

## **BIOSPHERE PARTNERSHIP – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

### **ITEM 4: BIOSPHERE REVIEW OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

**Provenance:** This report has been prepared by Devon County Council, on behalf of the Review Task and Finish Group.

**Summary:** This paper sets out the review process that has been undertaken and resulting options for the future Governance of the Biosphere Service.

**Recommendation:** The Partnership is requested to:

- Note the report and the options appraisal that has been undertaken
- Comment on and endorse, to take forward for decision by Executive, the four potentially viable options, or a combination of one or more parts of them, as summarised below.
- Note and comment on the further proposal, outlined in Appendix 3, that has arisen as a result of discussion at the special meeting of the AONB Executive.

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## **1. Background**

There have been an on-going series of review processes over recent years relating to the partnership and funding arrangements for the former North Devon Coast and Countryside Service (incorporating North Devon Biosphere Reserve and North Devon Coasts AONB). These have resulted in a series of changes in the structure, composition, name, work priorities and practical arrangements for the dedicated staff team(s). However, a common recent theme has been a need to adapt to reduced funding available from the three local authorities (Devon County Council, Torridge District Council and North Devon Council) and other sources, which has resulted in a gradual contraction of the staff complement.

The most recent exercise, in late 2011 / early 2012, failed to achieve the re-structuring and financial savings originally proposed by the County Council and, instead, resulted in the separation of the former North Devon AONB and Biosphere Service into two distinct teams. However, both have continued to be hosted by the County Council and co-financed by the two District Councils, with a clear mandate to support the achievement of the strategic objectives of their respective Partnerships, whilst working jointly to benefit mutual interests where practical.

In the light of the current financial climate and the increasing budgetary pressure on public bodies, the three local authorities agreed in early 2013 that there was a need to embark upon a further review of the funding and delivery arrangements for the Biosphere Reserve. There are similar processes being undertaken for most local authority services, particularly those which are discretionary in nature, to inform future priorities and the possible adoption of new operating models.

There are, currently, no specific savings targets to inform this process. Instead, there are shared expectations between the three authorities of having to make very significant

additional savings over the remainder of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review period and beyond. These cuts could, potentially, be anywhere between 15% and 100% over a number of years; however, even in the event of a complete withdrawal from the current funding and operational model, there are likely to be other ways in which the local authorities might continue to provide enduring practical support for biosphere-related activity.

The particular focus on the Biosphere Reserve, compared to the AONB, reflects the absence of clear, statutory obligations, the very limited external funding for its core functions and the lack of a formal / signed funding agreement between the local authority partners. In addition, at least from the County Council's perspective, there is pressure to explore the potential externalisation of the service.

## 2. Scope and Approach

At the Partnership Meeting in June 2013 a report was tabled looking at the implications for future delivery and co-ordination of Biosphere related activities in the light of the likelihood of reduced funding from the local authorities in future years. Following discussion, the Partnership decided that it:

- Accepted the need for review in the light of inevitable further public funding cuts;
- Strongly challenged the assumption that it would be beneficial to externalise the Service and requested further consideration of retaining a public-funded and hosted Service;
- Agreed that the review work should be co-ordinated through the Executive, with consideration given to a possible role for a Working Group.

Following this meeting, and in agreement with the Chair, the local authorities and Biosphere Co-ordinator discussed a provisional work programme taking account of these decisions. Thus, in the short term the adaptation work focused on proactively planning how to sustain the viable, future co-ordination and delivery of biosphere-related activity.

