

## **Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere; Appendix**

# **Guidelines for Zonation in UK Biosphere Reserves**

Drafted by Andy Bell and adopted by UK MAB Committee March 2007

## ***Background***

As the concept starts to get understood and more Biosphere Reserves are developing their applications, the issue of Zoning seems to present a mental challenge. This relates to what can constitute a core, buffer or transition zone and what activities are allowed in each zone. The National Committee is empowered to set the rules or guidelines for establishing a Zonation system. The MAB Bureau has been asked by the last ICC to recommend a formula for the different activities permissible in the different zones.

This might include the clarification of what is understood as (sustainable) development and where activities of various types might be allowed in the various zones. What activities would be prohibitive form including them in a Biosphere Reserve? There has been a perception in some areas that conservation is only related to the core and buffer areas.

The issue of activities also ties in with what to do with the reserves that have not extended into buffer and transition areas. They might also contribute to the development of an area by accepting tourists or perhaps the management of the site leads to a product of some value to the local economy and that they may still have a contribution to make to long term monitoring and global change.

The following guidelines are a suggestion or draft of how things might shape up in the UK and to be used to support the development of reserves and our selection criteria for Biosphere Reserves in the future. We must consider how these might apply to the Urban Biosphere Reserve concept.

Sweden and Germany have guidelines that are used in determining their Biosphere Reserves.

## ***Suggested Zoning Policy***

### **The Core Area**

The site must be of bio-geographical regional significance: This should a site that is a habitat that presents a very good example typical of the UK or Europe. It should have been recognised as a site under the Ramsar Convention or under the European Habitats directive (SAC or SPA) or similar international status. National or government ownership is easier but not essential. The legislation can be there to protect the site for the long-term through the EU directive. The National Trust Acts give security through inalienable status; however the first test of being a global site will more than likely mean a Natura 200 site.

It will be hard to argue that a site that has not been recognised on an EU scale should be a core area for a global designation. It was DEFRA policy at the extension of Braunton Burrows to only include international status areas as the core. Martin Doughty stated at the House of Lords meeting that the sites should be special.

Key UK habitats under represented in the current set are: calcareous grassland, deciduous woodland, lowland fen, lowland raised bogs, marine reefs, lakes and fine needle woodlands.

### **Buffer Zone**

Must be areas that are supported by a national conservation policy or designation to allow intervention if necessary or in the ownership of a public body (government mainly but National Trust or charitable conservation trust with guarantee to covenant or tenure). They should be ecologically linked or physically linked to the core site and support ecological integrity.

A total concentric protective or supportive ring of protection might not always be achievable. For example satellite buffer zones of might be considered in riparian systems.

Examples might be: National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast, SSSI, Forest Parks, Forest Nature Reserves, National Scenic Areas, and National Nature Reserve and possibly local nature reserves.

What should not be included is: County Wildlife sites, agri-environment scheme agreement areas, local development plan policy areas. These latter few can be seen as gains in the transition areas.

## **Transition Area**

The transition zone should encompass the most rational area that interacts with the core area. To most areas this might be the river basin or catchment area upstream or downstream for a site. The extent of the transition zone is nominal in terms of actions and activities and tend to grow rather than shrink, but there should be some statement of the scale of impacts and possibly a ratio of size of the core to six of the transition; other states use 1% or 3% for example.

The nominal transition zone should be easily identifiable.

## ***Permissible Activities***

### **Core Areas**

Within the core areas extractive activities that support the conservation of the site for its stated values should be permissible. Within the EU, and certainly more so in the UK context the totally natural state does not exist, other than possibly in marine sites. The EU sites have been declared to conserve certain features which probably involve some interventions.

Non-extractive activities that support or do not damage the conservation interest of the site. These could be as benign as guided trails for tourist or slightly more obvious activities. Again the existing EU legislation should offer the scheme of management for these sites. The military training at Branton Burrows is managed in a way such that it supports the conservation objectives and further more is subject to an "appropriate assessment" to ensure the conservation features of the site are not damaged.

The EU Habitat regulations allow for activities of over-riding human need, these may be prohibitive for a core area.

Science and monitoring to increase understanding of the management of the site and global change will be required on the site.

### **Buffer Zones**

Activities that do not damage the supportive function of the buffer zone should be enhanced or encouraged. The definitions can not be absolute in this area. For example if the buffer is defined by a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, one can not stop the passage of traffic or the corner shop or hotel from trading, nor every activity that does not support the conservation of the core area. This area should be generally effective at helping to improve the condition and extent of core area habitats/species into the future and reduce habitat fragmentation.

The question of human habitation or not has been raised at the ICC. It may be an inconceivable question in the UK given our population density. However if a totally marine site was declared it is unlikely to have a resident human population. There would be human interaction from the fishing community for example. The UK response to this should be developed.

## ***Conclusion***

This paper is presented to open the debate and then provide simple guidelines for potential Biosphere Reserves to follow. The information can support the MAB bureau in their deliberations for a generic formula.