# Social Enterprise & Biosphere Reserves
## Development Framework

assist
social capital

## About the Author

**Colin Campbell** is the founder and Executive Director of Assist Social Capital, which uses social capital as a critical resource for social innovation and community resilience. He has worked in the field of social enterprise since 2001. In 2003, he began using a social capital approach for the design and facilitation of a series of peer-to-peer clusters, the Social Enterprise Networks (SENs; www.se-networks. net). There are now 21 SENs with over 450 active social enterprises meeting on a regular basis to learn from each other and exchange knowledge and ideas and a combined economic impact of £300+ million per annum. He was also responsible for the design and development of the www. ReadyforBusiness.org database, a government funded pilot to promote opportunities for social enterprise in public procurement, which works principally due to the existence of a strong social connectivity within the network of SEN's.

© **Assist Social Capital CIC, 2013**
**54 Manor Place**
**Edinburgh EH3 7EH**
**Scotland, UK**
**www.social-capital.net**
**info@social-capital.net**
**+44 (0) 772 521 1834**
Company Registration No. 27046

## Disclaimer

*The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and other contributors and do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of UNESCO or the Scottish Government.*

# Contents

# Ministerial Foreword

Scotland is playing a leading role in developing the social enterprise model. In recognition of this in March 2012 Scotland's First Minister, Alex Salmond MSP launched the International Social Enterprise Programme to support social enterprises based in Scotland with a genuine global reach. This fund is supporting Assist Social Capital CIC (ASC) to develop a social enterprise approach in and around Biosphere Reserves in Europe, Canada and Asia.

UNESCO's 621 Biosphere Reserves in 117 countries, provide our communities, our children and young people with an opportunity to actively safeguard our natural capital for the future. Social enterprises empower communities to engage with the challenges of our 21st Century such as climate change, health, food and water security. By linking with UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme, the Social Enterprise in Biosphere Reserves Development Framework will help strengthen environmental and economic progress. This will be achieved by supporting social enterprises in and around Biosphere Reserves to thrive, providing a platform to generate new socially and environmentally responsible employment.

I am therefore very pleased to support Assist Social Capital's work to stimulate ambition in this matter and wish the project every success.

**John Swinney**
**Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth**

# Introduction

## Man and the Biosphere

UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB) was launched in 1970, as a response to the Biosphere Conference in 1968, which met to consider what should be done about the increasing threats to the biosphere, the life on our planet Earth. An International Coordinating Council (ICC) was formed as a result that called for the establishment of reserves, to meet scientific, educational, cultural and recreational needs. This became MAB's 'Biosphere Reserve' project.

MAB established protected areas representing the main ecosystems of the planet in which genetic resources could be protected and research and monitoring could be carried out. There are now 621 Biosphere Reserves in 117 countries and 5 regional MAB networks; EuroMAB, AfriMAB, IberoMAB, ArabMAB and Asia and Pacific (broken down into 4 sub-regional networks).

In 1995 the ICC conference in Seville, Spain started a new era for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), extending the transition zone (*see Figure 1*) to embrace large areas suitable for ecosystem management and **as learning sites to explore, demonstrate and promote sustainable development at a regional scale**. At the 3rd World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Madrid in 2008, Biosphere Reserves were put forward as the principal internationally-designated areas dedicated to sustainable development in the 21st century. The Madrid Action Plan, also set out the agenda for the MAB Programme for 2008-2013:

- develop scientific programmes of research to follow on from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) to define approaches that secure ecosystem services into the future
- test and apply policies for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change in coordination with other intergovernmental programmes
- use the experience of the WNBR, the MAB Networks and interdisciplinary approaches to develop and test policies and practices to address the issues impacting key ecosystem types, namely coastal zones, islands, oceans, mountains, drylands, tropical forests, freshwater ecosystems and areas of increasing urbanisation
- develop mechanisms to encourage the sustainable development of Biosphere Reserves carried out in partnership with all sectors of society to ensure the well-being of people and their environment.



**Figure 1 Biosphere Reserves: Three Zones**

**Core zones:** legally protected areas, no human activity permitted. Act as reference points on the natural state of the ecosystems.

**Buffer zones:** protective area around the core zone, human activity restricted to management of ecosystem resources, conserving natural processes and biodiversity. This zone may also accommodate education, training, tourism, and recreation facilities. Human use is less intensive than in the transition zone.

**Transition zones:** areas of cooperation, the areas where people live and work. Human activity which makes use of natural resources sustanably for economic and social activites.

# The need for Sustainable Development

Sustainable development, one of the key pillars for Biosphere Reserves (BR), has been an overarching goal of the international community for decades now. However, we are in serious danger of transgressing a number of ecological limits. In 1972 the Club of Rome commissioned a report to look at the progress and likely consequences of human development scenarios from 1900-2100. Authored by Donella Meadows, Jorgen Randers and Dennis Meadows, '**Limits to Growth**' depicted 12 possible scenarios for our future prospects. As a result of their work, the authors concluded that:

• If the present growth trends in world population, industrialisation, pollution, food production and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years. The most probable result will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity.

• It is possible to alter these growth trends and to establish a condition of ecological and economic stability that is sustainable far into the future. The state of global equilibrium could be designed so that the basic material needs of each person on earth are satisfied and each person has an equal opportunity to realise their individual human potential.

To respond effectively to such challenges, collective action will be vital. Francis G, (Biosphere Reserves in Canada: Ideals and some experience) points out a multidimensional approach to sustainable development: *"implies the existence of the appropriate knowledge and governance capacity to maintain economic vitality*

*with social inclusiveness in opportunities and benefits, provide for ecological sustainability and the protection of biodiversity to guide the use of resources, and promote social equity within and across groups and generations. All three are necessary and no one of them alone is sufficient. These requirements must also hold across a range of spatial and temporal scales".*

It is within this context, that we offer the **Social Enterprise and Biosphere Reserve Development Framework**, as a multidimensional and multi-stakeholder approach to enhance sustainable development in Biosphere Reserves. The Framework sets out a process to encourage and cultivate values based enterprises that reinvest profits in social and/or environmental benefits, to thrive on a regional level and help deliver sustainable economic development in and around BRs.

*ASC is grateful to all those who have collaborated in this process. We look forward to working with them and others interested in taking on the approach outlined in this document.*

**For further information and support contact info@social-capital.net**

# Scotland's Support for Social Enterprise

As is the case with many other countries, Scotland has experienced rising demand for public services together with constraints on public spending. In order to respond to this increasing social and environmental need the aim is to 'achieve more with less'. In doing so it is recognised the importance of empowering individuals and communities by involving them in the design and delivery of the services they use. As part of that process the Scottish Government has been a strong advocate of social enterprise, which uses an entrepreneurial approach, found in the private sector, to achieve wider social and/or environmental objectives more typically associated with voluntary organisations.

*"The values-based approach of social enterprise to produce financial, social and environmental sustainability easily lends itself to delivering the aims and objectives of BRs and the communities in and around them."*

This **Framework** therefore draws on the success of Scotland's national approach to encouraging the emergence of social enterprise in the effort to respond to social and environmental threats.

Scotland has seen a growing interest in social enterprise since the late 1990's. This has been aided by the Scottish Government's interest with £166 million invested between 2008 and 2013. A further £50 million is allocated up to 2016. Below are some examples of the **specialised agencies and programmes**, which have supported this development:

**Senscot** (Social Entrepreneurs Network Scotland) & Networks1st – extended regional and thematic peer-to-peer networks for social entrepreneurs

**Social Enterprise Academy** – training for social entrepreneurs by social entrepreneurs

**Social Enterprise Scotland** – a lobbying body for its social enterprise members

**Firstport** – investment for social entrepreneurs of up to £20,000

**Social Investment Scotland** – one of the largest non-profit-distributing providers of business loans to the third sector in the UK and a social enterprise itself

**ReadyforBusiness.org** – a central database for social enterprises with the capacity to tender for public sector contracts

**Just Enterprise** – Scottish Government funded consortium to deliver business support to emerging and established social enterprises

**Enterprise Ready Fund 2013** – new £6 million Scottish Government investment fund to maintain, develop and grow Scotland's social enterprises and traditional third sector.

In addition, the Scottish Government has championed a move to Sustainable Public Procurement, which is opening up huge opportunity for social enterprises, SME's (Small to Medium sized Enterprise) and innovation within the pubic sector procurement culture in Scotland.

**Public Contracts Portal** – a one-stop shop for every public sector contract in Scotland over £50,000.

# A Social Enterprise and Biosphere Reserve Sustainable Development Framework

This Framework aims to provide a **living document** that will be flexible and adaptable in different countries and contexts, within their own norms, values and approaches. As such the Framework is designed as a **route map** towards the emergence of social enterprise as a means to promote sustainable economic development, in harmony with social and environmental sustainability. For this reason we have developed a Framework that looks at the importance of four key Factors - Public Participation, Social Enterprise, Social Investment and Sustainable Public Procurement. *Figure 2* below shows the interconnected and dynamic relationships between the 4 Factors.

Explanations for each of these elements are given below and expanded through a set of **case studies** to elaborate these themes further. The result is a document, which provides a guide for progress towards an increased capacity for enterprising activity within BRs, while leaving space for contextualisation and local interpretation.

The Framework can be used to plot the current context in a BR, highlighting local strengths and weakness in relation to the 4 key Factors. Once this mapping process has been carried out an Action Plan can be designed, relevant to the particular country and BR. It is likely to take around 3 years to establish the momentum necessary for this approach to become self-organising and so sustainable into the future.

