

Appendix O - Report on the Dyfi Biosphere Consultation Process

13 September 2007

- A Summary
- B Timeline, resources and oversight
- C May 2006 – April 2007
- D May and June 2007 including results from the consultation questionnaire
- E Key stakeholders and corporate responses
- F Table of community events July 2006 – September 2007

A) Summary

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 and other means.

We have been at pains not to prejudice the response by being over-enthusiastic: it is important to give doubts and fears plenty of room to be expressed and considered. We have also emphasised that the content of any action plan or management plan needs to be constructed collaboratively by stakeholders, not proposed in a prescriptive manner by partnership members.

The resulting lack of detail in the proposals made it difficult for many people to respond at first.

In early May 2007 the Partnership published its consultation document, responding to comments and questions received during the first phase and offering firmer options for consideration. At the same time, the website was re-designed and an interactive Forum was added. People were asked to return the Response Form by the end of June if possible.

Overwhelmingly, the community's response to date has been positive. Of all the evidence over the past 12 months that we have collected, only two people have stated that they don't want the initiative to proceed.

Even this opposition was not out of principle, but was because the individuals concerned were not convinced the added value would be worth the expenditure.

In July the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership weighed up the evidence and decided that support was strong enough to justify making the application to UNESCO, as described in a separate document. Participation by the rest of the community will continue to be vital, as the principles are turned into an action plan and means are devised to ensure good coordination and accountability.

B) Timeline, resources and oversight

- In 1998, the Environmental Change Institute of the University of Oxford produced a report on the Dyfi Biosphere Reserve for Defra, having consulted key stakeholders
- In November 2000, ecodyfi held a public meeting in Machynlleth to raise awareness about the review being undertaken by Defra and the Assembly and about the potential benefits to the area
- In November 2002, delegates attended the conference that celebrated the registration of Braunton Burrows as the UK's first "modern" Biosphere Reserve
- In June 2004, ecodyfi held a conference in Machynlleth about Biospheres and the Dyfi. The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) funded this and there were speakers from Biospheres in Entlebuch and the Rhön. 80 people attended the evening public meeting, 65 people the day conference and 12 people the half day field trip. The level of interest and support was very high
- In November 2004, CCW and ecodyfi initiated discussions which led to the establishment of the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership in May 2005
- In April 2006, ecodyfi employed a Community Engagement Officer on behalf of the Partnership, financed by CCW. The subsequent communications have been funded by the Welsh Assembly Government through CCW, the Department of Economy and Transport (successor to the Welsh Development Agency) and the UNESCO Cymru Committee.

C) May 2006 – April 2007

Presentations were made at 9 public events and for numerous clubs, societies and events, backed up by media work at critical times.

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, similar, leaflet was distributed in April 2007.

While most input was verbal, we received over 100 written responses. These include about 50 slips from the first leaflet and 50 feedback forms from public meetings and presentations.

Many people were cautious and were waiting for the kind of detail contained in the consultation document, but all the written responses were supportive. Many included useful comments and suggestions, some of which are reproduced in section G below. 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.

D) Since publication of the consultation document - May and June 2007

The aim of the consultation document was to explain further what Biosphere Areas are, what possible benefits the designation could bring to the Dyfi Valley and what the options are for the next steps. Each copy also included a questionnaire to fill in and send back to us using the freepost address. We would then collate the results and the Partnership would come to a decision as to whether the community wanted to go ahead with the re-registration as a modern Biosphere Area.

The document was sent by mail and email to key stakeholders and to others who had asked to be kept informed. It was discussed at six evening public meetings and associated afternoon “drop-in” sessions, as well as at meetings of clubs and societies. Press work and email networking drew attention to it.