The **first phase of the work programme** included three key areas of work:

- i) The implications of various funding scenarios were examined based on budget reductions from the local authority partners. It should be noted that in order to provide short-term security to the Team and to allow the review work to formulate conclusions as to the way forward, the three local authorities, through agreeing a joint approach, have largely been able to maintain their budget contribution to the Biosphere Service for 2014/15. However, it has not yet been possible to secure a longer term commitment; this will be related to the outcomes of the Review work.
- ii) An examination of the operational arrangements of other Biospheres internationally and other similar environmental related services in the UK was undertaken. The overriding conclusion from this initial work is that there is no one perfect model, that most services struggle to sustain a viable operation and that they are all heavily dependent on local authority or other public support for core staff and work. This justifies the concerns expressed by the Partnership about any externalisation process and the paper is being used as part of the evidence base for the Review. (Paper available at <http://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/biosphere-review.html> )
- iii) An independent Peer Review was carried out during the autumn of 2013 by Peter Moore of Dorset County Council to critically assess the current operational arrangements. This was finalised early in 2014 and the Peer Review report circulated to Partnership members well in advance of the February meeting to allow them, and

the organisations they represent, to consider the findings. The Executive was careful not to attempt to influence the essence of these independent observations nor the summary of the views expressed at the Workshop event. The report is just one element of the Review process and as such, the recommendations have no particular status; they are simply an independent view offered to those involved in the Review process and will be taken into consideration as a framework as the Review process progresses. (The full report is available on <http://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/biosphere-review.html> )

### **3. Governance**

The key focus of the Review work relates to Governance, both of the Partnership and the Service and to the related organisations, the Biosphere Foundation and the Tarka Country Trust. Consideration of these issues has been critical as arrangements for an effective governance structure for both the Partnership and the Service, needs to be put in place to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver and monitor the new reviewed Biosphere Strategy and Delivery Plan for 2014-19.

Governance issues were looked at in two, firstly for the Partnership itself and secondly for the Service.

#### **a) Partnership Governance**

The Peer Review clearly identified a number of issues specifically around the governance of the Partnership which need to be considered and addressed. The relevant recommendations, in summary, included:

- Define the purpose of the Partnership and its breadth and scope of its work within the context of the review of the Strategy **(R1)**.
- Define in its Strategy the contribution that the Partnership can make to sustainable development through the Local Plan (rather than the Strategy trying to be the sustainable development plan) **(R2)**.
- Define the responsible bodies for the strategic functions and the operational delivery functions and that these flow clearly and logically from the Strategy **(R3)**.
- Define clear criteria for engaging in issues or projects, clearly based on the priorities set out in the revised Strategy **(R4)**.
- Draft a new Partnership Agreement for wider discussion to clarify the rights and responsibilities of partners **(R5)**.
- Ensure that there is a clear Funding Plan to (i) prioritise engagement with current and future projects in line with the revised Strategy and (ii) consider alternative sources to generate income to supplement delivery of the Strategy **(R12/14)**.

The Biosphere Manager prepared a paper looking at these recommendations in more detail which was discussed at the February 2014 Partnership meeting. There was a wide-ranging discussion, particularly around the role and purpose of the Partnership, and further work is needed to provide clarity on the above recommendations. However, it was concluded that the focus for the Biosphere should be sustainable development, although it was recognised that there was a lack of representation from the social and economic sectors on the Partnership. This should be addressed through a Governance Review.

## **b) Biosphere Service Governance**

It is the intention for the Partnership, through the Executive, to identify and develop a suitable structure for the future operation of the Service to ensure a sustainable solution to the management of the Biosphere. The key considerations in developing options for the Service relate to funding, hosting and relationships with the Partnership, the Foundation and other partnerships already operating in the north Devon area.

Although the Partnership originally challenged the assumption that it would be beneficial to externalise the Service, this still does need to be actively considered alongside the Partnership's previous preference of retaining a public-funded and hosted Service.

The relevant recommendations from the Peer Review report which have been taken into consideration are, in summary:

- Examine ways in which there could be closer integration with the North Devon AONB Partnership and how both Partnerships might have closer working with North Devon Plus and the relationship with the Devon Local Nature Partnership **(R7/R8)**.
- There should be an agreed approach between the local authority funding partners **(R9/R11)**.
- There should be open discussion with potential alternative hosts **(R13)**.