**NB.** *We would like to point out that while the focus of the Framework is to develop market opportunities for social enterprise this does not mean that traditional businesses are excluded. Rather the process outlined herein will benefit all SME's that are working in harmony with the aims and objectives of BRs.*

**Figure 2 – Social Enterprise and Biosphere Reserves Development Framework Diagram**
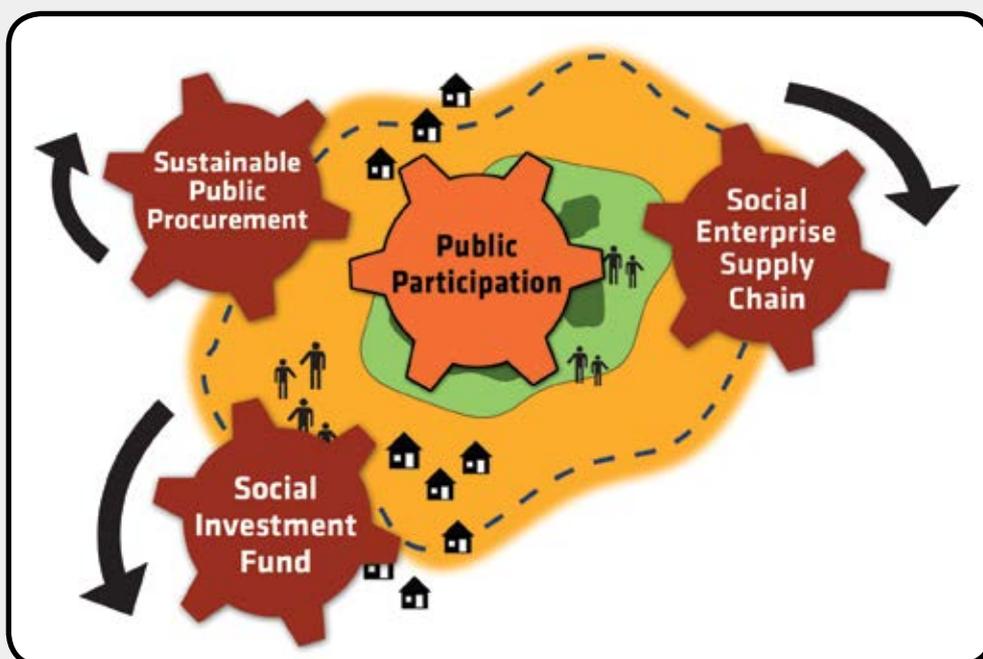
# Social Capital
# The Connecting Thread

Social capital underpins the whole **Social Enterprise and Biosphere Reserve Development Framework**. Social capital shapes the quantity and quality of our social interactions and how well we can act collectively to tackle issues in our lives. It is therefore a critical resource for any intervention aiming to deliver lasting benefits.

According to Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom taking social capital into account is critical if we are to understand economic development and political order. Ostrom believes *"the differential political and economic performance across nations and communities, could not be answered satisfactorily without seriously studying the omitted factors: trust and norms of reciprocity, networks and forms of civic engagement, and both formal and informal institutions."* She continues, "the social capital approach improves the knowledge of macro political and economic phenomena."
(Foundations of Social Capital. Ahn, T.-H., Ostrom, E. 2003)

The OECD defines social capital as: ***"networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups"***.

There are four main components of social capital:
- **norms** and values (shared standards of behaviour and expectations)
- **networks** (groups of people linked by a number of different types of ties; bonding [close strong ties], bridging [horizontally across similar groups] and linking [vertical between groups of differing power, financial or political])
- **reciprocity** (whether people will help each other, confident that someone will return the favour to them in the future)
- **trust (**the expectation that other members of a community will be honest and cooperative)

When social capital is mobilised it can provide benefits for the wider community. As Francis Fukuyama noted, *"people's ability to associate with each other, is critical not only to economic life but to virtually every other aspect of social existence as well. The ability to associate depends, in turn, on the degree to which communities share norms and values and are able to subordinate individual interests to those of larger groups. Out of such shared values comes trust, **and trust, as we will see, has a large and measurable economic value."***
(Francis Fukuyama, Trust: The Social Virtues And The Creation Of Prosperity, 1995)

© Devon BR

# Framework Factors

In this section is a description of the four key Factors that support the emergence of social enterprise as a means to promote sustainable economic development, in harmony with social and environmental sustainability.

## Factor 1 Social Enterprise

In his paper 'Gifts and Exchanges', Nobel Prize winner Kenneth Arrows echos Fukuyama's findings, claiming that *"truthfulness contributes in a very significant way to the efficiency of the economic system"*. Arrows' paper argues that the commercial for-profit-distribution system can place *"immense social costs on those least able to bear them – the poor, the sick, and the weak"*, while the altruism of the gift system, as in the case of donation of blood, builds trust. Thus the objective of profit for personal gain can lead to a conflict of interest where negative externalities (e.g. high carbon footprint) are a means to increasing profit. The social enterprise model (*Figure 3*) resolves this conflict by locking assets (revenue and capital) into the aims and objectives of the organisation, resulting in income generation being focused on the delivery of values based outcomes instead.

Social enterprises are also distinct from traditional third sector organisations in that they strive to be independent of grants and donations. They need to be economically self-sustainable to survive and deliver on their social and/or environmental objectives.

Social enterprise is a growing model of delivery internationally. In June 2007, the European Commission published a study into the social enterprise sector in Europe. It described the key features and identified relevant support measures for social enterprises in 31 European countries. According to the European Commission social enterprises *"are positioned between the traditional private and public sectors... their key distinguishing characteristics are the social and societal purpose combined with an entrepreneurial spirit of the private sector. Social enterprises devote their activities and reinvest their surpluses to achieving a wider social or community objective either in their members' or a wider interest."*

As described below by Stan Boychuk and Christian Hart from Canada, social enterprise provides new opportunities for BRs striving to be successful in an increasingly complex and challenging world context.

**Figure 3** **– The Social Enterprise Model**
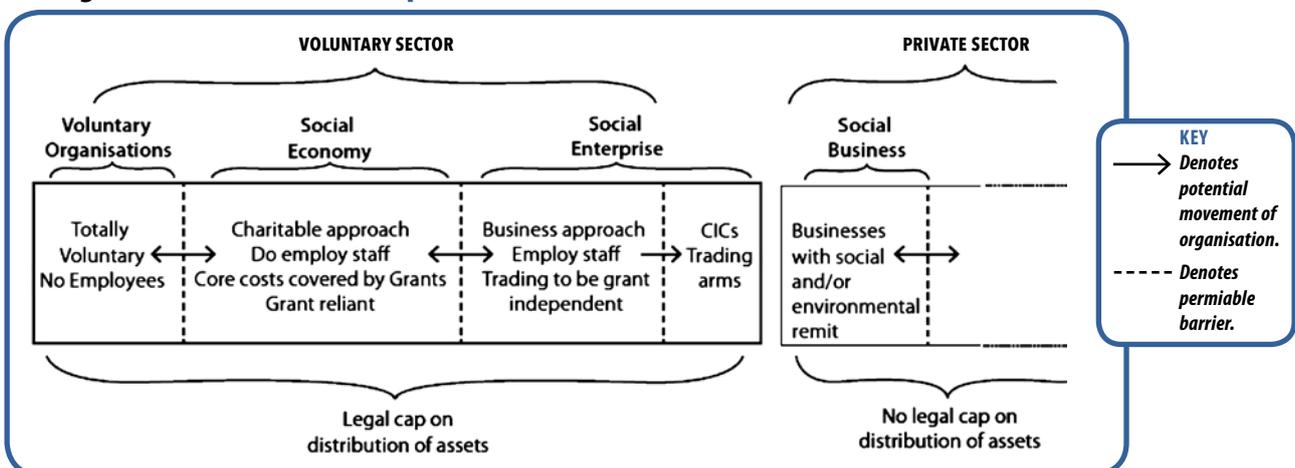
# Social Enterprise and Biosphere Reserves by Stan Boychuk, Canada MAB

In Canada we see prevalence for defining social enterprise as a business operated by a non-profit entity. As a business they have to have a product or service they sell to customers, they also have to have a defined social, cultural or environmental value. In the Canadian legal context, mission "related" businesses are allowed for non-profits and charities.

Traditionally the private sector has used a financial return on investment measurement for success: *"How much profit was generated for our shareholders?"* The non-profit sector traditionally reports on a social return on investment: *"How many people did we provide services for this year?"* Social Enterprise, however, measures success with what Jed Emerson stated more than 10 years ago in the Blende Value Proposition, a 'blended value bottom line'. It is not financial or social, it is financial and social, the simultaneous achievement of both.

More and more BRs need to explore income-generating enterprises as ways to:
• enhance their programs and services
• achieve mission more effectively and
• generate new revenues that enable them to stabilize and diversify their funding bases.

BRs need to develop innovative ways to meet social, cultural and environmental needs. They need to see the benefits of challenging their organisations to generate resources through the marketplace. Thinking like a business provides an advantage that is well worth the challenge it poses to their non-profit culture.

A social enterprise can take on a remarkable diversity of forms:
• From a product perspective, it can create anything from patio furniture, buffalo burgers, coffins, to packing crates to cookies
• From a service standpoint, a social enterprise can deliver anything from consulting services, recycling, property management to training and referral services, to home maintenance, cafes to retail shops
• From an outcomes perspective, social enterprise can provide the realisation of the goals and objective the organisation envisions

## "The change away from a culture of grant dependency, can prove challenging for organisations. They will have to adjust to a competitive, entrepreneurial environment"

Social enterprise can provide for BRs the ability to take control over their organisations through the process of altering the paradigm they have traditionally functioned under.

The change away from a culture of grant dependency, can prove challenging for organisations. They will have to adjust to a competitive, entrepreneurial environment. The skills required in applying for grant finance, where the social outcomes of the proposal are of principal interest to the funder are very different to those required to generate income from the sales of products or services in the open market.

To respond to this Lac-St-Pierre and their partners CRES in Quebec have produced a toolkit to help organisations investigate the social enterprise route.