We have received 160 questionnaires so far. This represents 7.3% of the 2200 distributed. Of these responses:

- 26 were from Ceredigion
 - 30 were from Gwynedd
 - 66 were from Powys
 - 1 was from Shropshire
- 37 didn't note their address

Most responses have been very positive. Here are some headline results:

Section 2.1

Should the Dyfi Biosphere be concerned with protecting cultural as well as natural assets?

Of the 155 people that voiced an opinion to this question, 141 people circled the options ‘yes, definitely’ and ‘yes probably’. Only 2 people felt that we should ‘definitely not’ protect the area’s cultural assets.

Section 2.3

Should the Dyfi Biosphere adopt the vision and objectives described?

153 people voiced an opinion with this question. As the previous question, a high proportion, 144 people felt that the Biosphere should adopt the vision and objectives described. Only one person felt that the Biosphere should not.

Section 3.2

Are these principles appropriate?

144 answered this question and once again, most of the responses circled the options ‘yes, definitely’ and ‘yes, probably’ - a total of 137 people.

Section 3.7

Is it appropriate for such a high proportion of ‘core’ funding to come from the public purse?

The 143 responses to this question were a lot more varied. 109 people (so, the majority) circled ‘yes definitely’ or ‘yes, probably’. But 24 people felt that they didn’t

know, and 8 people said that the money should 'no definitely' and 'no, probably not' come from the public purse.

Section 4.6 What should the designation be called?

We gave the people of the Dyfi Valley the opportunity to nominate an appropriate name for the Biosphere Area. Here are the results:

- *Bro'r Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere Area*

This was not a popular choice with the community. 63 out of 129 people did not want the area to be called this and only 36 people liked the name. 30 people didn't know or didn't mind.

- *Gwarchodfa Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere Reserve*

This option wasn't very popular either. Of the 130 that voiced an opinion, 63 of them didn't want the area to be called this. However, 42 respondents did like it.

- *Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere*

This title proved to be by far the most popular. 97 out of 138 people circled the options 'yes, I really like this' and 'yes I quite like this'. 20 people 'didn't know/didn't mind' if this was the chosen title and only 21 people circled 'no, I don't like this at all' or 'no I don't like this much'.

- *Bio Fro Dyfi (subtitle "Dyfi Biosphere Area")*

Again, this option was not the most popular. Out of the 129 people that voiced an opinion, only 46 of these wanted the area to be called this. 55 people said that they did not like this title as an option.

- *Y Fro Deg (subtitle "Dyfi Biosphere Area")*

Of the 132 responses, only 35 people preferred this title, but 74 people said that they did not want this titled used. 23 people circled the option 'I don't know/I don't mind'.

The number of people that answered each question varied, because some people didn't voice an opinion about some of the options.

The results therefore clearly show that the most popular name for the Biosphere Area is 'Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere' and when the Valley gets re-registered, this is what the initiative will be called.

Section 4.2: The Core Area

114 people felt that all the areas suggested should be considered to be the Core Area. These areas are Cors Fochno, the 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; the Dyfi Special Protection Area and Coed Cwm Einion.

Section 4.3: The Buffer Zone

95 people felt that all the areas suggested should be in the Buffer Zone. The rest of the responses either didn't express an opinion or chose only one or two of the options.

Section 4.5: The Transition Area:

37 of the 160 people **wanted** to see Aberystwyth and the surrounding area included in the Transition Area as well as the catchment area of the river Dyfi.

- 10 of these responses were from Ceredigion
- 8 were from Gwynedd
- 10 were from Powys
- 8 didn't include an address
- 1 was from Shropshire

105 out of the 160 only wanted to see the Dyfi Valley (the river catchment) as a Biosphere Area

- 18 of these responses were from Ceredigion
- 26 were from Gwynedd
- 37 were from Powys
- A further 24 didn't include an address

18 didn't state an opinion on this.

Section 6: Should the Partnership apply to UNESCO to re-designate?

Of the 160 responses, 146 of them circled the option 'yes, definitely' - they think the Partnership should apply to UNESCO to re-register as a modern Biosphere Area. An additional 9 of them thought that we should 'yes, probably' apply to UNESCO.