## **4. Options Appraisal Methodology**

To take forward the work related to the Service governance a small focused Task and Finish sub-group of the Executive was established, following agreement with the Partnership in February 2014, to undertake a Governance options appraisal. As its core, this T&F Group comprised representatives of each of the three local authority funders, Natural England and the Chair or a Vice-Chair of the Partnership.

The first task was to confirm the roles that the Biosphere Service needed to deliver and to decide whether these were essential or desirable. These 'Roles for the Biosphere' are attached in Appendix 1.

The next stage was to brainstorm possible options that would deliver these roles to a greater or lesser degree and then further examine the benefits and risks related to each potentially realistic option. These options were then appraised through discussion with representatives of other external bodies on the Partnership, including other stakeholders, the Foundation and the AONB Executive, who provided specialist input and advice on how any suggested model or alternative host might work in practice.

At the same time the requirements of the County Councils "Programme Devon: Future Service Delivery Models Strategy and Workstream Requirements" led to a more structured approach to the Review including the need to test the options against agreed objectives and to undertake wider public consultation.

### *Objectives for the Review*

In order to undertake a rigorous appraisal of any options, a series of objectives were developed for the Review against which the options could be tested. These are summarised as:

- i) To continue to deliver the 14 essential roles for the successful operation of the Biosphere Reserve.
- ii) To deliver as many as possible of the further 4 desirable roles for the successful operation of the Biosphere Reserve.
- iii) To make a financial saving for the current funding partners in line with defined or required savings targets (i.e. currently c.25% for DCC, but this may be subject to change).
- iv) To establish a financially viable method of operation that can be sustained in the short and medium terms (3 to 5 years) on behalf of the Biosphere Partnership.
- v) To establish an operating approach that accords with the wishes of the majority of the Biosphere Partnership partners (and, as appropriate, AONB Partnership partners).
- vi) To ensure that the proposed structure is practically acceptable to the host and lead organisation.
- vii) To provide evidence that there will be a significant and sustained multiplier of external investment through the lead organisation, in carrying out the management and project delivery function, over the core investment by local authorities.
- viii) To ensure the cost of establishing a new approach is proportionate to, and does not exceed, the savings that might be achieved over the following 3 to 5 years.

## **5. Options Appraisal**

Following a brainstorm and discussion, it appeared that there were 12 possible options which were grouped under four headings;

### *Withdrawal from Biosphere Service*

- 1. Complete Withdrawal and De-designate
- 2. Withdraw Service but maintain function

### *Public Sector Hosted*

- 3. Devon County hosted ie Status Quo
- 4. District Council hosted
- 5. Integration of Biosphere and AONB
- 6. Hosted by national statutory agency eg Natural England, Environment Agency
- 7. Hosted by local public bodies eg National Parks

### *Mixed Approach*

- 8. Combination of Public Sector Hosting plus Increased role for External Partner

### *Externalised Models*

- 9. Strategic Partnership Arrangement
- 10. Social Enterprise Model
- 11. Establish New Charitable Body
- 12. Contractual Commercial Arrangement

Following this initial appraisal the benefits and risks associated with each option were tabulated (attached in Appendix 2) and tested against the role for the Biosphere and the

objectives for the Review outlined above. This formed the basis of discussion with affected partners including the Biosphere and AONB staff teams, local authority officers and members, the Biosphere Foundation, the Chair and Executive Group of North Devon AONB, North Devon Plus and Devon Wildlife Trust.

In summary, It was not felt that either complete withdrawal from the obligations of the Biosphere (Option 1), resulting in potential loss of the designation, or in trying to maintain the function solely through an independent Partnership but without any dedicated staff withdrawal (Option 2) were acceptable solutions at this stage, although could not be completely discounted in the future if other options proved unworkable. Although some public sector hosting options (i.e. those through the local authorities) may still be feasible, with or without integration with the AONB, there was no appetite from other potential national or local hosts (Options 6) in the public sector, such as Natural England or one of the National Parks, to pursue discussion despite the opportunities for synergy and close working.