## Social Enterprise and Sustainable Development
### by Christian Hart (Lac-St-Pierre) and Chantal Tardif (CRES)

In 2006, the Québec government adopted a law on Sustainable Development, in which 16 principles were expressed to create a charter for Sustainable Development projects. Based on the sustainable development charter and the sustainable tourism certification, CRÉS has recently released guidelines for Social Enterprise on Sustainable Development. The tool is integrated into the operation of social enterprises actions to ensure that their economic activities achieve their social purpose, integrating social principles, while respecting the environment.

> **"The tool is integrated into the operation of social enterprises actions to ensure that their economic activities achieve their social purpose, integrating social principles, while respecting the environment"**

To make a concrete and easily applicable tool, it contains, in addition to the list of representative sustainable development criteria, actions and possible solutions that companies can implement in their daily activities. Examples are varied but not extensive. Furthermore, in view of the characteristics of the business, sometimes the examples may not be relevant. It is up to the community to innovate and to make the necessary adjustments. The tool covers the three elements relevant to the successful development of social enterprises namely Social, Environment and Economic.

**The tool (in French):**
http://tinyurl.com/o2wrzqn
http://tinyurl.com/pnj8od8

# Factor 2 Social Investment

Traditional banks and investment funds tend to view social enterprises as unattractive, limiting access to finance for those that wish to grow. The growth of the social enterprise sector has therefore led to a demand for alternatives to traditional investment. Social investment has developed to bridge the gap.

Social investment is the provision and use of finance with the aim of generating social and/or environmental as well as financial returns from non-profit-distributing organisations. Unlike grants and donations, social investments are loans, used to create social impact with the aim that they will eventually be paid back.

Social investors attribute different values to the mix of social and financial returns they expect, for example it can include the offer of capital without the need for any financial return. Forms of social investment include micro-credit, traditional style loans and also new forms of investment tools such as quasi-equity (e.g. a role in the governance of a company) and social bonds.

The number of social investment organisations are too many to list and will be different depending on which country. For that reason we have not attempted to give a list of the options and we will just mention Social Investment Scotland, which has played a significant role in supporting the growth of social enterprises in Scotland, successfully investing £45 million in 200 organisations over 13 years.

www.socialinvestmentscotland.com

# Factor 3 Sustainable Public Procurement

Public procurement represents a significant part of a region or a country's public expenditure and as such, can be an effective tool in the development and support of the green economy and a sustainable future for all. By strategically directing expenditure, the public sector can use its purchasing power as an incentive to sustainable products and services, and encourage innovation across domestic and global supply chains.

Sustainable public procurement (SPP) is about facilitating the purchase of goods and services by public sector agencies in a sustainable manner. SPP policies and procedures can deliver benefits within the public sector itself and across society as a whole, such as improving efficiency, reducing energy consumption, reducing costs through preventative spending, improving access to services and securing better human rights, equality and working conditions.

SPP therefore provides public agencies with an excellent opportunity to play a leadership role in the move to a more sustainable future, while improving local quality of life and tackling global social injustice and environmental degradation.

**The UNEP is a key player in promoting SPP. To find out more visit www.unep.fr/scp/procurement/whatisspp**
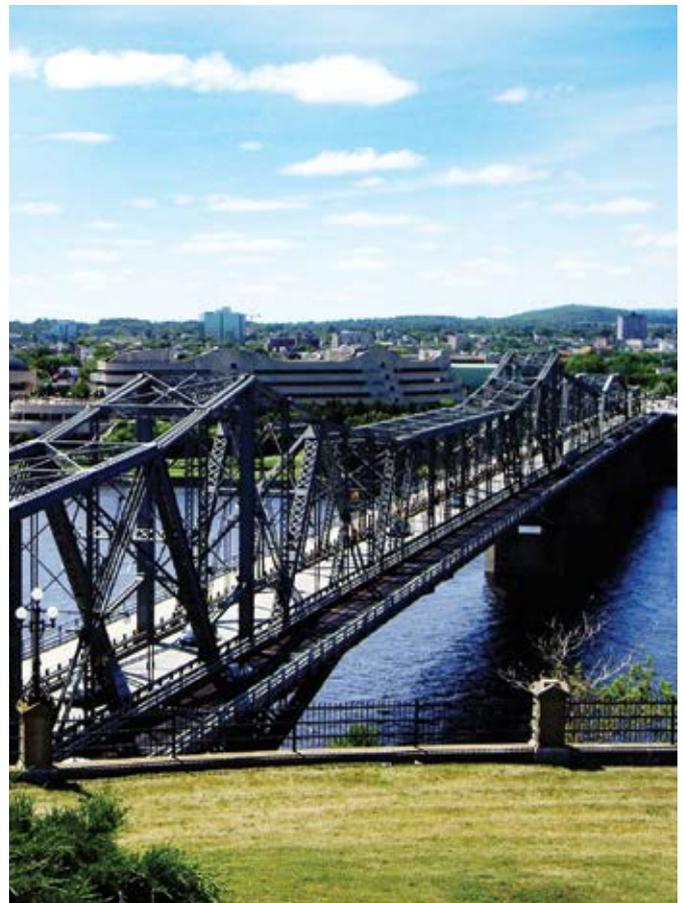


**"Sustainable public procurement (SPP) is about facilitating the purchase of goods and services by public sector agencies in a sustainable manner."**

# Factor 4 Public Participation

Public participation plays a central role in the **Social Enterprise and Biosphere Reserve Development Framework**, engaging with and interconnecting the other 3 Factors to support the emergence of an environment where enterprises can thrive. Participation is closely aligned with building social capital since it is an effective way to extend networks of trust, so crucial to the flow of information and resources.

The multi-dimensional challenges we face on a global scale are, first and foremost, a social issue. Participatory processes offer an effective alternative to 'top-down' methods that have failed to deliver lasting change. As public finances become ever more scarce there is a growing need to cultivate relationships at a local level and to re-establish our connection with the nature.

When delivered effectively participation can facilitate cooperation, ownership and trust, themselves concrete results of participation. Processes that encourage collective ownership restore and reinforce relationships among different parts of the community that otherwise would seldom come into contact with each other.

As a result outcomes will be more sustainable and mutually beneficial for the whole community. This in turn creates increased confidence and greater capacity to respond locally to challenges, leading to resilient communities capable of self-organising.

Participatory approaches require those leading the process to have a fundamental belief in the value of engaging and empowering citizens to identify local solutions to local issues. There are different levels of participation from the most basic level of information sharing up to community ownership and participatory democracy, each of which require skilled facilitators with the capacity to deliver appropriate approaches and mechanisms of participatory processes in order to achieve the desired outcomes (*see Figure 4 below*).

Embedding a culture of participation opens up previously unidentified opportunities for collective action and cooperation. As a result participation can substantially contribute to the aims of BRs to be learning sites for sustainable development and as spaces for experimentation and development of creative ideas.

**Figure 4 – Public Participation Pathway**
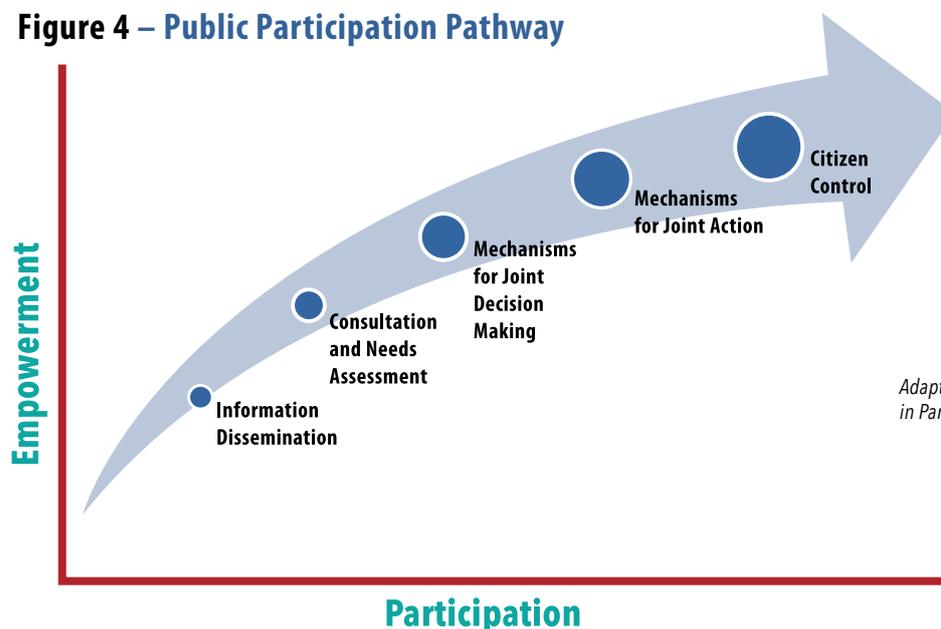


*Adapted from Practice in Participation.org*

# In Summary

Individually the Factors that make up this Framework offer important contributions to creating space for a more sustainable future within BRs. By combining all four Factors a multifaceted regional development strategy to maximise local, regional and national resources, emerges.

This approach has enabled Scotland to become a leader in the development of its social enterprise sector as a deliverer of social and environmental services. In a similar fashion, the Social Enterprise and Biosphere Reserve Development Framework can support BRs and their communities to become economically resilient while at the same time enhancing the natural environment in a manner that is appropriate to local strengths, resources and cultural characteristics. The result is a lasting and sustainable environment for social innovation and sustainable economic development.

