

# North Devon's UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Arts Strategy

May 2010



## Forward by Mark Wallace, Chief executive of Beaford Arts:

A study by the University of East Anglia called "[More evidence doesn't change minds](#)" showed that to influence people's behaviour, we need to alter their beliefs and not just present them with more scientific evidence. This shows the limits of rational persuasion and science - something that artists have known for years.

This fact, alongside Arts Council analysis that concludes that over three quarters of English adults participate in the arts in some form, shows the opportunity that the arts give to enriching people's engagement with the issues that are the beating heart of the Biosphere Reserve – Conservation, Sustainability and Education. From Arnolfini's current 'C - Words\*' programme in Bristol to the Barbican's 'Radical Nature' exhibition planting a wheat field in Dalston, artists throughout the country are showing an increasing willingness to take on these subjects, bringing them to the attention of a much wider proportion of the community.

Here in the Biosphere Reserve, our arts organisations have been doing this for some time. From Appledore Arts' Sea 4 Life project, which brought together three artists, 120 students, a geologist and a marine scientist through to the North Devon Festival's important and growing Biosphere strand each June, the centuries-old link between artists and the environment is very much alive.

Here at Beaford, we're now working with generations not even born when James Ravillious was creating his archive. For example, October's Village Band project in Burrington, from which this picture is taken, worked with the primary school to build a new oak tree from recycled materials. The village turned out to celebrate this and the 400-year-old old oak - a true symbol of sustainable environment which now has a special significance for Burrington's next generation.

This paper follows a presentation to the Biosphere Reserve Partnership Board on 16th October 2009, which provided an update on arts projects in progress and presented a wider context in which the arts sector could contribute to Biosphere Reserve's objectives.

It has been updated to reflect: themes covered in the Biosphere Reserve's Communications Planning exercise of February 2010; an interim evaluation exercise presented by the Jurassic Coast Arts Strategy team on 26th February 2010; and developments in the flagship projects mentioned in the initial presentation.

(\* oh, and, in case you were wondering, Arnolfini's C Words are of course carbon, climate, capital and culture)

## Summary and recommendations

- By building partnerships with arts organisations the BR can increase local engagement with, and external awareness of, its aims.
- For certain 'flagship projects' which could meet a range of Biosphere Reserve objectives, the Biosphere Reserve should also become an active project partner (with clearly-defined boundaries).
- Once its brand strategy is clearly established, the Biosphere Reserve can offer participating arts organisations brand accreditation which may assist them with gaining external funding.
- BRPB members should take advantage of engagement opportunities offered by relevant arts events. The BRPB should establish an arts subcommittee to liaise with the staff team in managing this process.



*Earth Painting Workshop, Peter Ward, North Devon Pigments, 2008 Appledore Visual Arts*

## Outline

1. strategic objectives of BR arts engagement
2. external arts resources (existing and additional)
3. proposed BR engagement with external arts resources to achieve objectives
4. risk assessment
5. actions proposed



## 1. Strategic Objectives

- **Increase local engagement**

The Biosphere Reserve has identified as an immediate priority the need to engage with local people and to explain the “complex concept” of the Biosphere Reserve to them. It proposed achieving this through alliances, partnerships, and joint branding.

Business engagement in the region demonstrates the perceived value of brand association with the arts. According to Arts & Business (‘Private Investment in Culture 08/09’, 2010), private sector investment in the arts in the South West rose by 33% to £17.2m in 2008/09.

Partnering with the arts is thus a well-used route to raising the perceived value of a non-arts brand, and to engaging those organisations with the non-arts brand’s values. It should therefore form part of the Biosphere Reserve’s portfolio of engagement strategies.

Partnering with the arts can also help the Biosphere Reserve to reach children and young people. Current developments in the primary curriculum are leading to the inclusion of ‘Understanding the Arts’ as one of the six core areas of learning. The new creative curriculum will lead both primary and secondary schools to focus more on cross-curricular engagement. Ofsted’s 2008 report on Learning Outside the Classroom links to the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda, requiring schools to make these opportunities available to their learners.