Of the externalised options, it was generally felt not to be the right time to establish a completely new social enterprise or charitable body (Options 10 and 11) that would add little value or difference to the existing bodies of this type that operate in north Devon which already share some of the objectives of the Biosphere and support delivery. Any new organisation would be particularly vulnerable and would require significant long-term support from the local authorities. Finally, it was felt that a purely contractual, commercial arrangement with an external organisation would bring no added value and would be more expensive due to management costs.

Therefore, it has become clear from these discussions, that there is only a smaller number of acceptable, feasible and realistic options which merit further investigation. These are set out in more detail below.

### **Option 3 and 4: Hosting by a Local Authority**

Under this option, the Service would continue to be hosted within the local authority structure meaning that there would be little change to governance structure or method of operation or to the majority of the terms and conditions for employment of the staff. However, the Service would still need to adapt to reduced funding from local authority partners which, unless alternative funding was found to address the shortfall, would result in the need to operate with a reduced staffing level.

#### *a) Devon County Council (DCC)*

The status quo option is for the Service to continue to be hosted by DCC, as at present. This was the stated preference of the Partnership previously and appeared to remain a possible preference for some of the partners during the recent discussions. Despite this, the political steer from DCC is that ongoing hosting of the Service by DCC is unlikely to be a favourable option. Neither does it reflect the transformation which needs to be made by all local authorities in the light of severe and ongoing funding pressures. However, it cannot be entirely discounted at this stage.

#### *b) North Devon Council (NDC)*

During discussion, the NDC lead officer and member did accept the potential merits of local hosting as an alternative to DCC and recognised the greater synergy with some NDC services such as Planning, Leisure and Culture and Community Services. It has been agreed that a business case will be developed for consideration by NDC Leadership Team. However, at the same time there was also a clear recognition of potential constraints and the complications of

staff liabilities. (It should be noted that when NDC hosting of the AONB Team was considered a few years ago, the District chose not to proceed with this option decision in the light of these complications and constraints.)

*c) Torridge District Council (TDC)*

To date, TDC have clearly indicated that there is no likelihood that they could act as host so this option has not been further explored.

**Interim Conclusion:** If an externalised solution is not adopted and no alternative hosting arrangements identified, it will become necessary to resolve whether DCC might agree to retain this role or whether it can be transferred to NDC.

**Option 5: Increased Integration of Biosphere and AONB**

Throughout the Review process, the T&F Group has recognised that it would not be possible to develop options for the Biosphere without reference to the AONB, as any alternative solution would have an impact on arrangements that are currently in place between the two Teams e.g. shared office space, shared administrative staff, and some elements of joint work on projects.

Despite the initial view of the AONB Chair that the AONB should remain outside of any consideration in the review, this is not possible due to some of the current arrangements noted above. While recognising that it will be very difficult to reach agreement on the practical measures and ultimate extent, the three local authority funding partners and Natural England have accepted the desirability of exploring aspects of increased integration between the two teams and associated governance / partnership structures. At this stage there are no specific proposals or predetermined outcomes, but the options appraisal summary table does identify a range of possibilities.

To facilitate the proper consideration of this issue with the direct involvement of the AONB, a special meeting of the AONB Executive was convened on 17<sup>th</sup> June. At this meeting the AONB Chair and Vice-Chair expressed a clear preference for the status quo for the AONB Partnership and Team to be maintained, irrespective of the impact that the review of the Biosphere might have on the current shared arrangements (i.e. some of the identified options might limit future opportunities for close joint working). This was countered by the funding partners (and by Natural England), who felt that status quo for the AONB was a risky option beyond the short term given the uncertainties of future funding and the recognition that the AONB staff unit is already operating at what might be considered to be a minimum viable scale. Whilst some believe that further integration will provide efficiencies, increased scale and synergies between the Biosphere and AONB, others view this with alarm, believing that it presents a potential threat to the AONB and preferring independence.