*Table 1* **on the next page summarises the Framework and the anticipated outcomes.**

"...the Social Enterprise and Biosphere Reserve Development Framework can support BRs and their communities to become economically resilient while at the same time enhancing the natural environment in a manner that is appropriate to local strengths, resources and cultural characteristics"
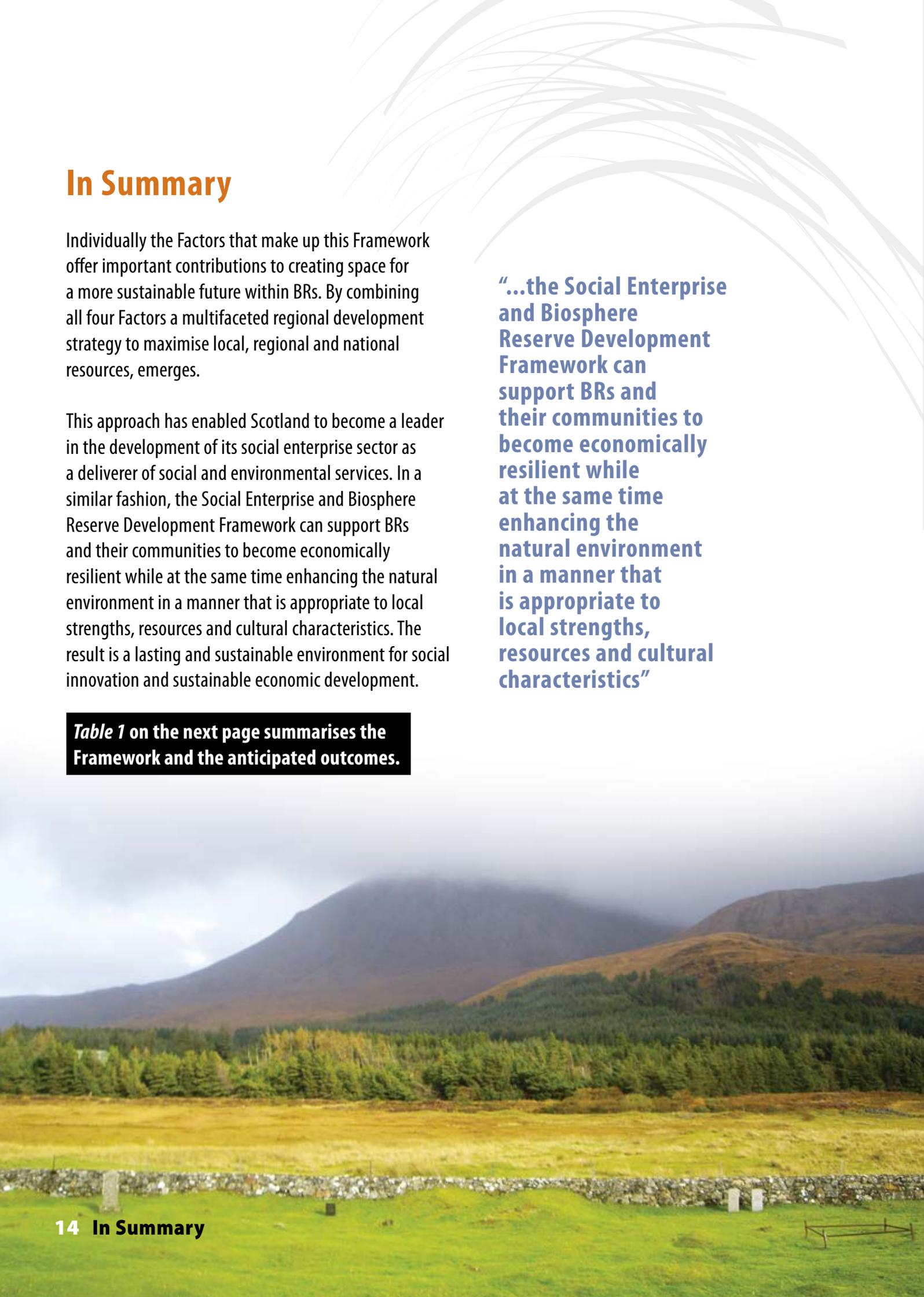
**Table 1 – Social Enterprise and Biospheres Development Framework**

## A Biosphere Reserve (BR)

| Vision | Factors | Objectives | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| 'To engender an environment where enterprises with values in harmony with the aims and objectives of BRs can thrive; delivering sustainable economic development which benefits the community, invests in biodiversity and leads to financially independent BRs' | **Factor 1** *Social Enterprises* (Aspiring, emerging and established) | **Flexible model for replication in BRs interested in a financially viable model, enabling them to move away from grant dependency**<br><br>**Better Understanding of:**<br>• BRs<br>• social enterprise<br>• public participation and social capital<br>• sustainable public procurement | • Increased financial independence and space for innovation<br>• Creation of short supply chain supportive of biodiversity and ecosystems |
| | **Factor 2** *Social Investment* | **Increased number of:**<br>• Viable social enterprises<br>• services being delivered by social enterprises in and around BRs<br>• employment opportunities | • Increased enterprise opportunities for green economy<br>• More local job opportunities in green economy |
| | **Factor 3** *Sustainable Public Procurement* | **Increased:**<br>• social capital<br>• community participation<br>• social investment pipeline<br>• community benefit in public sector contracts<br>• more effective local supply chain for sustainable economic development | • Increased cohesion and capacity for collective action<br>• Increased equality<br>• Local ownership & regional identity |
| | **Factor 4** *Public Participation* | | • Appreciation of cultural and natural heritage |
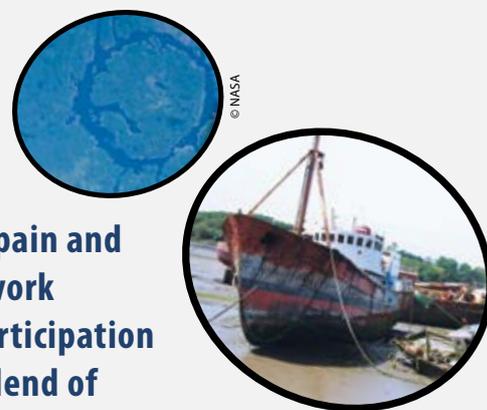
# Case Studies

The following case studies from Canada, England, Scotland, Spain and Sweden describe the implementation of the different Framework Factors. Each has a particular focus, be it social enterprise, participation or sustainable public procurement. Together they provide a blend of approaches that give an inspiring insight into to how these Factors can benefits BRs, sharing with us their successes and challenges through their stories.

© NASA

## Case Study 1 Social Enterprise

### Manicouagan-Uapishka Biosphere Reserve and Social Entrepreneurship

Jean-Philippe L Messier, Coordinator Manicouagan-Uapishka BR

**Provided by UNESCO, the status of Biosphere Reserve is one of the main international tools for reflection on sustainable development. For Manicouagan-Uapishka Biosphere Reserve (RMBMU) in Quebec, established in 2007, this status is based on a voluntary cooperative approach integrating all sectors in the region. Manicouagan-Uapishka is certainly a special place due to some unique features, but in the eyes of UNESCO, the interest to grant it with this designation was to encourage the local stakeholders, including industrial players, to progress in a collaborative and promising way towards sustainable development.**

This is a community initiative which wishes to diversify its options and to open itself to the world in order to create an integrative model of social, environmental and economic dimensions. A project where new solidarities emerge along with accomplishments, bringing pride and prosperity.

The RMBMU acts as a reference and a catalyst in the field of sustainable development in order to integrate it into all spheres of activity in the region. It generates knowledge and fosters international networking through UNESCO's network. As a result, the local networking boosts collaboration among all types of stakeholders in its territory.

In Quebec, the social economy is regulated. Organisations that are going down this route keep their 'non-profit' status, but to be officially considered a social enterprise the organisation must fulfill the following principles and rules:

- The company's aim is to serve its members and the community rather than to generate profits and focus on financial performance.
- The company has management autonomy from the state.
- The company includes in its constitution and its processes, a democratic process involving users as well as workers.
- The company defends the primacy of people and work, over capital, in the distribution of its profits and revenues.
- The company bases its activities on the principles of participation, support and individual and collective responsibility.

This definition really fits the spirit and normal governance structure of a BR, except in some cases in terms of autonomy from the state, which can also be fulfilled by the entrepreneurial activities.

## Why did the RMBMU go down this path?

Shortly after obtaining BR status, the RMBMU undertook a wide strategic planning exercise and clarified the relevance and the need to develop an entrepreneurial culture in order to survive financially. With that in mind, the organisation recognised that the key was to develop a credible expertise that could meet demand and would thus be marketable. Providing support for partners of all kinds, in the area of sustainable development, proved to be a niche in which RMBMU could operate. In addition to generating revenue and deploying its services throughout the territory, this path reflects UNESCO's designation, through the following 3 factors:

### › To be "mission-driven"

By promoting economic activities that support its mission, RMBMU demonstrates its management autonomy in order to fully exercise its practices. Instead of evolving according to the eligibility criteria of grant applications, RMBMU can make decisions more freely, based on the environment and mission. The main objective behind this approach is to create an entrepreneurial culture through which we can generate income by applying our BR's mission.

### › To be "sustainability-driven"

Sustainable development obviously includes the sustainability of the organisation itself. Diversify funding sources and being less dependant of grants, puts the organisation in a healthy state and allows it to move forward, to think outside of the box, to increase its tolerance to risk taking and to take decisions on a longer term basis. Consequently, the RMBMU is in the position to fully apply its mission according to the context and challenges of its territory. That, does not mean that contributions from economic development organisations, grants from foundations and subsidies from government, are not welcome anymore – they are just no longer critical for the organisation, because the dependency model has been replaced by a combination of auto-generated income and grants.

### › To be "expertise-driven"

To succeed along this path, the RMBMU needs to generate a competitive expertise, efficient working tools, distinctive partnerships, in order to offer services that will continue to be attractive to the market. This is a great source of motivation for the team and a guarantee to stay engaged in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning. Also RMBMU wants to provide proof that this organisational model is valuable and exportable to the world network of BRs.