Of these 146 positive responses:

- 22 were from Ceredigion,
- 65 were from Powys
- 27 were from Gwynedd.
- There were an extra 31 positive responses but no names and addresses were given. Another positive response was from Shropshire

So far, we have received only 2 negative responses as to whether we should apply to UNESCO, both circling option 1 ('no, definitely not'). Both were from individuals in the upper valley (in Powys). One felt that the designation '*would interfere with the strong cultural infrastructure that currently exists and feels that the Biosphere hasn't proved itself since the 1970s designation and should not be revived.*' The other felt the area '*doesn't need a Biosphere to protect the different treasures in the area*'. Both appear to reflect a strand of opinion that is sympathetic to the aims of the Biosphere but is sceptical that it's worth the inevitable financial cost – "we can do these things anyway".

E) Key Stakeholders and corporate responses

It should be noted that the response form in the consultation document did not ask for personal or occupational information. This makes it difficult to analyse the formal responses by sector or demographic profile, such as farmers or young people. We felt that the form was already going to be daunting for many people, without additional questions! We can, however, draw on the additional information from meetings and conversations.

The Dyfi Biosphere Partnership met during May 2006 to determine who the key stakeholders were for the Community Engagement Officer to target, in addition to the members of the Partnership . After much discussion the following were identified:

- Farmers, especially FUW / NFU Members

All Montgomeryshire members of both Unions received a summary of the document through the post with a covering letter from the Union branches stressing that they should take time to look at the document and respond. Andy Rowland and Delyth Richards attended a meeting of the FUW Montgomeryshire branch to discuss the designation. The attendance was poor but the response was positive. The FUW Ceredigion branch sent a generally supportive response emphasising the role of agri-environment schemes. The official response from the NFU in Wales says “*The Biosphere Partnership should apply to UNESCO if there is support expressed through the local farming representative on the coordinating partnership*”. It expressed concern that this was another designation that didn’t attract any direct additional funding and stated that any local food branding should sit within the strong Wales brand. Much more work needs to be done to involve farming families in the initiative.
- YFC groups

All groups have received a letter offering a presentation and received the document. As yet Delyth hasn’t received an invitation or a response but hopes that she could go to them or hold an event in the autumn (no groups meet during the summer). All groups have always been kept informed of new developments, such as public meetings, etc.
- RSPB

The response from the Ynyshir reserve was lukewarm but the Wales Director was much more enthusiastic at the policy level.
- Local schools

In Summer 2006, Delyth took part in a workshop at Ysgol Bro Ddyfi. Delyth’s role was to talk to the children about the Biosphere Project and see what their knowledge was of the designation and to see what their feelings were about the Valley. In the new school year, Delyth is hoping to go back to schools in the Valley with the large play mats that make up an aerial photograph of the Valley. The idea will be to get young people thinking about the Valley and to see how special it is and what connections they feel they have with the area. This was also the aim of a photographic project in secondary schools in May/June 2006. Some of the pictures taken by pupils and the visiting professional photographer are still up in Ysgo Bro Ddyfi.
- Ecodyfi Members

All members have received the Consultation Document via email or post and have been kept informed of any events, publications etc. Ecodyfi wrote to “*welcome wholeheartedly the proposal to re-register the Dyfi Biosphere as a*

'modern' Biosphere with a focus on sustainable development" and to offer to change its constitution to enable it to play a full role if this would be helpful.

➤ Town Councils

- **Aberystwyth:** The Council received a presentation in 2006 and responded saying, "*Following your recent presentation to Aberystwyth Town Council, it has been resolved that this Council will support your bid for the creation of the newly designated Dyfi Biosphere reserve*".
- **Machynlleth:** The Council has received information on the re-designation but has not yet received a presentation or responded.