The AONB Chair and Vice Chair presented what they consider to be the only acceptable way in which the two teams might be brought together. This is based around the AONB assuming responsibility (i.e. possibly through a competitive bidding process) for the delivery of prescribed Biosphere functions and management of a dedicated (but decreased) staff resource, which would be employed through a contractual arrangement with an external body, with relevant individuals, potentially, seconded back to the AONB host organisation. This proposal does not fit any of the approaches previously considered through the options appraisal and it has been accepted that it does not provide a true approach to further integration. However, it is described in more detail in Appendix 3 for information and possible comment.

**Interim Conclusion:** Whilst there is a clear view from some quarters that further integration between the Biosphere and AONB is desirable and should bring clear benefits and increased viability for both, a diametrically opposed view is currently being presented on behalf of the AONB Partnership. On this basis, the option of integration of the two teams as one under a single local authority host will only be viable in the event of there being a clear consensus on this between the local authority funding partners and with this view accepted by the two partnerships. A definitive view on this issue needs to be agreed now. In the event of this increased integration option being accepted, it could still be considered alongside one or more of the other identified options, especially Option 7. If integration of the teams is rejected, the related opportunities for closer joint working between the two partnerships are also likely to be reduced.

### **Option 7: Public Sector Hosting with Increased Role for External Partner**

This option has been an on-going intention for governance for the Biosphere since the original designation ie the role of the local authorities in facilitating the ongoing operation of the Biosphere would decrease as a charitable body or social enterprise gradually took a greater role in delivering the Biosphere functions. A fully independent organisation might be the longer-term ambition; but, it is recognised that the structures are not in place to achieve this in the short to medium term. However, it should be possible to build on the existing structures that are already in place as well as providing more of a leadership role for the Partnership and its constituent bodies.

In the immediate future, this Option envisages that a local authority might host a reduced core team which would deliver core essential activities at a minimum level, such as support for the Partnership, producing a Strategy, reporting to UNESCO, etc, while an external third sector partner would eventually lead on project activity, external funding and providing added value. Whilst it is recognised that although this solution lacks clarity in the short to medium transition phase, it might be the best and most sustainable way to obtain the longer term ambition of a truly externalised independent body.

#### *a) Biosphere Foundation / Tarka Country Trust*

The Biosphere Foundation is registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee and has recently gained charitable status; its objectives allow it discretion to support the activities of the Biosphere. It currently has four Directors / Trustees and is dedicated to furthering the aims of the Biosphere Partnership ie sustainable development

The Tarka Country Trust is a local charity established in the 1999 and currently has eight directors / trustees. Its objects relate to education and conservation and it acts as an enabler co-ordinator, working as the interface between those willing to donate funds and those requiring grant-aided support to implement environmental projects across northern Devon.

The Foundation recognises the requirement to research and develop an alternative model for the future management and delivery of the North Devon Biosphere and is supporting discussions on how the Foundation may play a greater role in delivery. The Foundation proposes developing a Business Plan identifying core work areas to be developed, for which it could seek viable funding streams, for delivery of the Biosphere Strategy. At the same time the Foundation is initiating discussions with the Tarka Trust to explore the potential of merging the two bodies, to provide scale and depth within a single entity to support the Biosphere.

It welcomes further involvement and discussion in the Review process and in trying to find a sustainable solution in which the Foundation may play an active role.

If the Foundation (with or without a joint arrangement with the Trust) can continue to grow its capacity, then this combined approach, with a local authority continuing to host a core team, could become a realistic option for the Biosphere and one which would have less impact on the staff team.

***Interim Conclusion:*** It is clear that the Biosphere Foundation, potentially together with the Tarka Trust, is very willing to consider how a public sector/ charitable approach could work in practice and is open to further discussion. However, there is some risk and uncertainty associated with this approach, which will involve an ongoing reliance on some level of local authority hosting, at least in the short to medium term.