In this sense, the RMBMU is in some way a hybrid organisation, blurring the boundaries between a profit and a non-profit world. Generating income serves RMBMU's social/environmental mission and the goals are therefore oriented towards both market and mission. It not only strives for profitability, but also strives to address some of humanity's most pressing issues, sustainable development in this case, by having this activity built-in into its business model.

## Organisational changes needed

Operating a transition from a typical non-profit to an entrepreneurial oriented non-profit organisation is a large project involving a re-definition of central characteristics, operations, policies and processes. The following section explains the major areas of change in the context of a biosphere reserve.

## Composition of the board: new mindset

Most BRs, when driven as an NGO by a board (100% in Canada), try to have a good representation of their region and/or pillars of sustainable development on the administration council. It is quite common to find a majority of representatives form environment and academic sectors. On the other hand, a typical business will try to have people on the board that have financial skills, experience in business development and a wide range of contacts throughout the potential market. For a social enterprise, both are needed. The needs of the organisation in a new competitive environment are different.

For RMBMU, the selection of the board members shifted from having seats dedicated to categories of stakeholders (first nations, environment, education, etc), to a board organisation based on the individuals rather than on the seats. These individuals are now elected for their personal knowledge, availability and motivation to contribute. Globally, the board is seeking individuals to get a good balance of entrepreneurial skills and experience, influential leaders in the region and guardians of social values.

This brings new ways to see the organisational development and a new decision making attitude. The biggest change for RMBMU has been the capacity to take financial risks. As a typical NGO, the board has the responsibility to make sure all the grants/partners contributions are confirmed before starting any project. Expenses made too early could end up not being reimbursed and put the organisation at risk. However, with the new mindset of the RMBMU, as an example, the board recently approved the hiring of a senior level sustainable development and territorial animation main advisor, without having the money confirmed for the whole year.

This decision is driven by the need to increase entrepreneurial activities and exploit observed business potential that the actual staff has no possibility to jump into. The board anticipates that this new employee will generate incomes that will ensure his own salary and profits for the organisation. Taking action, even when resources are limited, is a normal attitude in the business world, but very unusual for an NGO.

## Results in numbers

The RMBMU was designated in 2007. We went thought our strategic planning exercise in 2009 and started to apply our vision in 2010. As a result, the percentage of income generating services, as a percentage of the global income of the organisation, evolved the following way:
• 2010: 0%
• 2011: 21,5%
• 2012: 58,9%
• 2013 (anticipated): over 70%

At the same time, the global turnover remained about the same along those years. This could seem strange, but it is easily explained by the following facts that took place during this period:
• Grants in general became less available in terms of number of programs, as well as less generous due to a political context not very proactive in the fields that are exploited by BRs
• In 2011, Canada's Ministry of Environment (Environment Canada) used its legal right to terminate, before the end, a 5 years financial agreement that was the core functioning budget of every BRs in Canada
• As with most organisations, local donations, quite important at the beginning of the process, went down progressively from 2003 onwards.

Consequently, it is easy to see that without having jumped into service-selling, our financial health would have crashed in 2011-2012, as it was the case of the 2/3rds of Canadian BRs and many NGOs across the country. In this hard financial climate, RMBMU managed to keep all functioning staff onboard, diversified its income generation even more and secured a modest security fund that is big enough to ensure a full year of minimal activity.
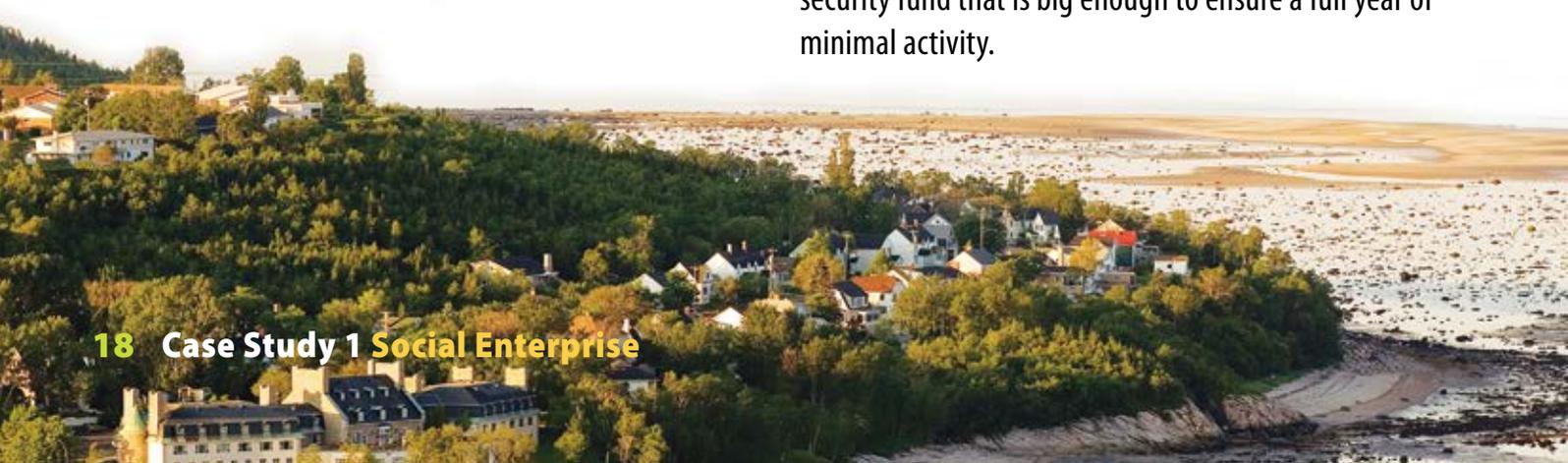
# Case Study 2 Social Investment

## North Devon Biosphere Reserve and Social/Environmental Entrepreneurship

Andy Bell, North Devon BR coordinator

## Introduction

**Since the inception of the Biosphere Reserve in North Devon, England, in 2000, its successful nomination in 2002 and continuously to the present day, the concept of facilitating and creating opportunities for local businesses to change or develop to a new paradigm has been high on the agenda. This case study will give some account of the history of the various initiatives and the lessons learnt.**



© Petroc College

## Towards Designation

The development of North Devon Biosphere Reserve started with the creation and implementation of the Taw Torridge estuary plan. As a coastal zone management plan operating at scale, it was very much the prototype of the BR. It specifically operated on an ecosystem scale recognising that the estuary did not sit in splendid isolation from the river catchments that fed it nor from the ocean it exchanged millions of tonnes of water with, nor the surrounding communities that enjoyed, used and sometimes abused it.

The strategy was originally to create new business opportunities arising from the environment that originally was seen as a threat. Early initiatives including the development of local speciality produce such as Saltmarsh Reared lamb, emulating the "agneau près salé " from the Mont Saint Michelle area of Normandy. The rationale was to demonstrate to farmers that should their land flood with seawater it was not

the end of the world. The potential value from the lamb was 30% more than the regular lamb. This was only partially successful and was ultimately wound down after foot and mouth disease hit the region on 2001, with the flocks being slaughtered.

Another initiative specifically targeted at initiating new enterprises linked to the environment and culture of the area was the Tarka Millennium Awards, funded by the Millennium Funds. This funded several community initiatives and some businesses start-ups. A couple of these enterprises are still in operation today as micro enterprises such as "Mrs Recycle"; an education service for schools about recycling.

**"The strategy was originally to create new business opportunities arising from the environment that originally was seen as a threat"**

## Post Designation

In 2002 the Biosphere Reserve was successfully extended from the core area to cover the wider catchment of the rivers and include the marine area. There was continuous, though low level, effort in developing a new business ethos in the area. The new economic strategy for the area showed a significant cultural shift in approach from seeking new major employers to one that used the environment as the economic driver and diversifying as much as possible to gain resilience.

LEADER 2 funds were used to kick start businesses with some success. For example, the BR explored a strand of work to develop an industrial symbiosis project, which gave access to a database of waste arising in the area, so that businesses could use it as raw materials in other products. This successful work was superseded by the work on Envision, funded by the Environment Agency and the Regional Development Agency. However, we rapidly found that although manufacturing represented around 20% of the economy, there was too much diversity in the waste materials, not enough critical mass or too great a distance between sources for any viable business propositions.

Following the emergence of a number of social entrepreneurs supported by UnLtd (micro investment fund for individual social entrepreneurs, up to £20,000), it was suggested that we develop a special BR suite of social entrepreneurs. It was proposed that Leader Plus funds would be used to match UnLtd funds to invest in these new social entrepreneurs. However the mix of application assessments was not compatible. The programme therefore was dropped as a mainstream action from the Leader programme. A "green business exemplar" programme was developed instead in the following LEADER 4 programme.



© Dave Green

North Devon BR continued its effort in providing incentives for small and large local enterprises through an accreditation scheme called "investing in nature". This scheme required businesses to sign up to the Biosphere Reserve Charter, which had 8 pledges reflecting the 8 strategic aims of the Biosphere Reserve. To keep the accreditation businesses are required to show how they are making progress on the aims. This scheme has been popular with the micro-enterprises looking for a new edge to their business. Some 30 businesses are specially tagged in the North Devon. com website. Recent developments have resulted in some of the holiday businesses contributing financially to projects that improve the sustainable tourism offer in the area. A notable example was the contribution of £5,000 of critical private investment into a Lottery funded project enabling a programme of £75,000 for improving access and facilities along the Tarka Trail long distance off-road cycle way.

The BR brand is now beginning to get some traction and is due to feature in the Visit England destination marketing campaign with the North Devon destination website giving good weight to the brand and highlighting the "investing in nature" businesses.

## Lessons Learned

There have been mixed successes in the area to develop socially/environmentally responsible enterprises, but there has been no evidence of a huge change in attitudes.