Schools within the Biosphere Reserve - particularly smaller schools with a limited range of internal resources - will be looking to partner with external organisations and professional practitioners to respond to these initiatives. By partnering with arts organisations active in education, the Biosphere Reserve will secure another route to engage local children and young people with its objectives.

- **Raise external awareness**

The Biosphere Reserve Partnership has concluded that influencing both private and public sector decision-makers locally requires that the Biosphere Reserve designation be seen as a business enabler. Raising the



*Sea for Life Arts and Geography programme 2010 – Woolacombe School © Simon Burt*

profile of North Devon as a tourist destination - particularly outside the main season - was seen as the clearest way to achieve this.

Arts projects engaging with Biosphere Reserve issues which are shown outside the Biosphere Reserve will raise the profile of North Devon with arts audiences, in ways which commercial campaigns are unlikely to achieve. By raising the Biosphere Reserve designation positively with such potential visitors, such projects will contribute to the Biosphere Reserve related marketing of North Devon.

Additionally, the Biosphere Reserve can partner with arts events taking place within North Devon which are marketed further afield, in order to raise its own profile beyond its borders.



Cob Ship Front,  
National Trust, 2008  
Appledore Visual Arts  
Festival

## 2. External Resources

### • Existing resources

These are arts organisations already presenting or producing work within the Biosphere Reserve. Some (noted in bold) are already contributing to Biosphere Reserve objectives; others might be persuaded. They are segmented according to funding:

#### Regularly or project funded by Arts Council England

- **Appledore Arts** - operates an annual internationally-known visual arts Festival in Appledore; runs a range of community and education projects along the coast year-round.
- **Beaford Arts** - operates year-round in rural communities across the Biosphere Reserve area; runs residential education courses at Greenwarren House in Beaford; owns and exhibits the Ravilious Archive
- **North Devon Theatres Trust** - operates two mid-scale venues in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe year-round, with related education work; manages the North Devon Festival in June which markets a range of community and arts organisations from across the BR; runs the North Devon Museum

#### Regularly or project funded by county/district council

- **Burton Art Gallery** - offers a year-round programme of visual arts and crafts exhibitions; owns the RJ Lloyd collection of Devon slipware, with related exhibitions and outreach work.
- **The Plough Arts Centre, Torrington** - operating a year-round programme of theatre and performing arts events in a small-scale venue; arts and crafts exhibitions; cinema; and outreach and education work.

#### Festivals with a range of funders

- Appledore Book Festival
- Bideford Folk Festival
- Goldcoast Festival
- LLAMA Festival
- Two Moors Festival

#### Artist-led organisations

- Bideford Bay Creatives - representing visual artists practising in the Bideford area
- North Devon Artists - representing visual artists practising across the Biosphere Reserve area

... plus a range of smaller amateur and community groups

Funding for the arts is being cut at district and county level. It is likely that Arts Council England will also have reduced resources when it decides on its next round of regular funding. In these circumstances, the most likely contribution from these existing resources would be some amendment to the regular programme to include some focus on Biosphere Reserve issues - in other words, business as usual but with an increased Biosphere focus.

So without additional resources, external publicity is unlikely to increase beyond its current levels (primarily, brochure distribution for the North Devon Festival; irregular national coverage for the festivals listed above; tours of work made at Beaford, especially the Archive).

## • Additional resources

Higher profile arts work which has the potential significantly to increase internal and external awareness of the Biosphere Reserve will require additional funding for commissioning and delivery. Acquiring this specialist arts funding is not within the core skill set of the Biosphere Reserve team.



Ben Mellor – Beaford Arts

*Environmental campaigner and BBC Radio 4 National Slam Poetry Champion Ben Mellor visited North Devon's Biosphere Reserve at the end of March and created a new piece of poetry based on a combination of species particular to the North Devon Biosphere area, some of which are endangered or have become extinct to the region or even the country, and characters he imagined from the places he visited.*

## 3. Biosphere Reserve Engagement With External Resources

As part of its efforts to increase local engagement and external awareness, the BR team should partner with arts organisations. The BR team (including, where appropriate, Biosphere Reserve Partnership Board members) should encourage and guide participation by organisations, approving co-branding where appropriate. To maximise output, there should be varying levels of engagement by the Biosphere Reserve team depending on the project's potential contribution:

- **Flagship partner projects needing external funding**

These are relatively large-scale projects, selected because of their potentially significant impact on a range of BR objectives - contributing both towards increased local engagement and raised external awareness.