### **Option 9: Strategic Partnership Arrangement**

To explore the potential viability of this option, initial discussions have taken place with representatives of two bodies, the Devon Wildlife Trust and North Devon Plus, although there may be others who might be considered. This has been to test whether, in principle, whether they might be prepared to take on a management role and develop the Biosphere through their own resources in a non-commercial capacity. Under this arrangement, the asset management function related to the South West Coast Path and Tarka Trail might, at the discretion of Devon County Council, remain as part of its highway authority function. A Partnership Funding Agreement would be drawn up between the local authorities and the new host body with a commitment for funding, albeit at a tapering level, for an agreed number of years. The advantages of this model include the opportunities to build on the strength of the new host body, whether they are environmental or economic, with resulting greater integration with related projects. There would also be new and increased funding opportunities depending on the status of the new host body and potentially increased support from existing staff and volunteers.

#### *a) Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT)*

DWT is a registered charity working to make Devon a "living landscape" in which wildlife on land and in seas is varied, plentiful and widespread. It works towards this by securing the future of key wildlife sites, promoting the sustainable use of Devon's natural resources and increasing support for wildlife in the County. It is part of a national network of local Wildlife Trusts.

An initial discussion was held between the Biosphere Chair and Vice Chair and Chief Executive of DWT and followed up through a further meeting with DCC's Environment Group Manager and DWT. DWT is very keen to ensure that the Biosphere has a secure future and believes that more could be made of the designation. Four key considerations need to be explored including whether there is sufficient alignment in terms of the organisations' mission and purpose; whether there were any statutory obligations to fulfil; the liabilities, financial and otherwise, that are involved; whether the Biosphere function can fit neatly within DWT in terms of (for example) its charitable objectives and organisational culture.

In terms of a Governance model, there may be more than one model that could be considered ranging from a total merger to DWT being contracted in to manage the project. A halfway house solution could parallel with how DWT operates the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, where the staff and budget is managed as part of DWT, but it has its own steering / advisory group of funders and key stakeholders that meets quarterly and a wider forum that meets annually. Although neither has strictly executive powers, it enables the DBRC to operate, and be seen as, at least partly autonomous.

DWT Board of Trustees has considered the proposition and is supportive of further discussion and consideration of key details such as the responsibilities that the Biosphere would bring, budget details and staffing structures and liabilities.

*b) North Devon Plus (ND+)*

ND+ is a public / private sector company for economic delivery in northern Devon. It provides a primary focus for regeneration, business support and tourism and works with the local authorities and the private sector to deliver projects and initiatives that encourage and support business growth, improve quality of life, and address social and economic inequalities.

An initial very brief discussion has taken place with NDC's Lead Officer for ND+ who considered that the ND+ Board would be prepared to at least consider the possibility of a strategic partnership arrangement, especially if the local authorities were in favour. As an organisation it has taken the decision to focus on inward investment and has moved away from tourism and marketing. However, it was felt that the hosting of the Biosphere could be seen as an opportunity and there are clearly some complementary skills within the staff.

However, some concerns have already been expressed at the lack of synergy between ND+ objectives and those for a Biosphere and that the focus of the Board is not consistent with environmental management or an ecosystem services approach. Although successful in inward investment in gaining and running the Leader 4 Programme (it exceeded targets and had an effective programme management in place) the one short-coming noted was underperformance in environmental sustainability.

Nevertheless, this opportunity merits further investigation and discussion in more detail with ND+.

**Interim Conclusion:** The discussions to date on a Strategic Partnership approach have taken place to test the viability of the concept with just two of the potential partners. This approach will need to be developed in accordance with DCC's Procurement Strategy and initial Expressions of Interest will be sought via the required consultation process, outlined below in Section 6.

## **5. View of the Partnership**

Having considered what appears to be the five main viable options outlined in Section 4 above, the Partnership is asked to express its view as to whether these could deliver the requirements of the various roles that have been established for a Biosphere, whether they meet the objectives for the Review and whether they would appear sufficiently viable to be considered in more detail. Additionally, the Partnership may feel that there are further options, being a combination of one or more parts of those that have been set out, that might provide an alternative solution.

The Partnership is invited to make any comments that they wish to draw to the attention of the funding partners in further consideration of the options.