Reasons for the slow change can be narrowed to the following:
- North Devon is almost entirely micro-enterprises who are clinging on to existence and do not have the time to invest in change. A recent business survey showed that most businesses were not interested in developing new markets. Many are run by people who came to the area to enjoy a lifestyle rather than set up a successful growing business.
- The BR brand is only now gaining ground. he perception has been that this is only about biodiversity despite the efforts to promote it as a 'quality marque' for sustainable development. This was therefore not of interest to the 20% manufacturing sector
- Controversially the area has maintained its good environment due to scepticism of the "new", and therefore momentum for change is hard to generate.

> "The role of the BR Partnership is to provide access to knowledge and skills as well as creating and pointing to opportunities for appropriate business models and markets"

## For the Future?

The reduction in publicly funded services is creating a climate for private or third sector run services. A new BR Environmental Social Entrepreneur Scheme is being developed with the Devon Community Foundation (DCF). A rotating fund of around £2 million is being set up to invest in young social entrepreneurs. So far around £200,000 has been raised. The DCF works hand in glove with other institutions to support the development of the enterprises. These include the Fredericks Foundation, the Devon School for Social Entrepreneurs and the BR Partnership. The role of the BR Partnership is to provide access to knowledge and skills as well as creating and pointing to opportunities for appropriate business models and markets.

The fund operates as a loan and micro-finance fund. It is recognised that the clients will need business development support and that as many as 20% will fail even with that support. The £2 million is needed to give enough of a buffer to finance the support service being offered by the fund recipients, so activity will remain fairly small. The other opportunity is to participate in a SW England regional bid.

We foresee the following challenges:
- There is normally an outmigration of the 19-35 year age groups, where the most likely market for environmental entrepreneurship exists.
- There is concern that entrepreneurship is not implicit in the education system and therefore a focus on young entrepreneurs may not find many takers.

Key areas for economic development in the area include the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors, environmental management, social care and probationary/community services, payment for ecosystem services brokerage, authentic sustainable tourism activities, educational tourism, sustainable construction and self-build homes particularly in the affordable housing bracket, entrepreneurship training for the 16 to 24 age groups.

To give the whole BR movement critical mass opportunities should be sought to collaborate with other BRs in Europe.

Due to the cutbacks in local government funding, there is some pressure on the BR coordinating team to become a social enterprise in its own right. This has advantages and disadvantages; the current preference is to stay as an arm lengths body of the local government so it can still use the power of local authorities and at the same time influence the local government policies from the inside. However a business model for externalising the service has been explored. For such an organisation to work, experience from other areas has shown that having a working capital is vital.

The model for blending social entrepreneur support and BR functions is shown in *Figure 5 below*.

The investment in the new enterprises can either be equity or a loan depending on the risk or growth opportunity of the enterprise.

**Figure 5 – Social Entrepreneurship in Biosphere Reserves**
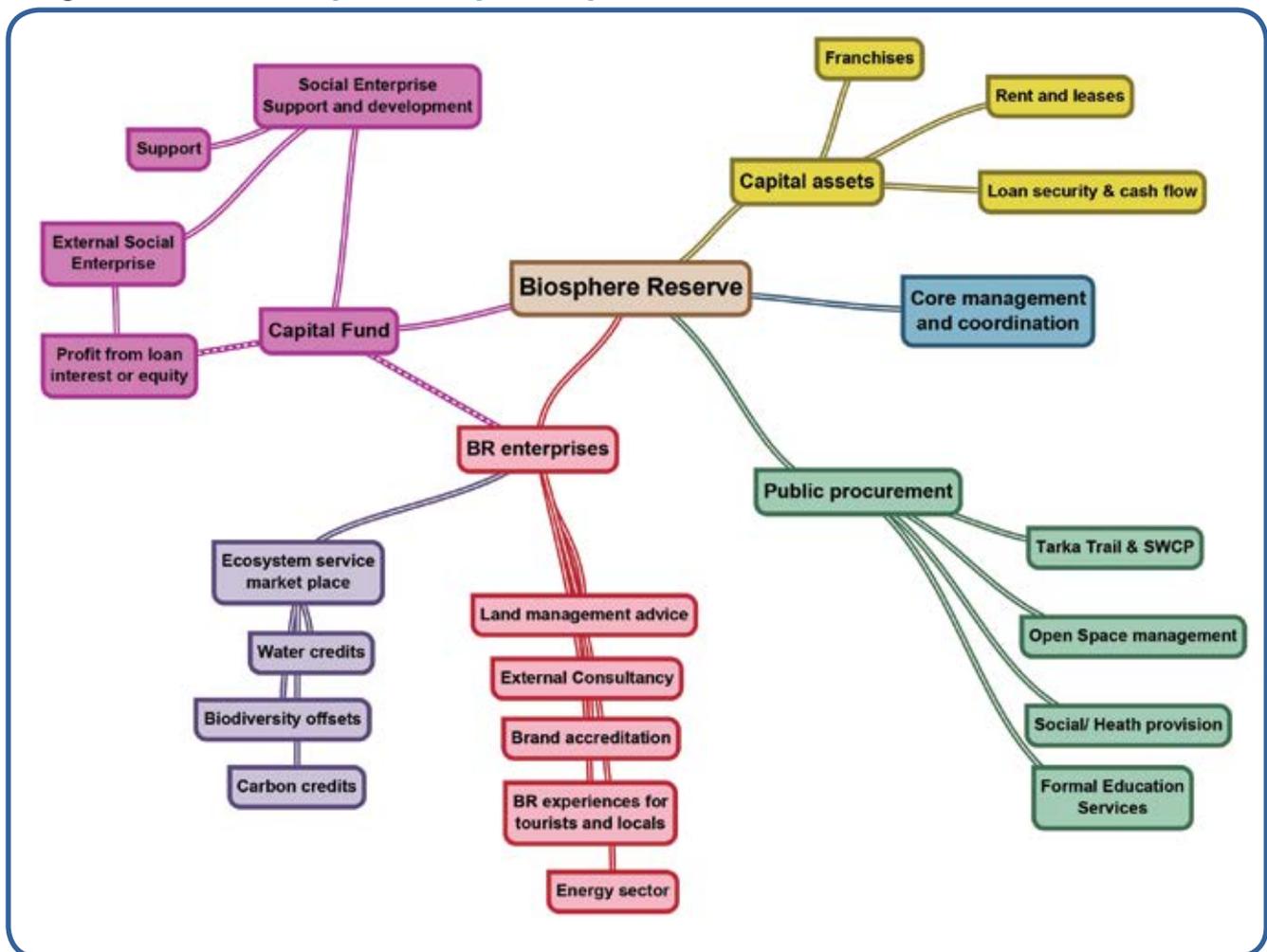
# Case Study 3 Social Entrepreneurship & Public Participation
## Ecosytem Services and Biosphere Reserves
Johanna MacTaggart, coordinator Vastra Gotaland BR and Sweden MAB

**Humankind is for its survival dependent on functions – ecosystem services – the life supporting systems provided by Earth. The current trend is that humanity gradually reduces the capacity of many of these systems; which can result in significant future costs.**

People benefit from the services provided by natural ecosystems but communities and stakeholders would benefit by creating better conditions for well-functioning ecosystems ensuring continued future provision. Ecosystems exist freely for everyone's advantage, but in practice, their benefits are shared unequally around the world.

Ecosystem services can be grouped in four categories:
- **Provisioning** services, material or energy outputs, such as vital organic and inorganic natural resources ranging from foods and clean air and water, to fuels, medicine and building materials.
- **Regulating** services, the services ecosystems provide by acting as regulators. Such as waste water treatment, pollination, erosion prevention, biological control etc.
- **Supporting** services, for example living spaces for plants and animals. These services underpin almost all others.
- **Cultural** services, non-material benefits, which include opportunities for outdoor recreation and the aesthetic benefits of natural environments.

**Resilience** in this context is the capacity of social-ecological systems to cope with change and continue to evolve. The concept of social-ecological systems emphasizes that people must be seen as part of, not separate from nature – that the boundary between social and ecological systems is artificial and arbitrary. Social Resilience is the ability of human communities to withstand and recover from stresses, such as environmental change or social, economic or political upheaval. Resilience in society and its life-sustaining ecosystems is crucial for maintaining options for future human development. Loss of resilience can cause loss of valuable ecosystem services, and can also lead to rapid negative changes in different situations for people, ecosystems, knowledge, or whole cultures. For example, if water is polluted there will no longer be clean water available or if pesticides and scaling of agricultural land, lead to loss of wild bee populations, the service of pollination may be lost. Both these examples will have an economic impact and both examples are currently happening around the world today. Working for increased resilience means new ways to turn crises into innovative catalysts for sustainable development.

**Biodiversity** is a prerequisite for well-functioning ecosystems, and there is currently an increased loss of biodiversity, globally. Healthy ecosystems may enhance the social and economic sustainability of local communities.

# The role of BRs

A BR adds an unifying role and connects different actors through learning experiences, in a strategic way. BRs are regions that show good examples of how land use and conservation can go hand in hand. These areas are pilot areas where new approaches and new knowledge is tested in order to achieve a sustainable society. BRs also have a role of awareness rising, to create better links between local communities and local resources and/or ecosystem services, as well as taking joint actions for a more resilient social-ecological system.

This may be achieved by making efforts to increase regional identity, perhaps by using the concept of Terrior. UNESCO defines Terroir as a delimited geographic area within which a human community constructs, in the course of its history, a collective knowledge based on a system of interactions between a physical and biological environment, and an ensemble of human factors. The technical specifics thus acquired display originality and impart a reputation for a benefit that originates from this geographic space; so that one may share equally in these specific characteristics of the land. A BR may use the concept of Terroir to inspire people and communities to work towards a common goal, building trust within the group, and enhancing social capital.

# Practical example

One way in which ecosystem services can be addressed within the work of a BR is through the concept of food security, where food is a provisioning ecosystem service. The FAO (The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations) describes food security as existing when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle. Food security is based on the stability of food availability, access and utilization, and is underpinned by food systems, which are made up by production, processing, distribution, marketing,

preparation and consumption activities. Food security comes into play both at local and global scales, especially in the light of climate change.