➤ Community Councils

- **Aberdyfi:** The Council had a presentation and copies of the Document. Many of the members attended a couple of the public meetings as well. The 30 members present seemed supportive and wanted more information but no official response has been received.
- **Borth:** They have received a presentation but we haven't received an official response.
- **Cadfarch:** They have received the document but not a presentation and we have not received a reply.
- **Ceulanmaesmawr:** They have received the document but not a presentation and we have not received a reply..
- **Corris:** They have received copies of the document and presentation, but only very recently. We anticipate a positive response.
- **Glantwymyn:** Members had a presentation last winter and seemed supportive as long as the whole concept would stay voluntary. The Council has since sent a letter supporting the designation and saying that "*the area needs more recognition as a special place for people and nature*".
- **Genau'r Glyn:** They have received the document but not a presentation and we have not received a reply.
- **Llanbrynmair:** The Council received a presentation and has responded supporting the re-designation of the Biosphere Area, saying that "*The Welsh Language, Welsh activities and all types of singing should be protected, developed and promoted and that walking paths for local communities should be developed*". They also suggested that "*a book on local historic buildings should be published*".
- **Llangynfelin:** They have received the document but not a presentation and they haven't sent a response.
- **Mawddwy:** Delyth gave the Council a presentation in 2006 and a few representatives have come to the public events that were held in Dinas Mawddwy. Most of the members are from a farming background and during informal conversations the main worry is that the designation would force them to change their ways of farming and land management.
- **Pennal:** They have received the document but not a presentation and they haven't sent a response.
- **Ysguborycoed:** They have received the document and a presentation in 2006 and a few of the members have attended a couple of public events. No

official response has come from the Council, but during the presentation members wanted more information and seemed supportive.

➤ Chambers of Trade

- **Aberdyfi:** Delyth gave an informal talk to the group and they seemed supportive. One businessman was worried about the future of the golf course because of the sea level rising and hoped that this re-designation would help their bid for a flood defence.
- **Machynlleth:** Delyth was due to give the group a presentation but it was cancelled. Another presentation has not been arranged and they haven't sent an official response.

➤ ICPL (International Centre for Protected Landscapes)

Liz Hughes from ICPL wrote a letter of support for the re-designation stating that *"I am writing on behalf of ICPL to offer our endorsement of the application to UNESCO for an expanded biosphere reserve in the Dyfi Valley"*. She goes on to write regarding the possibility of including Aberystwyth in the Transition area and says *"We suggest that it is wholly inappropriate to extend the designation beyond the Dyfi catchment"*

➤ Snowdonia National Park Authority (Department of Planning and Transportation)

A letter of support came from the Head of the Department stating *"I would like to take this opportunity to strengthen our support to the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership, and the process of designing an application to re-designate the Dyfi Valley as a Modern Biosphere area"*. He goes on to say *"As you already know, the Authority is supportive of the project and is keen to support the work to assure local support for the project"*

➤ Bro Ddyfi Communities First

The Bro Ddyfi Communities First Partnership has written a letter of support for the re-designation stating that *"The Partnership believes that to re-register the Dyfi Biosphere with UNESCO as a "modern" Biosphere with a focus on sustainable development can only be of benefit to the whole area"*.

➤ Other organisations and businesses that have responded positively

- **Machinations**, Llanbrynmair
- **Menter Aberystwyth**
This group received a presentation. And after the group discussed the designation they responded and said that *"Aberystwyth should be included in the Biosphere transition area"*
- **Dyfi Discoveries**, Aberdyfi
- **Tŷ Mawr Holiday Home Park**, Ynyslas
- **Insight Insulations Ltd**, Aberhosan
- **Kelvin Jenkins Jewellery**, Machynlleth
- **Rhys Huws** (translator), Talybont
- **The Wynnstay Hotel**, Machynlleth
- **Greener Aberystwyth Group**.