## **6. Next Steps to Conclude Review**

Following the views of the Partnership, and the special meeting of the AONB Partnership on 14<sup>th</sup> July, the T&F Group will reconvene to take forward preferred options that are still

considered to be feasible to pursue. These options will be further discussed with the affected organisations and worked up in more detail and will be reported to the Biosphere Executive meeting in September. A final decision on the preferred option will then be made for endorsement by the Partnership in October.

At the same time, a wider public consultation will be undertaken in line with the requirements of the County Councils "Programme Devon: Future Service Delivery Models Strategy and Workstream Requirements". This will invite comment on the three or four preferred options, and whether there are any alternative delivery mechanisms that have not been considered. It will also invite expressions of interest should the Strategic Partnership approach be endorsed. This may also be an opportunity to seek views on some aspects, perhaps more meaningful for the public, related to the Biosphere Strategy.

Following the Partnership in October, the formal approaches in relation to the preferred solution, will begin to be made with a view to developing Heads of Terms with partner organisations, should this be relevant.

At this point, there will also need to be formal consultation with Unison to ensure staff interests are protected.

*Summary Timeline and Key Dates*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Consultation</i>
14 <sup>th</sup> July (provisional)	Special AONB Partnership	To formulate a view on greater integration within the possible options / or the new proposal	6 week public consultation during this period
Early August	T&F Group	To agree tasks related to further development of remaining options	
September	Biosphere Executive	To agree one preferred Option	
October	Biosphere Partnership	To endorse the recommendation	Consultation with Unison
November - March		Agree Heads of Terms with any preferred partner	

## APPENDIX 1: Roles of the Biosphere – Essential and Desirable

Role	Essential	Desirable
Provide secretarial coordination (for Partnership), meetings, minutes, papers, working groups etc <i>(Is the Partnership essential/ desirable / unnecessary? Administrative role)</i>	X	
Give strategic direction and leadership for the Biosphere Reserve (and guide the Partnership) as the champion for sustainable development <i>(See above. But also role for Partnership Chair, if applicable)</i>	X	
Develop the strategy with actions across all of the Biosphere functions (conservation, sustainable development and education)	X	
Monitoring and report on implementation and delivery of the Strategy	X	
Monitor and report on, through MAB Periodic Reporting requirements, the condition of the Biosphere Reserve	X	
Facilitate active community engagement in the objectives of the Biosphere	X	
Ensure the Biosphere Reserve objectives are integrated into the work of partners and local authorities including land-use planning and development control.	X	
Facilitate the Biosphere Reserve operating as part of an international network	X	
Ensure the Biosphere Reserve is working to the latest strategy for the MaB programme (Seville strategy, Madrid Action Plan and its imminent successor)	X	
Communicate at appropriate level with, and raise awareness of, the Biosphere to the local community, partners, elected members, government departments through suitable tools <i>(Communication needs to be appropriate for the audience)</i>		X
Administer the finances and transactions of the team	X	
Seek external funding to support the work of the Biosphere Reserve	X	
Through partnership working, exchange best practice, advice and information on Biosphere Reserve related issues		X
Engage with stakeholders to develop collaboration in the Biosphere Reserve including the private sector to increase socio-economic benefits	X	
Support community with direct hands on support in projects and technical advice		X
Management of the Biosphere assets (SWCP and Tarka Trail) in support of the objectives of the Biosphere	X	
Use the Biosphere designation as a catalyst and added value for gaining external funding to deliver projects <i>(Projects delivered in the name of the Biosphere rather than being led by the Team)</i>	X	
Ensure the Biosphere adopts innovation and acts as an exemplar both locally and internationally		X

## **APPENDIX 2: Biosphere Review; Options Appraisal Table**

See accompanying A3 Table

### Appendix 3 – Proposal Put Forward by North Devon AONB Chair and Vice-Chair

Set out below is a new proposal, the basis of which was put forward by the Chair and Vice Chair of the North Devon AONB Partnership at a special meeting of the AONB Executive held on 17 June 2014. This meeting was convened to address the implications of the Biosphere Review process and the potential for increased integration between the Biosphere and the AONB. It was agreed that this should be identified as a new, hybrid proposal, which is not properly accommodated by any of the existing 12 options. It is shown separately from the others, as it has not been specifically supported by the full AONB Executive, nor subject to any specific consideration by the Biosphere Review Task and Finish Group.