**Example of Vendace, Coregonus albula**: BR Lake Vänern Archipelago includes parts of the largest inland sea in the EU, including one of the largest fishing fleets. The lake is also the greatest freshwater reserve in Europe. Hence, many aspects of sustainability and stakeholder collaboration are key values along with security in terms of clean water and food quality. Both are historically big issues, which have been solved by collaboration with decision makers, industries and civic society.

However, there is a need to increase knowledge and raise awareness about the ecosystem services the lake provides in order to once again increase the joint responsibility amongst the stakeholders gaining economic benefits from the lake. The aspiration is to be an example of good practice and that the techniques developed in this effort can be used in other parts of the world.

A sustainable fishing industry, in regards to logistics, catch, secured healthy population size of the fish and processing techniques is the approach of a pilot project. More efficient logistics need to be secured to reduce climate impact and optimize the economic value of the product. Yet another interesting area is to reduce catch waste to improve sustainability by promoting new products, services and new economies.

The results so far in this project would be impossible to achieve without an increased collaboration amongst stakeholders. After years of conflicts, and not speaking to each other, a joint association has been established with the common goal to launch Lake Vänern products under a common marketing label. Evidentially, trust has been built and the local community moves forward and onward with their collaboration for their own sustainable future.

# Case Study 4 Public Procurement
## Collaborative Procurement and Policy Delivery in Public Sector Biomass
### Graeme Cook, Scottish Government Procurement

## Summary

**Scottish Procurement stakeholders requested a collaborative framework for biomass heating that would address poor supply-chains, lack of financial capital and variable boiler maintenance & fuel quality. At first inspection, this appeared to be a relatively standard procurement exercise but, through detailed market and stakeholder engagement, we realised that this single initiative had the potential to integrate diverse policy targets and to deliver measurable benefits in lead-markets & innovation, economic growth, carbon reduction, renewable heat, community benefits and social inclusion. The result is a pan-public sector, £50 million framework that will:**

- create up to 275 jobs
- deliver training in college and schools
- secure $CO_2$ reductions of 48,500 tonnes per annum
- give public bodies access to novel funding
- use wood from sustainable sources to displace fossil fuel usage
- secure savings of £8.5 million per annum
- reduce supply-chain risk

## Background, aims and objectives

Scottish Procurement identified a requirement for a biomass-derived heating solution across the public sector that was beyond the current market capability. This was driven in part by geography as Scotland has many 'off-grid' requirements for heat that, by necessity, have had to rely on expensive fuel-oil for their heating requirements. Supply chains were under-developed, there were instances of poor boiler maintenance and fuel quality was variable. Many existing biomass systems were insufficiently reliable for public buildings (e.g. hospitals and schools) and funding options were limited. This background presented risks that led to reluctance to invest in new Biomass, even though it had the potential to deliver significant carbon and monetary savings. Overcoming this reluctance would require market development and significant up-skilling and expansion of expertise in that market. Market growth and training are key contributors to economic growth so by meeting our contractual goals we realised we would be able to contribute to the Scottish Government's wider purpose. This would take leadership and collaboration on a scale beyond that normally delivered by procurement teams.

Once we fully understood the project's potential we decided to lead the delivery of Biomass solutions in Scotland and to use our policy and commercial understanding to marry biomass demand with policy outcomes, sources of capital investment and suppliers that demonstrated the potential for innovation and growth. The strategic objectives of the project were to contribute measurably to national sustainability targets and create vital anchor demand that would encourage further growth and investment in Scotland's renewable energy sector. Successful delivery would reinforce and further establish Scottish Procurement and the Scottish Government as leading-edge innovators in using collaborative public procurement and intelligent public policy development to deliver measurable, sustainable outcomes across multiple policy areas.

The framework was designed to contribute directly to three out of five of the Scottish Government's Strategic Objectives; **Wealthier and Fairer** (enable businesses and people to increase their wealth and more people to share fairly in that wealth) by providing new business to a fledgling market and in so doing to facilitate further investment by transforming a reluctance to invest into tangible and binding contracts; **Smarter** (expand opportunities for Scots to succeed from nurture through to life-long learning ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements) by working with suppliers to deliver apprenticeships and college training; **Greener** (improve Scotland's natural and built environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it) by reducing the use of fossil fuel, delivering renewable heat and reducing CO2.

## Participation: Collaboration, Transparency and Consultation

Stakeholders were at the heart of this project from its inception. We began by identifying expertise across Government policy areas and the wider public sector. We designed a programme that would engage diverse stakeholder groups (policy, public bodies and suppliers). Supplier and public sector workshops were held in venues across Scotland, providing a forum for suppliers and customers to discuss competing standards and agree a consensus. Attendees were aware they were involved in shaping a strategy that would ensure competition, market consistency, market growth and value for money. We used the 'Public Contracts Scotland' (PCS) advertising portal to engage suppliers. This site captures all public tender adverts in Scotland (above £50,000 in value). We held web and teleconference-



based workshops with suppliers as we realised that much of our audience would be based in rural and often remotes parts of Scotland. This reduced the administrative burden that suppliers face in engaging with public bodies. 130 public & supplier organisations and a wide range of stakeholders were consulted, including:
- wood fuel forums
- rural development organisations
- Forestry Commission
- Scottish Government policy colleagues in Renewable Energy, Rural Development, Sustainability and Qualifications Authority
- Carbon Trust
- OFGEM
- UK's Department for Energy and Climate Change

## Innovation and creativity

Every part of this initiative, from project initiation, through our commercial and contractual models to a mini-competition process, broke new ground in driving the adoption of a **Sustainable Public Procurement** approach, now embedded into our 'Procurement Journey' which standardizes public procurement across Scotland. As well as innovating in policy development and delivery, using a collaborative framework model to deliver 'Energy Supply Agreements' was a first for Scotland, and we believe, for the UK. This required the team to develop new ways of supporting customers, new EU-compliant competition models, and new heights of supplier engagement and consultation.

## Overcoming Barriers

The largest issues we encountered were around market readiness and customer confidence. There was a history of poor installations, a general lack of expertise and a fundamental issue at a critical point in the supply chain. The efficiency of biomass boilers is affected by the quality of both boiler maintenance and fuel. Several existing installations were inefficient; when challenged, the boiler engineer would blame fuel quality and the fuel supplier would blame the quality of boiler maintenance. These problems had become well-known throughout the public sector and were further confounded by a lack of specialist biomass knowledge in the buying community. Public bodies were increasingly reluctant to invest in Biomass.

> **"The framework therefore rewards innovative companies by giving them access to public contracts that may not have materialised at all otherwise"**



In response, Scottish Procurement designed an outsourcing model (an Energy Supply Agreement) that places responsibility for all of these issues into the hands of the supplier while the innovative pre-commercial 'project-brief development' stage (similar to competitive dialogue but under a framework) brings bidders into the heart of specification-development and reassures buyers that they are buying the most sustainable and cost-effective system for their site.

Our Energy Supply Agreements (ESA) pay for heat that is derived from biomass systems. The supplier installs and maintains the boiler AND, regardless of boiler efficiency, must ensure that the required level of heat is provided at a fixed price. It is therefore in the suppliers' own interest to ensure that all aspects of supply are of the optimum quality. Only those bidders offering to integrate their supply chains and manage risk on their client's behalf can get onto the ESA. The framework therefore rewards innovative companies by giving them access to public contracts that may not have materialised at all otherwise.

# Case Study 5 Public Participation

## Ancares leoneses biosphere reserve (alebr): laboratory for social participation on planning and managing

Nuria Alonso Leal, Head Manager of Ancares Leoneses Biosphere Reserve
Pedro Maria Herrera Calvo, Environmental Consultant

## Introduction

The Ancares Leoneses, a mountainous area in Northwest Spain was recognised as a Biosphere Reserve (BR) in 2006 because of its extraordinary social, cultural and natural heritage. Four Councils, (Candín, Peranzanes, Vega de Espinareda and Villafranca del Bierzo, all belonging to the province of León), formed a consortium for managing this area. The task was not easy since there were no funds assigned to the aim. This meant that the first few years were difficult, weighed down by the absence of economic and human resources along with other issues faced by the rural municipalities. As a result, the image of the area as a BR was kept discreetly in the background, whilst seeking new allies and opportunities.

In 2011, a new stage began when Ciudad de la Energía Foundation (CIUDEN) joined the consortium, providing the BR with technical support. The first change that took place was the introduction of a completely different role for the local population, which would become one of the main assets of the BR, as outlined in the principles and governing documents that highlight the participation of local stakeholders. If, like any other BR, ALEBR is meant to test alternatives for sustainable development while maintaining local heritage, the strategic decisions should belong to the people living there. We therefore see conservation as the dynamic involvement of local people preserving their heritage, whilst also developing fair livelihoods from the resources provided by the landscape. With this aim, ALEBR began developing a framework and structure to achieve a new approach of community managed Reserve.

## The Method

### 1. Participative Assessment

Every planning process should start with a deep diagnosis, analysing and collecting relevant information available about the targeted territory. However, raw data is only part of the task, to collect and analyse a large amount of data, it is necessary to be fully aware of the context, and there is no better way to acquire real knowledge than by asking those people who actually live, enjoy and suffer that reality. Thus, the first step in our process was to ask locals about any relevant issues or needs (economic, social, environmental) they felt were relevant to building a future for such a special place.

Successive interviews and tours along the Ancares valleys and villages (Fornela, Burbia, Villafranca) occurred over several months, seeking inputs from farmers, beekeepers, housewives, mayors, youth, naturalists, artisans and other people about present, past and possible future of the territory. Meetings were also scheduled in each municipality of the BR to discuss and reflect on these issues, sometimes with a local focus sometimes with a more global aim.

