



Biosphere Update July 2026

This is an update for FoDDC on the progress and work being completed in relation to the proposal to designate the Forest of Dean District a UNESCO Biosphere and engagement with stakeholders surrounding the proposal.

Communication

- The Biosphere Steering Group has suggested getting some wider voices explaining what makes them think a biosphere would be positive for the area. It is proposed that a series of short interviews be developed, where appropriate, to continue building understanding of what a biosphere is and the proposal that is being discussed.
- We are aware that the webpages are quite extensive and wordy. Working with the comms team we will be breaking some of them into bite size chunks for social media.

Young People

- A letter was written to all secondary schools in the district at the end of June inviting them to engage with the team and to arrange events in local schools in the new academic year to help raise awareness of what a biosphere is and invite young people's feedback and thoughts.
- We have contacted some of the voluntary youth sector (Scouts & Guides) to ask if we can collaborate with them to deliver a series of activities in the autumn to help engage young people and create an opportunity to hear from young people about what they want for the future of the district.

Community Engagement

- All town councils have been emailed and offered a bespoke meeting to help them learn about and discuss biospheres, answer questions and hear feedback. Cinderford and Newent have already received similar bespoke meetings.
- Recently we met Lydney Town Council who were very engaged in discussing the potential positives and any risks with the proposal. We hope to meet with Coleford Town Council shortly.
- All parish councils have been written to asking them to complete a short survey which will allow us to arrange bespoke cluster meetings for parish council members to attend in September/ October 2026.
- We shall shortly be inviting quotations from suitably experienced organisations to bring together a citizen's jury or assembly to consider the potential benefits and risks of a biosphere designation.

Partnership

- The Young Farmers Association have been contacted and sent information and asked to contact us if they would like us to run an event for young farmers about the biosphere proposal.
- We are waiting on final confirmation of a date/ time and venue for the NFU to hold an engagement meeting with us.
- UWE are interested in following the biosphere journey and are the latest organisation to become a member of the partnership.
- We hoped to attend a heritage fishing day which was sadly cancelled and we are looking to arrange an alternative engagement opportunity with them.
- Work continues in terms of engagement with the Freeminers and Commoners. We have asked both groups as to how they wish to engage going forward, their feedback is awaited. They have both also been asked to feedback on the outline governance model as well as been given a printed copies of the outline draft application for their reference.
- Biosphere Steering Group meetings continue to run every month to bring together volunteer partners.

Editorial and Presentation

- UK MAB have given their feedback, and on the whole is very positive with some recommended amendments/reviews. They felt the outline governance model seemed very positive.
- UWE lecturers have kindly offered to feedback on the outline.

Please get in touch with either Rachael.Wells@fdean.gov.uk or Chris.McFarling@fdean.gov.uk if you have any further questions or suggestions.