#### Summary Table

<b>MIXED APPROACH</b>	
<b>OPTION</b>	<b>13. HYBRID ARRANGEMENT OF AONB MANAGING CONTRACTED STAFF</b>
<b>SUMMARY DESCRIPTION</b>	<p>Prescribed Biosphere functions delivered through contractual arrangement with external body, managed by AONB.</p> <p>AONB would tender to run service (link with Option 12) with likely TUPE staff transfer to external partner and possible secondment back to AONB.</p> <p>Funding at reduced level from local authorities through a SLA</p> <p>Independent Biosphere Partnership maintained.</p> <p>Asset management either with AONB or retain with DCC.</p>
<b>BENEFITS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single line of management for AONB and Biosphere</li> </ul>
<b>RISKS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complicated arrangement</li> <li>▪ Staff TUPE issues and liabilities</li> <li>▪ Potentially more expensive due to overhead costs for external employing body.</li> <li>▪ Unclear how Defra would view arrangement (i.e. ability to claim Defra grant for time spent overseeing Biosphere function).</li> </ul>

#### Outline of Proposal

This proposal has arisen as result of discussion with the North Devon AONB Executive. The view currently presented by the Chair and Vice-Chair on behalf of the AONB Partnership (and following discussion with the AONB Manager) is that the only acceptable form of direct linkage with the Biosphere would be by it assuming responsibility for the delivery of the Biosphere function and management of its staff resource. Due to the very recent identification of this proposal, its precise details are not yet properly developed.

In essence, this represents a hybrid option, whereby the AONB team might remain a publically hosted body, but it would bid to take on the delivery of the Biosphere function on a commissioned basis. It is currently assumed that this might be through a competitive process which might also be open to other external bodies (i.e. link to Option 12 in the summary table). The proposal also has parallels to the Strategic Partnership option (i.e. Option 9 in the summary table), in that the AONB would take on the lead role in the delivery of the Biosphere, with the staff resource no longer directly employed by the host organisation.

It is different from the integration option, in that the AONB and Biosphere functions would operate distinctly, so maintaining their independence, with the AONB funding being ring-

fenced and given priority (i.e. any future savings derived through a reduction in the Biosphere functions). Also, the dedicated staff resource for the Biosphere would be employed in partnership with an external body (for example, North Devon +), but possibly seconded back to the AONB host organisation so that the two teams might be co-located. This would have to be preceded by a staff re-structuring to fit the available budget and would be likely to require a TUPE transfer of the remaining staff. If operated through such a hybrid arrangement, funding would continue to be provided to an agreed level by the local authority funding partners, probably through a Service Level Agreement; in turn, a commercial contract would have to be entered into with an external body, by the AONB host organisation.

Under this arrangement, a decision on the operation of the asset management function related to the South West Coast Path and Tarka Trail would rest with the County Council. The primary options would be for this to be run in conjunction with the AONB Team, or for this to be integrated within the core DCC highway management function (i.e. through the Public Rights of Way Team).

***Interim Conclusion:*** This option has been introduced as a direct result of the engagement of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the AONB Partnership in the review process. Whilst agreed that it should be presented to the Biosphere Partnership, the proposal does not have the specific endorsement of the Executive Committee; nor have its full implications and viability been properly investigated and understood, which may well require input from both an HR and legal perspective. It appears to offer some benefit in that there would be a single approach to the management of both the AONB and the Biosphere, albeit not through a properly integrated model. Whilst there would be some element of externalisation of the dedicated Biosphere staff, this may well be through quite a complicated process. If this option was to be pursued, it would need to be subject to more detailed consideration, and also endorsed by the AONB Partnership (note: a provisional date for an AONB Partnership meeting has been agreed for mid-July).