Such projects are likely to involve several partners, and will require active input throughout from the BR team to ensure that BR issues are dealt with appropriately. It is likely that members of both the staff team and the BRPB will need to be involved at local level to benefit from the potential community engagement opportunities which result.

This relatively resource-intensive approach places a clear limit on the number of such projects active at any one time. Accordingly, a clear selection procedure will be needed. An arts and culture subcommittee is recommended (comprising members of the BRPB and BR staff team) which would meet as required.

- **Increased Biosphere Reserve focus in existing programmes**

### 1. Producing organisations

(defined as arts organisations which produce original work or which co-produce new work with other companies and artists)

These are equally as important as the flagship partner projects, but require less input from the BR team. Such organisations (for example Appledore Arts, Beaford Arts, and some members of the North Devon



Art in the landscape – Braunton Cycle Path Light Column by Kirsty Waterworth

*Environmental sustainability relies on individuals being more aware of their surroundings and the impact that they have. However, because these are familiar surroundings...too familiar – that damage, the beauty and the everyday miracles are never noticed unless the viewpoint is changed. Our aim is to make the experience resonate with the viewer so the feeling stays with them for longer. Andy Bell, North Devon AONB and Biosphere Service*

Festival) have the professional expertise to secure specialist arts funding and to use it to commission new work which could be shown outside the BR. Some artist-led work may also meet these criteria; a number of artists and groups have strong track records.

The production of such new work should be strongly encouraged, as long as it is well-informed. As such, both the BR team and BRPB members should provide relevant mentoring and guidance to commissioned artists and companies where appropriate (and within reasonable limits).

## 2. Presenting organisations

(defined as arts organisations which show a mixed programme of existing work from a range of artists and companies)

These arts organisations (listed in section 2) should be encouraged to establish strands of programming related to current BR issues. For them, BR accreditation might assist with bids to some funders.

The Biosphere brand, once established, would provide a framework for such accreditation. Most arts organisations operate by season brochures. If the BR team concluded that a season's work contained a meaningful engagement with BR objectives, the organisation would be given permission to include the Biosphere logo.

Maintaining such relationships is not time-intensive, and could form part of the BR Outreach Officer's portfolio in association with the arts subcommittee.

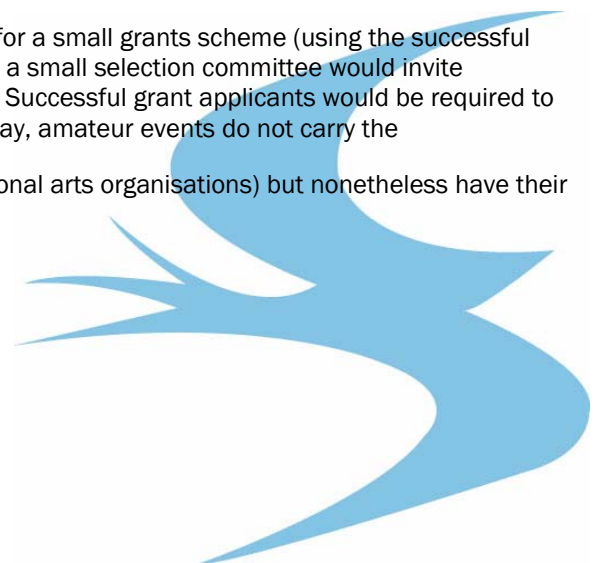
### • Encouraging amateur/community groups to engage

The risk in the above two categories is that they may appear exclusive, and do not encourage the deep and broad levels of local engagement required to progress BR objectives. The North Devon Festival demonstrates that there is a wide range of amateur community arts groups which can make locally interesting work. The Festival incentivises them to do so by offering wide-ranging marketing for activities listed under its banner, together with funding in some cases.