This group received a presentation and replied via letter stating *“It is difficult to foresee exactly what specific benefits the designation would bring, however the extension of the area to include Aberystwyth could bring benefits for the protection and improved management of our green spaces so we are broadly supportive of the proposal”*.

- **Centre for Alternative Technology** (Staff member)
- **CPRW** (Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales), Dolgellau. The Meirionnydd branch has responded positively saying *“CPRW is in support of the reaffirmation of Biosphere Status for the enlarged area of the whole Dyfi Catchment. We note that the enlarged area has validity, not only in terms of UNESCO’s revised definition, but in landscape terms, and as a functioning ecological unit”*

Section 5.2 of the consultation document summarised some typical early comments received from individuals, together with responses from the Partnership.

F Table of community engagement events

Event	Location	Date	Number present
Stand at Agricultural Show	Talybont	26.8.06	
Culture mapping seminar for people that have moved to the area for ecological reasons	The White Lion, Machynlleth	28.9.06	13
Agriculture and Forestry Seminar	Y Plas, Machynlleth	25.9.06	15
Eglwysfach WI	Eglwysfach	2.10.06	25
Llandre WI	Llandre	4.10.06	19
Llanbrynmair Public Meeting	Community Centre	5.10.06	10
Glantwymyn Public Meeting	Glantwymyn Community Centre	6.10.06	4
Dinas Mawddwy Public Meeting	Dinas Mawddwy Village Hall	10.10.06	21
Culture mapping Seminar for the Welsh that have lived here for generations	The White Lion, Machynlleth	12.10.06	5
Talybont Public Meeting Theme: Agriculture People asked for more information	Neuadd Goffa, Talybont	18.10.06	25
Machynlleth Public Meeting Theme: The Economy	Owain Glyndwr Institute	26.10.06	40+
Taliesin Public meeting Theme: The Environment	Neuadd Llanfach Hall	30.10.06	27
Corris Public Meeting Theme: The Environment	Primary School	2.11.06	25

Rural Studies' class	Aberystwyth University	15.11.06	10
Aberdyfi Public Meeting	Aberdyfi	16.11.06	35
Borth Public Meeting	Y Borth	22.11.06	
Mawddwy Community Council	Dinas Mawddwy	6.12.06	12
Menter Aberystwyth	Aberystwyth	20.12.06	
Glantwymyn Community Council	Glantwymyn		10
Ysguborycoed Community Council	Eglwysfach	10.1.07	8
UNESCO Cymru Wales Committee	Aberystwyth	12.1.07	11
Aberdyfi Community Council	Aberdyfi	15.1.07	30
Dyfi Valley Probus Club The group seemed very supportive	Machynlleth	30.1.07	35
Gwerin y Coed 10-12 year olds. First time to use the aerial floor map: very popular and a good way to engage with young people	Machynlleth	7.2.07	20 (?)
Economy and Employment group	Machynlleth	12.2.07	7
Aberystwyth Town Council	Aberystwyth	12.2.07	8
Greener Aberystwyth	Aberystwyth	20.2.07	10
Open Days	Llanbrynmair	8.5.07	Approx 18
	Talybont	9.5.07	
	Machynlleth	10.5.07	Approx 17
	Dinas Mawddwy	14.5.07	Approx 8
Gwerin y Coed 12-16 years	Machynlleth	16.5.07	
Open Day	Aberdyfi	25.5.07	
Clwb y Ddôl	Llanbrynmair	31.5.07	35
Presentation for a person in Ynyslas a few of her neighbours		1.6.07	4
Llanbrynmair Community Council	Aberdyfi	6.6.07	10
Aberdyfi Chamber of Trade	Aberdyfi	20.6.07	11
Open Day	Corris	21.6.07	Approx 7
Drop in to CAT staff during their lunch hour	Pantperthog	27.6.07	Approx 30
Aberdyfi WI	Aberdyfi	27.6.07	40
Corris Community Council	Corris	6.9.07	6