environment by working with local universities, schools and colleges, and the public to actively engage people in the use, appreciation, conservation and management of their local area.
- 3.14 The strategy brings together relevant high level plans, policies and strategies from partner organisations and paves the way for greater integration to achieve the benefits of the Biosphere Partnership. An action plan will be produced for Brighton & Hove which will deliver the Biosphere Objectives in the city. The plan will incorporate the recently adopted Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), The One Planet Action Plan and the Eco Tourism Strategy. The existing Parks & Open Spaces Strategy will be updated to deliver the conservation objectives of the Biosphere. The action plan will be produced in 2014/15.
- 3.15 The Biosphere Application consists of UNESCOs Biosphere Reserve Nomination Form a draft of which has been completed. The form seeks details on the proposed Biosphere in relation to UNESCOs criteria and objectives.

Progress to Date

- 3.16 Since the report to Cabinet in March 2012 significant progress has been made on the project:

- The proposed Biosphere area has expanded to include notable 'gaps' comprising Lewes town, Newhaven, Peacehaven and Telscombe in the east, and Shoreham, Shoreham Beach and Southwick in the west, as well as Ditchling in the north.
- The Partnership has grown as detailed in the section above and now includes key organisations from different sectors
- The project was formally launched in May 2012 and a busy engagement program was delivered. This is estimated to have reached more than 10,000 residents and resulted in signing up 1,400 'Friends of The Biosphere'
- The UK Man and Biosphere (MAB) Committee held its biannual meeting in Brighton in May 2012. The Committee was very supportive of the bid.
- An invited advisory visit by the principal UNESCO officer in Paris was made on 21-22 May. She was very positive about our proposed application and provided constructive feedback on how it can be further improved. She felt that we could make a very valuable contribution to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, with our connectivity between the urban areas and our surroundings was a key strength.
- The Biosphere Strategy has been drafted with key partners. The strategy sets out the aims and objectives of the proposed Biosphere and draws together high level policies relating to the rural, urban and marine environments, education and knowledge and draws out links between the different environments.
- The joint funding bid to DEFRA with the SDNPA has been successful and the Nature Improvement Area project is in the process of being delivered.
- Formal consultation on the Biosphere proposals has been completed (detailed below)
- The Biosphere application has been drafted (Appendix 3).

Next Steps

- Subject to approval by Committee the Biosphere application will be completed and submitted to UNESCO by the 30 September 2013 deadline. A decision on whether the application has been successful will be made by July 2014.
- An action plan to deliver the Biosphere conservation objectives locally will be produced in 2014/15. The action plan will build on a lot of the existing conservation work that is underway in the city
- The Partnership will pursue funding opportunities to deliver the Biosphere Objectives.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Public consultation on the Biosphere Management Strategy and the proposals more generally was carried out for 12 weeks between 28 January and 22 April 2013. It was extended for a month principally to allow for the inclusion of Shoreham and Southwick and two areas within Lewes District.
- 4.2 The consultation was advertised through a road show of Biosphere exhibitions, by Biosphere partners attending existing events and distribution of leaflets on all of the Brighton & Hove Buses who are a project partner. The consultation was supported by a media campaign consisting of press releases and making use of

social media. People were able to respond to the consultation on line or by posting forms back.

- 4.3 A total of 1,776 responses were received. Respondents were asked:
- Whether they supported the area becoming a Biosphere Reserve
 - Whether they supported the Biosphere objectives
 - What people valued most in their environment
 - What environmental improvements people would most like to see.
- 4.4 The vast majority of respondents support the proposals to become a Biosphere Reserve (94%) and the Partnership Objectives (95%). People value accessibility to their local environment as well as nature conservation and promotion of health and well being through nature. Respondents would like to see improvements in areas relating to sustainable transport, waste and recycling, nature conservation and sustainable economic development, and public awareness.
- 4.4 Detailed analysis of the specific comments will be carried out by a student as part of a research project.
- 4.5 Residents other organisations were also invited to comment on the detailed Biosphere Management Strategy. The document was produced through a joint effort and many members of the Biosphere Partnership were closely involved in its production.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The post of Biosphere Reserve Officer was funded by an ongoing £40,000 budget allocation in the 2011-12 budget process to support the project. It is planned that from 2014/15 the Councils contribution will reduce to £20,000 per year with the remaining costs being met from partnership funding. All other costs to support the application will be met from existing revenue budgets and contributions from partnership members. It is anticipated that achieving Biosphere status will provide opportunities to draw in external funding to deliver the objectives of the partnership.

Finance Officer Consulted: Steven Bedford

Date: 10th June 2013

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report. The Biosphere Partnership Board does not have delegated powers to make decisions on behalf of the Council and therefore any proposals that require a decision will need to use the Council's existing decision making structures.

Lawyer Consulted :Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 10th June 2013

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The Biosphere project aims to improve access and the number of people who make use of their local environment. The consultation was subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment and specific engagement events were held with hard to reach groups.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The Biosphere Project objectives are to protect the environment and encourage sustainable development. It will provide an overarching framework and a robust management plan to help deliver the council's sustainability objectives.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications. The project may generate opportunities to reduce crime and disorder by encouraging greater community involvement in the management and enjoyment of the environment.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The risks associated with the Biosphere project are limited. The project does not require additional expenditure. Funding for delivery will either be through external funding or through work which is already funded eg the Ranger Service. The project can realise benefits of improved partnership working with key partners like the Environment Agency, neighbouring authorities, the National Park and many others irrespective of whether Biosphere Reserve Status is ultimately achieved.
- 5.7 Officers are working closely with the UK MAB Committee who will make recommendations to UNESCO when the bid is submitted.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.8 The Biosphere Reserve has the potential to positively impact on public health (both in terms of physical and mental health) by encouraging more people to go out in to their local environment and improving access. It also seeks to improve the environment (eg by improving the quality of drinking water) to improve human health.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.9 Achieving Biosphere Reserve status is set out as a priority in the 2011 – 2015 Corporate Plan. The project will cover the whole of the city with the objectives set out in the main body of this report.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The recommendations seek approval the submission of the bid to UNESCO which is a corporate priority.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Map of Proposed Biosphere Area
2. Biosphere Management Strategy Summary
3. Draft UNESCO Biosphere Application

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. Biosphere Management Strategy