The BR team already works successfully with the Festival to ensure that the BR has a clear presence. As such, it would be more appropriate for the BR to find a way of encouraging community arts groups to engage with BR issues at other times in the year. The most attractive incentive for this would be a contribution to funding.

The BR Foundation should be encouraged to pursue funding for a small grants scheme (using the successful model applied by Exeter City Council). If funding was secured, a small selection committee would invite applications for grants (ranging, perhaps, from £250 - £750). Successful grant applicants would be required to carry BR Foundation accreditation on their publicity. In this way, amateur events do not carry the

main BR logo (which would devalue its attractions to professional arts organisations) but nonetheless have their contribution recognised and encouraged.



## 4. Risks

Much of this strategy is informed by analysis of the Jurassic Coast Arts Strategy. This more ambitious work followed from the Jurassic Coast Interpretation Action Plan developed in 2003-05, from which followed an arts strategy in 2006. Two years of securing funding and implementation followed, with the Jurassic Coast Arts Officer in post and opening a three-year programme in 2008. The programme was professionally evaluated by Mary Schwarz at the interim stage.

Participants have found the JC programme helpful in that it gives access to funds, expert knowledge, promotion, and practical support. **This BR strategy does provide immediate access to expert knowledge and potentially provides access to funding in future. It does not provide promotion or practical arts support. This may limit the range of amateur and community groups which would regard the BR strategy as useful.**



Areas of the Jurassic Coast programme identified as needing improvement were:

- Building a clearer identity for the programme
- Building a more accessible application route for participation/funding
- Clarification of mutual expectations with partners
- Taking a more strategic role as a catalyst in building connections and collaborations

To take these in turn:

- This strategy does not seek to establish a clearly-defined BR arts programme - rather, it seeks to partner with the arts sector as one route to increasing engagement with the BR objectives.
- The three layers of participation above should avoid problems with the second and third issues - the strategy identifies a finite number of arts organisations with which the BR Outreach Officer can establish personal contact, and not all are likely to wish to engage. Mutual expectations will thus be clarified via key one-to-one relationships. Access for other groups would be via the BRF funding programme which would have clear guidelines and an easy application process.
- Finally, it is inevitable that in the absence of funding, the BR Outreach Officer will take a more strategic role.

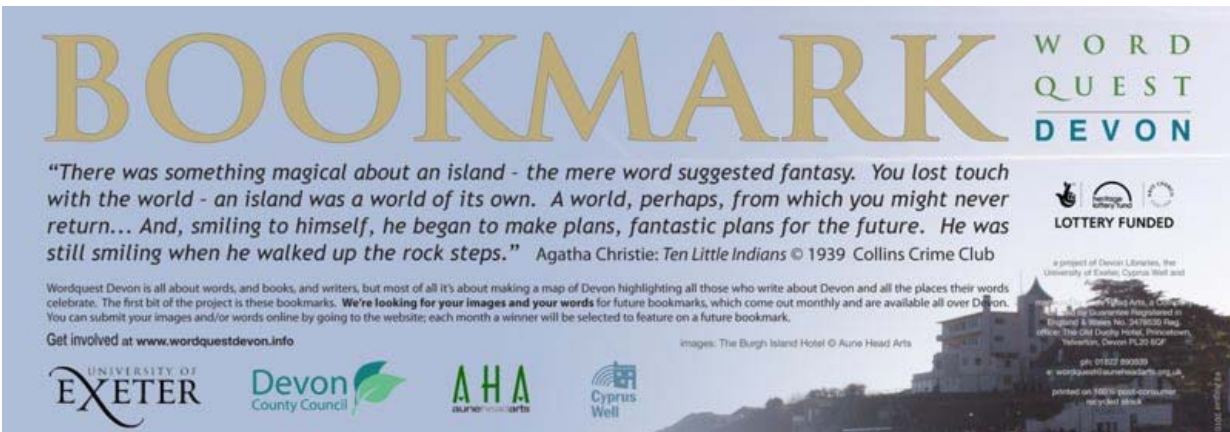
The greater risk is that the BR team does not capitalise on the engagement opportunities offered by the raised profile created by relevant arts activities. Accordingly, and since the engagement opportunities may be of interest to a range of BRPB members, it is recommended that the BRPB is kept informed of all 'flagship projects', and any relevant 'strands of programming' via the Outreach Officer and arts subcommittee.