This Participative Diagnosis of ALEBR was performed as a key part of the Strategic Plan, while in parallel, a Technical Diagnosis was conducted providing local people with access to information brought by experts. The result was an integrated diagnosis combining these two points of view: the data and statistics collected by technicians and the hearts and minds of people talking about their own land, drawing a bigger picture of Ancares. The combined diagnosis was released and shared with the local population to be used as a collective instrument to develop the ALEBR strategy. The delivery of the diagnosis was also the excuse to start collecting proposals to improve the economic, ecologic and social future of the BR.

The difference between participatory plans and conventionally made (top down) plans is substantial, although on the surface they may seem to be more similar than expected. We find our participatory plans match local reality with more accuracy, making them more viable. When people sit at a table with the aim of being active and forthcoming they suddenly become responsible for what they are saying narrowing down the possibilities to propose doable ideas. This is the major outcome of participatory plans, the sense that they are actually possible, anchored to reality and owned by their protagonists.

## 2. Clear/Wider information: What a Biosphere Reserve is? What do you think that it should be?

While we were discussing the future and collecting proposals we tried also to spread the meaning of being a BR. Gradually, the significance of this idea and the consequences for the shared territory became clearer for its inhabitants. Helped by web-based support, a portable exhibition and other communication materials, the technical team toured the various districts of the area, explaining the role of ALEBR and its objectives. To enhance this knowledge ALEBR organised a visit to a neighboring Biosphere Reserve, Sierra de Béjar y Francia BR in Salamanca, inviting a mixed group of people from all economic and geographic sectors in Ancares. As a result, they saw "on site" how their counterparts in Salamanca had been able to give meaning to the idea of a BR and to set up a multitude of projects and initiatives. What is more, they were able to share peer-to-peer, their concerns and doubts of belonging to a BR and begin to look at the BR as theirs, rather than something useless being imposed by municipalities.

> "This is the major outcome of participatory plans, the sense that they are actually possible, anchored to reality and owned by their protagonists"

## 3. Participative planning: Building real proposals of work

The first step in designing the main planning tools of ALEBR was taken by the Manager, who collated a first set of guidelines from the proposals originating from the working sessions. These initial guidelines were modified and polished through further meetings and gatherings, again across the different populations of the BR. Empowered by participatory techniques, those sessions helped to clarify and prioritize ideas, and lead to real decision-making. The resulting priorities and myriad ideas and proposals were organised as a formal plan thanks to the dedication of the BR staff team. The more concrete and immediate proposals were carefully defined and scheduled to build a genuine program, with all their needs and resources properly addressed.

The compilation of these proposals (both specific and generic) led to two documents to be disseminated, discussed and finally approved: The Strategic Plan (a general framework for the next few years) and the Action Plan 2011-2013 (far more specific with programs, timetables and budgets).

These plans focus on both strategic and operational issues (including social, economic, conservation and ecologic actions). Strategic issues took priority as the BR needed to set up the appropriate decision-making centres leading to the constitution of the main bodies managing the BR and to implement a communication plan. Operational issues developed more slowly but were integral to driving the whole activity of the BR in terms of conservation, economic and social activities that promote sustainable development. These included

> **"These plans focus on both strategic and operational issues (including social, economic, conservation and ecologic actions)"**

activities traditionally linked to the territory (tourism, cattle farming or beekeeping) and other activities related to social issues such as training, capacity building, outreach and participation from volunteering to land stewardship. Then, after all this work undertaking meetings and web participation, and after the development and assessment of people's proposals, the BR was eventually ready to put its Action Plan to work and implement its first measures.



## 4. Participative management

### A. The ALEBR Participatory Council
The most important of these actions may be the setting-up of the Council of Participation, which includes representatives of all social sectors of the BR (e.g. artisans, neighborhood representatives, entrepreneurs or members of environmental organisations). The Council's main role is to represent the local population in the management and the specific actions of the BR.

The process to build up this Council was performed through several sessions with participatory dynamics like World Cafes, where the local population decided who, how and for what should make up this body. As a result, the BR has already begun to weave synergies between the groups within it, which collaborate with each other in various projects and working groups.

The Participatory Council also develops activities of its own, with support from the technical team and other bodies of the BR. Currently, they are working on recovering cultural heritage and path marking in interesting points of Ancares.

## B. Building Networks

One of the most significant milestones in the life of ALEBR was the birth of AGARBALE, the extensive farming association of the BR. This active group has gathered local farmers seeking to improve their outputs, the dignity of the profession and the enhancement of environmental services provided. Lately, this group has been working with a specialist in extensive farming research in the CSIC (Spanish National Research Council) and high nature value farming to improve meat quality of Ancares (and the ecosystem). Currently, it is starting an exciting project related to land stewardship for capercaillie conservation.

At the same time, similar work is starting in tourism. After the carrying out diagnostic and community conversation activities to analyse the situation and needs, a group of tourism professionals inside ALEBR decided to upgrade a local association to be part of ALEBR's social fabric and start working in the tourism sector by boosting quality products and participating in the design of a local sustainable tourism strategy.



**"One of the most significant milestones in the life of ALEBR was the birth of AGARBALE, the farming association of the BR"**



## C. The science and the exchange of knowledge: Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee, meanwhile, is the realisation of a major goal of the BR itself: to promote applied scientific research to the territory and its conservation. One of the main roles of the Scientific Committee has been to develop a strong link between applied science and the accumulated wisdom of the local population over time. This recently created Committee is made up of a group of highly qualified scientists from our community (from three different universities), clearly committed to Ancares and capable of working closely with its population for a better future for the whole area.

The first activities involving the Scientific Committee (SC) have been the 'Sharing Wisdom Workshops'. These workshops are open technical sessions where members of the SC and people with extensive local understanding share their knowledge about a field of interest linking traditional knowledge with modern science, highlighting the synergies between them. Four interesting items have already been discussed following this innovative approach: global change, geomorphology and landscape, new opportunities for tourism and intangible cultural heritage.

The SC is also committed to developing an emergent education and training program of ALEBR, starting with our summer course in 2013, dedicated to participatory management.

## D. Involving people in success

Finally, there is a place in the Biosphere Reserve, for many other initiatives, such as the Proyecto Rios El Bierzo-Laciana (volunteering related to the water quality of streams) which is developing a specific program in ALEBR, together with many other actions about tourism, conservation, cultural heritage and communication around sustainable development.

ALEBR is also promoting a collaborative approach with external initiatives, such as sports, educational and training activities, giving support in exchange for the adoption of ALEBR principles and working together with the BR's social network.

After some time of development (almost two years) we are still learning and improving the process. We have reached some conclusions but also some "Unanswered questions" which we think can be useful for any BR who wants to work in the same way.

> "Empowerment is the key to participation, and it is achieved through the cultivation of the social fabric"

## Some Conclusions

› Social participation is not 'to ask for' but 'to count on'. It is not only to volunteer, not only to inform and we shouldn't forget this. If a participatory path is set nothing else is as important as people and you have to adapt everything, even the urgent issues, to the participant's needs.

› People need to trust, and that is not easy. Credit is a fragile and hard won asset. We must be completely transparent in our role and be clear with people.

› Empowerment is the key to participation, and it is achieved through the cultivation of the social fabric. Every effort targeted at improving social organisation inside the BR is an extra bonus for future projects.

› The idea of what a BR means and the feeling of being part of that is a great vision, not easy to achieve since each person has a different background. Experiences and expectations about their land and life, condition the individual's perception of a sustainably developed territory.

› In embracing what a BR is, concepts like sustainability, development or common goods, need to be discussed with people and common agendas identified and the role a BR should play in developing them.

› Not everybody can lead conflict-resolutions. The team supporting the work in the BR must be trained in participatory processes, methods and techniques.

› Participatory processes have long-term focus and are highly demanding. Many of them have failed because of mismatches between the aim and the delivery. There is a strong need for evaluation and feedback that should be accomplished in the same way as the rest of the process.

## And some unanswered questions...

- For ALEBR, social participation means to involve people on decision-making however we wonder about the limits of participation. A balance needs to be struck between participation and decision-making, which will derive in quicker resolutions and lower costs among other benefits.

- We see participation as a governance tool, however we question whether public approval is needed for every single project. For example, if someone has a good idea and can find the resources to develop it, do they really need to submit it to a participatory process? Where does individual initiative come into play in this context? However, there are participation tools that can be used to enhance such individual initiatives, such as transparency, assessment and accountability that should be incorporated to the BR management as a way to engage with these initiatives and add value to them.

- We are fortunate in ALEBR to have the ability to work with a certain level of autonomy, in parallel with the more bureaucratic methods of municipalities. But we wonder how can we encourage local government to be really involved in this way of decision-making process?

- Sometimes maintaining a participative process for the BR management is difficult, so how can we maintain success when we are faced with a lack of resources? How should we deal with sensitive results? When and how should we credit results? How should we deal with unexpected results?

- Which format should the governance of ALEBR take? Self-governance, a mixture of technical and social work?

- We live in an individualistic world, are we really prepared to change our way of decision-making for good?



The Biosphere Reserve of Ancares Leoneses already has its roadmap as a result of all this work. While these plans need funding and financial support for their implementation (the technical team, is applying to every institution they can), and, though times are tough, there is support that never fails: that is provided by an organised and informed population, fully aware and committed to a model in which the decisions and guidance of the work fall directly on them. The main characters of this formidable task are the true heirs to this territory that was considered so exceptional as to be declared a Biosphere Reserve.

*"El futuro de los pueblos y de la especie humana, depende de un abrazo intelligent entre el capital social y el capital Natural"*

*"The future of our communities and of human kind, depends on an intelligent embrace between social capital and natural capital"*

Juan José Ibarretxe (President Basque Country, 1988-1998)
and Founder of the Agirre Lehendakaria Center for Social and Political Studies

assist
social capital