There is also a slight risk of duplication or audience confusion when some arts organisations work both with the AONB and the BR. AONB and BR officers should continue to liaise to avoid any potential scheduling clashes.

## 5. Actions

At the time of writing, two **'flagship projects'** are in development:

1. **'Confluence'** (formerly 'Watershed'). A partnership between University of Plymouth's Institute of Digital Art and Technology (iDAT), Appledore Arts, Beaford Arts, and the Biosphere Reserve. (This was presented to the BRPB in October 2009.) An innovative project which will see a range of real-time environmental data interpreted by artists in partnership with the communities whose environments are being monitored. Now invited to make an application for part-funding to Leader 4, and as a result now making a solicited application to Arts Council England for other part-funding.
2. **'WordQuest'**. A Devon-wide Cultural Olympiad project managed by Dartmoor's Aune Head Arts with participants including Devon Library Services. The BR is the lead partner in North Devon, working with the North Devon Festival and Beaford Arts. Likely to result in a range of communities participating in creating new writing about BR-related aspects of their environment, either in Spring 2011 or 2012.



**BOOKMARK** **WORD QUEST DEVON**

*"There was something magical about an island - the mere word suggested fantasy. You lost touch with the world - an island was a world of its own. A world, perhaps, from which you might never return... And, smiling to himself, he began to make plans, fantastic plans for the future. He was still smiling when he walked up the rock steps."* Agatha Christie: *Ten Little Indians* © 1939 Collins Crime Club

Wordquest Devon is all about words, and books, and writers, but most of all it's about making a map of Devon highlighting all those who write about Devon and all the places their words celebrate. The first bit of the project is these bookmarks. **We're looking for your images and your words** for future bookmarks, which come out monthly and are available all over Devon. You can submit your images and/or words online by going to the website; each month a winner will be selected to feature on a future bookmark.

Get involved at [www.wordquestdevon.info](http://www.wordquestdevon.info)

Images: The Burgh Island Hotel © Aune Head Arts

LOTTERY FUNDED

a project of Devon Libraries, the University of Exeter, Cyprus Well and Aune Head Arts, a Creative Writing Centre for Devonians registered in England & Wales No. 2478550 Reg. Office: The Old Doolittle Hotel, Broomdown, Newton, Devon PL21 8QP. ph: 01322 400039 e: [wordquest@auneheadarts.org.uk](mailto:wordquest@auneheadarts.org.uk) printed on 100% post-consumer recycled stock

### Actions

- the BR team will continue as an active partner in these projects, and keeps BRPB members informed as to potential participation opportunities.
- BRPB members commit in principle to explore follow-up opportunities for community engagement offered by flagship arts projects.
- that the BRPB nominate three of its members to represent it on an arts subcommittee, to liaise with the Outreach Officer and convene when appropriate to consider proposals.

At the time of writing, three organisations (Appledore Arts, Beaford Arts, and the North Devon Festival) have recently programmed or produced work engaging with BR issues.

- The BR Outreach Officer will maintain active links with these organisations in order to encourage further work.
- the BRPB particularly will encourage any programme aimed at commissioning new work which engages with BR objectives and the Outreach Officer and arts subcommittee will ask BRPB members to offer guidance and mentoring to such commissions as appropriate.
- once the BR branding strategy has been established, the BR Outreach Officer or arts subcommittee members will approach other arts organisations listed in section 2 to discuss programming and related use of the BR logo.

At the time of writing, no additional funding is available to support community arts groups seeking to engage with the Biosphere Reserve.

that the BR Outreach Officer and arts subcommittee liaises with the BR Foundation to seek funding to establish a small community arts grants scheme.



Heather Jansch Workshop, Participants Work, June 2010, Appledore Visual Arts Festival